The British Psychological Society
Special Group in Coaching Psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 13 No. 2 – Autumn 2018

ISSN: 1750-2764

International Coaching Psychology Review

Subscriptions

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

Editor

Jonathan Passmore, DOccPsych, Centre for Coaching, Henley Business School, UK & University of Evora, Portugal

International Editorial Board

Hilary Armstrong, PhD, Institute of Executive Coaching, Sydney, Australia

Tatiana Bachkirova, PhD, Oxford Brookes University, UK

John Bennett, PhD, Queen's University of Charlotte, North Carolina, US

Patricia Boston, Massey University, New Zealand

Michael Cavanagh, PhD, Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, Sydney University, Australia

Cary Cooper, PhD, Manchester Business School, UK

Sarah Corrie, PhD, Middlesex University, London, UK

Susan David, PhD, Harvard Medical School, US

Joel DiGirolamo, International Coach Federation, US

Anthony M. Grant, PhD, Coaching Psychology Unit, School of Psychology, Sydney University, Australia

Suzy Green, PhD, University of Wollongong, Australia

Rebecca Jones, PhD, Centre for Coaching, Henley Business School, UK

Stephen Joseph, PhD, University of Warwick, UK

Travis Kemp, PhD, International Graduate School of Business, University of South Australia, Australia

Ho Law, PhD, Cambridge Coaching Psychology Group, UK

Michel Moral, HEC, Paris, France

Lindsay Oades, PhD, University of Wollongong, Australia

Gordon Spence, PhD, University of Wollongong, Australia

Ernesto Spinelli, PhD, Regent University, London, UK

Catherine Steele, University of Leicester, UK

Richard Stelter, PhD, University of Copenhagen, Denmark

Salome van Coller-Peter, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

Llewellyn E. van Zyl, Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands

Mary Watts, PhD, City University, London, UK

Eva-Maria Graf, PhD, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Austria

Notes for Contributors

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

Case studies and book reviews will be considered. The *ICPR* is published by the BPS SGCP in association with the APS IGCP.

1. Circulation

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

2. Length

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

3. Peer review

This publication operates a policy of anonymous peer review. Papers will initially be desk reviewed by the editorial team, to confirm they meet the scope and focus of the journal. At the sole discretion of the editor/s the paper will be sent to two independent reviewers, with the aim of a review within 21 days. The reviewers will not be aware of the identity of the review and any markings, references, etc., will be removed from the paper to ensure the anonymity of the author/s. Authors are asked to remove any information about the authors, including self-citations, acknowledgements, affiliations, etc., to ensure a blind review. These can be added following the review if the paper is accepted.

4. Online submission process

(a) All manuscripts must be submitted to the editor by email: Jonathan Passmore – jonathancpassmore@yahoo.co.uk

(b) 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.

Continued on inside back cover.

The British Psychological Society
Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The Australian Psychological Society Ltd
Interest Group in Coaching Psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 13 No. 2 – Autumn 2018

Contents

4 **Editorial**
Jonathan Passmore

Papers

6 **The effectiveness of person-centered coaching intervention in raising emotional and social intelligence competencies in the workplace**
Miselina A. Lemisiou

27 **A dream of a retirement: The longitudinal experiences and perceived retirement wellbeing of recent retirees following a tailored intervention linking best possible self-expressive writing with goal-setting**
Julie Round & Jolanta Burke

46 **Crossing the line? A qualitative exploration of ICF master certified: Coaches' perception of roles, borders and boundaries**
Carley Sime & Yannick Jacob

62 **'Adjusting to that new norm': How and why maternity coaching can help with the transition back to work after maternity leave**
Jane Moffett

77 **A role for coaching to support leadership development? The experiences of female Arab leaders: An interpretative phenomenological analysis**
Maya Mattar, Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Margaret Barr & Yannick Jacob

The SGCP Committee

87 **CPIG Chair's report**
Vicki de Prazer

88 **SGCP Chair's Letter**
David Webster

Editorial

Jonathan Passmore

THIS is the second issue since my appointment as editor and the process of change at the *ICPR* continues. Our first objective, with the support of the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology Committee and the BPS SGCP, has been to broaden the reach of the *ICPR*. At present, the publication is sent as a hard copy to 2500 BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology members and as a digital copy to Australian colleagues. To reach a wider base we have started to connect with other coaching psychologists and coaching researchers across the world. The aim for the *ICPR* is to both increase its readership and impact through these new partnerships.

Our second aim is to connect with a wider range of academics and researchers. Specifically, to broaden the base and perspective in the publication beyond a UK–Australian view of what is 'coaching psychology'. In this regard we have seen several changes to the editorial board. A number of past members have stepped down. We would like to thank them for their contribution to the *ICPR* over the years, and we have been joined by new colleagues from the Netherlands, France, South Africa, New Zealand, Austria and Poland. Our second step is to launch a discussion about 'What is coaching psychology?' – We would welcome your views as readers – please e-mail us with you definition or views. We would like to feature these, along with a series of short papers on exploring the nature of coaching and coaching psychology in the next issue.

Our third project is building relationships with postgraduate coaching programes in the UK, Ireland and beyond. Our desire is for the *ICPR* to be the 'go to' reference source for those studying coaching and for students to see this as the first point of call to submit their coaching research. To support this, the *ICPR* is working with the SGCP Committee to develop a series of webinars on research methods that we hope will be available to members by early 2019.

Finally, we are continuing to make progress, thanks to the help of BPS colleagues, with increasing the discoverability of the publication and individual articles. The publication is now listed in several databases, including EBSCO. Work continues on this front and we have recently applied for a Scopus listing.

Finally, as readers will note, we are sorry to see the departure of Sandy Gordon. I would like to thank Sandy for his contribution over the past four years representing the Australian coaching community. We have been joined by Yi-Ling Lai and Natalie Lancer in the role of editorial assistants. Yi-Ling and Natalie are helping the *ICPR* drive forward these new projects.

In this issue we have five original papers from academics around the globe. Our first paper is from Miselina Lemisiou, based in Greece, who explores the effectiveness of person-centred coaching in raising emotional and social intelligence at work.

Our second paper, by Julie Round and Jolanta Burke, explores the application of self-expressive writing with retirees, and its impact on wellbeing.

In the third paper in this issue, by Carly Sime and Yannick Jacob, the contributors explore the issue of roles and boundaries, based on a sample drawn from International Coach Federation of Master Coaches.

In our fourth paper, Jane Moffett explores the impact of adjustment by mothers to a new

member of the family, and how coaching can support the transition back to work.

The fifth and final paper by Maya Mattar, Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Margaret Barr and Yannick Jacob explores how coaching can support leadership development for female Arab leaders.

Our next issue of the *ICPR* will be a special issue focusing on neuro-linguistic programming. As psychologists we are concerned with evidence. Given the continued popularity of NLP as a coaching tool, it seems right to examine the evidence, with arguments in favour and against the theory and practice of NLP coaching. We thus invite researchers and practitioners to submit papers for the next issue testing the efficacy of NLP methods and approaches. Does NLP coaching work, or is it all false claims and stolen ideas from other approaches?

Jonathan Passmore
Henley Centre for Coaching,
Henley Business School, University of Reading;
University of Evora, Portugal.
j.passmore@henley.ac.uk

The effectiveness of person-centered coaching intervention in raising emotional and social intelligence competencies in the workplace

Miselina A. Lemisiou

Background: *Research has shown that top performers (10 per cent) often differ from median performers in terms of emotional and social intelligence.*
Objective: *The purpose of this study is to review a one-year, one-to-one, person-centered business coaching programme with the management and the production team members within an organisation, exploring the development of emotional and social intelligence skills.*
Design: *The research used an experimental design and applied paired* t*-test in pre- and post-intervention conditions, using the ESCI-360° as a measurement tool to measure changes in emotional and social intelligence over the period.*
Results: *The analysis showed that the intervention had a strong effect in all measures (targeted competencies, overall score, targeted versus non-targeted competencies, EI versus SI competencies) of the production team (N = 34) and a significant effect on the targeted competencies of the management team (N = 10).*
Conclusions: *A person-centered coaching approach can assist in the development of the levels of emotional and social intelligence competencies scores.*
Keywords: *Emotional and social intelligence; coaching; person-centered approach; intentional change theory (ICT).*

THE NECESSITY of emotional and social intelligence (ESI) skills in the workplace today has been discussed, explored and considered to be a critical factor in job performance (Ashkanasy et al., 2000; Druskat & Druskat, 2006). Writers (Cherniss, 2000; Goleman, 1998) have suggested that top performers within organisations worldwide show higher scores in emotional and social intelligence (ESI) competencies, and these explain two thirds of performance differences, while the factor of technical skills only account for around 30 per cent of performance difference.

Self-awareness is considered to be the heart of ESI. Goleman (1998) argued that leaders should trust their gut feeling (intuition) when it comes to decisions. However, when self-awareness is not developed it is hard to accurately distinguish emotion signals. This might lead to the individual making inaccurate or poor decisions. With higher levels of self-awareness, individuals may identify their emotional state more accurately and thus improve the quality of their decision making (Goleman et al., 2013).

Research has shown that ESI are also significantly associated with customer satisfaction. Higher ESI levels were shown to be associated with higher customer satisfaction scores (Kernbach & Schutte, 1993). Other research suggests higher sales scores from professionals with high ESI levels achieved higher levels of sales than professionals with lower ESI scoring colleagues (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). In a similar study Boyatzis

(1999a) showed that consultants with higher ESI scores in a multinational company were associated with higher returns than colleagues with lower scores.

In recognition of these associations with higher performance, many large companies have focused on developing emotional intelligence competencies (Goleman, 2003). A range of interventions have been discussed (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001, as cited in Bennis, 2003). Goleman et al. (2013) recommended a structured executive coaching process combined with a 360-degree ESI feedback.

Coaching psychology has been proved to be a new professional field of facilitating the inner skills and activating a higher functionality of each individual. Passmore and Gibbes underline empathy as the key quality of the coach for providing effective coaching (2007).

Consequently, this study aims to explore the application in practice of a person-centered coaching intervention as a tool for developing ESI.

Literature review

Person-centered approach

Rogers (1959) widely analysed the effect on personal growth, of acceptance and unconditional positive regard to the emotion, as it is felt and experienced by the client. According to Rogers, the client is learning that he/she does not have to deny experiential parts of him/her in order to be accepted, to be loved as a person (Gottman, 1977; Rogers, 1959). Rogers (1961) characterises the unconditional positive regard condition as a paradox. By unconditional positive regard, Rogers refers to the belief that only when one is fully accepting of himself/herself, as he/she is, then he/she is open to change.

Person-centered interventions, within the working environment, can be a form of business coaching. The discussion about person-centered interventions in leadership was raised even earlier in the scientific field of psychology. Gordon refers to a framework of leadership based on a paradox. This paradox is that 'the most effective leader is one who can create the conditions by which he will actually lose the leadership' (as cited in Rogers, 1951, p.334). Here, Gordon is underlining the sense of leadership's homeostasis within the organisation, equally shared by all the members of the group.

The theory argues that a leader who actually wants to keep the leadership in terms of authority for himself/herself would not be able to adapt this kind of approach effectively. He describes a model of 'distributed leadership', where each member of the group would be able to involve himself/herself in some of the functions of leadership at any time. The aim of an effective 'non-leader' leader is to be perceived by others as one of them. This must happen gradually by earning the respect and acceptance of others, as well as trust in the relationship. All members should be able to feel secure enough to express themselves freely, and share or put forth ideas without feeling intimidating or fearful. He addresses a specific formula of approaching the group, which the main points are:

1. The opportunity for participation.
2. Freedom of communication.
3. A non-threatening psychological climate.
4. Conveying warmth and empathy.
5. Attending to others.
6. Understanding meanings and intents.
7. Conveying acceptance.
8. The 'linking' function.
9. Planning for the group by the leader.
10. Getting members to participate.
11. Leadership never becoming completely distributed.

(Rogers, 1951, pp.336–368)

Rogers' fundamental hypothesis was that 'individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and for altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes and self-directed behaviour' (1980, p.115). In his theory, he recommended three fundamental conditions as 'necessary and sufficient' to be provided by the therapist in

order to offer a promoting environment for change and personal growth. The empathic understanding of the client's frame of reference and feelings, the unconditional acceptance and the authenticity of the therapist in the relationship, are considered as the three core conditions for providing a facilitating climate to the client.

Person-centered approach suggests that any individual has the innate potential to develop towards his/her actualising tendency, when one meets the right conditions for personal growth. The mission of person-centered approach is to offer the social environment where self-determination and the organismic valuing process (OVP) will be facilitated (Joseph & Linley, 2005; Palmer & Whybrow, 2014). The OVP is an innate adjustment mechanism, acting as an evaluating process of the experiences regarding the satisfaction of the human needs.

The person-centered approach is not characterised by techniques but by efficient conditions of the relationship, and it is process-oriented. However, it may be argued that therapy and coaching are different processes. Coaching diverges from therapy as a method, with a greater focus on goal-setting, a stronger focus on the future and use of content-oriented techniques.

The distinction from the directive approaches is that in a person-centered coaching intervention, techniques are perceived to be assets that could enrich the process, on the condition they do not interfere in the coachee's narration. It is not prohibited to use facilitative techniques, but it depends on how the coach is applying them respecting the three core conditions (Joseph & Linley, 2005; Joseph, 2006).

It could be argued that the client-centered framework and the ESI-based theories, such as self-directed learning (Boyatzis, 1999b) and coaching with compassion (Boyatzis et al., 2013) have similar roots. In these cases, empathy, self-awareness and authenticity of the coach play a key role in the facilitation procedure (Goleman et al., 2013; Mearns et al., 2013; Rogers, 1951).

Rogers' theory of development is based on the principle that the individual is valued as a person without the need of any expectations about his/her existence, and this quality can lead to higher functionality of the organism and plasticity in change (Bozarth, 1993). This condition, in the therapeutic or coaching relationship, is of upmost importance as it is offering the climate of acceptance through caring and verbal prizing, whatever the state of the client at that current moment. Under this condition, change is more likely to occur.

By empathically understanding, in addition to the lack of expectations, it is possible for the coach to closely approach the sense of feeling and perception of the client. The increasing communication about the client's shared experience is able to bring up to the surface of awareness a larger part of experience, and therefore a more holistic view of the experience. At this point of increasing emotional awareness the client is able to symbolise and understand his/her inner motives that drove or drive to a specific behaviour towards the external environment (Rogers, 1951; Temaner, 1977).

Intentional change theory

Kolb and Boyatzis (1970) spent 15 years exploring the behavioural competencies on MBA students. Their longitudinal studies showed that emotional intelligence (EI) competencies can be learned and raised. They suggested that intrapersonal exploration offered by supporting interventions, such as coaching, develop a higher feeling of safety, and have a respective positive effect on efficient personal-growth or change. They recommended Rogers' theory and approach as the most influential, according to the sufficient conditions and principles.

The theory has been further developed, and transformed to the intentional change theory (ICT), by Boyatzis (2006). Goleman et al. (2013) have discussed about the intentional behavioural change in association with the Ideal Self. The process should cover these conditions:

(i) the goals must be decided upon by the person who wants to change;
(ii) they must lead to the Ideal Self;
(iii) they must built on the real self (i.e. focus is on exploiting strengths);
(iv) the plan must be feasible in your life (i.e. grounded in reality, not fantasy);
(v) the plan must start from your preferred learning style; and
(vi) actions must fit into the structure of your life and work.

(Francis, & Barnard, 2006, p.7)

The Ideal Self does not refer to what others would like us to be, as in most personality theories is described (e.g. Kohut, 2013). For Boyatzis and his colleagues (2013), the Ideal Self reflects the inner motives, needs and OVP potentials. Others' perspective of our best self is called the 'ought self'.

Intentional change is the result of self-awareness and the conscious willingness to change when trying to minimise the distance between who you currently are (real self) and who you would like to be (Ideal Self). Self-directed learning is the process of that change where one is cognitively and emotionally aware of that movement. The framework of ICT is described by five so called discoveries. Each discovery starts with a point of discontinuity. The process of change is not a linear one and a person might seem to be stuck in a stage, but change appears suddenly. This is called discontinuity. The five discoveries are the following:

(i) The first discovery: My ideal self – Who I want to be?
(ii) The second discovery: My real self – Who I am? What are my strengths and gaps?
(iii) The third discovery: My learning agenda – How can I build on my strengths while reducing my gaps?
(iv) The fourth discovery: Experimenting with and practising new behaviours, thoughts and feelings to the point of mastery.
(v) The fifth discovery: Developing supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible.

(Goleman et al., 2013, pp.111–112)

Beyond goal-setting, executive and business coaching is a relationship where in a safe environment one can explore one's own feelings towards himself/herself, his/her team, or even his/her personal ideal model based on dreams and inspirations (Goleman et al., 2013). Because of the nature of the relationship, confidentiality plays a critical role in offering the sense of security and trust, and was rated as the most significant attribute of the coaching relationship in order to facilitate change (Luebbe, 2005). A more structured approach over a coaching programme could be initiated by a 360-degree feedback on emotional and social intelligence, among the factors that affect performance (Goleman et al., 2013). In a longitudinal study conducted by Smither and London (2003) over 400 managers who undertook a coaching intervention improved their performance according to a multi-rater feedback tool.

Solution-focused approach

As with the person-centered approach, the solution-focused approach is based on the principle of conceptualising the individual as a functional whole (O'Connell, 2005). The solution-focused coach aims to facilitate solution-focused way of thinking and acting, always attuned with the client. The client's starting point is to describe his/her preferred future with a personalised method of goal-setting.

A solution focused approach is competence-based, and its early roots emerged from family therapy (Shazer et al., 1986). The main target of this particular approach is to gradually shift the problem-focused thinking into solution-focused thinking. The coach is aiming to facilitate the client towards his/her strengths and times when things have gone as expected. The client identifies what he/she had been done differently, and what qualities his/her approach had at that time. The coach does not interfere with the process of finding the solution, but facilitates the client to address the solution for himself/herself, due to his/her frame of reference in the current moment (O'Connell & Palmer, 2007).

According to Grant and Stober (2006), the purpose and the process of coaching is where the person-centered approach and solution-focused approach converge. They recommend that the most important skill of a coach is to be aware of his/her interference in order to control it and not to get involved in the outcome, but to enforce the process of it. They conclude that 'a coach with highly developed applied coaching skills can deliver excellent outcomes purely through facilitating a process that operationalises the principles of coaching, rather than through an instructor mode that emphasises the delivery of expert knowledge' (Grant & Stober, 2006, p.363).

The coaching relationship

Stober (2006) suggests that a humanistic perspective as it is applied in therapy could be adjusted for application in coaching. She focused on the basic aim of therapy, which is facilitating development rather than directing it, transferred to coaching as process intervention rather than content intervention, to the coachees' phenomenological field of perception. Gregory and Levi (2013) too have argued that person-centered approaches have a useful role to play in development.

Wales (2003) argued that an effective coaching relationship offers a safe and compassionate environment where inner fears and stress-factors have the room to be discussed. Other writers have also highlighted the relationship as a key factor in coaching outcomes. Gyllensten and Palmer (2007) highlighted two conditions – trust and transparency – as key factors in forming the relationship. Similarly, Schmidt (2003) noted the involvement of the coach as one of the particular relationship's factors related to success.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that coaching interventions take place in what might be considered to be a 'normal' and 'non-clinical' population (Linley & Harrington, 2005). This may reduce the importance of the relationship as a factor. Furthermore, coaching relationships tend to be more structured in a time-frame than a classic therapeutic relationship (O'Hanlon, 1998). This shorter, more focused nature of sessions and the period of the working alliance may also reduce the centrality of the relationship as a central factor in outcomes.

Neuroplasticity of the brain

There is a key difference between cognitive abilities, which refer to technical skills, and emotional abilities, which refer to soft skills of an individual (Cherniss et al., 1998; Goleman, 1998). This difference relies on the various functionalities and areas of the brain. Cognitive abilities are preceded in the neocortex area, whereas emotional capacities derive from the activity in other brain areas such as amygdala and all the way to prefrontal lobes. This is an interpretation of amygdala activity, which has the fastest response than any other brain functionality, when a threat occurs. Developing ESI competencies depends on practice and repetition of effective ways until new neural connections are built. Research in neurophysiology has proven that the neural connections which are not being used fade away, a process known as long-term depotentiation (LTD). In contrast, the neural connections, which are used systematically, become stronger through a process known as long-term potentiation (LTP) (Malenka & Bear, 2004). ESI development comes with replacing an old habit with a new one, in contrast to cognitive development, which requires the ability to add information (Cherniss et al., 1998).

Namely, neurophysiology research underlines a distinction between task-positive network (TPN) and default mode network (DMN). These two brain functionalities exist antagonistically one against another. TPN is responsible for cognitive activities such as problem-solving, attention span, self-control, decision-making, and so forth, whereas DMN is the key brain functionality responsible for emotional self-awareness, social awareness and decision-making based on values. These two cortical networks have the tendency to suppress each other, therefore an

over-activity of the one can damage competencies derived from the other part and vice versa (Boyatzis et al., 2014). Boyatzis and Goleman (2007) separated EI from social intelligence (SI) in terms of neuroactivity. EI was framed as the competencies to identify, perceive and use effectively emotional stimuli about oneself and others (Boyatzis, 2006). It is suggested that both DMN and TPN are involved, serving the EI. On the other hand, SI abilities are powered by the DMN, due to the fact that they are non-task focused, such as being compassionate about others. Boyatzis et al. (2006) recommended that SI competencies are associated with the parasympathetic nervous system, whereas task-oriented brain activities and cognitive use of EI derive from the activity of the sympathetic nervous system. Research findings tend to associate TPN with the sympathetic nervous system and DMN with the parasympathetic (Beissner et al, 2013). Boyatzis et al. (2014) suggest that developing one's abilities for both cortical networks, decreases the effort of cognitive activity and therefore a balanced co-existence of TPN and DMN could respond respectively to conditions with less interference.

EI instruments

There are several measurement tools for evaluating ESI. However, the classic ones are self-assessed questionnaires, such as the Emotional Intelligence Scale – WLEIS (Wong & Law, 2002), the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) (Mayer et al., 1999), the Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-I) (Bar-On, 2000), and the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI) (Sala, 2002).

For the purpose of measuring and developing performance, suggestions about 360-degree tools, including self-assessment section, as aforementioned (Goleman et al., 2013). The argument supports the fact that 360-degree tools reduce the impact of the distortion of self-assessment. This is an important interpretation of how an individual is perceived by others and the effect of his/her behaviour on colleagues from different levels of the organization (Bacon & Voss, 2012). The Emotional and Social Competency Inventory (ESCI-360°) has been most researched and validated tool and its development started with McClelland's detailed explorations into what drives performance in the workplace (Hay Group, 2015). Goleman's theory (1998) is the central orientation of the development of this particular measurement tool and it is adjusted specifically to the work environment, in contrast to other EI tools (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003).

Methodology

Design

This study used a longitudinal quasi experimental design. The population underwent a 12-months coaching intervention, with pre and post-assessment using a 360-degree evaluation tool. The independent variable was the coaching intervention sessions. The dependent variable was the Emotional and Social Intelligence scores using the ESCI-360°.

Sample

The target population included employees from a high technology company with the headquarters in Athens, Greece. The population that took part in the intervention were all the employees of the company's core production team (Group 1, $N = 34$) and the management team (Group 2, $N = 10$).

Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.1. The overall accountable sample size was 44 people and their mean age was 32.93 years (SD = 5.85). As the initial accountable sample was divided into two sub-samples, the sample size of managers was 10 people, which included nine males. Their overall mean age was 38.2 years (SD = 4.2). The sample size of production was 34 people, including 20 males and 14 females. Their overall mean age was 31.38 (SD = 5.4). Six people out of the initial sample size (N = 50), left the company during this intervention year, and were considered 'drop-outs'.

Intervention

The Management team to receive in total 20 one-to-one sessions, twice per month. However because of the overload, some sessions were cancelled and the mean sessions in the management team were 18 ($M = 18.1$, $SD = \pm1.3$). The production team received 10 one-to-one sessions, once per month. The intervention period started in March 2015 with the completion of the instrument, and ended in March 2016, with the same measurement.

The 360-degree feedback was applied only for the use of coaching process and only for the developmental purpose, as suggested by Goleman and Cherniss (2001). It was not related with any other evaluation process within the company's operations (e.g. payment or promotion), and this fact was clearly communicated to the coachees even before the evaluation. The design of the tool also protects the confidentiality of all raters, helping improve the raters' reliability. The only rater who could be identified was the manager, who could be invited to give further feedback to the individual if requested.

For confidentiality purposes the minimum suggested number of raters' needs to be five to seven respondents, including the manager. The selection of raters was decided by the in-house coach, with the only criterion of the past year's collaboration frequency. The results are only available to the coachee and the coach.

The process included three phases:

(i) The opening session: This included the initial ESCI 360° feedback and the facilitation of the coachee's development goals. The conclusion identified at maximum of three competencies for development during the following year. This could be considered as a development plan and a motive for starting the coaching intervention. This feedback session can be seen as important and used as a motivational instrument towards one's Ideal Self (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001; Grant, 2006).

(ii) The coaching interventions, which included three psychology approaches, were adjusted in the coaching frame. The main approach was person-centred, with the conditions as discussed above, which was followed by the intentional change theory (ICT) and solution-focused coaching as secondary methods, when needed, such as targeting and committing purposes of the process. The coach followed BPS ethical standards during the project. Specifically, the confidentiality of the questionnaire results was secured between the coach and coachee. This also meant that the data were used only for development and was not part of appraisal or key performance indicators (KPI) of the company. The coachee had the freedom to discuss whatever he/she was willing with others and had the opportunity to share his feedback results, if he/she was willing.

(iii) The closing feedback was under the same structure of the opening feedback, apart from the Ideal Self section. The focus of this session was the unconditional positive regard on the personal development journey of the coachee, the effort he/she made, and the behaviour he/she developed, as a result of maturity of emotions and perception.

Apparatus

The measurement tool that was chosen to measure Emotional and Social Intelligence was the ESCI-360° (Version III) provided by the Hay Group. It was initially designed to categorise outstanding performers in the workplace with the average ones. The ESCI measures the perception of others and the individuals themselves upon the demonstration of specific behaviour, deriving from ESI capacity. The term 360° refers to the feedback data, deriving from the evaluation of raters among all organisational levels (manager, direct reports, peers, etc.) for an individual, and the self-evaluation of the individual, on the same questions. Twelve competencies are measured by overall 68 items (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1: Emotional and Social Intelligence Competencies (Boyatzis & Goleman, 2007, pp.6)

Self (EI)	Self-awareness	Emotional self-awareness
	Self-management	■ Achievement orientation ■ Adaptability ■ Emotional self-control ■ Positive outlook
Social (SI)	Social awareness	■ Empathy ■ Organisational awareness
	Relationship management	■ Conflict management ■ Coach and mentor ■ Influence ■ Inspirational leadership ■ Teamwork

Table 1.2: Demographics

Overall sample	Size	N	44	SD
	Gender	Male	29	
		Female	15	
	Overall mean age	Overall	32.93	5.85
		Male	33.13	5.75
		Female	32.53	6.23
Managers	Size	*N*	10	*SD*
	Gender	Male	9	
		Female	1	
	Mean age	Overall	38.20	4.21
		Male	38.40	3.88
		Female	35.00	–
Production	Size	*N*	34	*SD*
	Gender	Male	20	
		Female	14	
	Mean age	Overall	31.38	5.38
		Male	30.70	4.45
		Female	32.36	6.19

**Table 2.1: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of 3 selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015. Paired samples statistics.**

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Mean of 3 of 2016	3.9697	34	.41032	.07037
Mean of 3 of 2015	3.5156	34	.35659	.06116

**Table 2.2: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of 3 selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015. Paired samples test.**

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
.45412	.35207	.06038	.33128	.57696	7.521	33	.000

ESCI-360° includes a test of inconsistency to exclude unreliable participants. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the factors. All the items of the questionnaire resulted in a positive value and higher than 0.7 in all competencies – a rate which is considered as statistically reliable (Hay Group, 2015).

Within the 20 years of improvements on ESCI, data from 160,000 participants worldwide has been retrieved. This database confirms strong face validity, content validity, construct validity and criterion validity of the instrument (Hay Group, 2015).

Results

The hypothesis tested in this study was that the presence of a person-centered coaching intervention is positively related to a significant outcome on ESCI 360° competencies. The statistical analysis was performed by paired *t*-test.

The IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was used for statistical analysis. Continuous data were expressed as means (± standard deviation). Descriptive statistical techniques were used to estimate means and frequencies. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov statistical test was used to test the normal distribution of the quantitative variables. Although the Shapiro–Wilk test is more powerful than other normality tests, it is not powerful enough to reliably detect deviations from normality with sample sizes lower than 100. The comparisons of the variables followed a normal distribution, and were performed by using parametric tests (paired *t*-test). Moreover, the effect size for quantifying the difference between two groups was assessed by calculating Cohen's *d*. A *p*-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.

Paired samples *t*-tests were applied in all measurements post (2016) minus pre (2015) intervention, based on the mean scores. The data are based only on the average of others' ratings, and not the self-assessments.

Intervention on members of production (N = 34)

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 3 selected (Ideal Self) competencies out of 12 (Table 2.1)

The results suggest that the participants successfully reached the level of Ideal Self by the end of the intervention. Specifically, there was a strong significant difference in the ESI mean scores on the three selected competencies, as a reflection of the Ideal Self post (M = 3.97, SD = 0.41) and pre (M = 3.51, SD = 0.36) intervention condition; $t(33) = 7.51$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 2.2).

Cohen's effect size value (d = 1.29) was found to be very large.

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the remained 9, not selected competencies (NSC) out of 12 (Table 3.1)

The results show that the ESI levels were increased even for the competencies that were not considered as goals for the Ideal Self. More precisely, there was a significant difference in the ESI mean scores on the nine NSC post (M = 3.8, SD = 0.4) and pre (M = 3.61, SD = 0.35) intervention condition; $t(33) = 2.91$, $p < 0.01$ (Table 3.2).

Cohen's effect size value (d = 0.5) was found to be medium.

Test of the difference of the means (2016 and 2015) on the 3-SC comparing to the difference of means (2016-2015) on the 9-NSC (Table 4.1)

These results depict the fact that even though both the matrix of the three SC,

Table 3.1: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 2: Mean of the 9 non-selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Mean of 9 of 2016	3.7982	34	.40071	.06872
Mean of 9 of 2015	3.6191	34	.35259	.06047

Table 3.2: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 2: Mean of the 9 non-selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
.17912	.35859	.06150	.05400	.30423	2.913	33	.006

Table 4.1: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 3: Difference of means of 2016 and 2015 of 3 selected comparing to 9 non-selected competencies. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Difference of means on 3 2016–2015	.4553	34	.35222	.06040
Difference of means of 9 2016–2015	3.7982	34	.40071	.06872

Table 4.2: Mean of 3 selected competencies vs. mean of 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 3: Difference of means of 2016 and 2015 of 3 selected comparing to 9 non-selected competencies. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
−3.34294	.38798	.06654	−3.47831	−3.20757	−50.241	33	.000

related to Ideal Self, and the matrix of the nine NSC, were raised significantly, the difference of means on the three SC ($M = 0.45$, $SD = 0.35$) still had a significantly exceeding rate from the also developed score of difference of means on the nine NSC ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.40$), with $t(33) = –50{,}24$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 4.2).

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 1.4$) was found to be very large.

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 5 emotional intelligence (EI) competencies out of 12 (Table 5.1)

There was a considerably increased rate at post intervention condition of the EI competencies ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.38$), in comparison to pre intervention condition ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.38$), with $t(33) = 3.11$, $p < 0.01$. (Table 5.2).

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.53$) was found to be medium.

Table 5.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of the 5 EI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Mean of 5 of 2016	3.9571	34	.38550	.06611
Mean of 5 of 2015	3.7894	34	.38273	.06564

Table 5.2: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of the 5 EI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
.16765	.31369	.05380	.05820	.27710	3.116	33	.004

Table 6.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 2: Mean of the 7 SI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Mean of 7 of 2016	3.7471	34	.38847	.06662
Mean of 7 of 2015	3.4709	34	.35535	.06094

Table 6.2: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 2: Mean of the 5 EI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
.27618	.39710	.06810	.13762	.41473	4.055	33	0

**Table 7.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 3: Difference of means 2016 and 2015 of 5 EI comparing to the 7 SI competencies.
Paired samples statistics.**

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Difference of means on 5 2016–2015	.1676	34	.31369	.05380
Difference of means on 7 2016–2015	.2771	34	.39795	.06825

**Table 7.2: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs. the mean 7 SI competencies.
Pair 3: Difference of means 2016 and 2015 of 5 EI comparing to the 7 SI competencies.
Paired samples test.**

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
–.10941	.27297	.04681	–.20466	–.01417	–2.337	33	.026

**Table 8.1: The mean of overall 12 competencies scores by others 2016 vs. 2015.
Pair 1: Mean of 12 2016 others vs. mean of 12 2015 others. Paired samples statistics.**

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
.24853	.34593	.05933	.12783	.36923	4.189	33	0

**Table 8.2: The mean of overall 12 competencies scores by others 2016 vs. 2015.
Pair 1: Mean of 12 2016 others vs. mean of 12 2015 others. Paired samples test.**

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Difference of means of 12 2016–2015	3.8419	34	.37677	.06462
Difference of means on 12 2016–2015	3.5934	34	.31791	.05452

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 7 social intelligence (SI) competencies out of 12 (Table 6.1)

This analysis shows that there was also a strong significant difference for the seven SI competencies mean scores in post ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.39$) and pre ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.35$) intervention condition, with $t(33) = 4.05$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 6.2)

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.7$) was found to be medium to large.

Test of the difference of the means (2016 and 2015) on the 5 EI competencies comparing to the difference of means (2016 and 2015) on the 7 SI competencies (Table 7.1)

At this point, the results suggest that the five EI competencies appeared to develop further in comparison to the seven SI competencies, supporting the fact that the EI competencies are directly and highly by self-awareness expansion. There was a significant difference between the scores of the difference of means (2016–2015) on the EI competencies ($M = 0.17$, $SD = 0.31$) and the difference of means (2016–2015) on the SI competencies ($M = 0.28$, $SD = 0.4$), with $t(33) = –2.34$, $p < 0.05$ (Table 7.2).

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.41$) was found to be almost medium.

Comparison of the mean score of 2016 and the mean score of 2015 on the total ESI 12 competencies (Table 8.1)

The analysis depicts that the overall ESI scores were improved by the end of the intervention,

Table 9.1: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 not-selected competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of the 3 selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015.
Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Means of 3 of 2016	3.7780	10	.32907	.10406
Means of 3 of 2015	3.5420	10	.19708	.06232

Table 9.2: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 not-selected competencies.
Pair 1: Mean of the 3 selected competencies 2016 vs. 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
.23600	.24139	.07634	.06332	.40868	3.092	9	.013

Table 10.1: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 non-selected competencies.
Pair 2: Mean of the 9 not-selected competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Means of 9 of 2016	3.6350	10	.39371	.12450
Means of 9 of 2015	3.7120	10	.28134	.08897

Table 10.2: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 non-selected competencies.
Pair 2: Mean of the 9 not-selected competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
–.0770	.25747	.08142	–.26118	.10718	–.946	9	.369

despite the specific goals on competencies. In detail, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the ESI on the total of 12 in post ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.37$) and pre ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.32$) intervention condition, with $t(33) = 4.2$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 8.2)

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.69$) was found to be medium.

Intervention on members of management
Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 3 selected competencies (SC) out of 12 (Table 9.1)

The statistical analysis concluded with a successful development result of the three SC for the management team. There was a significant difference in the scores for the ESI mean scores on selected competencies post ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.32$) and pre ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.2$) intervention condition, with $t(9) = 3.09$, $p < 0.05$ (Table 9.2).

Cohen's effect size value ($d = 0.98$), was found to be large.

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the remained 9 not selected competencies (NSC) out of 12 (Table 10.1)

There was no significant difference in the scores for the ESI mean scores on the nine NSC post ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.39$) and pre

($M = 3.71$, $SD = 0.28$) intervention condition, with $t(9) = –0.95$, $p = 0.369$ (Table 10.2)

Test of the difference of the means (2016 and 2015) on the 3- SC comparing to the difference of means(2016-2015) on the 9 NSC (Table 11.1)

The results show that there was a serious increase in the rates of the targeted competencies, in contrast to the non-targeted, which did not develop with a statistical significance. Therefore, there was a strong significant difference between the scores for the difference of means (2016–2015) on the three SC ($M = 0.23$, $SD = 0.24$) and the difference of means (2016–2015) on the nine NSC ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.4$), with $t(9) = –29.3$, $p < 0.001$ (Table 11.2).Cohen's effect size value ($d = 1$) was found to be large.

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 5 EI competencies out of 12 (Table 12.1)

There was not a significant difference between the mean scores for the five EI competencies in post ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.31$) and pre ($M = 3.7$, $SD = 0.23$) intervention condition, with $t(9) = 3.33$, $p = 0.746$ (Table 12.2).

Table 11.1: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 3: Difference of Means (2016–2015) on the 3 selected comparing to the 9 not-selected competencies. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Difference of Means on 3 2016-2015	.2320	10	.24013	.07594
Difference of Means on 9 2016-2015	3.6350	10	.39371	.12450

Table 11.2: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 3: Difference of Means (2016–2015) on the 3 selected comparing to the 9 not-selected competencies. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
–3.4030	.36736	.11617	–3.66580	–3.14020	–29.293	9	.000

Table 12.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs the mean 7 SI competencies. Pair 1: Mean of the 5 EI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Means of 5 of 2016	3.7160	10	.31038	.09815
Means of 5 of 2015	3.6920	10	.22866	.07231

Table 12.2: The mean of 3 selected competencies vs the mean 9 non-selected competencies. Pair 1: Mean of the 5 EI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
.02400	.22761	.07198	–.13882	.18682	.333	9	.746

Comparison of the means of 2016 and 2015 on the 7 SI competencies out of 12 (Table 13.1)

There was not a significant difference in the mean scores for the seven SI competencies in post (M = 3.64, SD = 0.4) and pre (M = 3.65, SD = 0.25) intervention conditions, with $t(9) = -0.24$, p = 0.816 (Table 13.2).

Test of the difference of means (2016–2015) on the 5 EI competencies comparing to the difference of means (2016–2015) on the 7 SI competencies (Table 14.1)

There was no significant difference between the scores of the difference of means (2016–2015) on the five EI competencies (M = 0.02, SD = 0.23) and the difference of means (2016–2015) on the seven SI competencies (M = –0.02, SD = 0.24), with $t(9)$ = 0.76, p = 0.466 (Table 14.2).

Comparison of the means of 2016 and of 2015 on the total ESI 12 competencies (Table 15.1)

The overall ESI mean scores of the management team appeared to remain stable and there was no significant difference in the mean scores for the ESI on the total 12 competencies in post (M = 3.67, SD = 0.35) and pre (M = 3.67, SD = 0.24) intervention condition, with $t(9)$ = 0.00, p = 1 (Table 15.2).

Table 13.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs the mean 7 SI competencies. Pair 2: Mean of the 7 SI competencies 2016 vs 2015. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Means of 7 of 2016	3.6370	10	.39805	.12588
Means of 7 of 2015	3.6550	10	.25052	.07922

Table 13.2: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs the mean 7 SI competencies. Pair 2: Mean of the 7 SI competencies 2016 versus 2015. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
–.01800	.23808	.07529	–.18832	.15232	–.239	9	.816

Table 14.1: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs the mean 7 SI competencies. Pair 3: Difference of Means (2016–2015) on the 5 EI comparing to the 7 SI competencies. Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Difference of Means of 5 2016-2015	.0240	10	.22761	.07198
Difference of Means of 7 2016-2015	–.0160	10	.23768	.07516

Table 14.2: The mean of 5 EI competencies vs the mean 7 SI competencies. Pair 3: Difference of Means (2016–2015) on the 5 EI comparing to the 7 SI competencies. Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
.0240	10	.22761	.07198	.0240	10	.22761	.07198

Table 15.1: The mean of overall 12 competencies scores (by others) 2016 versus 2015. Pair 1: Mean of 12 (2016–2015). Paired samples statistics.

	M	*N*	*SD*	Std error mean
Mean of 2016 others	3.6700	10	.35523	.11233
Mean of 2015 others	3.6700	10	.23792	.07524

Table 15.2: The mean of overall 12 competencies scores (by others) 2016 versus 2015. Pair 1: Mean of 12 (2016–2015). Paired samples test.

Paired differences					*t*	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
M	*SD*	Std error mean	95% confidence interval				
			Lower	Upper			
.00000	.21876	.06918	–.15649	.15649	.000	9	1.000

Summary of findings

The findings illustrate that there is a significant association with the increase of competencies settled as goals during the opening session in both management and production samples. Specifically, production's participants resulted with a high significance in the mean of the goal-settled competencies as well as the overall ESCI-360° scores. Despite the overall significant increase of the competencies, the goal-settled competencies were found to exceed those from the non-selected ones, with a strong significant difference for the production team. The management team's data achieved significance in the mean of the goal-settled competencies. However, the management team data did not see an increase to their levels of overall ESCI-360° scores, in comparison to the production team where the overall ESCI-360° scores showed a significant increase.

Additionally, the results of this study suggest that the five EI competencies related with self-awareness and self-management increased significantly compared to the seven SI competencies related to social-awareness and relationship management, for the production team. Also, the latter had a significant change in 2016 measurement compared to 2015 measurement for the production team.

Discussion

Self-awareness is considered to be the core mechanism in the development of ESI competencies (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001); thus, by applying the client-centered approach as the core approach into coaching, the main goal is to broaden the self-awareness capability. The behaviour measured pre- and post-intervention is considered only the 'tip of the iceberg'. However, the actual focus of the coaching relied on the emotions and the internal process, which may contribute to a particular behaviour. There is a wealth of information for the client, when the internal frame of reference is discussed, that might have been activated on each occasion by different stimuli. In his theory, Boyatzis's team seems to address the same issue, despite their behavioural perspective (Goleman, 2013). The 'tip of the iceberg' for Boyatzis is the observable part, which is the part that others are able to perceive and understand. This derives mainly from our behaviours and cognitions (e.g. knowledge); however, the hidden and larger part of the iceberg consists of personal values, past experiences, self-image and motives. It is the part which is much harder to reveal and develop in terms of coaching and it includes mostly personality traits. Motives are characterised as the emotionally coloured pattern of cognition (McClelland, 1965).

It could be argued that competencies such as self-awareness are not behaviours but the bottom-line of elements that can actually affect behaviours. Studies conducted in various organisations revealed that there is a positive outcome on productivity and efficiency when the individual sets his/her own goals by bringing into consciousness the inner motives or needs which dominate the specific goal setting (Likert, 1967). Self-settled goals have been found to create higher commitment than goals settled by external sources (Locke, 1996). These findings were based on the principle that internal motivation could be reached easier by simply asking the individual (Ryan, 1970). This principle is also focusing on the subconscious motives, in contrast to McClelland's (1965) behaviouristic position on the importance of consciousness (Locke, 1996).

The effect of coaching intervention on an individual level is depicted by the current study's results. By getting emotionally more mature within the working environment, people realised that they actually had the power within themselves to change things and transform their everyday working life in the most effective way. Each member of the team that faced a problem was actually the best member of the organisation to come up with the most effective solution to that particular obstacle and share it with other members of the same area of expertise.

It could be argued that when a population is under a balanced level of job requirements, which they can afford according to the respective seniority, the coaching intervention is much more beneficial to develop emotional and social intelligence competencies.

Beyond the benefits at the individual level, the influence of the coaching intervention drove actions within the organisation. This observation is aligned with Boyatzis et al. (2013) discussion on how coaching with compassion at an individual level within the workplace has also a wider effect to the organisation as a whole, in terms of culture, norms and total performance.

This study provides evidence that a person-centered in-house coaching intervention is able to promote ESI development. While Goleman assesses that these competencies can be developed, due to neuroplasticity of the brain, he underlines the importance of time-frame, commitment to the process and support; the latter being noticed as a critical factor for effective change (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001). While external coaches is seen as a high cost option by many businesses, internal coaching programmes can offer a cost effective and impactful solution, as evidenced by this study.

As a comparison, training programmes, which have been common practice, have often been noticed to fail, due to the lack of support and personal feedback (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001). While in a training approach the person might utilise these for a short period of time, his/her habitual style is likely to return.

In addition, beyond the impact of awareness on behaviour, research has shown that a coaching intervention is a reliable method of improving self-esteem and self-efficacy. When these elements are discussed during coaching, the awareness of OVP and personal strengths there can be a significant effect on wellbeing (Govindji & Linley, 2007).

The idea of non-directive approach combined with an agenda or goal-setting, has been defined by Kohut (1982), and later by Stolorow et al. (1987), as the intersubjective approach. Intersubjective approach is sharing the same critical principle with person-centered approach, from a psychoanalytical point of view. Specifically, the shared principle is that every person has an innate drive known as the actualising tendency. When a person meets the 'sufficient and necessary conditions' for personal growth, then he/she can achieve internal congruence with the self-concept and the organismic actualising tendency (Kahn, 1996). Furthermore, the central idea of intersubjective approach is that one's subjectivity is reflected on another subjectivity, which is

a form of encounter relationship (Schmid and Mearns (2006). Stolorow et al. (1987) suggest that only the client is able to decide his/her goals and set his/her own agenda. In the current study's coaching intervention, the discussion themes in each session depended on the will and needs of the client; yet the goals he/she settled in the initial feedback session remained an integral part of our consciousness.

The latest relevant non-directive coaching model has been suggested by Boyatzis et al. (2013), referenced as 'coaching with compassion'. In this model, they clarify the importance of 'an explicit dyadic coaching process' (p.154) with regards to the relationship between the coach and the coachee. They discuss a model that focuses on the personal growth and has a tendency towards the Ideal Self of the coachee. In addition, they underlined the distinction between the instrumental coaching approaches, or 'coaching for compliance' (p.156), and the coaching with compassion, which focuses on the coachee's strengths. This model exhibits the closest resemblance, in terms of principles and combination of approaches, when compared with the current study.

In a previous review, Govindji and Linley (2007) cited and analysed several studies measuring the effectiveness of coaching in the development of a range of areas (e.g. motivation, leadership, wellbeing, OVP). However, most of these studies do not seem to specify the methods and coaching approaches applied. Also, many of them are based on the post-intervention self-assessment by coachees about the progress they perceived they had (e.g. Dawdy, 2004; Gonzalez, 2004). Similarly, many studies are based on data and reports delivered only by coaches (e.g. Liljenstrand, 2003; Luebbe, 2005). Additionally, the majority of studies are focused on executives and managers aiming to transform leadership in organisations (Goleman et al., 2013; Perkins, 2009). This confirms that coaching to date has been perceived by many as an executive level benefit.

Limitations of this study

The current study has a number of limitations. One is that there was no control group; however, a control group in a real life environment would have caused many complications. Even if an agreed randomised selection was applied, the period during the intervention would probably reveal frustrations and feelings of discrimination if the hypothesis of the project started to reveal the benefits (salary, seniority status, etc.) of a higher ESI and therefore a better performance. It was also assumed that a randomised control selection method would have harmed the homeostasis of the environment. In social sciences, experiments with equal criteria of control and experimental groups in the same environment have been shown to be risky, even if participants were initially aware and had given their consent.

Since this was the first annual pre–post measurement on ESI skills that took place in this company, there were no previous comparable annual data. Therefore, there could be other factors that might have affected the result. It could be assumed that some participants may have entered the programme because their managers reassured them that it would be beneficial for them. Still, there was a significant change in all measures in the production team. As long as their managers endorsed the programme, they created a promoted environment for this particular intervention (Goleman & Cherniss, 2001). On the other hand, some managers might have felt a duty to set the tone in the organisation without necessarily being fully engaged on the procedure, especially during the early sessions.

Future research suggestions

Further research suggestions could include more interventions and measurement tools. Specifically it would be recommended that the managers' team firstly receives an initial intervention of group counselling, in order to reduce the stress and anger levels caused by responsibilities, overload and miscommunication (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008), as well as

a the main intervention on the business coaching model for ESI soft skills development. A team alignment programme might have had an additional effect on the management team.

Further research that combines measurements on different fields in association with the pre- and post-coaching intervention levels on ESI would be recommended. Specifically, employee engagement is a critical area to be evaluated further. Gallup's recent worldwide (142 countries) research on employees' engagement found that only 13 per cent of the overall employees are motivated and actually engaged in their workplace, whereas 64 per cent were rated as not engaged and 24 per cent were characterised as actively disengaged, which means that they have expressed behaviourally this psychological statement with unproductive work and negativity towards co-workers (Crabtree, 2013). Finally, it would be beneficial to investigate whether a coaching intervention is able to positively affect employees' engagement as a human resources method of development.

Miselina A. Lemisiou
College for Humanistic Sciences – ICPS, Greece; School of Psychological Sciences & Health, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Acknowledgements

The author gives special thanks to Dr Richard E. Boyatzis, the Distinguished University Professor of Organizational Behavior, Psychology and Cognitive Science at Case Western Reserve University, for the invaluable insights on designing the most suitable process for the analysis of the results.

The author would also like to thank her supervisor on business coaching, Mr Sotiris Karagiannis, for the critical guidance in applying coaching in a way that efficiently encapsulates and respects the principles of client-centered approach, and Mr Konstantinos Pappas, General Manager of Institute of Counselling and Psychotherapy Studies, for support in the completion of this project.

References

Ashkanasy, N.M., Härtel, C.E, & Zerbe, W.J. (2000). Emotions in the workplace: Research, theory, and practice. In N.M. Ashkanasy, C.E. Härtel & W.J. Zerbe (Eds.) *Emotions in the workplace* (pp.3–18). Westport, CT: Quorum.

Bacon, T. & Voss, L. (2012). *Adaptive coaching: The art and practice of a client-centered approach to performance improvement.* London: Nicholas Brealey.

Bar-On, R.E. & Parker, J.D. (2000). *The handbook of emotional intelligence: Theory, development, assessment, and application at home, school, and in the workplace.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Beissner, F., Meissner, K., Bar, K. & Napadow, V. (2013). The autonomic brain: An activation likelihood estimation meta-analysis for central processing of autonomic function. *Journal of Neuroscience, 33,* 10503–10511. doi:10.1523/JNEUROSCI.110313.2013

Bennis, W. (2003). Foreword. In C. Cherniss & D. Goleman (Eds.) *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations.* Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Berglas, S. (2002). The very real dangers of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review, 153,* 86–92.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1999a). Paper presented at Linkage Conference on Emotional Intelligence, Chicago, 27 September.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1999b). Self-directed change and learning as a necessary meta-competency for success and effectiveness in the twenty-first century. In J. Veres & R.R. Sims (Eds.) *Keys to employee success in coming decades* (pp.15–32). Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood.

Boyatzis, R.E. & Goleman, D. (2007). *Emotional and social competency inventory.* Boston, MA: Hay Group.

Boyatzis, R.E., Rochford, K. & Jack, A.I. (2014). Antagonistic neural networks underlying differentiated leadership roles. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 8,* 114.

Boyatzis, R.E., Smith, M.L. & Beveridge, A.J. (2013). Coaching with compassion: Inspiring health, well-being, and development in organizations. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 49*(2), 153–178.

Boyatzis, R.E., Smith, M.L. & Blaize, N. (2006). Developing sustainable leaders through coaching and compassion. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 5,* 8–25. doi:10.5465/AMLE.2006.20388381

Boyatzis, R.E. (2006). Using tipping points of emotional intelligence and cognitive competencies to predict financial performance of leaders. *Psicothema, 18,* 124–131.

Bozarth, J. (1998). *Person-centered therapy: A revolutionary paradigm.* Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.

Cherniss, C. (2000). Social and emotional competence in the workplace. In R.E. Bar-On & J.D. Parker (Eds.) *The handbook of emotional intelligence: Theory, development, assessment, and application at home, school, and in the workplace* (pp.433–458). San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.

Cherniss, C., Goleman, D., Emmerling, R. et al. (1998). *Bringing emotional intelligence to the workplace.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University.

Crabtree, S. (2013, 8 October). Worldwide, 13% of employees are engaged at work. *Gallup.*

Dawdy, G.N. (2004). Executive coaching: A comparative design exploring the perceived effectiveness of coaching and methods. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65*(5).

Druskat, V. & Druskat, P. (2006). Applying emotional intelligence in project working. In S. Pryke & H. Smyth (Eds.) *The management of complex projects: A relationship approach* (pp.78–96). Oxford: Blackwell.

Ely, K., Boyce, L.A., Nelson, J.K. et al. (2010). Evaluating leadership coaching: A review and integrated framework. *Leadership Quarterly, 21*(4), 585–599.

Emmerling, R.J. & Goleman, D. (2003). Emotional intelligence: Issues and common misunderstandings. *Issues in Emotional Intelligence, 1*(1), 1–32.

Francis, A. & Barnard, D. (2006). *Why are relationships the heart of emotional intelligence?* Los Angeles, CA: Korn Ferry. Available from www.haygroup.com/us/downloads/details.aspx?id=7542.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence.* New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, D. (2003). What makes a leader? In R.W. Allen (Author), L.W. Porter (Contributor) & H.L. Angle (Contributor) *Organizational influence processes* (pp.229–241). New York: ME Sharpe.

Goleman, D. & Cherniss, C. (2001). *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations.* San Francisco, CA. Jossey-Bass.

Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2013). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence.* Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Gonzalez, A.L. (2004). Transforming conversations: Executive coaches and business leaders in dialogical collaboration for growth. *Dissertation Abstract International Section A: Humanities and Social Science, 65*(3-A), 1023. Ann Arbor, MI: Proquest.

Gottman, J. (1977). The effects of a modeling film on social isolation in preschool children: A methodological investigation. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 5*(1), 69–78.

Govindji, R. & Linley, P.A. (2007). Strengths use, self-concordance and well-being: Implications for strengths coaching and coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 2*(2), 143–153.

Grant, A.M. & Stober, D. (2006). Introduction. In D. Stober & A.M. Grant (Eds.) *Evidence-based coaching handbook.* New York: Wiley.

Grant, A.M. (2006). An integrative goal-focused approach to executive coaching. In D.R. Stober & A.M. Grant (Eds.) *Evidence-based coaching handbook: Putting best practices to work for your clients* (pp.153–192). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Gregory, J. & Levi, P. (2013). Humanistic/Person centre approaches. In J. Passmore, D. Peterson & T. Freire (Eds.) *Wiley Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring* (pp.285–297). Chichester: Wiley.

Gyllensten, K. & Palmer, S. (2007). The coaching relationship: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 2*(2), 168–177.

Hay Group (2015). *Emotional And Social Competency Inventory (ESCI): A user guide for accredited practitioners.* Birmingham: Author.

Joseph, S. (2006). Person-centred coaching psychology: A meta-theoretical perspective. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 1*(1), 47–54.

Joseph, S. & Linley, P.A. (2005). Positive psychological approaches to therapy. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 5*(1), 5–10.

Kahn, E. (1996). The intersubjective perspective and the client-centered approach: Are they one at their core? *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training, 33*(1), 30.

Kernbach, S. & Shutte, N. S.(2005). The impact of service provider emotional intelligence on customer satisfaction. *Journal of Services Marketing, 19,* 438–444.

Koestner, R., Weinberger, J., & Healy, J. (1988). *How motives and values interact with task and social incentives to affect performance.* Unpublished manuscript, Department of Psychology, Boston University.

Kohut, H. (1982). Introspection, empathy and the semi-circle of mental health. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 63,* 395.

Kohut, H. (2013). *The analysis of the self: A systematic approach to the psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kolb, D.A. & Boyatzis, R.E. (1970). Goal-setting and self-directed behavior change. *Human Relations, 23*(5), 439–457.

Likert, R. (1967). *The human organization: Its management and values.* New York: McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Liljenstrand, A.M. (2003). *A comparison of practices and approaches to coaching based on academic background.* Unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of California School of Organizational Studies, Alliant International University.

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

Locke, E.A. (1996). Motivation through conscious goal setting. *Applied and Preventive Psychology, 5*(2), 117–124.

Luebbe, D.M (2005). The three-way mirror of executive coaching. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences & Engineering 66*(3-B), 1771. Ann Arbor, MI: Proquestl.

Malenka, R.C. & Bear, M.F. (2004). LTP and LTD: An embarrassment of riches. *Neuron, 44*(1), 5–21.

Mayer, J.D. (2002). *The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT).* Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations.

McClelland, D.C. (1965). Toward a theory of motive acquisition. *American Psychologist, 20*(5), 321.

Mearns, D., Thorne, B. & McLeod, J. (2013). *Person-centered counselling in action.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

O'Connell, B. (2005). *Solution-focused therapy.* London: Sage.

O'Connell, B. & Palmer, S. (2007). Solution-focused coaching. In S. Palmer & A. Whybrow (Eds.) *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners.* London: Sage.

O'Hanlon, W. (1998). Possibility therapy: An inclusive, collaborative, solution-based model of psychotherapy. In M.F. Hoyt (Ed.) *The handbook of constructive therapies: Innovative approaches from leading practitioners.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2014). *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners.* Oxford: Taylor & Francis.

Passmore, J. & Gibbes, C. (2007). The state of executive coaching research: What does the current literature tell us and what's next for coaching research. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 2*(2), 116–128.

Perkins, R.D. (2009). How executive coaching can change leader behavior and improve meeting effectiveness: An exploratory study. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 61*(4), 298.

Richardson, K.M. & Rothstein, H.R. (2008). Effects of occupational stress management intervention programs: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 13*(1), 69–93. doi:10.1037/1076-8998.13.1.69

Rogers, C. (1980). *A way of being.* Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Rogers, C.R. (1951). *Client-centered therapy: Its current practice, implications and theory.* London: Constable.

Rogers, C.R. (1959). Significant learning in therapy and in education. *Educational Leadership, 16*(4), 232–242.

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

Ryan, T.A. (1970). *Intentional behavior: An approach to human motivation.* Oxford: Ronald Press.

Sala, F. (2002). *Emotional competence inventory: Technical manual.* Philadelphia, PA: McClelland Center For Research, Hay Group.

Schmid, P.F. & Mearns, D. (2006). Being-with and being-counter: Person-centered psychotherapy as an in-depth co-creative process of personalization. *Person-Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies, 5*(3), 174–190.

Schmidt, T. (2003). Cited in S. Dembkowski & F. Eldridge, (2004). The nine critical success factors in individual coaching. *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching, 2*(2).

Shazer, S., Berg, I.K., Lipchik, E.V.E., Nunnally, E. et al. (1986). Brief therapy: Focused solution development. *Family Process, 25*(2), 207–221.

Smither, J. & London, M. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multi-source feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology, 56,* 23–44.

Spencer Jr., L.M. & Spencer, S. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance.* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Stober, D. (2006). Coaching from the humanistic perspective. In D. Stober & A.M. Grant (Eds.) *Evidence-based coaching handbook.* New York: Wiley.

Stolorow, R.D., Brandchaft, B. & Atwood, G.E. (1987). *Psychoanalytic treatment: An intersubjective approach.* Hillsdale, NJ: Analytic.

Temaner, B.S. (1977). *The empathic understanding response process.* Chicago Counseling Center Discussion Paper. Chicago: Chicago Counseling & Psychotherapy Center.

Wales, S. (2003). Why coaching? *Journal of Change Management, 3,* 275–282.

Wong, C. & Law, K. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *Leadership Quarterly, 13,* 243–274.

A dream of a retirement: The longitudinal experiences and perceived retirement wellbeing of recent retirees following a tailored intervention linking best possible self-expressive writing with goal-setting

Julie Round & Jolanta Burke

Objectives: *The research aimed to analyse retirees' experiences of a tailored positive psychology intervention (PPI) combining Best Possible Self (BPS) expressive writing with goal-setting and to explore its potential as an aid to retirement wellbeing. This is the first time, to our knowledge, that BPS and goal-setting have been employed as a combined approach.*

Design: *This was an experimental study design using qualitative analysis methods, namely interpretative phenomenological analysis, alongside participatory action research.*

Methods: *Three recently retired women participated in the project. Semi-structured interviews and groups were used.*

Results: *The intervention contributed to feelings of retirement wellbeing by boosting a number of meaning-related factors (such as self-awareness, purpose in life and intrinsic goal-progress), bringing about an overall improvement in hedonic-eudaimonic balance.*

Conclusions: *Findings suggest a need for further research into the newly combined intervention and into its most appropriate delivery format(s) for retirees (e.g. online versus face-to-face). Given the intervention's potential to elicit wellbeing-maximising goals, the current findings have relevance for populations beyond the retiree community.*

Keywords: *Best Possible Self; goal setting; self-concordance; retirement; positive psychology intervention; meaning in life; older people.*

INCREASES in life expectancy mean that the average retirement is now 20 years long (Office for National Statistics, 2012) and healthier than ever (Koch, 2010). Whilst often viewed as a utopian time of life, transition into non-working status can also bring social, emotional and practical challenges (Laura, 2014; Robertson, 2014), with around one-third of retirees suffering stress at some stage (Bosse et al., 1993).

There is currently a deficit of provision for the wellbeing and adjustment of retirees (Robertson, 2014), despite the significant impact of retirement on their 'sense of purpose', 'identity' and day-to-day 'behaviours'. Given the burgeoning older population and topics of loneliness and isolation hitting the socio-political agenda too (Jopling, 2015), the matter of enhancing wellbeing during retirement feels timely and appropriate.

With coaching-type interactions generally tied into some form of 'feel better' goal, the sciences of coaching psychology (CP) and positive psychology (PP) are natural and valuable partners, and indeed there is a growing body of research bringing the two together (e.g. Pritchard & van Nieuwerburgh, 2016). Yet there has been little focus on the just-retired lifestage, so this study aims to explore how recent retirees

might be supported in making the best of such a significant chunk of their lives. Can the two sciences combine forces to promote 'post-career' flourishing?

This research introduces a novel, two-phased intervention, which links a reworked positive psychology intervention to subsequent goal-setting. Best Possible Self Goals (BPSG) (Round, 2016) combines a tailored version of King's Best Possible Self expressive writing (BPS, 2001) – deemed helpful in highlighting one's values and priorities – with goal-setting. The aim is to explore BPSG's value as a tool for retirement adjustment and wellbeing via the establishment of self-concordant goals, with self-concordance referring to those goals most positively associated with wellbeing because they match personal values and interests (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Indeed, Seligman (2016) continues to highlight the wellbeing benefits of having personal goals, and research has linked these to positive outcomes in retirement adjustment and to wellbeing in general amongst older populations (Payne et al., 1991; Robbins et al., 1994). Finding self-concordant goals is not straightforward, however, and individuals often fail to select goals which truly represent their needs (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). The freshly combined PP/CP (expressive writing plus goal-setting) intervention is intended to help overcome this particular stumbling block in goal-setting – via the precursor of Best Possible Self writing.

Literature review

Robertson (2014) suggests that the very concept of retirement itself is ready for a revised narrative, away from the clichéd view of this time of life as one of leisure, reminiscence and relative inactivity. Similarly, it is perhaps also time for researchers to acknowledge and pay attention to a distinct 'healthy retired' lifestage as it would appear from our literature review that this particular population has fallen, largely unnoticed, between the fields of PP and CP (typically youth to middle-aged focused) and psychogerontology (generally long-retired and with health limitations) (Round, 2017). Where retirement research does exist, it has traditionally focused on financial goal-setting, with little consideration of psychological and transition planning. Correspondingly few positive psychology interventions (PPIs) have been directed at older adults and even fewer explicitly at the recently retired. We outline key examples of older adult interventions below. These make reference to the two types of wellbeing – 'eudaimonia' and 'hedonia' – with the former more broadly related to meaning and purpose in life and the latter to pleasure (Boniwell, 2012; Wong, 2011).

Most recently, a PP-inspired community programme in the US (Friedman et al., 2017) did bring quality-of-life uplift to older adults by focusing specifically on eudaimonic (meaning-related) wellbeing. The programme consisted of group sessions to encourage the savouring of positive experiences and was successful at building psychological wellbeing, shown to moderate the risks of depression and isolation in older age (Ryff, 2014). However, in tailoring this from the original adolescent programme, the researchers exchanged a future goal-setting task for one focusing solely on past goal-achievements, despite the widely-documented connection between future life goals and wellbeing across all life-stages (e.g. Brunstein, 1993; Erikson et al., 1986; Schmuck & Sheldon, 2001). The omission of future goal-setting perhaps missed a broader opportunity then for galvanising retirement plans towards increased purpose and meaning (eudaimonia), conceivably sticking instead to older-person stereotypes around the notion of reminiscence.

Other older adult programmes have shown positive shifts in hedonic wellbeing but, as Freidman et al. (2017) highlight, it's actually the eudaimonic aspects which decline with age. Eudaimonic wellbeing is positively correlated with better physical health, such as reduced risk of heart attack, stroke and Alzheimer's (Boyle et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, an intervention that aims to increase eudaimonic wellbeing could be particularly beneficial for retirees.

As Seligman (2016) proposes, 'we're pulled by the future, not pushed by the past'. Goals drive behaviours and energise us, positively influencing day-to-day experience and, importantly, helping us to address emotional and wellbeing needs (Cantor & Blanton, 1996). As mentioned, there is a long-established and well-researched link between goal-setting and wellbeing (Brunstein, 1993; Emmons, 1991; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), including in older populations (Payne et al., 1991; Robbins et al., 1994).

Future goals are also shown to have critical relevance for adaptation/transition (e.g. into retirement); they support emotional stability and help mediate personal resource towards positive change (Kohut, 1977; Robbins et al., 1994). Lybomirsky advocates, 'In a nutshell, the fountain of happiness can be found in how you behave, what you think and what goals you set every day of your life' (2008, p.67). Despite this, PPIs aimed at older populations have typically been past-biased, such as reminiscence, gratitude or life review (e.g. Friedman et al., 2017; Killen & Macaskill, 2015; Ramírez et al., 2014).

Selecting beneficial goals isn't straightforward, however. Sheldon and Elliot (1999) highlight that we can lose touch with ourselves or make choices informed by external (e.g. societal or familial) expectations. Moreover, the array of possibilities in life can appear overwhelming too (Schwartz, 2000), and particularly so with all the freedom of retirement. Thus, when selecting goals, it seems crucial to help retirees connect with their authentic selves and to narrow down their focus. Therefore, BPSG (Round, 2016), with expressive writing as a precursor to goal-setting, is intended as an enabler towards deeply personal, value-driven and prioritised, self-concordant goals.

The psychology term 'possible selves' is described by Markus and Nurius as 'the ideal… that we would very much like to become' (1986, p.954) and is of value because it incentivises behaviour towards future outcomes and enables evaluation of the current self. In the original intervention, 'best possible self (BPS; King, 2001), this ideal self is explored via a four-day (20 minutes per day) expressive writing task, deemed to bring to the fore deep-seated values and interests. Sheldon and Elliot's (1999) self-concordance model proposes that goals driven by an individual's values and interests bring greater wellbeing outcomes, motivating behaviours towards an upward spiral of progress and improving daily experiences.

A number of other 'possible selves' interventions (including non-writing interventions) exploring academic, physical and social possible selves have shown positive association with self-regulatory behaviours and goal progress (e.g. Ko et al., 2014; Strachan et al., 2017), as well as with academic performance and personal development (Ruvolo & Markus, 1992). Pertinent to retirees (yet not yet researched amongst them) is that BPS has also been shown to aid psychological adjustment to change (Rivkin & Taylor, 1999), and by its very nature is deemed a personally relevant and energising intervention (Roberts et al., 2006). Teismann et al. (2014) also evidenced a lowered cortisol response alongside a reduction in rumination. Combining BPS with goal-setting may therefore hold multi-layered benefits at retirement, a time of significant readjustment and potentially challenged emotional equilibrium.

To date, versions of BPS have largely been researched amongst student and youth populations, however, and with only limited direct linkage to goal-setting, most notably in a resource-heavy Possible Selves Programme (Hock et al., 2006), which delivered positive outcomes for student learning. Hock et al. concluded: 'there is a paucity of studies investigating how to effectively teach individuals to become aware of their possible selves and how to set and work towards meaningful goals' (p.769).

The inspiration for this intervention, King's BPS research (2001), showed an immediate uplift in positive emotion, increased subjective wellbeing after three weeks and fewer doctor's visits five months later. Subsequent BPS writing research has additionally shown enhanced levels of opti-

mism (Meevissen et al., 2011) and boosts to positive affect (Layous et al., 2011; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006). Research to date has, however, largely omitted to consider outcomes beyond affect and has not explored its longitudinal influence (aside from physical health benefits).

To the authors' knowledge, there are no BPS writing interventions which have been directly linked with goal-setting and a paucity of research generally amongst the newly-retired. Yet Petkoska and Earl's research (2009) specifically suggests the centrality of personal goals to retirement planning across all domains (health, leisure and travel, interpersonal and work, as well as the more ubiquitous financial goal focus). They summarise that blanket retiree interventions are unlikely to deliver lasting results, with the notable exception of goal-setting: 'Given that goals are malleable and not fixed characteristics of an individual, goal-setting could represent an important ingredient in the design of interventions promoting holistic retirement planning' (p.250).

Overall, BSPG aims to provide a narrative platform, enabling retirees to engage with their future ideals in a meaningful way, as a precursor to self-concordant goal-setting. It will also help plug the BPS literature gap by considering longitudinal outcomes more broadly (beyond affect) and will look at the qualis or 'nature of' (Barnham, 2008) their intervention experiences via depth of qualitative insight. A quantitative research bias has meant that much of the detail relating to the very personal writing process and its associated thoughts, emotions and behaviours has also remained unexplored.

Method

Research design

A relatively experimental methodology was selected, combining participatory action research (PAR; Baum et al., 2006) with interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This combined research design was aimed at bringing about real world change via praxis or 'informed, committed action' (Smith, 2011).

The synthesis was also intended to actively engage the participant in reflexivity, harnessing this as a valuable part of the research and in line with Mead's (1934) proposition that output from a process can sensibly become a factor in its development. Smith (personal communication, 16 July, 2016) asserts that a range of combined action research-IPA positions are indeed possible, although few have attempted it to date (e.g. Hutchinson & Lovell, 2012; Smith, 1994).

Closing the gap between researcher and researched (O'Brien, 1998), the objective is to build knowledge from practice and for this to be informed by an idiographic view of participant experience via IPA. PAR was selected as it embodies a dedicated, collaborative approach to knowledge and action (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010). Theoretically, action research represents a sound choice for exploring an intervention delivery within its socio-cultural context, whilst IPA is valid for understanding interventions and significant life events such as retirement (Smith, 2004). Unlike much action research, this study didn't involve a sequential approach, but focused more intently on bringing depth of participant insight, whilst identifying opportunities for future revisions and delivery routes (ideally BPSG would be disseminated online or adopted into living practice).

IPA was chosen over alternative qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis or grounded theory, because it gives more opportunity for interpretation and reflexivity (Smith et al., 2012). As a phenomenological approach, both empathic and questioning hermeneutics were used (i.e. both identification with and critique towards participants) in trying to make sense of them (Smith & Osborn, 2007). As regards interpretative ownership, the author delivered the final interpretation of all accounts, whilst visibly representing retiree voices.

A mix of in-depth interviews and groups were identified as the optimal route to data collection, with interviews to enable sharing of idiographic experience and groups to provide fertile ground for considering context and future ideals (Keegan, 2009). There

are already examples of successful hybrid approaches (e.g. Macleod et al., 2002) and comparable project designs lie at the heart of consumer research (Keegan, 2009).

Conventional quantitative methods were ruled out because the aim was to explore the nature of participants' experience rather than to measure it at this preliminary stage and to research with – not on – participants, thus valuing the voices of those most impacted by the study (Smith, 1994).

Participants

The study focused on a tight group of three female participants recruited via an e-mail sent to local community networks in south west London. The e-mail outlined the purpose of the project and sought volunteers aged 55 to 65, who were 3 to 36 months voluntarily retired from full-time employment. All female and from similar socio-economic backgrounds (BC1), the study aimed at maximising participant homogeneity in order to support depth and clarity of findings at this initial stage (Smith et al., 2012), with the intention that clear, insightful outcomes could inform future (larger scale) quantitative pieces from the bottom up (Thin, 2016).

Summary of participants (their names have been changed):

- Kelly, aged 61, 3 months retired;
- Sarah, aged 64, 18 months retired;
- Alice, aged 62, 29 months retired.

Procedure

(i) *Introducing the intervention:* The aim of an initial group discussion was to briefly explore the subject of retirement with participants before introducing the two-part (self-administered) BPSG intervention. Participants were also provided with personal journals intended for their expressive writing (and any ad hoc reflections).

(ii) (a) *BPSG, part 1:* Four days of 'best possible self' expressive writing (20 minutes per day) carried out independently at home. In line with King's (2001) recommendation of tailoring BPS writing to its audience, the original instructions were reworked for retirees (see Appendix 1). These were also designed to cue breadth of self-exploration by shifting participant perspectives daily (Round, 2016);
(b) *BPSG, part 2:* Participants received an e-mailed SMART-style 'Goal-setting Think Sheet' for independent completion of up to five goals per participant (see Appendix 2).

(iii) *Initial interviews:* One week later. To explore participants' writing and goal-setting experiences in depth.

(iv) *Core research interviews:* Three months later. To explore the intervention and its longitudinal outcomes more holistically (i.e. thoughts, feelings and goal activity; present outcomes and projected futures; any sense of retirement adjustment; influence of expressive writing on goal-setting and commitment).

(v) *Looking to the future:* The aim of a concluding group discussion was to provide a platform for participants to 'co-consider' intervention design and delivery ideals and to share experiences.

Interviews and groups were all conducted in a conversational, semi-structured style and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. All were audio-recorded. Topic guides were used flexibly in order to attend to retirees' personally pertinent topics (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Smith et al., 2012). The final interviews provided the core data for this particular analysis as it was during these that participants were invited to reflect on their longitudinal intervention experience and ways in which it 'made life better' (Lomas et al., 2014). The three-month gap between completing BPSG and these final interviews was aimed at shedding light on the sustainability of the intervention and was critical for exploring goal-stickiness (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Data collection

Self-awareness was fundamental in handling researcher 'biographical presence' (Smith, 2004, p.45) as she 'changed hats' between

researcher–practitioner, interviewer–facilitator and academic researcher. As an experimental approach, any conflicts and decisions were noted in the researcher's reflective journal, with the 'personal analytic work done at each stage' deemed key (Smith, 2004, p.40).

Full reflexivity spanned the analysis process and attention was paid to how the researcher's own values and objectives might be impacting (Willig, 2001). Yardley's validity principles (2000, 2008) of 'sensitivity to context; commitment and rigour; transparency and coherence; and impact and importance' (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011, p.758) were central to the approach.

The aim was for the study to move gently away from a traditional researcher-dominant style which might be at risk of confirmation bias. Wong (2017) proposes that collaborative methodologies can potentially improve study validity and reliability, and are 'probably the most promising way to understand complex human phenomena such as meaning and wellbeing' (p.5).

Data analysis

Deep familiarisation with the final interview transcripts, including line-by-line noting of micro-themes, was followed by further organisation of themes, building eventually towards clusters of superordinate themes. The approach was re-iterative and inductive, with the researcher forming theoretical links only after full textual analysis (Smith et al., 2012). Participant journals were used to deepen idiographic understanding. The researcher took care to not favour the more articulate or emotionally insightful participants (Hefferon et al., 2017).

In terms of the synthesised methodology, as a separate but inevitably interwoven process and based on the concept of triangulation in action research analysis (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010), evidence was taken from across a range of perspectives to help shape the future process and delivery ideals of BPSG. This included output from each participant, interview and group findings, and reflexive journal learnings. Based on triangulation, the dataset was further searched and analysed in order to unravel learnings about how the intervention might best be delivered in future.

Results

Contextualising the sample

Alongside the pleasures of not working, retirees also expressed a gentle existential angst based largely on how to manage the freedom of retirement, its impact on identity and, overall, the question of how to feel more fully at ease with it and themselves:

> *I really felt I was drifting a little bit. I didn't want to. I know some people are happy to do nothing but actually I'm not.* (Alice, p.8, 223–224)

> *Mmm, you feel like you're no good to anyone… I'm just me; living.* (Sarah, p.12, 360)

> *I'm just a 'blob'.* (Sarah, p.13, 367)

> *There isn't a structure or routine, so [it relies on] having the self-discipline to get out of bed and make stuff happen and that, for me, is the main challenge.* (Kelly. p.3, 78–79)

Participants alluded to intermittent struggles to fully relax into their freedom – referencing an unsettling feeling of a lack of deservedness, or an underlying guilt even – particularly in relation to the more hedonic life pleasures.

From the analysis, the researcher inferred that BPSG contributed to retirement wellbeing by increasing eudaimonic (meaning-related) factors, facilitating an improved hedonic-eudaimonic balance overall.

BPSG intervention themes are:

- Meaning-making and retirement ease – 'I'm in a better place'.
  - Greater purpose and self-efficacy.
- Heightened self-awareness – 'It's okay to die now'.
  - Mortality awareness towards acceptance.
- Identification of self-concordant goals – 'I'd just be me'.
  - Responsibility and progress.

Meaning-making and retirement ease… 'I'm in a better place'

Following the intervention, participants described greater feelings of retirement ease; their guilt or inability to truly enjoy appeared diminished and they exhibited confidence and vitality:

> *I'm in a better place because I haven't had a plan before and maybe that's why the retirement thing… the guilt… because there was never any plan.* (p.3, 77–78)

This shift was largely associated with an increase in personal meaning – associated with eudaimonia – a broad theme inferred in all interviews and pervading the research more generally. Via expressive writing and reflective journalling, each retiree established a powerful, future-led narrative which bolstered their identity, drove action and pointed towards increased fulfilment:

> *Like in American movies you see granny who's the matriarch of the house and she's this loving, wonderful person everybody loves and she has words of wisdom, and I suppose I'm vaguely picturing myself as that but with a bit more 'oomph'.* (p.3, 74–75)

Notably, this particular visual imagery and associated emotional state remained influential three months later:

> *I'm still looking forward to my 80th birthday party, everyone's going to love me. […] I've got to get my mind in that nice peaceful place.* (p.3, 68–69)

Insightful personal narratives led to associated meta-goals such as 'happiness' (through relationships), 'health' and 'wisdom':

> *I'm happiest when I'm with loads of people who like me and I like them and I suppose that's my best self […] my buzz.* (p.3, 90–91)

> *One of the main things that changed [during the intervention]* (p.4, 84) *…the prime goal has got to be health.* (p.4, 86)

> *I want to be someone who is able to make the best of whatever that future might be'.* (p.8, 246–247)

Starting to pursue what really mattered to them personally provided focus and pointed the way towards increased meaning:

> *My goal [is] not to be rich, not to be this, not to be that, but my goal is to be liked…* (p.7, 196–197)

These shifts impacted on others in their lives too, opening up conversations or positively influencing behaviours and outcomes, bringing greater fulfilment.

Overall, they highlight positive new cognitions and describe gentle emotional shifts:

> *[I'm] thinking more positively – things I can do rather than not.* (p.13, 366–367)

> *[I have] a kind of inner smile.* (p.3, 85)

Greater purpose and self-efficacy

In association with their meaning-making, each expressed greater purpose and increased self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is 'the core belief that one has the power to effect changes by one's actions' (Bandura, 2006, p.170).

In response to her unfulfilling sense of 'drifting', Alice achieved numerous goals (including finding volunteer work) and coached herself towards new ones. A sense of purpose was pervading her everyday activities and bringing greater pleasure to her retirement freedoms:

> *It's [the intervention] made me think about doing things more purposefully.* (p.15, 405)… *If I can look back and say, 'look, that's what I achieved this week' then I feel better.* (p.15, 412)

Away from the formless 'blob'-like identity she described in relation to retirement, Sarah instead reflected powerful

visual imagery of herself as a well-loved, wise 'matriarch' and calm, Buddha-like figure. This new purpose and sense-of-self was influencing her daily actions and increasing her self-regulation:

> *I have a purpose […] it has made me think, 'Well, this is how I want to be when I'm 80, so how do I put that into action', so it's given me a plan.* (p.7, 206–208)

For Kelly, in her retirement 'honeymoon period', BPSG gave her confidence that she was on track as she gained feelings of validation and gratitude by choosing to look back as well as forward:

> *Whatever I choose to do now, if I want to do it, I ought to be able to do it.* (p.6, 175)

Respecting idiographic difference, the experiences of the three participants differed in relation to the time they had spent in retirement. For Sarah and Alice (18+ months retired) 'it was quite a good time to think about the future' (p.14, 377) as they felt 'over the kind of novelty of it' (p.8, 222). Kelly, on the other hand, at less than six months retired, wasn't driven by any particular need for change. This permeated her experience, from writing style through to goals, yet the intervention's innate flexibility supported (softer) wellbeing outcomes for her too.

Heightened self-awareness… 'It's ok to die now'

All reported increased self-awareness:

> *Things that surprised me that clearly kept coming through [in my writing] as being important, but if you'd actually asked me if it was important, it wouldn't have come immediately to mind.* (p.6, 158–159)

There was insight too about the usefulness of exploring their desires and motives.

Two participants ascribed the depth of personal revelation during the intervention to their particular writing approach, which elicited less top-of-mind and, at times, less palatable thoughts:

> *I just started writing and it was just a load of rubbish – like I talk – just wittering away really. […] I would have been more structured if I hadn't have written it down, and more structured means not so honest.* (p.11, 334–335)

Despite the future-focus of BPSG, the past emerged in some form for each participant, and a longing for what had gone became a goal for one participant:

> *That gay abandon, I've lost that sadly over the years… but I'd like to have that [back].* (p.8, 227)

For others, reflecting on past achievements brought reassurance for moving forward:

> *[My] personal qualities… they are a continuum.* (p.9, 264)

For those in a relationship, it seemed a natural (if slightly unnerving) part of the intervention process to consider – at least briefly – how retirement might be different without their partner. Associated insights may even prompt brave new conversations:

> *Maybe that's something [my partner and I] need to look at.* (p.8, 200)

This dance across time and alternative realities builds self-awareness and paves a route towards acceptance.

Mortality awareness towards acceptance

All participants reported a powerful connection between the move into retirement and a parallel acknowledgement of loss, ageing and, beyond it, death:

> *I've never really thought of it but I suppose I am aware of how old I am now [I'm retired].* (p.10, 284)

BPSG's 'Imagine your 80th birthday party instruction' (Appendix 1) brought mortality awareness into sharp focus, eliciting powerful dialectical writing and imagery. For example, contrasting in the same piece of writing, a fear of death, I wrote, 'I don't think I'll be here' (p.6, 212) with the celebratory clinking of glasses and chatter of friends. This complexity of emotion fed into the heart of subsequent goal-setting and even led to a feeling of mortality acceptance for one participant:

> *Almost like going to my funeral but a jolly one […] like 'this is my life', who I've ended up being' (p.8, 214)… And I thought, 'It's ok to die now'.* (p.7, 193)

A sense of increased global acceptance (e.g. of self) was also evidenced, for example, in a greater appreciation of the now and in rational reappraisals of self and circumstance:

> *Actually, I realise I'm ok as I am.* (p.5, 152)

Identification of self-concordant goals… I'd just be me

Participants internalised their BPS-inspired goals which attracted ongoing effort for the three-month period of the project (and beyond, they planned).

> *I like [my goals] and I think they're positive* (p.13, 282)… *You've actually just got to keep going at it.* (p.13, 285)

With goals achieved, others carefully revised and new habits forming:

> *I've achieved certainly three of them. I mean one of them I've ditched* (p.10, 277)… *I've thought a bit more carefully about what I was doing'.* (p.10, 284)

> *I'm more ready to smile and actually it becomes easier.* (p.1, 11)

Goals emerged as personally meaningful and they reported approaching them differently – often with greater motivation and success than previous attempts:

> *Writing it down did make me feel quite committed to it and actually it went quite well… actually I felt that for me was an important one 'cos it's something for me that's been hovering about for ages.* (p.1, 21–22)

Further analysing participant language around goals suggests that BPSG enabled them to re-engage with what they already felt (consciously or less so) to be important:

> *I might have thought to myself before, 'Why don't I say hi to these people?'… so this [intervention] has sort of centred it… like, I've got to start trying these things.* (p.10, 298–299)

> *[I'm doing] the things that were in the back of my mind.* (p.10, 275)

Responsibility and progress

Each took responsibility for their goals and, via ongoing action and reflection, they progressed, learnt from and revised their approaches.

Following on from goal successes, one participant described her unprompted method of self-coaching.

> *[I would consider] how I was approaching the goals. What was I achieving or what did I need to do* (p.10, 137) *so that when that goal is achieved, set another one within the same kind of area.* (p.12, 343)

Another demonstrated a cognitive behavioural self-coaching style to tackle personal fears around shyness:

> *Like having a phobia maybe. Whereas I'm realising that it's not that bad* (p.4, 96)… *I am joining in more conversations… I would have just sort of listened before, so that's more positive.* (p.1, 27)

> *All claimed to be in 'a better place' post-intervention.* (p.3, 65)

Discussion and limitations

The aim of this study was to reveal the idiographic experiences of retirees participating in the targeted intervention and examine its perceived utility in addressing retirement wellbeing. With key emergent themes of 'meaning-making and retirement ease', 'heightened self-awareness' and 'identification of self-concordant goals', participants perceived that BPSG did have a role to play at this change of lifestage.

On holistic analysis of participant themes, it seems evident that BPSG contributed to retirement wellbeing principally by boosting eudaimonic (or meaning-related) factors, which are shown to decrease with age (Ryff, 2014). Increases in a number of eudaimonic factors (such as self-awareness, purpose in life and intrinsic goal progress) appeared to facilitate a more balanced hedonic-eudaimonic wellbeing and a global wellbeing increase overall.

For the purposes of this discussion, 'eudaimonia' and 'meaning' are considered broadly similar and are referenced interchangeably. This is in line with Wong's proposition (2011) that a meaning-orientation equates to eudaimonia, and with Huta and Waterman's (2013) terminology study, which highlights meaning as one of the most common factors amongst eudaimonia's somewhat tangled definitions.

Given the interconnected nature of participants' inducted themes, the intention here is to discuss their experiences relatively holistically and to allow themes to sit together as appropriate. The discussion begins with the topics of meaning and purpose, deemed to lie at the heart of the intervention experience.

Overall, this section will shed light on the longer-term eudaimonic potential of BPSG, away from the short-term positive affect outcomes traditionally researched in expressive writing interventions. It will also complement the small body of PP/CP retirement literature, whilst exploring the broader benefits of the specifically-tailored intervention. It concludes with a review of opportunities for the further development of BPSG.

Meaning and purpose (re-balancing hedonia and eudaimonia)

Participants reported progress towards retirement wellbeing which spanned their cognitions, actions and emotions. This triumvirate of elements is consistent with those proposed in Wong's theory of meaning (1998). Expressive writing and reflective journalling supported the 'cognition' element, eliciting personal narratives and retirement philosophies which inspired participants in a cognitively meaningful way. Goal-setting underpinned the 'action' component, whereby meta- and sub-goals which had materialised through their writing, motivated their subsequent behaviours. Participants described feeling more purposeful.

Finally, following on from this alignment of 'cognition' and 'action', participants' 'emotion' built to produce a global experience of meaning. This was evident in their descriptions of a sense of fulfilment and greater feelings of 'ease', an 'inner smile' or simply the feeling of being more at one with themselves. Therefore, the findings from the current study are consistent with Wong (1998).

Participants' accounts of a post-intervention uplift in meaning were accompanied by an increased comfort with their retirement freedoms and pleasures, bringing an improved daily experience overall (i.e. a eudaimonic shift towards greater meaning also appeared to increase their pleasure in life – or hedonia. In line with Huta's theory (2015), it seems that rebalancing eudaimonia also benefits hedonia; the two are known to complement one another and it's reasoned to be difficult to fully pursue or accept hedonic activity without feeling deserving of it. According to Anic and Toncic (2013), those who pursue both eudaimonia and hedonia have better wellbeing outcomes than those focused on either one or the other. These findings are particularly salient in the context of retirement, given the circumstantial shift towards hedonia, and indeed, in the light of participants' reported discomfort with this prior to the intervention.

Deep re-engagement with the self through expressive writing and subsequent goal-oriented behaviours each played a role in participants' meaning-centred wellbeing uplift. This is in agreement with Lyubomirsky, Sousa and Dickerhof (2006), who found that a bolstered awareness of self and of possible futures through writing can help with the process of meaning creation. It concurs too with Kohut's (1977) theory that a sense of equilibrium and meaning – via goals and ideals – can act as a stabilising force in life transitions. Meaning can also help clarify one's approach to life, prompting enduring goal-commitment and a motivation towards self-care (Klinger, 2012), as evident, for example, in participants' deepened personal health goals.

Meaning in life has been correlated with psychological adjustment, hope and vitality (Steger, 2012; Thompson et al., 2003), all of which are particularly pertinent for wellbeing at a time of change (such as retirement) and are echoed by this study's findings. Personal meaning can change across the life-course and particularly in relation to a shift in lifestage (Prager, 1996). With meaning a key factor in human flourishing (see Ryff's psychological wellbeing theory (1989) and Seligman's PERMA model (2012)), it seems that BPSG may be a useful tool for re-engaging with one's authentic self and linking this with goals in order to smooth the passage into retirement. To our knowledge, there have been no PPIs specifically aimed at this freshly-retired population and the learnings here suggest that BPSG challenges head-on some of the specific issues of retirement. Additionally, given the inherently personal nature of writing one's future and the flexibility of subsequent goal-setting and revising, BPSG seems to offer person-fit, intrinsic motivation and ongoing variety – and thus, unlike many interventions, sits well with the hedonic adaptation prevention model (Sheldon et al., 2012). Research is required to further explore its retirement benefits (e.g. adjustment and transitioning), as well as further longitudinal outcomes (e.g. happiness and flourishing).

Self-efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy is a belief in one's own abilities (Bandura, 1982), and thus lies at the heart of goal pursuit. Participants' increased self-efficacy was likely a combination of cognitive re-engagement with their values and goals, alongside a positive mood uplift as a reflection of their goal successes. This is in line with Bandura's theory and research (2006). Likewise, findings concur with Maddux's theory (2009) that an additional route to self-efficacy is via 'imaginal experiences' – or the ability to visualise oneself behaving successfully. Participants who engaged deeply with the expressive writing component of BPSG were most influenced by visualisations of self-efficacy.

Concurring with Bandura's research (1989), retirees' attitudes were optimistic and self-enhancing, positively shaping their outcomes such as finding voluntary work and improving health behaviours. Research indicates that self-efficacy is a key contributor to emotional wellbeing, motivation and performance (Maddux & Kleiman, 2012) and it's also associated with lowered stress reactions, increased self-regulation and better coping behaviours (Bandura, 1982). With perceived self-efficacy diminishing in older adulthood, this may be particularly helpful for retirees to maintain quality of psychological functioning. Further research is needed to explore this topic in more detail.

Heightened self-awareness

As King (2001) points out, writing about one's life goals provides the occasion to learn about oneself, and this was borne out by the intervention. A more coherent sense of self – away from any niggling retirement identity issues – emerged through retirees' narratives, with their prized narrative 'endings' (e.g. adored granny Buddha) helping to direct choices towards fulfilment (through meaning). Overall – and in line with Drake (2007) – this brought improved feelings of personal alignment across 'identities, stories and actions in the direction of their goals' (p.289). Indeed, telling one's story is a way of

exploring personal meaning and refashioning one's identity over time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; McAdams, 2001).

Unlike the more 'mainstream' past-focused narrative interventions for older people, such as reminiscence activities (Cook, 1998), what BPSG achieves is to direct retirees' personal narratives towards the future, whilst also bringing the present into sharp focus and enabling contemplation of the past via journalling. Maintaining a broadly healthy balance across all time perspectives in this way is shown to be most significantly linked to positive wellbeing, whilst the intervention's principal future-orientation has positive links to optimism and hope (Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2015).

Overall, expressive writing can bring a host of wellbeing benefits, including emotional adjustment and positive psychological functioning (Frattaroli, 2006; King, 2001) as evidenced in participants' increased self-awareness, self-regulation and cognitive-behavioural modifications. BPSG thus offers something new and relevant for retirees at a time of significant change and refocused priorities.

Mortality awareness towards acceptance

The immediate uplift in positive affect found in previous BPS writing studies (King, 2001; Layous et al., 2011; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006) was not echoed in this revised intervention which gave a more complex affect picture overall. With existential concerns such as loss, illness and death feeling rather closer in retirement, the concept of 'possible selves' is less straightforward.

In particular, BPSG's 'Imagine your 80th birthday party' writing was initially upsetting for some. Death is a difficult subject for our 'death-denying' society (Wong & Tomer, 2011); yet it is such challenging subjects which are key to the beneficial outcomes of writing (King, 2001). The rich imagery and intrinsic goal-setting emerging for participants during this study indeed suggests that this was the case. Alongside discomfort, there is apparent value in what Yalom (2008) might refer to as a (mini) 'awakening experience' created by the 80th birthday instruction.

Other research has also shown the potential benefits of the 'negative', including how death might influence us (Wong, 2011). Cozzolino's empirical and theoretical work (2006) on death contemplation, highlights that personalised death reflection can firmly direct individuals towards their intrinsic goals and needs; and that a death-prompted self-focus delivers goals which are better-aligned with personal strengths, making them more achievable. This was borne out here, with retirees ultimately energised by the discomfort of the 'negative'. They appeared better able to prioritise opportunities and to focus their attentions towards what emerged as personally important. BPSG seemed to cut through some of the 'noise' around the (sometimes intimidating) new-found freedoms of retirement.

Moving from death denial to acceptance (explicitly experienced by one participant) can help reduce existential anxiety and increase meaning in life (Ivtzan et al., 2016). With retirement an uncomfortable reminder of ageing and death, this would seem an appropriate moment to engage with the subject perhaps. Indeed, existential concerns and other 'negative' (retirement) emotions such as frustration and guilt were shown to motivate participants towards meaningful change. Distinct from the majority of PPIs – and in line with PP 2.0 (Wong, 2011) – the flexible and personal nature of BPSG provided a space for difficult emotions too. Further exploration of the pros and cons of prompting potentially complex existential thoughts is necessary in order to balance the direction of BPSG and to ensure that it's effective but also safe for participants.

General feelings of acceptance (relating to self, others and circumstance) emerged during the study too. Wong (2013) highlights the adaptive value of acceptance and signposts it as a potent start-point for positive change, with authenticity and eudaimonia as

pathways towards it. Acceptance is an interesting outcome too and warrants further research amongst this retiree lifestage, for whom it might be particularly relevant in terms of providing a solid platform for ongoing positive ageing.

Self-concordance and goal progress

Whilst it's difficult to fully identify goal self-concordance, as it is by nature 'subtle and shifting' (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999; p.495), participants' experiences point firmly in this direction. Specifically, their use of language revealed an internalisation of goals and highlighted an easy marriage between these and their personal values (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). Their behaviours too echoed a similar sense of ownership and commitment, with ongoing personal effort leading to more satisfying day-to-day experiences, in line with Sheldon and Elliot's self-concordance model (1999). A further benefit of self-concordance is that of deeper feelings of relatedness to others (Sheldon & Kasser, 1998), which was also borne out here. This targeted BPSG intervention represents the first time that goal-setting has been linked with BPS writing and the findings are powerful in terms of apparently enabling self-concordant goal outcomes. A larger scale mixed-methods project specifically considering measures of self-concordance would be really valuable.

Inherently flexible and personal, BPSG was relatively successful in becoming integrated into participants' everyday lives and avoiding hedonic adaptation. Previous research has indicated that interventions need to attract such ongoing attention for sustained wellbeing after the initial boost (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Interestingly, two participants even reported spontaneous forms of self-coaching during the course of the intervention, triggering ongoing engagement with – and revision of – their goals. This is of potential value because repetitive goal cycles have been shown by Sheldon and Houser-Marko (2001) to promote an upward spiral of healthy goal-striving. Might such recurrent cycles stimulate ongoing behavioural tweaks to keep retirees' (seemingly threatened) eudaimonic–hedonic equilibrium optimised over time?

Overall, BPSG is perhaps less about goal-attainment than it is the more holistic gains in meaning and purpose as a result of combining BPS expressive writing, goal-setting and journal writing – supporting the cognition–action–emotion triumvirate of Wong's theory of meaning (1998) – and helping to rebalance participants' off-kilter eudaimonic-hedonic wellbeing. As an apparent aid towards often elusive self-concordant goals, it merits further research across broader populations too.

BPSG development opportunities

As part of the participatory action research methodology and in order to get closer to giving retirees the best-fit wellbeing tool for them, we conducted participant discussions around BPSG ideals. Further research is required, but the initial consideration is for local community groups to organise new-retiree meet-ups, using BPSG as the backbone for a self-guided group process. A group setting would help counter the abrupt absence of work-related social contact whilst enabling peer-support and the growth of organic friendships. Social support is deemed key at a time of transition (Pettitt & Kwast, 2017) and the sharing of goals with others is instrumental in maintaining goal-striving (Shteynberg & Galinsky, 2011). Participants imagine it providing a start-point for a mutually supportive community experience. Where resources allow, they propose that sessions might be expert-led, at least initially.

An expert-led model might empower retirees with a broader set of wellbeing tools, maximising person-activity fit by offering choice. Although we have questioned the convention of past-orientated interventions, some may feel more inclined towards these.

Considering the broader BPSG development opportunities, these might variously include: a simple online (or print)

self-guided format based on the current design; an upgraded online version including virtual coaching and an online support group; integration into a self-guided community retirement group (e.g. U3A or local book-club style); or an expert-led community group offering additional PPIs.

Developing the concept further, it might form part of a one-to-one or group coaching programme (e.g. via local authorities, social enterprise, HR departments or practitioner-led) or perhaps get redesigned into a more elaborate retirement programme with additional wellbeing tools, theories and inspirational content (e.g. akin to the Action for Happiness course (Action for Happiness, n.d.)).

Obviously there are cost and benefit implications of each and further research is required to establish where the balance best lies.

Limitations

With a homogeneous sample and a detailed idiographic approach, this study brings texture and nuance to previous research on the topic of BPS expressive writing and provides preliminary findings regarding the relationship between BPS and self-concordant goals. Output may be of value to those engaged with the retirement community and starts to shed light too on how PP and CP might provide supportive tools for those in the early stages of retirement.

Whilst a rich study, the high degree of 'novelty' across the research (methodology, population and intervention) is perhaps challenging and the study output thus more diverse and less intensely focused than it might otherwise be. Replicability might also prove less simple, but a fully documented research pack is available. Certainly, in the absence of a synthesised methodological protocol, the researcher employed maximum reflexivity and a rigorous analysis approach.

The recruitment method means that participants self-selected and likely comprised those more naturally-inclined towards an expressive writing intervention. The findings may therefore not apply to those who, for example, find writing burdensome – or indeed for the 16 per cent of British adults deemed functionally illiterate (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills , 2011). By its nature too, this initial qualitative sampling lacks ethnic and socio-economic diversity, which would need to be addressed in subsequent studies.

Findings are not aimed at generalisation, but can instead inform future bottom-up research. The combined intervention's emergent themes indicate some interesting divergence from BPS' short-term positive affect findings, pointing instead towards long-term eudaimonic outcomes.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the research conditions are deemed to have increased the intervention's efficacy, with the qualitative design meaning that participants also had the opportunity to verbally share their written goals, boosting feelings of accountability and likely prompting greater responsibility towards the project overall. Thus, whilst findings suggest that BPSG has value as a group intervention or face-to-face coaching tool, its efficacy in a fully self-administered format (e.g. online) is less clear.

Implications for future research

With retirees an under-researched population in human flourishing, and BPSG a newly combined intervention, there is certainly scope for additional research learnings. It is recommended that preliminary idiographic learnings inform a larger, macro-level study – perhaps via a mixed methods approach – to further elucidate and validate current findings.

Further research would also be required to specifically explore BPSG as an online self-administered tool – this route would ideally remain a key focus as it enables cheapest and broadest reach, democratising CP/PP interventions. Nonetheless, given the recognised risk of social isolation in retirement (Pettitt & Kwast, 2017), a group format is contextually well-founded. On that basis, future research would also

ideally trial BPSG in a group or community format. Indeed, whilst expressive writing research amongst students found equal positive affect outcomes online as in-person (Layous et al., 2011), numerous studies also show that social support leads to larger wellbeing increases (e.g. Diener et al., 2006) and this was certainly echoed in participants' clear preference for a group intervention. At the micro level, further research is required to more fully understand the contribution of mortality awareness to the intervention. We note too that care must be taken to exclude clinical populations or those who, in general, may lack positive feelings in respect of their future selves. Relevant amendments to the recruitment criteria are required.

Conclusion

Initial research seems to uphold Ken Sheldon's prediction (personal communication, 2016) that BPS expressive writing may lead to self-concordant (i.e. wellbeing maximising) goals. Whilst the intervention was designed for and appears beneficial to the retirement community, this link to optimal functioning via self-concordance suggests a much broader applicability and it is likely to be of interest to individuals, educators, businesses and practitioners alike. Practitioner-researchers might therefore consider further modifications to BPSG's instructions in order to build its contextual relevance for alternative populations. With potential across diverse delivery formats too – from online to more heavily-resourced – it's hoped that these preliminary findings might spark creative engagement and dynamic research across multiple populations. For those transitioning into retirement or 'post-career life', it is recommended that further research establishes an appropriate framework for BPSG delivery in order to support them towards their new freedoms and flourishing.

'We become the stories that we tell ourselves. Write yours with passion and joy…' (Minarik, 2012).

Julie Round MSc
School of Psychology, University of East London.
Jules_77@hotmail.co.uk
Jolanta Burke PhD
School of Psychology, University of East London.

Acknowledgements

The following academic experts helped not only to inspire this piece of research, but also readily assisted by responding so generously to unsolicited e-mails:
Professor Jonathan A. Smith, Birkbeck University, who provided sound advice in constructing the synthesised methodological approach. Professor Ken Sheldon, University of Missouri, who gave encouragement for creating the combined intervention. Associate Professor Chiara Ruini, University of Bologna, for sharing her exciting Lighten Up! project. Of course this study would not have been possible without the research participants who so generously gave of their time and energy; it was a pleasure to spend time with each of them.

References

Action for Happiness (n.d.). *The action for happiness course.* Available at www.actionforhappiness.org/the-action-for-happiness-course

Anic, P. & Tončić, M. (2013). Orientations to happiness, subjective well-being and life goals. *Psihologijske teme, 22*(1), 135–153.

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist, 37*(2), 122.

Bandura, A. (1989). Regulation of cognitive processes through perceived self-efficacy. *Developmental Psychology, 25*(5), 729–735.

Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 1*(2), 164–180.

Barnham, C. (2008). Qualis? From theory to practice. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 11*(4), 414–424.

Baum, F., MacDougall, C. & Smith, D. (2006). Participatory action research. *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 60*(10), 854–857.

Boniwell, I. (2012). *Positive psychology in a nutshell: The science of happiness* (3rd edn). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Boniwell, I. & Zimbardo, P.G. (2015). Balancing time perspective in pursuit of optimal functioning. In S. Joseph (Ed.) *Positive psychology in practice: Promoting human flourishing in work, health, education, and everyday life* (pp.223–236). New Jersey: Wiley. doi:10.1002/9781118996874.ch13

Bosse, R., Aldwin, C.M., Levenson, M.R., Spiro, A. & Mroczek, D.K. (1993). Change in social support after retirement: Longitudinal findings from the normative aging study. *Journal of Gerontology, 48*(4), 210–217. doi:10.1093/geronj/48.4.P210

Boyle, P.A., Buchman, A.S., Barnes, L.L. & Bennett, D.A. (2010). Effect of a purpose in life on risk of incident Alzheimer disease and mild cognitive impairment in community-dwelling older persons. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 67*(3), 304–311. doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2009.208

Brunstein, J.C. (1993). Personal goals and subjective well-being: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*(5), 1061–1070. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.65.5.1061

Cantor, N. & Blanton, H. (1996) Effortful pursuit of goals in daily life. In J.A. Bargh & P.M. Gollwitzer, (Eds.) *The psychology of action: Linking cognition and motivation to behavior.* New York: Guilford Publications.

Cook, E.A. (1998). Effects of reminiscence on life satisfaction of elderly female nursing home residents. *Health Care for Women International, 19*(2), 109–118. doi:10.1080/073993398246449

Cozzolino, P.J. (2006). Death contemplation, growth, and defense: Converging evidence of dual-existential systems? *Psychological Inquiry, 17*(4), 278–287. doi:10.1080/10478400701366944

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1996). *Flow and the psychology of discovery and invention.* New York: Harper Collins.

Diener, E., Lucas, R.E, & Scollon, C.N. (2006). Beyond the hedonic treadmill: Revising the adaptation theory of well-being. *American Psychologist, 61*(4), 305. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.61.4.305

Drake, D.B. (2007). The art of thinking narratively: Implications for coaching psychology and practice. *Australian Psychologist, 42*(4), 283–294. doi:10.1080/00050060701648159

Duckworth, A.L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly, D.R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 92*(6), 1087–1101.

Emmons, R.A. (1991). Personal strivings, daily life events, and psychological and physical well-being. *Journal of Personality, 59*(3), 453-472. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.1991.tb00256.x

Erikson E.H., Erikson, J.M. & Kivnick, H.Q. (1986). *Vital involvement in old age.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Frattaroli, J. (2006). Experimental disclosure and its moderators: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*(6), 823. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.132.6.823

Friedman, E.M., Ruini, C., Foy, R. et al. (2017). Lighten UP! A community-based group intervention to promote psychological well-being in older adults. *Aging & Mental Health. 21*(2), 199–205. doi:10.1080/13607863.2015.1093605

Hefferon, K., Ashfield, A., Waters, L. & Synard, J. (2017). Understanding optimal human functioning – The 'call for qual' in exploring human flourishing and well-being. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 12*(3), 211–219. doi:10.1080/17439760.2016.1225120

Hefferon, K. & Gil-Rodriguez, E. (2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. *The Psychologist, 24*(10), 756–759.

Hock, M.F., Deshler, D.D. & Schumaker, J.B. (2006). Enhancing student motivation through the pursuit of possible selves. In C. Dunkel & J. Kerpelman (Eds.) *Possible selves: Theory, research and applications.* Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science.

Huta, V. (2015). The complementary roles of eudaimonia and hedonia and how they can be pursued in practice. In S. Joseph (Ed.) *Positive psychology in practice: Promoting human flourishing in work, health, education, and everyday life* (pp.159–182). New Jersey: Wiley. doi:10.1002/9781118996874.ch10

Huta, V. & Waterman, A.S. (2013). Eudaimonia and its distinction from hedonia: Developing a classification and terminology for understanding conceptual and operational definitions. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 15*(6), 1425–1456. doi:10.1007/s10902-013-9485-0

Hutchinson, A. & Lovell, A. (2012). Participatory action research: Moving beyond the mental health 'service user' identity. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing, 20*(7), 641–649. doi:10.1111/jpm.12001

Ivtzan, I., Lomas, T., Hefferon, K. & Worth, P. (2016). *Second wave positive psychology: Embracing the dark side of life.* London: Routledge.

Jopling, K. (2015). *Promising approaches to reducing loneliness and isolation in later life.* London: Age UK. Available at www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Promising-approaches-to-reducing-loneliness-and-isolation-in-later-life.pdf

Keegan, S. (2009). *Qualitative research: Good decision making through understanding people, cultures and markets.* Philadelphia: Kogan Page.

Killen, A., & Macaskill, A. (2015). Using a gratitude intervention to enhance wellbeing in older adults. *Journal of Happiness Studies, 16*(4), 947–964. doi:10.1007/s10902-014-9542-3

Kim, E.S., Sun, J.K., Park, N., Kubzansky, L.D. & Peterson, C. (2012). Purpose in life and reduced risk of myocardial infarction among older US Adults with coronary heart disease: A two-year follow-up. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 36*(2), 124–133. doi:10.1007/s10865-012-9406-4

King, L.A. (2001). The health benefits of writing about life goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(7), 798–807. doi:10.1177/0146167201277003

Klinger, E. (2012). The search for meaning in evolutionary goal-theory perspective. In P.T.P Wong (Ed.) *The human quest for meaning: Theories, research, and applications* (pp.23–55). London: Routledge.

Ko, H., Mejía, S. & Hooker, K. (2014). Social possible selves, self-regulation, and social goal progress in older adulthood. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 38*(3), 219–227. doi:10.1177/0165025413512063

Koch, S. (2010). Healthy ageing supported by technology – A cross-disciplinary research challenge. *Informatics for Health and Social Care, 35*(3–4), 81–91. doi:10.3109/17538157.2010.528646

Kohut, H. (1977). *The restoration of the self.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Laura, R. (2014, 30 May). Overcoming mental challenges your first year of retirement. *Forbes.* Available at www.forbes.com/sites/robertlaura

Layous, K., Chancellor, J., Lyubomirsky, S., Wang, L., & Doraiswamy, P.M. (2011). Delivering happiness: Translating positive psychology intervention research for treating major and minor depressive disorders. *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, 17*(8), 675–683. doi:10.1089/acm.2011.0139

Lomas, T., Hefferon, K. & Ivtzan, I. (2014). *Applied positive psychology: Integrated positive practice.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage. doi:10.4135/9781473909687

Lyubomirsky, S. (2008). *The how of happiness: A practical guide to getting the life you want.* London: Piatkus.

Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K.M. & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. *Review of General Psychology, 9*(2), 111. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.111

Lyubomirsky, S., Sousa, L. & Dickerhoof, R. (2006). The costs and benefits of writing, talking, and thinking about life's triumphs and defeats. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(4), 692. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.90.4.692

Macleod, R., Craufurd, D. & Booth, K. (2002). Patients' perceptions of what makes genetic counselling effective: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Health Psychology, 7*(2), 145–156. doi:10.1177/1359105302007002454

Maddux, J.E. (2009). Self-efficacy: The power of believing you can. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.) *Oxford handbook of positive psychology,* 277–287. Oxford: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0031

Maddux, J.E. & Kleiman, E.M. (2012). Self-efficacy. *The Wiley handbook of positive clinical psychology,* 89–101. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Markus, H. & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist, 41*(9), 954–969. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.41.9.954

McAdams, D.P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology, 5*(2), 100. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.5.2.100

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2010). *You and your action research project.* Boca Raton, FL: Taylor & Francis.

Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self and society* (Vol. 111). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Meevissen, Y.M.C., Peters, M.L. & Alberts, H.J.E.M. (2011). Become more optimistic by imagining a best possible self: Effects of a two week intervention. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 42*(3), 371–378. doi:10.1016/j.jbtep.2011.02.012

Minarik, S.K. (2012). *Rewriting the stories we tell ourselves.* Available at www.positive-living-now.com/rewriting-the-stories-we-tell-ourselves

O'Brien, R. (1998). *Overview of action research methodology.* Available at www.web.ca/~robrien/papers/arfinal.html

Office for National Statistics (2012). *Pension trends, Chapter 3: Life expectancy and healthy ageing* (2012 edn). Retrieved from http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pensions/pension-trends/chapter-3--life-expectancy-and-healthy-ageing--2012-edition-/index.html

Payne, E.C., Robbins, S.B. & Dougherty, L. (1991). Goal directedness and older-adult adjustment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 38*(3), 302–308. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.38.3.302

Petkoska, J. & Earl, J.K. (2009). Understanding the influence of demographic and psychological variables on retirement planning. *Psychology and Aging, 24*(1), 245–251. doi:10.1037/a0014096

Pettitt, B. & Kwast, L. (2017). *Supporting people through transitions.* Available at https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2017/03/Gulbenkian-Transitions-support-summary-23-3-17.pdf

Prager, E. (1996). Exploring personal meaning in an age-differentiated Australian sample: Another look at the Sources of Meaning Profile (SOMP). *Journal of Aging Studies, 10*(2), 117–136. doi:10.1016/S0890-4065(96)90009-2

Pritchard, M. & van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2016). The perceptual changes in life experience of at-risk adolescent girls following an integrated coaching and positive psychology intervention group programme: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 11*(1), 57–74.

Ramírez, E., Ortega, A.R., Chamorro, A. & Colmenero, J.M. (2014). A program of positive intervention in the elderly: Memories, gratitude and forgiveness. *Aging & Mental Health, 18*(4), 463–470. doi:10.1080/13607863.2013.856858

Rivkin, I.D. & Taylor, S.E. (1999). The effects of mental simulation on coping with controllable stressful events. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*(12), 1451.

Robbins, S.B., Lee, R.M., & Wan, T.T.H. (1994). Goal continuity as a mediator of early retirement adjustment: Testing a multidimensional model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 41*(1), 18–26. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.41.1.18

Roberts, B.W., Walton, K.E. & Viechtbauer, W. (2006). Patterns of mean-level change in personality traits across the life course: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. *Psychological Bulletin, 132*(1), 1–25.

Robertson, G. (2014). *Transitions in later life: Scoping research.* Available at https://gulbenkian.pt/uk-branch/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/2014/06/Scoping-Research-Guy-redesigned.pdf

Round, J.M. (2016). *Best possible self and goal-setting: Perspectives on wellbeing.* Unpublished manuscript, University of East London.

Round, J.M. (2017). *A dream of a retirement: Research proposal.* Unpublished manuscript, University of East London.

Ruvolo, A.P. & Markus, H.R. (1992). Possible selves and performance: The power of self-relevant imagery. *Social Cognition, 10*(1), 95–124. doi:10.1521/soco.1992.10.1.95

Ryff, C.D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological wellbeing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*(6), 1069. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.6.1069

Ryff, C.D. (2014). Psychological well-being revisited: Advances in the science and practice of Eudaimonia. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 83*(1), 10–28. doi:10.1159/000353263

Schmuck, P. & Sheldon, K.M. (Eds.) (2001). *Life goals and wellbeing: Towards a positive psychology of human striving.* Seattle: Hogrefe & Huber.

Schwartz, B. (2000). Self-determination: The tyranny of freedom. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 79. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.79

Seligman, M.E. (2012). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being.* London: Simon and Schuster.

Seligman, M. (2016, 12 May). *Positive psychology with Martin Seligman* [Video]. Available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=HH0sssQzQGg

Sheldon, K.M., Boehm, J.K. & Lyubomirsky, S. (2012). Variety is the spice of happiness: The hedonic adaptation prevention (HAP) model. *Oxford Handbook of Happiness*, 901–914.

Sheldon, K.M. & Elliot, A.J. (1999). Goal striving, need satisfaction, and longitudinal wellbeing: The self-concordance model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 76*(3), 482–497. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.76.3.482

Sheldon, K.M. & Houser-Marko, L. (2001). Self-concordance, goal attainment, and the pursuit of happiness: Can there be an upward spiral? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80*(1), 152–165. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.80.1.152

Sheldon, K.M. & Kasser, T. (1998). Pursuing personal goals: Skills enable progress, but not all progress is beneficial. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 24*(12), 1319–1331. doi:10.1177/01461672982412006

Sheldon, K.M, & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(2), 73–82. doi:10.1080/17439760500510676

Shteynberg, G., & Galinsky, A.D. (2011). Implicit coordination: Sharing goals with similar others intensifies goal pursuit. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 47*(6), 1291–1294. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2011.04.012

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011). *The skills for life survey: A survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT levels in England.* Available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/2011-skills-for-life-survey

Smith, J.A. (1994). Towards reflexive practice: Engaging participants as co-researchers or co-analysts in psychological inquiry. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 4*(4), 253–260. doi:10.1002/casp.2450040405

Smith, J.A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*(1), 39–54.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P, & Larkin, M. (2012). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage. doi:10.1037/13620-005

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2007). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (2nd edn). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Steger, M.F. (2012). Making meaning in life. *Psychological Inquiry, 23*(4), 381–385. doi:10.1080/1047840X.2012.720832

Strachan, S.M., Marcotte, M.M., Giller, T.M., Brunet, J, & Schellenberg, B.J. (2017). An online intervention to increase physical activity: Self-regulatory possible selves and the moderating role of task self-efficacy. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 31*, 158–165. doi:10.1016/j.psychsport.2016.05.001

Teismann, T., Het, S., Grillenberger, M. et al. (2014). Writing about life goals: Effects on rumination, mood and the cortisol awakening response. *Journal of Health Psychology, 19*(11), 1410–1419. doi:10.1177/1359105313490774

Thin, N. (2016). *Aspirational social planning: Beyond social problems and living standards.* Keynote paper delivered at the European Conference on Positive Psychology, Angers, France, July.

Thompson, N.J., Coker, J., Krause, J.S. & Henry, E. (2003). Purpose in life as a mediator of adjustment after spinal cord injury. *Rehabilitation Psychology, 48*(2), 100. doi:10.1037/0090-5550.48.2.100

Willig, C. (2001). Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method. *Japanese Journal of Experimental Psychology, 43*(2), 195–196.
Wong, P.T. (1998). *Implicit theories of meaningful life and the development of the personal meaning profile.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Wong, P.T. (2011). Positive psychology 2.0: Towards a balanced interactive model of the good life. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne, 52*(2), 69. doi:10.1037/a0022511
Wong, P.T. (2013). *Acceptance and well-being: A meaning-management perspective* [PowerPoint presentation]. Available at www.drpaulwong.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Acceptance-Wellbeing-A-Meaning-Management-Perspective.pdf
Wong, P.T. (2017). *Proposed guidelines for collaborative research.* Available at www.drpaulwong.com/proposed-guidelines-collaborative-research
Wong, P.T. & Tomer, A. (2011). *Beyond terror and denial: The positive psychology of death acceptance.* London: Routledge.
Yalom, I.D. (2008). Staring at the sun: Overcoming the terror of death. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 36*(3–4), 283. doi:10.1080/08873260802350006
Yardley, L. (2000). Dilemmas in qualitative health research. *Psychology and Health, 15*(2), 215–228. doi:10.1080/08870440008400302
Yardley, L. (2008). Demonstrating validity in qualitative psychology. *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods, 2,* 235–251.

Appendix 1

BPSG, part 1 – Daily writing instructions
Day 1 – Describe your best retired self, imagining all your dreams have come to fruition.
Day 2 – Explore the key building blocks of your life at their future best (home, family, community, leisure, learning, volunteering, etc.)
Day 3 – Imagining that everything has gone to plan, write specifically about how things look in five years' time.
Day 4 – Envisage that everything has turned out as you would like and now write from the perspective of your own birthday party aged 80 (think about how it looks, feels, smells, sounds; who's there with you – people you already know and those you may not yet have met).

Appendix 2

BSPG, part 2 – Goal-setting think sheet
Goal statement (describe the goal – what exactly it is you would like to accomplish)?

Highlight the day or days on which this goal appeared in your writing?
Day 1 Day 2 Day 3 Day 4

Who's the goal for (yourself or others and why)?

Why you chose this goal and why it feels important?

What you need to do to move towards or accomplish this goal?

How will you know when you've got there (what will be different?)?

By when will you reach the goal?

Crossing the line? A qualitative exploration of ICF master certified: Coaches' perception of roles, borders and boundaries

Carley Sime & Yannick Jacob

Objectives: *Coaches have an unclear role and the industry shares a complex border with therapeutic practices. This study explored the nature of the relationship between coaching and therapeutic practices, how coaching professionals experience, navigate and manage this boundary, and sought to identify what roles they adopt.*
Design: *Seven International Coaching Federation Master Certified Coaches self-selected to participate. Sixty-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted using an initial interview schedule comprised of 15 questions.*
Method: *A qualitative methodology was adopted to explore the social reality and operation of coaches within their professional context. A grounded theory method of data collection and analysis was utilised to explore gaps in the profession's current understanding of roles and boundaries.*
Results: *A range of borders and boundaries were identified. The nature of the relationship between coaching and therapeutic practices appears to hinge on each coach's self-selected boundaries. Such boundaries appear to be delineated most often by a coach's feelings of competency and their client's ability to process and move forward within coaching.*
Conclusions: *Findings suggest that the main difference between coaching and therapeutic practice is driven by how coaches perceive the work they do as opposed to differences in the processes, content and roles.*

WHEN DISCUSSING boundaries within this context Popovic and Jinks' note boundaries demarcate 'one thing from something else' (Popovic & Jink, 2013, p.79). Boundaries within coaching serve several purposes, most notably they provide clarity for practitioners around acceptable practice and support them in discerning what is expected of them (Popovic & Jinks, 2013). The border coaching shares with therapeutic practice, reflections on the nature of the boundary between the two and coaching boundaries in general have featured within coaching literature (Maxwell, 2009; Palmer & Whybrow, 2014; Popovic & Jinks, 2014; Price, 2009; Rutkowski, 2014). However, overall, there is little research and discussion in the area given the moral and ethical implications which are of considerable importance (Gebhardt, 2016).

Understanding, with precision, what differentiates coaching and therapeutic practices is a complex task (Rutkowski, 2014) with definitions of coaching providing little clarity or distinction. Definitions have been reported to provide as 'apt a description of the coaching process as they do of a therapeutic journey' (Rutkowski, 2014, p.147). Other suggestions propose that the coaching process differs very little to the therapeutic one – the disciplines are integrated and distinction between the two can only be found in the form of the client's content and the context in which help is sought (Joseph, 2006; Popovic & Jinks,

2014). Maxwell (2009) suggests that the border is 'largely a function of the willingness and ability of both coach and client to work with personal/psychological material' (p.82) as issues of a psychological nature are often present within the coaching space.

Subsequently, reaching a greater level of understanding with regards to how coaching and therapeutic practices differ in action is of substantial interest to those within the professions (Rutkowski, 2014). The complexity of the border itself and the difficult to define relationship between the two is perhaps one reason for the lack of research into the overlap. There is however a considerable amount of writing on the topic that is not grounded in research (Forde et al., 2013).

In his 2009 study Price found that coaches within the organisational coaching industry view coaching as 'differing from therapy in being future-oriented, short-term, less deep, goal-orientated, appropriate for clients who are mentally healthy, and organisationally focused' (Price, 2009, p.1). A caveat of the study, however, is the finding that under this definition much of the practices of the coaching professionals who took part 'appeared to be therapeutic' (Price, 2009, p.1). This takes away much of the clarity provided with regards to coaching boundaries and differing features between therapy and coaching. The study's overarching recommendation was to move away from seeking to define the boundary and towards accepting the significant overlap. It was also suggested that coaches would 'benefit from therapeutic training' (Price, 2009, p.1).

Accepting the apparent overlap between coaching and therapeutic practices may be a premature and difficult step. The shared border is by no means fully understood, it lacks definition and research (Linley, 2006; Sherman & Freas, 2004). The relationship between the two practices is also a source of contention within the industry (Gebhardt, 2016). Overarching these are the unexplored ethical considerations which come with accepting any overlap (Gebhardt, 2016) and should be critically considered given the fact that untrained individuals practicing coaching is one of the proposed future obstacles of the profession (International Coach Federation, 2016).

Roles

When discussing roles within this context the definition of 'a part played by an individual in a particular setting, influenced by their expectation of what is appropriate' (British Dictionary Definition, 2016) is suitable. The 'ultimate skill' of a coach has been referred to as their ability to adeptly assess the needs of their client and move between roles (Schein, 2000, p.65). Some research suggests that roles in which coaches perceive themselves as being unable to fill act as a barometer which they utilise to identify the limitations of their practices (Maxwell, 2009). It would appear that a coach's role is never singular and that roles are providing boundaries and shaping coaching practices within a profession where clear borders prove difficult to define (Hardingham, 2004).

Current literature documents various roles adopted by coaching professionals (Table 1), Hardingham (2004) and Silsbee (2010) have written two comprehensive pieces. The role of a coach as therapist or counsellor is not touched upon by either piece but is present elsewhere (Bluckert, 2005; Bresser & Wilson, 2010; Carrol, 2003; Langdridge, 2012; Price, 2009; Summerfield, 2006). The majority of these roles have been identified within literature not underpinned by research. They do, however, lay a foundation with regards to roles within coaching that could provide a bridge for research within the field. Exploring roles within coaching may also be a significant move towards providing more clarity around the boundaries of coaching work and the complex border between coaching and therapeutic practices (Jacob, 2013).

Table 1: An overview of coaching roles taken from coaching literature.

Role	Reference
Sounding board	Sperry, 2008 Reeves, 2007 Hardingham, 2004
Conscience	Hardingham, 2004
Explorer/investigator	Silsbee, 2010 Whitmore, 2009 Hardingham, 2004
Challenger	Hanaway, 2012 Hardingham, 2004
Teacher/mentor	Forde et al., 2013 Hanaway, 2012 Barner, 2011 Silsbee, 2010 Hardingham, 2004
'Safe container'	Hardingham, 2004
A Guru/guide	Silsbee, 2010 Hardingham, 2004
'Professional friend'	Hardingham, 2004
Mirror/reflector	Silsbee, 2010 Bresser & Wilson, 2010 Hardingham, 2004
Booster	Barner, 2011 Reeves, 2007 Grant, 2004
Celebrator	Hardingham, 2004
Therapist/counsellor	Langdridge, 2012 Bresser & Wilson, 2010 Reeves, 2007 Summerfield, 2006 Bluckert, 2005 Carrol, 2003
Facilitator	Forde et al., 2013 Grant, 2012

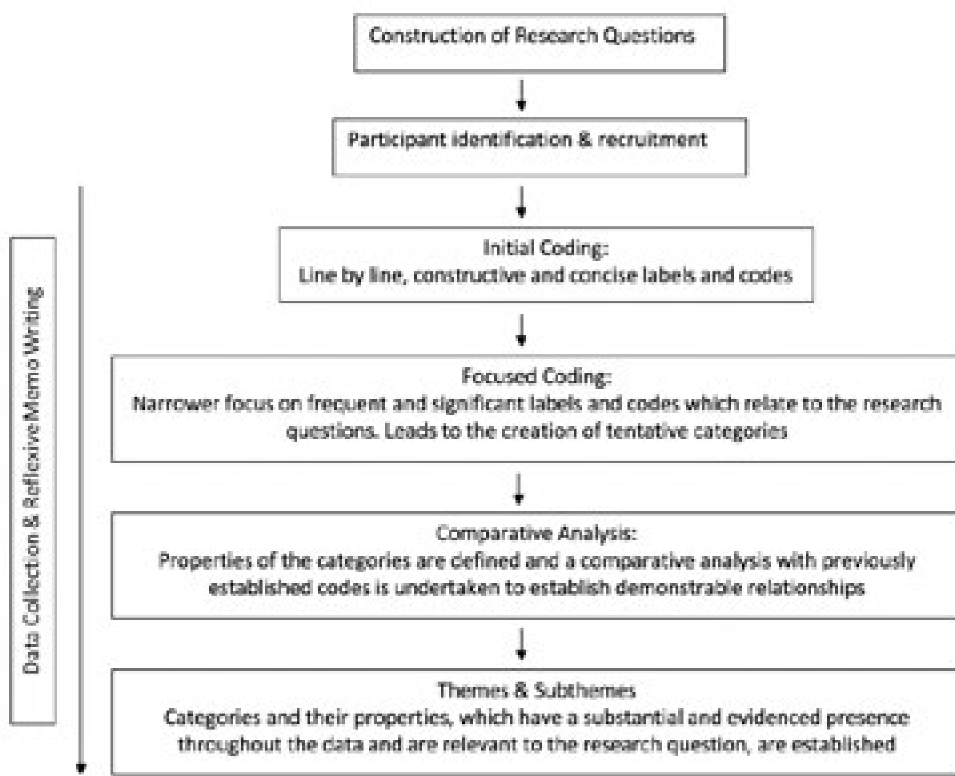


Figure 1: Rationale, analysis – Analysis flow chart.

Rationale

Of the research available there is a clear focus on further definition of the overlap – or 'fuzzy space' (Joplin, 2007) – between coaching and therapy. There is evaluation of its complexity, the potential quandary it presents and one call to move straight to an acceptance of it (Gebhadrt, 2016; Hart & Leipsic, 2001; Maxwell, 2009; Price, 2009; Rutkowski, 2014). This, coupled with therapist/counsellor featuring as the most common role within the coaching literature (Bluckert, 2005; Bresser & Wilson, 2010; Carrol, 2003; Langdridge, 2012; Summerfield, 2006), makes the presence of a relationship between coaching and counselling obvious. However, the nature of this relationship is in no way clear.

The majority of these roles, definitions, explorations and evaluations do not exist upon a pre-existing foundation of theory. Detailed and robust research detailing how coaches work, the roles they adopt, how they experience boundaries and where they actually lie within their professional practices does not currently exist. It could be argued that practical information such as this should be key to the development of foundational theories which could go on to inform and shape the discussion of broader topics. The importance of theory and the industry's ability to integrate it has been highlighted as key to its development with the suggestion that said theory should develop from the 'large body of practitioner expertise and experience' which exists (Grant et al., 2010, p.51).

Harnessing this expertise and experience for the purpose of research allows for the development of understanding around the context and day to day professional practice of coaches. Qualitative research exploring this would allow for the emergence of evidence of roles, the reality of the boundaries

within coaching and any commonalities that may exist between the client-based practices of coaching professionals. In employing qualitative method, the current study is able to provide meaningful findings and a richer understanding of roles, boundaries and borders within coaching.

International Coach Federation (ICF) Master Certified Coaches (MCCs) were identified as a suitable population for this study because of their extensive training and expertise. The qualitative nature of this study and its implementation of a grounded theory (GT) methodology which focused on data first and hypothesis formation and testing second meant no hypotheses were assigned (Deely, 1990; Fann, 1970; Rosenthal, 2004). Overarching research questions focused the study, these were: 'What is the nature of the relationship between coaching and counselling/therapy?', 'How do coaching professionals experience, navigate and manage this boundary?'; and 'What are the roles they adopt while working?'

Design

A grounded theory (GT) methodology centred around Charmaz's 2007 practical construction guide was adhered to. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.13) initially defined GT as 'a method of discovery'. The analysis for this study used Charmaz's (2007) approach in a process of moving forwards and backwards between empirical data and a developing analysis towards a progressive focus looking at justified patterns and trends (Figure 1).

The researcher adopted the epistemological stance of social constructionism, which encouraged a sustained awareness of their potential effect on the study and data. With this stance, remaining reflexive to their own interpretations of the data as well as the interpretations of the study's participants was key. Subsequently, the study's findings are perceived as a product of the interaction between the participants and the researcher. A critical relativist epistemological framework was also upheld, as it encourages continual consideration of the circular relationship of influence between the researcher, study's participants and the data.

Participants

A narrow participant pool was selected to encourage a robust methodology. All participants were UK-based ICF MCCs. To gain MCC accreditation a coach must have a minimum of 200 hours coach specific training and 2500 client hours. All MCCs have passed a coach knowledge assessment and have completed a performance evaluation. The MCC accreditation framework ensures a similar level of competency and skill among coaches who have received it. Recruiting from this narrow client pool ensured a sample made up of participants with similar levels of training, practice and competency. These aspects of the sample provided a good level of homogeneity.

A pool of 35 identifiable UK-located MCCs were invited via e-mail to participate in an attempt to control for cross cultural differences among the participant group. Of that 35, seven participants chose to take part. Six of the seven participants were female, highlighting a demographic imbalance. This imbalance, however, is somewhat mirrored in the overall number of UK-based MCCs, 27 (77 per cent) of which are female. The majority of participants were British. An average number of 7700 coaching hours was established, with all participants identifying their most common client group as senior executives.

Method

The study's data were collected through individual, informal interviews. An initial interview protocol made up of 15 questions was used and constructed from Charmaz's (2007) methodology and gaps in the profession's current understanding of roles and boundaries. The nature of Charmaz's GT methodology allowed for the researcher to adapt the interview protocol as the process of data collection continued and during an interview follow 'hunches', stop and

Table 2: Themes and sub-themes.

Theme	Sub-theme
Coaching and the coaching process	Excessive frameworks/structures/models interfering with coaching Intuition within coaching Coaching as a holistic practice Coaching boundaries Psychological models within coaching
Coaching roles	Pure roles Switching roles
Coaching borders	Coaching as existing on a continuum Depth within coaching The process of coaching involving a backwards and forwards movement with clients
Belief within coaching	Trust in the process and value of coaching Belief in a client's ability to take responsibility and manage their own content The client is expert Nothing within the client is broken and needs fixing

explore statements, request more detail and ask about participant's thoughts and actions (Charmaz, 2007).

Each interview lasted between 47 and 64 minutes and was recorded with full consent from each participant. Participants were provided with an invitation letter and informed consent form briefing them on how their data would be used along with how and up until when they could withdraw it – in full or exerts. Each participant gave fully informed signed consent to participate. Each participant was verbally debriefed after the study and emailed a debrief letter. After each interview the researcher made reflexive memos in order to aid the subsequent analysis of the data.

Analysis

Each interview was transcribed with the omission of any identifying details. The analysis of the study's data began during the data collection phase of the study, as per the Charmaz's GT methodology. The analysis followed a three-stage process (Figure 1), beginning with line-by-line coding for each transcript. During this phase labels and codes were created providing descriptions and interpretations of each line of data.

Focused coding utilised the most frequent and significant labels and codes identified in the previous stage to explain larger segments of data, and allowed for categorisation of larger segments of data and is more directed and selective than the line-by-line coding procedure (Glaser, 1978). These categories were then used in a comparative analysis with the previously established codes in the final stage of data analysis. This process identified prominent themes and sub-themes from within the data. Four core themes and fourteen sub-themes subsequently emerged from within the data (Table 2). Throughout the study the researcher wrote reflexive memos in order to acknowledge and reflect on their cognitive processes and their possible influ-

ence on the data collection and analysis (Anderson, 1986; Charmaz, 2007; Rennie, 2012). Fortnightly meetings with other MSc researchers ensured any emerging analysis from the data was continually reviewed.

Results

Four themes and fourteen sub-themes were produced (Table 2), their development took place over the course of the research process outlined above. In line with Pope, Ziebland and Mayas (2000) the following display of results is given on the basis that it provides a fair representation of the study's data and a useful overview of the analysis.

Coaching and the coaching process

Several common components of coaching and the coaching process were identified.

Excessive frameworks/Structures/ Models interfering with coaching

Participants reported that excessive frameworks, structures and models within the coaching space can interfere with the process of coaching. In excess, these features were linked with creating an interference between the coach and the client as participant PA7 notes: 'You've got all of these models and frameworks and processes and structures and… it interferes actually with… what's just between us.' In excess, they were also connected with preventing the client from connecting with their own voice. Participant PA11 suggests that 'tools and exercise and lots of yadda yadda just take away from that.'

Intuition within coaching

Six out of the seven participants spoke about using an intuitive sense within the coaching space to gauge the depth a client needs to work at, the resources a client has available to them, when clients are ready for coaching and how to approach them in order not to overwhelm. Participant PA11 said: 'I don't really know; I just seem to intuitively know' when a client needs to work 'more deeply'. Participant PA12 summed up this intuition more generally as 'more like going with… my instinct or my intuition or, I can't even, I can't even articulate the thought pattern but it's kind of just a… a natural connecting of what is going on versus the context that I'm holding.'

Coaches also appear to be using this intuition to help them notice what is happening with a client, enquire about it in a sensitive and appropriate way, and if needs be feed it back to the client within the coaching space. Participant PA9 talks about this as 'Using the here and now between us to decode what's happening. So, having, having the space in myself to recognise what's happening and then the frame in which to say it in the moment.'

Coaching as a holistic practice

In quantitative terms, viewing coaching as a holistic practice had an extremely high prevalence, with six out of seven participants viewing the coaching process as one that works with the client as a whole. Participants discussed this sub-theme in various ways, participant PA9 discussed clients as not being 'compartmentalised' and participant PA12 discussed viewing coaching as being a process oriented towards 'the person not the topic'. Seeking to understand the client as a whole was seen as a way to gain a broader perspective and used to support the development of more meaningful objectives within the coaching process. The view of individuals as non-compartmentalised also appeared to facilitate the acceptance of any topics/areas of conversation within the coaching space as everything is relevant, meaningful and valid.

Coaching boundaries

The analysis found 13 distinct boundaries coaches use to distinguish between coaching and non-coaching and between content they will and will not work with (Table 3). The most prevalent boundary – which six out of seven coaches adhere to – being competency and understanding, with the use of connection between coach and client as a way in which to distinguish between these things.

Table 3: Coaching boundaries.

Coaching boundaries
A client's ability to think clearly
A client's emotional stability
A client's ability to process the past from their adult self
Intimacy
Diagnosable mental illness
Sustained excessive emotion
Working with what you can understand Working with what you can connect with Working with what feels within your competency
When questioning backwards moves a client to regression Old patterns of behaviour cannot be moved past A client is trapped in the past
A client's ability to try out new behaviours
A client's ability to manage their own content
When increased perception isn't enough to help a client move forward
When a client continues to move around in circle

Participant PA10 discussed this by asking: 'How competent, comfortable, confident are you as a coach to explore those areas?'. Participant PA9 talked about how all coaches will have 'different points of comfort on that continuum, they'll have different antenna, they'll have different abilities of recognising when they've got to a point of discomfort for them or when they've gone over, over a line, over the line of their competence'. The suggestion was that crossing that line would lead the coach outside of the realms of coaching.

A client's inability to move forward within the coaching process, try out new behaviours, or process the past from their adult self were also prevalent boundaries identified within the study's analysis. The suggestion from the analysis was that if these boundaries were not reached, coaches would work with a broad spectrum of content and challenges within the coaching space.

Psychological models within coaching

The analysis provided evidence of coaches knowingly using psychological models within the coaching space such as the 'adult stages of development' – PA12 – and 'learning stages' – PA6. This appeared to inform and shape their understanding of their clients – which they believed was better as a result of their psychological understanding – and affect the way they chose to interact with them according to certain stages and personality traits.

Coaching roles

Roles II: Switching roles

The analysis found 20 distinct roles adopted by coaches within the coaching space. These can be seen in Table 4, along with some descriptive information about each role. Five circumstances in which coaches are motivated to switch roles were also identi-

Table 4: Roles and Switching Roles – Coaching roles identified from within the study's data analysis.

Coaching roles	Role characteristics
Mentor/Consultant	Providing information that the client needs, and the coach has.
Supportive friend	Listening to the client and talking, sharing experiences with them to offer support in challenging times.
Thinking partner	Facilitating/stimulating a client's thinking and ability to listen to themselves.
Active listener	Listening with awareness and in order to help the client hear themselves better.
Challenger/Prober	Questioning dissonance and assumptions within clients.
Being with the client	Trusting the coaching process with a focus on being authentic and fully present with the client. In flow.
Perspective giver	Providing feedback from different perspectives and about how they (as coach) are being impacted by the conversation.
Muse	Provoking by offering different perspectives.
Noticer	Seeking to comprehend how the client is being impacted by the conversation.
Charmer	Someone outwardly friendly and warm, usually in the first few minutes of a coaching conversation to put the client at ease.
Teacher	Helping the client to look back over previous actions and holding them accountable. Holding a structure and taking more of a lead.
Brainstormer	A creative energy encouraging broad thinking.
Sitting back	Moving out of the way to provide space for reflection. Inviting someone to think.
Wise counsel/Wise partner	Interested, thoughtful, 100 per cent connected to the client. Supporting them and offering ways of making sense of new perspectives or ideas.
Warm confidant	Not saying anything but being present with positive intent, no judgement and a desire to understand the client on a deeper level.
Space holder	Creating a safe, courageous space in which a client can feel vulnerable, feel and think deeply. This is mostly created through a coach's way of being.
Director of traffic	Directing the content of the conversation so the client gets to where they want to go.
Mirror	Allowing the client to see what the coach is seeing. Playing it back in a way that the client can trust that it is being done with the intention of support.
Empowerer	Transferring belief to the client.
Expert question asker	Asking questions to ignite new thinking or perspectives.

Table 6: Switching roles – Motivations for coaches switching roles with clients.

Motivation for switching roles
Frustration within the client
A completion in the client's thinking/The client has moved forward
When a role is not working
When the coach feels a frustration/Block
When there is a change of energy in the client

fied (Table 5). It appears that permission to switch roles is most often sought by the coach when changing into the role of a consultant, mentor, supportive friend or challenger.

Coaching borders

Coaching as existing on a continuum

Participants identified coaching as existing on a continuum which starts with consultancy 'so there's a bundle there, there's a therapeutic bundle potentially around therapy, counselling, whatever you might call it. There's… a sort of continuum between directive and non-directive and we, we tread a, a subtle line in that' (Participant PA9). It would appear that coaching exists somewhere on this continuum and that the continuum for one coach may be very different to another's. The continuum and its breadth within this study appears to be linked to a coach's level of confidence and competency. This can be seen connecting to one of the coaching boundaries of competency previously discussed.

Depth within coaching

The coaching work discussed by participants appears to have depth to it. Participant PA6 referred to coaching as 'deep personal work'. All seven participants discussed working at depth with their clients and linked depth to transformational coaching and an increased sustainability of change. Participant PA6 referred to it as 'increasing the odds of sustainability of change'. Participant PA9 shared: 'I think you can appear to coach at, at the surface level but actually it's not durable (.) people talk about transactional or transformational coaching'. Coaching at depth appears to involve topics including a client's beliefs, values, patterns of thinking, ways of being and experiences set in their past.

The process of coaching involving a backwards and forwards movement with clients

Participants discussed the process of coaching as being one that often involves a backwards and forwards movement. This backwards movement appears to involve gaining insight in order to then move forwards and support clients to use this insight in drive sustainable changes. Participant PA9 discussed viewing working with content based in a client's past still as being coaching, saying: 'It absolutely is for me and I keep saying "What else would you work with?!"' and does not believe 'that you cannot work on the past' within coaching.

Participant PA12 identified working with past content as differing from therapy in that they 'don't coach how they got to where they are because that's, that's more in the realm of therapy', but suggests that 'often reflecting on… where this might have originated in their… previously, may inform the client around what is being manifested in the present'. Understanding where and when a behaviour in the present has served a client in the past appeared to be another motivation for this backwards and forwards movement to look at aspects of a client's 'script or patterning or beliefs' (Participant PA11) as 'old patterns reflect and show up in the now' (Participant PA12).

Further delineating coaching from therapy in terms of the backwards and forwards movement participants identified when the line of backwards questioning regresses a client as a marker for when coaching work is no longer enough to move a client forward. Participant PA11 discusses the process still being coaching if a client is able to 'process the past from their adult, from their here and now and make sense of it in order to resolve and move forward, and to me that whole frame can be coaching and this fear of looking past or back doesn't need to exist'. This boundary is discussed above under the subheading 'Boundaries' and identified in Table 3.

Belief within coaching

Participants indicated that several aspects of belief were important to the coaching process. One aspect of belief related to the process itself.

Trust in the process and value of coaching

Participants identified trust in their ability to let go in the conversation, relinquish control and belief in the value of coaching as being central to its outcome. Participant PA7 described it thus: 'I trust that I can let go in this conversation. And the person is going to get value, I don't have to strangle this conversation to get to a certain point'. Arriving at this place of trust and belief is an apparent result of time, skill and practice.

The other aspects of belief identified by the analysis were all centred around belief in the client. These have been separated into three sub-themes.

Belief in a client's ability to take responsibility and manage their own content

'The people we're talking to are perfectly robust enough to deal with their own stuff' (PA7).

The client is whole & complete

'(People are) naturally creative, resourceful and whole… they have everything they need, and they want to live more fully' (PA8)

The client is expert: 'You're the expert, that you have the power' (PA7)

These aspects of belief appear to be fundamental to the majority of the participant's coaching practices. The coaches view their clients as complete and resourceful individuals, participant PA12 refers to their belief specifically as clients being 'whole, creative and resourceful', mirroring client PA8 closely. It appears that these aspects of belief grant coachs permission to work with a broad spectrum of topics within the coaching space. This is born of a trust they have in their client's ability to manage their own content and that the content they have chosen to focus on has been chosen for a reason, meaning there is work the client wants and needs to do in that area. Participant PA8 discussed this belief affecting the outcome of coaching: 'If in a coaching space you can actually demonstrate that you do think they can take responsibility and that they have got a level of robustness that they are able to deal with then you will get a different outcome'. Participant PA10 discussed this trust and belief with regards to leaving the power in the client's hands as 'there is only so much power in a room and if (the coach takes) it the only place that (they've) taken it from' is the client.

Conclusions

The study intended to explore the nature of the relationship between coaching and counselling/therapy, how coaching professionals experience, navigate and manage this boundary, and the roles they adopt while working. Clear roles were identified and practical boundaries coaches use to navigate their practices. How coaches perceive their work and the subsequent implication on their boundaries is an overarching finding. It is their perception of their work, which is a tool for differentiation between their coaching practice therapeutic work. Coaches who view their work as coaching and practice within their competency remain within the boundaries of coaching.

Participants appeared to focus on their way of being with clients and trusting in the coaching process rather than actively using coaching tools or techniques. Van Nieuwerburgh (2014) suggests many coaches are often trained to coach in purely transactional way with less confident coaches focusing on tools instead of driving the conversation with their way of being (Van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). Some research suggests that tools in and of themselves are too simplistic to manage the complexity of a client, and that coaches are too quick to adopt them and this way of working (Jinks & Dexter, 2012).

The participant's competency provides a potential explanation for their trust in their way of being as a catalyst for generating movement and change. Being, as opposed to doing, is most associated with therapeutic practices (Popovic & Jinks, 2014). Therapeutic practitioners are often trained to master's level, allowing substantial time for the development of their way of being. Asserting that participants' significant professional success is a result of their ability to adeptly move between being and doing is not possible; however, it does ignite questions around the possibility. The impact of coaches training in an overly transactional way, with a reliance on frameworks, tools and 'doing', also poses compelling questions with regards to ethical working, coaching outcomes and the value of coaching from a client's perspective.

Intuition – a sub-theme – has received little attention within the research, so is not fully understood. Intuition appears to help coaches interpret what they are hearing and experiencing with their clients, as well as their needs and resources. Intuition, within this study, has many similarities with psychological formulation which is a process/tool used by individuals working in therapeutic practices. Professionals within this field use formulation to help them understand a client's difficulties. They build hypotheses about what is happening for their client in the present by considering how past experiences, actions and patterns may be impacting thoughts, feelings and behaviours in the present (Summers, 2006). They are trained and supported in their use of formulation – usually within sustained and consistent supervision – to better understand and interact with their clients, guide and tailor the therapeutic process, inform their professional practice. Coaches appear to be using their intuition in a similar way, relying on it as a frame of reference and using it to build up a context of their client.

Gray (2005) suggests that coaches often create a psychological profile of their clients. It may be harder to see this apparent link between psychological formulation and coaching 'intuition' without a psychological or therapeutic background. Subsequently, this finding and its replication is potentially dependent on the researcher. However, it is a similarity worth noting, as it may be further evidence that coaching and therapeutic practices are more similar than they are different. Implications around ethical practice and codes of conduct are also noteworthy, as coaches are not trained to use formulation, formally required to engage in supervision or necessarily employed to work therapeutically. It is possible that coaches are engaging in this process without realising and reflection on that may also be of benefit to their ongoing professional development.

Hodgetts (2002), Ives (2008) and Saporito (1996) suggest that therapeutic practices are holistic and have a focus on a client's personal issues. However, the study found coaches viewing their practice as holistic, involving a forward and backward movement and work at depth on personal topics. Participants would engage in a process of coaching which involved looking backwards in order to help the client move forwards and create more sustainable change. These findings are in conflict with Price's study (2009) in which practicing coaches appeared to view coaching as 'differing from therapy in being future-oriented, short-term, less deep, goal-orientated' (Price,

2009, p.1). David, Clutterbuck and Megginson (2014) suggest that the field of European coaching has experienced strong influence from psychology and the work of Freud and Jung. This may have influenced the acceptance of looking backwards, working at a greater depth and with whatever emerges.

The study's coaches shared belief in their clients' expertise and their ability to take responsibility and manage their own content. This is not an uncommon perspective (Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014; Palmer & Whybrow, 2008); however, given the context of the study, it may be reasonable to question whether it further supports coaches in their ability to work with a greater spectrum of content and more broadly across the coaching continuum while still considering it coaching.

Coaching has blossomed in the light of the positive psychology (PP) movement which has moved psychology away from a focus on mental illness and a view that individuals are broken and need fixing (Seligman, 2013). Furthermore, coaches' inclination to deal with a broad spectrum of content – which includes deeper issues and those with difficult emotions attached – and the belief that clients can take responsibility for and manage their own content could be seen as reminiscent of the second wave positive psychology movement (SWPP) (Ivtzan et al., 2016). Within this framework, challenging experiences, emotions and behaviours can provide content for potential growth, insight and change and they should not be viewed as dysfunctional or ignored in favour of more comfortable topics. SWPP suggests that through embracing these aspects of the human experience instead of just 'rejecting the negative' (Ivtzan et al., 2016, p.1) transformation and insight is possible. Further research looking at these tentative links would provide greater clarity around the relationship between PP, SWPP and coaching.

Extending the depth and range of coaching work are perceived as elements that shift the coaching relationship to one that is more therapeutic in nature (Ives, 2008). Working only with content in the present and remaining future focused (Grant, 2012; Ives, 2008) is also a separating feature. Coaches discussed coaching as existing on a continuum with therapeutic practices. However, at no point did they consider their depth of working, movement forward and backwards or broad range of acceptable coaching content as anything other than coaching. This calls into question a potential misalignment between how coaches are perceiving their work and how their work would be perceived by others. It also highlights a limitation of the study and space for further research.

Coaches may have been unwilling to openly discuss the nature of their work as being therapeutic and instead framed it as coaching. The participants were also self-selecting, and it may be the case that those who chose not to take part were working more on the therapeutic end of the coaching continuum and did not want to discuss the topic. This limits the extent to which we can generalise the findings, but overall they ignite a discussion around the possibility that coaching work can share similarities with therapeutic practices without being considered therapy. Further research into what depth actually means within coaching and what work is carried out within it would also provide more clarity.

The roles highlighted shed interesting light on the way in which coaches perceive themselves to be working. Many of the roles mentioned feature heavily within the coaching literature which is not founded in research but makes assumptions with regards to roles coaches adopt (Barner, 2011; Forde et al., 2013; Hanaway, 2012; Hardingham, 2004). The fact that coaches identified many roles featured within the literature is worthy of examination. Are these roles indeed the most common and the assumptions made by the literature correct, or are coaches labelling and identifying these roles as they are ones that have been pre-identified. One role that featured heavily within the literature but not at all in the study was that

of counsellor/therapist (Bluckert, 2005; Bresser & Wilson, 2010; Carrol, 2003; Langdridge, 2012; Reeves, 2007; Summerfield, 2006). This highlights similar limitations as discussed above.

The identified boundaries provide intriguing insight into the scope of coaching and novel ideas with regards to where the line between coaching and other practices sits. Coaches discussed using their own competence as a boundary to distinguish between what is and is not coaching. This is presumably quite a way along the coaching continuum as it allows for in depth work with a range of topics. This boundary may provide some support for Maxwell's (2009) suggestion that the boundary between coaching and therapeutic practices often lies with the coach and not with the fields. It is the 'willingness and ability of both coach and client to work with personal/psychological material' (Maxwell, 2009, p.82).

Coaches identified any diagnosable mental illness and sustained excessive emotion from a client as another boundary. If crossed, coaches would overtly move from working on the continuum as a coach towards working therapeutically. However, covert movement along this continuum may remain feeling like coaching and the high levels of competence and skill among the participant group is perhaps the reason for their willingness and ability to work comfortably at depth and with a range of topics.

A client's ability to process from their adult self and to try new behaviours is another novel boundary. This pivots around how clients are able to process growth within the coaching space and no clear need for therapeutic intervention. Popovic and Jinks (2014) and Joseph (2006) suggest that one distinction between coaching and therapeutic practices is the context in which a client seeks help and their content. If a coach is able to work with a broad range of content and a client is not directly seeking therapeutic help and able to manage change this may be a combination that enables coaches to work covertly with material and growth that could be considered therapeutic. However, this is just one interpretation and that is true of all interpretations made. This is a limitation of the research itself – the participant number was small ($N = 7$) and saturation was not reached or theoretical sampling completed. In-depth research would need to be conducted which allowed for the full process of the GT methodology to unfold before more substantive claims across the range of topics discussed here could be made.

A client's ability to process their past from their adult self is another example of coaches using psychological ideas within their practices. Other examples obtained included coaches using developmental and learning models. This finding is perhaps timely as there is currently a growing debate between psychologists and non-psychologists about psychological principles being core requirements for coach training and coaching professionals (Lai & McDowall, 2014; Newnham-Kanas et al., 2012). Psychological principles appear to play an important part in the participant's coaching practices and could potentially provide support for the value of psychological training.

The main focus of the participants in this study appears to be their client and any work – within their boundaries – which is in their client's best interest is meaningful, valid and within the realms of coaching for them. The insights illuminate the field, with practical information taken from real life, highly skilled and incredibly competent professionals who bring great value, change and meaning to their clients lives.

This study raises more questions than it has answered with regards to the relationship between coaching and therapeutic practice, the role of a coach and the boundaries of coaching. These newly raised questions provide fuel for discussion and further research with the study's findings offering insights and areas of consideration for professionals within the industry. What differentiates coaching from therapeutic practices may be down to each coach's perception of their work. Either way the coaches in

this study's sample appear to be engaging in deep, meaningful work which is of great value to their clients.

Instead of pushing for demarcation between the coaching industry and therapeutic profession or accepting the overlap outright, focus should perhaps be on sustained, transparent and judgement free conversations about the relationship between the two. Integrative models such as personal consultancy, which bridge the gap between the two professions, provide a new and promising synthesis (Popovic & Jinks, 2016). Focusing on what benefits the client most and how to support the development of the profession and its practitioners is far more important than continuing to attempt to draw a clean line in the sand. Given the vast similarities between the two professions, it may well be that in a busy world where clients continue to seek more for less, integration instead of separation of the professions may be in their futures.

Carly Sime & Yannick Jacob
University of East London

References

Anderson, P.F. (1986). On method in consumer research: A critical relativist perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research, 13*(2), 155–173.

Bachkirova, T. & Lawton, C. (2015). From competencies to capabilities in the assessment and accreditation of coaches. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 13*(2), 123–140.

Barner, R. (2011). The 5 hidden roles of the managerial coach. *Training & Development, 65*(6), 38–45.

Berglas, S. (2002, June). The very real dangers of executive coaching. *Harvard Business Review,* 3–8.

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

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.) *Handbook of research methods in psychology* (Vol 2: Research Designs, pp.57–71). Washington, DC: APA Books.

Bresser, F. & Wilson, C. (2010). What is coaching? In J. Passmore (Ed.) *Excellence in coaching: The industry guide* (pp.9–26). London: Kogan Page.

Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (2011). *The Sage handbook of grounded theory* (1st edn). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Carroll, M. (2003). The new kid on the block. *Counselling Psychology Journal, 14*(10), 28–31.

Charmaz, K. (2007). Grounded theory. In J. Smith (Ed.) Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods (2nd edn, pp.10–98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chartered institute of Personnel and Development (2015). *Learning and talent development annual survey report.* Available at www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/strategy/development/surveys

Deely, N. (1990). *Basics of semiotics.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Farm, K.T. (1970). *Peirce's theory of abduction.* The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Fillery-Travis, A. & Cox, E. (2014). Researching coaching. In E. Cox, T. Bachkirova & D. Clutterbuck (Eds.) *The complete handbook of coaching* (2nd edn, pp.446–459). London: Sage.

Forde, C., McMahon, M., Gronn, P. & Martin, M. (2013). Being a leadership development coach. *An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 2*(2), 135–148.

Gallwey, W. & Bull, R. (2001). *The inner game of work* (1st edn). New York: Random House.

Gebhardt, J. (2016). Quagmires for clinical psychology and executive coaching? Ethical considerations and practice challenges. *American Psychologist, 71*(3), 216–235.

Glaser, B.G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory.* Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory.* Chicago: Aldine.

Grant, A. & Cavanagh, M. (2004). Toward a profession of coaching: Sixty-five years of progress and challenges for the future. *International Journal of Evidenced Based Coaching and Mentoring, 2*(1).

Grant, A., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M. & Parker, H. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 25,* 125–167.

Grant, A (2008). Past, present and future. In S. Palmer & A. Whybrow (Eds.) *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners* (pp.23–39). London: Taylor & Francis.

Gray, D.E. (2006). Executive coaching: Towards a dynamic alliance of psychotherapy and transformative learning processes. *Management Learning, 37*(4), 475–497.

Hanaway, M. (2012). Conflict coaching using an existential approach. In E. VanDeurzen & M. Hanaway (Eds.) *Existential perspectives on coaching.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hardingham, A. (2004). *The coach's coach: personal development for personal developers* (1st edn). London: Kogan Page.

Hart, V. & Leipsic, S. (2001). Coaching versus therapy: A perspective. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 53*(4), 229–237.

Hodgetts, W.H. (2002). Using executive coaching in organisations: What can go wrong (and how to prevent it). In C. Fitzgerald & G.J. Berger (Eds.) *Executive coaching: Practices and perspectives.* Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Publishing.

International Coach Federation (2016). *ICF Global coaching study – Executive summary.* Birmingham: Author.

Ives, Y. (2008). What is 'coaching'? An exploration of conflicting paradigms. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 6*(2), 100–113.

Ivtzan, I., Lomas, T., Hefferon, K. & Worth, P. (2016). *Second wave positive psychology* (1st edn). London & New York: Routledge.

Jacob, Y. (2013). *Exploring boundaries of existential coaching.* New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling.

Jarvis, J., Lane, D, & Fillery-Travis, A. (2006). *The case for coaching* (1st edn). London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

Jinks, D. & Dexter, J. (2012) What do you really want: an examination of the pursuit of goal setting in coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring 10*(2), 100–110.

Joplin, A. (2007). *Part One – The fuzzy space: exploring the experience of the spacebetween psychotherapy and executive coaching.* Unpublished MSc dissertation, New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, London. Available at www.scribd.com/document/17168879/Research-Thesis-The-Fuzzy-Space-Between-Psychotherapy-and-Executive-Coaching

Joseph, S. (2006). Person-centred coaching psychology: A meta-theoretical perspective. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 1,* 47–54.

Lai, Y. & McDowell, A. (2014). A systematic review (SR) of coaching psychology: Focusing on the attributes of effective coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 9*(2), 118–134.

Langdridge, A.D. (2012). Existential coaching psychology: Developing a model for effective practise. *Danish Journal of Coaching Psychology, 2*(1), 83–89.

Linley, A. (2006). Coaching research: Who? What? Where? When? Why? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 4.*

McLean, P. & Hudson, F. (2012). *The completely revised handbook of coaching: A developmental approach* (Jossey-Bass Business and Management Series, 2nd edn). Oxford: John Wiley & Sons.

Maxwell, A. (2009). The co-created boundary: Negotiating the limits of coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 4*(1), 82–94.

newnham-Kanas, C., Morrow, D. & Irwin, J.D. (2012). Certified professional co-active coaches: Why they enjoy coaching. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 10*(1), 48–56.

Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2014). *Handbook of coaching psychology* (1st edn). London: Routledge.

Pope, C., Ziebland, S. & Mays, N. (2000). Analysing qualitative data. *British Medical Research, 320*(7227), 114–116.

Popovic, N. & Jinks, D. (2014). *Personal consultancy* (1st edn). London: Routledge.

Price, J (2009). The coaching/therapy boundary in organisational coaching. *International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 2*(2), 135–148.

Reeves, D.B. (2007). Coaching myths and realities. *Educational Leadership, 65*(2), 89–90.

Rennie, D.L. (2012). Qualitative research as methodical hermeneutics. *Psychological Methods, 17*(3), 385–398.

Russell, J. & Dexter, G. (2008). *Differentiation of coaching.* PGDip/MSc Personal and Corporate Coaching Handout, University of Hull.

Rutkowski, N. (2014). Coaching and therapy: Finding common ground in gestalt practice. *Gestalt Review, 18*(2), 146–153.

Saporito, T.J. (1996). Business-linked executive development: Coaching senior executives. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 48*(2) 96–103.

Schein, E. (2000). Coaching and Consultancy. In M. Goldsmith, L. Lyons & A. Freas (Eds.) *Coaching for leadership: How the world's greatest coaches help leaders learn.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

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

Silsbee, D. (2010). *The mindful coach* (2nd edn). Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.* London: Sage.

Sperry, L. (2004). *Executive coaching: The essential guide for mental health professionals.* New York: Brunner-Routledge.

Sperry, L. (2008). Executive coaching: An intervention, role function, or profession? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 60*(1), 33–37.

Summerfield, J. (2006). Do we coach or do we counsel? Thoughts on the 'emotional life' of a coaching session. *The Coaching Psychologist, 2*(1), 24–27.

Summers, A. (2006). Psychological formulations in psychiatric care: Staff views on their impact. *Psychiatric Bulletin, 30*(9), 341343.

Whitmore, J. (2009). *Coaching for performance: GROWing human potential and purpose – The principles and practice of coaching and leadership* (4th edn). London: Nicholas Brealey.

van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2014). *An introduction to coaching skills* (1st edn). London: Sage.

'Adjusting to that new norm': How and why maternity coaching can help with the transition back to work after maternity leave

Jane Moffett

Objectives: *Maternity coaching is delivered in certain sectors, with the aim of retaining women after maternity leave. Enabling women to stay in the workforce is a current focus of both government and industry in the UK. The objectives of this research were to determine if there are any key elements that are common to successful maternity coaching programmes which could inform recommendations for maternity coaching programmes across a variety of employment sectors.*

Design: *Semi-structured interviews were used. Eleven participants from five different participating organisations were recruited. Participants had all returned to work after receiving maternity leave.*

Methods: *The interviews were coded and analysed to identify themes. They were also analysed with relation to the Schlossberg 4S Transition Model, Stern's Transition to Motherhood theory and Dilts' logical levels tool.*

Results: *With this cohort of high-performing women, we found that coaching was influential in enabling them to engage on a deep level, developing increased self-awareness and finding ways to navigate their way back into the workplace at this time of major transition. The relationship with the coach, and the breadth and depth of the outcomes of coaching were key findings.*

Conclusions: *Coaching at this time appears to enable a re-adjustment on a deep personal level, helping with the return to work after maternity leave.*

Keywords: *Maternity coaching; maternity leave; Dilts' logical levels; transition coaching; coaching outcomes.*

RETAINING women in the workforce is a key UK government priority. A Women and Work All Party Parliamentary Group was established in January 2016 to investigate the main barriers to women staying in the workforce. Their work builds on previous government reports; for example, Prosser 2009, the Department of Trade and Industry Survey and Stevens et al., 2004 (cited in Gallhofer et al., 2011). The benefit of retaining women is also recognised by industry, with research from Lloyd's showing that for every female board member, assets are increased by on average eight per cent (2016). With the current focus on the UK gender pay gap, various factors are being investigated that have an impact on this, including leaving the workforce or working part-time as a result of starting a family (Felfe, 2012; Sumer et al., 2008).

Transition theory

When considering the transitions of leaving work to go on maternity leave and returning from this leave to re-integrate into the workplace, it is relevant to look at transition theory. Schlossberg's transition theory (1981) identifies four factors that have an impact on how someone perceives and copes with transition; factors concerned with: (i) the situation; (ii)) the self; (iii) the

support available; and (iv) strategies to help with coping.

These are labelled as the 4Ss in Schlossberg Model (McManus, 2013). The elements within Situation are the trigger (in this case, getting pregnant), whether the change is permanent or temporary (permanent), whether it involves a role change (it does) and whether the change is positive, negative or neutral (this would vary according to the individual's circumstances). Thus, we can see that becoming a mother is a significant transition. In fact, it has been identified as a major life transition that affects women's self-identity and wellbeing (Altsveit et al., 2011; Houston & Marks, 2003; Millward, 2006; Smith, J., 1999; Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998). In light of this shift in identity, Dilts' theory of Logical Levels is also of interest (2014). The Logical Levels model is made up of six levels (from bottom to top): environment; behaviour; skills and abilities; values and beliefs; identity; and purpose. The model is based on the concept that a change at one level may effect changes at other levels. The higher up the level at which change occurs, the greater that change may have on other levels. Thus, a change occurring at the Identity level is profound and will have an impact on many other levels.

The transition to motherhood

Stern and Bruschweiler-Stern label the psychological change that occurs at this time as the development of the 'motherhood mindset' (1998, p.28) and describe becoming a mother as a time of 'psychological turbulence' (1998, p.37) which occurs over three stages:

(i) the pregnancy, when the woman is imagining her unborn baby and thinking about what her life might be like and how it might change;
(ii) adjusting to motherhood once the baby is born; and
(iii) returning to work and integrating the new psychological mindset with the previous pre-pregnancy mindset.

These 'profoundly transformative experiences for women' (Millward, 2006, p.317) can result in a shift in values and priorities. This change, along with a shift in self-identity, can have an impact on a woman's ability and motivation to re-integrate into the workplace after maternity leave. Combined with the lack of implementation of organisational policies and practices, this can result in the decision to leave their organisation (Cabrera, 2007).

The decisions around returning to work are complex for women when they become mothers and many authors note the feelings of guilt and being judged that are associated with this time (Millward, 2006; Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998; Sumer et al., 2008). Stern and Bruschweiler-Stern write 'adjusting the motherhood mindset to the realities of working again is a major task in the third phase of the birth of a mother' (1998, p.179). They see this as a time when the woman balances her various identities and makes decisions that are right for her at that time. As a continuation of women maintaining their valid status as an employee, on return after maternity leave, women strive to re-establish their 'viable employee identity' (Millward, 2006, p.324). There is a desire to revalidate themselves, both as an employee and as a mother.

Support for women returning to work and the role of coaching

This unique transitional phase is highlighted by Altsveit et al., who describe this as a time when 'first-time mothers readjust their lives in terms of the tension between work and motherhood' (2011, p.2157). Support for the woman returning from maternity leave is identified as key (Houston & Marks, 2003; Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005) and the benefits of coaching as part of this support is highlighted by many authors. As well as helping women to plan their return to work, maternity coaching can help with other practical aspects of embarking on and returning from maternity leave; for example, preparing for discussions and negotiations (Millward, 2006) and managing

dual roles (Bussell, 2008). Filsinger's research (2012) showed the link between maternity coaching and career re-engagement, which was particularly noticeable in women who did not plan to have any more children.

The whole premise of coaching is to facilitate desired change in the coachee by creating a situation where perspectives can be discovered, personal insight can be gained and self-awareness raised (Hardingham et al., 2004; O'Connor & Lages, 2004). Through the use of active listening, reframing to offer alternative perspectives, coaching tools and techniques, and questions that appeal to both the analytical and creative parts of the brain, the client is encouraged and enabled to discover their own answers to their dilemma or situation, allowing them to achieve their goals in a solution-focused way (Hardingham et al., 2004; Kline, 1999). To allow the above to be effective, the coach needs to create a safe environment by being non-judgemental, to accept and value the coachee and to have the ability to form a good rapport (Hardingham et al., 2004; O'Connor & Lages, 2004).

By having an understanding of the transition to motherhood and transition theory, coaches can help women with the transition back to work and enable them to articulate their new identity and bring their behaviour at work into alignment with this identity (Bussell, 2008). Previous research also shows that maternity coaches can additionally take on the role of mentor (Cotter, 2015; Liston-Smith, 2011), forming part of a new mother's 'affirming matrix' – a phrase adopted by Stern and Bruschweiler-Stern (1998). A typical maternity coaching programme would include coaching at three key points: before, during and after maternity leave. Although maternity coaching was introduced in the UK in about 2005, mainly in large law firms, there are still only a few industries that provide maternity coaching as part of their maternity package – or indeed, have actually heard of it. Encouraging professions other than in the legal and professional services sectors to invest in this effective intervention is thus key.

Objectives of the research

The research began with the assumption, based on literature (Ernst & Young, 2012; Filsinger & Worth, 2012; Harrison, 2008; My Family Care, 2016; Talking Talent, 2016) that maternity coaching is a successful intervention in helping to retain professional women when they have a family. The aim of the research was to try and determine if there were any common themes or elements inherent in the coaching that were found to be helpful. Although there is practitioner literature and company marketing that cites the success of maternity coaching programmes in terms of retention, increasing morale and improving commitment to the workplace, there is very little written about which aspects of the coaching bring about these results. By determining this through qualitative research, there would be a research basis for making recommendations for future maternity coaching programmes, and a model could be developed that could be adopted by a greater variety of organisations at different budget levels. In addition, with the increased uptake of shared parental leave that is expected over the coming years, there is the potential for this research to contribute to our understanding of parent transition programmes designed for both women and men.

Method

A qualitative approach was taken to the research and inductive reasoning was used so that an understanding and interpretation of different themes and findings could emerge (Hair et al., 2007). The approach to coding was emergent so that links could be made between 'topics, themes, concepts, ideas and other higher order abstractions' (Hair et al., 2007, p.292). The advantage of this approach is that as new ideas and themes arise there is the flexibility to include them in the coding; the disadvantage is that scripts that have been read earlier need to be re-read with the new codes in mind. The interviews were transcribed

by the researcher and various themes and potential points of interest were noted during the process of transcription. Once all the interviews were transcribed, coding was further developed, primarily focusing on themes, phrases and words.

The interviews were semi-structured in that there were three main subject areas that that the interviewer asked about:

(i) the topics, issues, dilemmas that were taken to coaching;

(ii) what the coach actually did during the coaching that was helpful to the women; and

(iii) whether there was anything else that the women had found supportive in their return to work.

At some point during the interview, each woman was also asked: 'If I had to get you to pinpoint one thing that was most useful or helpful about the maternity coaching as a whole, what would that be?'. Also, at the end of the interview, all the women were asked: 'Is there anything you would like to ask and is there anything you wished I had asked you?'.

Eleven women who had received maternity coaching agreed to take part in the research project. Ten of these semi-structured interviews were face to face in the work premises of the respondents; one was conducted by telephone. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed.

The interviewer spent some time at the beginning of each interview giving some information about her background as a coach and her long-term experience of working with new parents and building rapport. Through mention of her work experience she showed that she had an understanding of the various challenges and dilemmas that can arise in early parenthood. She was aware that everyone has different experiences of parenthood and makes different choices about combining work and parenthood, and she was able to suspend judgement and treat all the interviewees with unconditional positive regard.

During the interviews the researcher summarised, clarified and paraphrased to check for meaning and to enable the women to reiterate points, which often resulted in them going into greater depth about their own experiences. Her use of open questions, half-formed questions, repetition of the same questions and asking: 'Anything else?' drew the women out, so that they went into more detail and were able to elaborate on their ideas and come to new realisations. Also, she would summarise what had been said and use this to lead on to other, more probing questions that included a word or phrase that the woman had used. She was responsive to what the interviewees said and was not constrained by any set order of questions. At times, by using minimal prompts and just sitting and actively listening, she was able to give the women the space to talk at length and to develop their ideas.

Analysis of the data

As maternity coaching is an intervention that is used during a time of a number of transitions in a woman's life – going on maternity leave, becoming a mother and returning to work after maternity leave – the data was analysed from a variety of angles to:

(i) explore the ways in which coaching affected these transitions; and

(ii) explore how coaching could aid in aligning behaviour with identity change.

This was done by:

(i) coding the transcripts and analysing any themes that appeared;

(ii) using the Schlossberg 4S Transition Model (McManus, 2013) as a framework to interpret the data and determine how effective different elements were in relation to supporting these transitions; and

(iii) plotting change of identity with adaptation of behaviour and determining if the coach had helped to bring the behaviour into alignment with the new identity.

Table 1: The 4S tool.

Situation (Sit)	Self	Support (Sup)	Strategies – Coping responses (Strat)
The trigger	Feeling in control of your responses to the transition	Getting what you need – affect, affirmation, aid	Ones that modify the situation – action/ inaction
Permanent or temporary	Belief that your efforts will affect the outcomes of a particular course of action	Range of types of support – colleagues, co-workers, partner, friends	Ones that control the meaning of the threat, cognitively neutralising it – reframing
Involves a role change	Sense of meaning/ purpose	Is the support system for the transition a high or low resource?	Ones that help to manage stress – self-care
Is it positive, negative or neutral?	Optimistic outlook/ high self-efficacy	Supportive institution	

Table 2: What was taken to coaching.

Topics	When?	Numbers	Total*	Coaching
Profile-raising/ networking/ arrangements for keeping in touch	Pre-mat leave During mat leave	4 2	5	Strat 1
Planning the return	Pre-mat leave During mat leave	6 8	9	Strat 1
Career planning	Pre-mat leave During mat leave Post-mat leave	1 3 2	5	Strat 1
Setting boundaries	Pre-mat leave During mat leave	2 1	2	Strat 1
Getting yourself heard/ negotiating role/ how you are perceived	Pre-mat leave During-mat leave Post-mat leave	2 3 2	5	Strat 1
Guilt connected with children	Pre-mat leave During mat leave	1 2	3	Strat 2
Relationship with partner/sharing the load at home	During mat leave	2	2	Strat 1

* Number of women in total – some women took the same topic to coaching sessions at different stages.

Table 3: Coaching outcomes.

Outcomes of coaching	Total (number of women)	Coaching positively affected these 4S factors
Time and space to focus on yourself	3	Strat 3
Enabling behavioural change	6	Self 2
Enabling greater clarity	4	Strat 1
Increased confidence and self-belief	4	Self 4
A change in perspective	5	Strat 2
Re-framing the situation	3	Strat 2
Developing greater self-awareness	2	Self 2
Managing work and being a mum	2	Strat 1
Practical tips regarding home life	2	Strat 1
Permission given to do things differently this time	2	Strat 1
Reduced stress/increased wellbeing	2	Strat 3
Setting priorities and useful tasks	3	Strat 1

Stage 1: Coding

An emergent approach to coding was taken. Initially, a series of codes was developed (*a priori* codes). There were three main overarching topics that codes were designed for, before the transcripts were analysed:

- the coaching itself, encompassing the relationship with the coach, the coach's approach, any tools, techniques or exercises that were used;
- organisational issues that might have been supportive during this time of transition, or that were unsupportive; and
- work/life balance.

Through reading the first and second transcripts, the following overarching topics were added to the previous three:

- what people brought to coaching; and
- coaching outcomes.

Within these five broad topics, up to 11 subsets were developed. An additional code was added to denote when behavioural change had occurred, and further codes were then added to shows links with the Schlossberg 4S Transition Model. In total, there were 58 codes. Each transcript was read and coded accordingly. Once the coding had been completed, themes within each broad topic were identified and collated.

Stage 2: The 4S Transition Model

As the research was focused on coaching with relation to times of transition, the 4S Transition Model was chosen as a framework as an additional way to analyse the data. For this, a simple tool was developed by the researcher to link the findings with the theory (see Table 1). This tool was used to

explore aspects of the coaching by linking these aspects to the factors that this model conclude are helpful with transitions and adding a column to several tables, showing these results (see Tables 2, 3 and 4).

Stage 3: Aligning behaviour with change in identity

Because previous research has shown that becoming a mother is transformative, involving a deep psychological shift, the scripts were also analysed from the perspective of Dilts' Logical Levels (Dilts, 2014). The research sought to identify elements of the coaching that might have helped to facilitate a change in behaviour to bring it into alignment with the woman's new internal identity. The researcher examined the transcripts of the interviews, noting down any time the women alluded to their identities as a professional and as a mother, of times when they wanted or needed to adapt their behaviour to fit their new identity as a working mother, and how the coaching had helped to affect the change that had brought their behaviour at work into alignment with this new identity. This was collated into a table (see Table 5).

Results

The coach and the coaching

Of the 11 women interviewed, seven emphasised the importance of the fact that the coach was external, neutral and objective. The quality of the relationships that they had had with their coach was referred to by

Table 4: Answer to key question: 'If I had to get you to pinpoint one thing that was most useful or helpful about the maternity coaching as a whole, what would that be?'

In vivo answers	Link with 4S model
The two things are earmarking that time and coming away from that time with some actions	Strat 1
Having someone to take a step back and give you that perspective that you can still make it work	Self 2
Definitely the face-to-face meetings	
We did almost like a kind of roleplay of the conversation that we would have	Strat 2
I'll do 2… I would say the practical advice – kind of logistics… and being kind to myself	Strat 1 Self 1
I think being given time to think	Self 2/Strat 3
Preparing the conversations around my working arrangements	Strat 2
I think maybe that it is the point that it is about you and that 'What is it that you want'?	Self 2
Being given the tools and asking the questions to enable me to actually work out my priorities and how everything fits together	Self 2
I think it's action plans	Strat 1
How to make the best out of all the different situations you can find yourself in	Strat 1

five of the participants, with trust identified as a key element of the relationship. One of the participants said that, until she fully believed that the coach was not affiliated to her organisation, she was 'on message'; once she came to the realisation that her coach really was neutral and objective, she gained a lot more from the coaching. The role of the coach also being that of a mentor was mentioned by five of the participants.

There were a variety of topics that women took to coaching, often dependent on when the coaching was – before, during or after maternity leave (see Table 2). These contrast to the outcomes that the women said they had got out of coaching (see Table 3). Both sets of outcomes have been analysed according to the model displayed in Table 1 and show that, although the women took practical and logistical issues to coaching (defined as Strat 1), the outcomes of coaching were both broader and deeper.

In the interviews, all of the women were asked the key question: 'If I had to get you to pinpoint one thing that was most useful or helpful about the maternity coaching as a whole, what would that be?' (see Table 4). When analysed with the 4S tool, it can be seen that strategies that modify the situation and the belief that their efforts will affect the outcomes of the situation were most commonly identified. The next part of this Results section will be structured around the main themes of the answers to the key question.

Work preparations

Some of the main issues that the women focused on during coaching were factors relating to their working arrangements. These could be in the form of action plans or thinking about logistics, but must notable was the opportunity to discuss significant conversations that they needed to have. The important place that work held for all of the women was reflected in the desire to devote time to raising their profile and plan their return, so that they could ensure that they were fully integrated back into the workplace. Preparation – and at times, roleplay – for their return to work conversations was an important feature of coaching for several of the women. As Chloe said: 'I had clarity of thought' (line 198) gained from preparing for the conversation and being able to have it in a positive, articulate way.

These conversations were often described as 'key' or 'difficult' because the women felt

Table 5: Identity and behaviour.

Identity	The role of coaching in enabling change in identity to be reflected in change of behaviour	Behaviour
Self-esteem tied up with job – work identity very strong	Focused on negotiating the right role for her on her return to work	Successful combination of work and motherhood
Strong professional and motherhood identities – reclaiming work identity was important Feelings of loss and of life having fundamentally changed	Focus of a coaching session – what she needed to reclaim work identity Gave permission for these feelings and encouraged self-kindness	Connected with the most important people – raised profile Regularly practised self-kindness
Strong identities of being a professional and a mother	Encouraged strict boundary setting	Movement from being too focused on work, to being stricter about boundaries.

that they were asking something of their employer, as they were not going to be returning to exactly the same work patterns as prior to going off on maternity leave. They were concerned that they were going to be viewed differently in terms of their professionalism and commitment to work. In many situations, the coach encouraged them to be confident in their abilities and to reinforce their feelings of self-worth – as Linda said, coaching resulted in her 'believing that I have a right to be here without having to prove it' (lines 327–328). Maria also felt that the coaching enabled her to see 'how to get the best out of whichever situation you are in' (lines 243–244). The coach also helped the women view the situation from the perspective of their employer, trying to ensure that what they were asking for was reasonable and made good business sense, as well as aligning with what the women wanted. In many cases, this resulted in the discussions being as productive as possible for both sides.

Navigating the two identities of being a mother and being a professional working woman

Being on maternity leave

For some of the women the transition to motherhood had been difficult. By adopting an active listening stance, asking about their feelings, and drawing on and referring to her many years of experience of working with women in this period, the researcher was able to encourage the women to go into some detail about how this transition had been for them. The change in lifestyle, sense of lack of personal attainment and cognitive functioning was captured by Martine: 'Going from someone who speaks at conferences to someone who's pleased if they've had a shower by one o'clock' (lines 72–73), and Rachel: 'It's incredibly hard work and… there's nobody to say thank you to you and that you're doing a good job' (lines 209–210) and 'I don't think I was quite ready for how much your brain seems to change when you have a child… I felt like my brain way dying' (lines 81–83). For these two women, the coaching session they received before they returned to work was focused on how they could reconnect with their very strong professional identities. Ensuring that they re-entered work assertively and had the opportunity to have challenging work was fundamentally important.

For some of the others, they identified that when they were off on maternity leave they just 'wanted to get into sort of "mummy mindset"' (Chloe, line 49), so that they could focus on their baby. They saw their maternity leave as a completely different experience, and work as being 'unrelated to the world I was in' (Sally, line 202). For some, this had an impact on the coaching session that they had whilst on maternity leave, because they were unable to bridge the distance between their current state and their future state at work. The resulting feeling about this session for these women was one of dissatisfaction – of all the sessions in their maternity coaching programmes, this was seen to be the one that was of least value. For others, however, this session was extremely timely and helped them to focus on what they wanted from their return to work.

Approaching the time of returning to work

Of the six women who talked about the time of returning to work, some used extremely poignant language. As Sally put it: 'I'd say that I was… heartbroken… I feel I was grieving lots. I was grieving for the loss of the maternity, for the relationship that we'd had for none months, that was never going to be the same again' (lines 372–374).

Jane said: 'The thought of going back to work and leaving my little baby was so terrible' (lines 68–69) and she admitted to being very tearful during the telephone session that she had with her coach at this time. This followed through to the next coaching session, once she was back at work, with her analysing the issues of how she had felt about work during her maternity leave and how she was trying to adjust to being back. When she became pregnant again, her coach helped

her to plan her exit from and return to work in a different way, so that there were fewer issues raised for her.

The point about not being the full-time carer any more was highlighted by several of the women, with Rachel saying that if there is little work to do on return from maternity leave women can feel: 'Why am I in the office? Someone else is looking after my baby and I'm here' (lines 323–324). This was echoed by Chloe when she said: 'When I am busy on stuff that I love doing, even though the hours are a bit mental, I'm really enjoying it and so then that helps it to work' (lines 427–428). Sally also reiterated this point; returning to work at a particularly quiet time after her first baby was difficult for her as she had had plenty of time to think about how much she was missing her baby. Not wanting this to happen the next time, she was determined to ensure that she was busy when she returned, and this was something that she worked on with her coach. She wanted to return with energy and accelerate her career, and working with her coach enabled her to come up with a plan of how to do this.

Finding the way forward

Returning to work was identified as a time of stress and under-confidence. Chloe articulated this when she said: 'People underestimate how vulnerable you can feel when you come back' (lines 272–273). The lack of understanding of the impact of becoming a parent was a cause of distress for some of the women. Chloe's statement that 'your life has dramatically changed' (line 298) was also conveyed by Sally who was frustrated by a work colleague's behaviour: 'And I wanted to scream at him "My life has fundamentally changed – can you acknowledge it!"' (lines 389–390). Sarah spoke of her experience of 'you almost have to pretend that you don't have a child' (line 340) which she found difficult.

Finding their own way of combining work and motherhood was a feature of the coaching for several of the women. Linda said: 'I had to make it work for my family and I was not going to change the system' (line 122) and Rachel encapsulated the issue in her words: 'How to achieve that kind of Mecca of, how do you do a job like this and have a partner who does a job like this and have some form of – well, how do you balance both things well?' (lines 104–106). With her coach, she worked on what she could to achieve the best balance for her in terms of her workload, the time she spent with her baby and sharing of the household duties. Martine acknowledged that, although she had good childcare in place, she still wanted to be more involved with the day-to-day care of the children, including putting them to bed and taking them shopping. She described her situation as 'making the peace with what is good enough' (line 146). At one point, Pauline could not see how she could make things work and described how her coach 'asked quite probing questions… what do you want to achieve? What are your priorities? (lines 190–194), 'Could you make it work in your favour to make this work? Because, you know, you sound really happy in your job.' (lines 216–217). Her coach helped her to identify that she needed to see her son every day in order to be happy and then they worked on a plan to achieve that, whilst still putting in enough hours to do her job well. She really appreciated 'having someone to take a step back and give you that perspective that you can still make it work' (lines 365–367).

Interestingly, half of the women who had described their deep sense of sadness about leaving their babies also identified that they would not be happy being a full-time mother, and Jane spoke of how she felt her relationship with her children was enhanced by the fact that she worked: 'I've also come to the realisation that actually having my time at work makes my relationship with them, when I see them, much better' (lines 575–577). It would seem that time needs to be given to accept these changes and come to new realisations; Pauline acknowledged that it took a couple of months 'adjusting to that new norm' (lines 496–497). Coaching

gave the women the opportunity to be able to acknowledge their feelings, to help work through them and articulate what was important to them going forward.

As can be seen when looking at Tables 2, 3 and 4, with relation to the 4S Transition Model (2013), the coaching helped the women work on the levels of self, support and strategies, increasing their feelings of self-efficacy in terms of managing the changes within the workplace that had come about because of their new status as a mother.

Having time, space and focus

At the life stage of being a working mother with young children, when there is little opportunity to focus on yourself, 'time to think' (Anita, line 36) was identified as an important factor in the maternity coaching. As Linda said: 'It is about you and that "What is it that you want?"' (lines 355–356). Jane described how her thoughts would be all 'jumbled up' (line 565) and that coaching gave her the time and the direction to start to unravel this jumble and make sense of things. As she said: 'I came out with this incredible, all these great realisations that I had just not thought' (line 117). One of these realisations was that she could view her situation from a different perspective – that of viewing the decision to stay at her current workplace as positive, rather than negative. The resulting change in her view of work was translated into much more positive behaviour, which was noticed and commented on at work. Another realisation was that she did not need to make all her life decisions at the same time and that there was a range of factors that she could adjust at different times. She describes this as 'giving me the tools and asking the questions to enable me to actually work out my priorities and how everything fits together' (lines 429–430). This new way of thinking gave her greater freedom in her approach to work, motherhood and life generally.

This theme of the coach encouraging thinking about other alternatives ran through many of the interviews. Linda talked about, 'and not more, what the firm can be doing differently, but what about I can do differently?' (lines 284–285) and she appreciated the time that coaching gave her to really reflect on herself, her views and her aspirations. Pauline found it helpful that her preconceptions on many things were challenged by the coach and Anita said that being asked: 'Have you thought about doing it differently?' (line 36) really allowed her to explore different possibilities and identify what she needed to do at that time regarding length of maternity leave. This exploration helped her 'to deal with the guilt' (line 139) of doing something different from what she had planned, and from what she had done with her previous children.

The time, space and focus that was devoted to the women during the coaching sessions resulted in them being able to reflect on themselves and their situations, allowing insights and behavioural change. It also enabled them to explore some of the deep feelings surrounding grief and emotional health.

Aligning behaviour with a new identity

As new motherhood is a time of change in identity – from working woman, to working woman who is also a mother – the data was also analysed from the perspective of Dilts' Logical Levels (2014). In several cases it was possible to identify times when the coaching enabled the women to articulate what was important to them in their changed state and then to examine the implications of this with respect to how they were at work. That could be in terms of being clearer about their work boundaries or finding the best way for them to balance their time in their roles of professional and mother. The coaches had done this by asking probing questions and challenging the womens' perceptions of their current situation. This encouraged them to think about what was really important to them (their values and beliefs) and how this fitted with their new identity as a mother and their identity as a professional.

At times, changes in behaviour were necessary to bring these two identities into alignment (see Table 5).

Discussion

Trust and time to think

The importance of the trust that the women had in their coach is a key finding of this research, which concurs with much writing about the nature of relationships within a coaching context (Hardingam et al., 2004). For three of the five women who had maternity coaching for more than one baby, the nature of their relationship with their coach was such that they asked for the same coach the second time.

It was important that the coach was external to the organisation that the women worked for, and was neutral and objective. Although many organisations have internal coaches, Hardingham et al. (2004) emphasise the need for coaches to be viewed as not being biased. As Millward (2006) identifies, the time of becoming a mother can result in a shift of values and priorities which may have an impact on how the woman views her relationship with work. Having complete confidence in the neutrality of the coach is therefore of fundamental importance. The participants in this research study identified this to be key and concluded that this neutrality enabled conversations in which it was easier to open up, as they saw the coach as an 'objective sounding board'.

The feeling of time and space, and the opportunity to focus on themselves was another important feature for the women. According to the literature, the focus of any coaching should be the coachee, and the coach should also provide challenge so that the coachee examines their own preconceptions and models of the world (Hardingham et al., 2004; O'Connor & Lages, 2004). This can then result in an understanding of alternative perceptions, increased self-awareness, personal insights and realisations. This was certainly the case for the women involved in this study, who, as a result of the coaching, came to have a much greater understanding of themselves and what was important to them, what they wanted their futures to look like and how to work with their employers so that they could achieve this within their work contexts.

Coaching and the transition to motherhood

As is shown in the literature, the women had needs that were specific to this particular period of their lives. Both before returning to work, and once they had returned to work there was a desire to re-validate their employee identity, as highlighted by Millward (2006). Several of the women identified that the coaching sessions were extremely helpful for preparing for important conversations and raising their profiles.

In line with Stern and Brushweiller-Stern's (1998) theory of the three stages of the transition to motherhood, it can be seen that the women took different things to coaching at these three stages. Their gradual adjustment from working woman to working woman who is also a mother, and the stages of change that they went through to go from one to the other, is evident from what they recalled about their experiences. The coaching was often career-focused – enabling the women to leave work positively and return positively, successfully re-integrating back into the workplace, which adds to the evidence of other researchers (Filsinger, 2012). Several of the women appreciated that their coach had also been in a similar position and had knowledge of the sector that they were working in. As is noted by Liston-Smith (2011), maternity coaches often also perform the role of a mentor.

As well as finding the optimum way of being back at work, the women also worked on finding the right way for themselves of combining work with motherhood. As the literature suggests, several of them felt guilty about leaving their baby (Millward, 2006; Stern & Bruschweiler-Stern, 1998; Sumer et al., 2008). Needing to be busy and have interesting, worthwhile work eased this

guilt and formed part of them establishing their 'viable employee identity' (Millward, 2006, p.324). Whilst noting the tension that existed between their two roles, the coaching encouraged them to articulate their values and priorities and find the solutions for themselves about the balance that seemed the best one for them.

As women's behaviours at work might well change due to their new role and identity, it is important for coaches to be able to put these changes within the context of what has happened and to help the new mother who is also a professional woman align her behaviour to her new identity, values and beliefs.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that all of the participants were from similar high pressured and high status professions, thus working in the same type of work environments. Therefore, further research focusing on the effect of maternity coaching on women from a variety of work environments and working patterns is recommended in order to assess whether the findings from this research can be generalised to other places of work. Finally, as a few coaches were involved there was not the same consistency of coaching as if only one coach had been employed.

Implications

The purpose of analysing this aspect of the women's experiences was to further inform maternity coaches and to provide evidence to help organisations comprehend the significance of this time of change. Time needs to be given to accept these changes and come to new realisations; as one of the women said, it took a couple of months to adjust to the new way that things were. Thus, this evidence suggests that line managers need to be aware that this time of return is one of vulnerability – and potentially grief – and have support systems in place to ease this transition.

As a result of this piece of research, there are a few key recommendations to be made. As having a baby is a major transition which involves a change in identity, coaches working with women at this time need to embed their coaching within a deep understanding of the transition to motherhood and real-

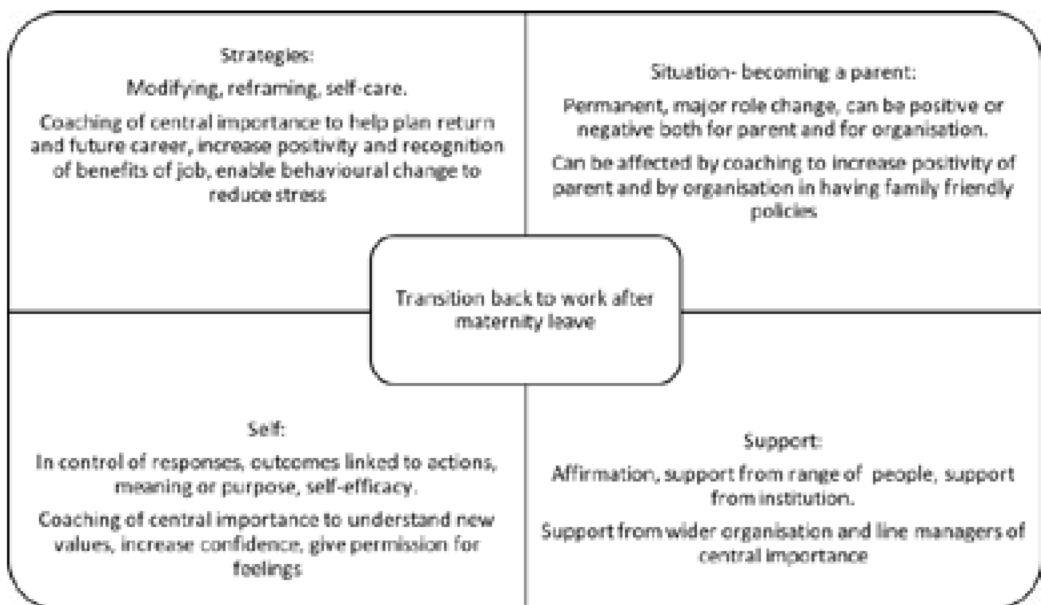


Figure 1: The 4S Parent Returner Model.

ise that the coaching helps with the transitions on different levels. Preparation for the return to work to enable the woman to reassert herself and her identity is an integral part of coaching at this time and there is a role in helping the women to align their behaviour with the change in their identity.

The neutrality and objectivity of the coach is important and needs to be clearly stated at various points in the contracting by the organisation, the coaching provider and the coach.

The coach needs to build trust and to gently challenge the woman and the assumptions that she has made about herself, the way she works and structures her life, and the people around her.

Building on these recommendations, the researcher has designed the 4S Parent Returner Model, based on current thinking and the findings of her research, constructed within the framework of the 4S Transition Model (see Figure 1). This model could be used to determine the different roles of coaching and organisational policies and support when considering implementing a parental returner programme, in line with one of the objectives of this research.

Conclusion

This research shows why investing in maternity coaching can ease the transition back to work after maternity leave and increase retention and job satisfaction. Whilst there is no single common element that women found to be most useful, it is a combination of various factors that result in the re-adjustment on a deep personal level that is needed at this time. The coaching relationship and approach, combined with knowledge of transition theory and the understanding of the transition to motherhood can result in the coach enabling the woman to work on a deeper level than just a practical one and to come to an understanding of what her new identity as a mother in the workplace means and how this can be reflected in her behaviour.

Jane Moffett
Kangaroo Coaching

Author's note

All names have been changed to protect anonymity.

References

Alstveit, M., Severinsson, E. & Karlsen, B (2011). Readjusting one's life in the tension inherent in work and motherhood. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 67*(10), 2151–2160.

Bussell, J. (2008). Great expectations: Can maternity coaching affect the retention of professional women? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, Special Issue 2,* 14–26.

Cabrera, E. (2007). Opting out and opting in: Understanding the complexities of women's career transitions. *Career Development International, 12*(3), 218–237.

Cotter, K. (2015). Transitional object: Supporting new mothers back into work. *Coaching Today, 13.*

Dilts, R. (2014). *A brief history of Logical Levels.* Available at www.nlpu.com/Articles/LevelsSummary.htm

Felfe, C. (2012). The motherhood wage gap: What about job amenities? *Labour Economics, 19*(1), 59–67.

Filsinger, C. (2012). How can maternity coaching influence women's re-engagement with their career development: A case study of a maternity coaching programme in UK-based private law firms. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, Special Issue No.6,* 46–56.

Filsinger, C., Worth, S. (2012). Women and leadership: Closing the gender gap. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 10,* 111–119.

Gallhofer, S., Paisely, C., Roberts, C., Tarbert, H. (2011). Preferences, constraints and work-lifestyle choices. *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal, 24*(4), 240–270.

Hair, J. Jr., Money, A., Samouel, P., Page, M. (2007). *Research methods for business.* Chichester: Wiley & Sons.

Hardingham, A., Brearley, M., Moorhouse, A., & Venter, B. (2004). *The coach's coach: Personal development for personal developers.* London: CIPD/Kogan Page.

Harrison (2008). Maternity plan delivers the goods. *Human Resource Development International Digest, 16*(4), 28.

Houston, D., Marks, G. (2003). The role of planning and workplace support in returning to work after maternity leave. *British Journal of Industrial Relations, 41,* June, 197–214.

Kline, N. (1999). *Time to think – listening to ignite the human mind.* London: Octopus.

Liston-Smith, J. (2011). Supervising maternity coaches. In T. Bachkirova, P. Jackson, D. Clutterbuck (Eds.) *Coaching and mentoring supervision theory and practice* (pp.273–280). Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Lloyd's (2016). *Holding up the mirror: Reflections on diversity and inclusion in the Lloyd's market.* Inclusion@ Lloyd's Report. Available at www.lloyds.com/~/media/files/the%20market/tools%20and%20resources/inclusion/holding%20up%20the%20mirror.pdf

Mainiero, L., Sullivan, S. (2005). Kaleidoscope careers: An alternate explanation for the 'opt-out' revolution. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 19*(1), 106–123.

McManus, K.B. (2013). *A review of transition theory. From counseling in adults in transition by Jane Goodman, Nancy Schlossberg and Mary Anderson.* Available at www.slideshare.net/KeciaMcManusEdD/transition-theory-4-s-2013

Millward, L. (2006). The transition to motherhood in an organizational context: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 79*, 315–333.

Moffett, J. (2017). *My life has fundamentally changed: The relationship between maternity coaching and mother's transitions back to work after maternity leave.* Unpublished MSc dissertation, Henley Business School, University of Reading.

My Family Care (2016). *My family care* [website]. www.myfamilycare.co.uk

O'Connor, J. & Lages, A. (2004). *Coaching with NLP.* London: Harper Collins.

O'Neil, D. & Bilimoria, D. (2005). Women's career development phases: Idealism, endurance, and reinvention. *Career Development International, 10*, April, 68–189.

O'Neil, D., Hopkins, M. & Bilimoria, D. (2008). Women's careers at the start of the 21st century: Patterns and paradoxes. *Journal of Business Ethics, 8*(80), 727–743.

Prosser, M. (2009). *Women and Work Commission. Shaping a fairer future: A review of the recommendations of the women and work commission three years on.* London: Government Equalities Office. Available at http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100212235759/http:/www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/297158_WWC_Report_acc.pdf

Schlossberg, N. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *The Counselling Psychologist, 9*(2), 2–18.

Smith, J. (1999). Identity development during the transition to motherhood: An interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology, 17*(3), 281–299.

Stern, D. & Bruschwelier-Stern, N. (1998). *The birth of a mother: How motherhood changes you forever.* London: Bloosmbury.

Sümer, S., Smithson, J., das Dores Guerreiro, M. & Granlund, L. (2008). Becoming working mothers: Reconciling work and family at three particular workplaces in Norway, the UK, and Portugal. *Community, Work and Family, 11*(4), 365–384. Available at www.talking-talent.com

Thornton, C. (2010). *Group and team coaching: The essential guide.* Hove: Routledge.

A role for coaching to support leadership development? The experiences of female Arab leaders: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Maya Mattar, Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Margaret Barr & Yannick Jacob

Objectives: *This study aimed to explore how eight female leaders from four Arab countries experienced their leadership journey, and to consider a potential role for coaching in that developmental journey.*
Design and Method: *A qualitative design was applied to explore the participants' experiences. Data collection was through semi-structured interviews, and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to analyse the data.*
Results: *Four themes emerged: (i) a continuous, exhausting struggle; (ii) fulfilment and pride in achievements; (iii) adoption of coping strategies; (iv) engagement in personal and professional development.*
Conclusion: *The findings suggest that coaching may be an appropriate intervention to increase the individual leadership potential of females in the Arab world.*
Keywords: *Female leaders; Arab world; coaching; interpretative phenomenological analysis.*

THE EVIDENCE from coaching research demonstrates the value of coaching as a significant tool for leadership development (Passmore, 2010, p.8). There is also a high level of recognition of the growing need for coaches working internationally to integrate cross-cultural awareness into their practice (Rosinski, 2010; van Nieuwerburgh, 2017). This study contributes to cross-cultural awareness by exploring the experiences of eight female leaders from four different Arab countries during their transformation into their leadership roles. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants. The implications for practice and future research are considered, including discussion about the potential role of coaching to contribute to the leadership development of females in the Arab world.

Status of female leaders in the corporate world

In their meta-analysis of contextual moderators, Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) showed that there is essentially no significant difference between genders in leadership effectiveness. Yet women remain under-represented at senior levels in the corporate world and face barriers to advancement despite the tremendous social progress and improvement in attitudes towards women in leadership in modern societies. For example, in their 2015 study of women in the corporate America workplace, LeanIn.org and McKinsey&Company concluded that women were still marginalised at all levels in the corporate world. The major findings of the study drew attention to several barriers for women progressing into leadership roles. These included: (i) The leadership ambition gap persists; (ii) gender diversity is not widely believed to be a priority; (iii) there

is still inequality at home; (iv) women and men have very different professional networks. The study was repeated with increased participation in 2016, and again in 2017 when 222 companies and 70,000 employees participated. The 2017 study concluded that: 'Until we treat gender diversity, and diversity more broadly, like the business imperative it is, true progress will be hard to achieve' (Thomas et al., 2017, p.31).

The progress of women leaders in the Arab world

When women's progress in some Arab countries is compared with countries in Europe and North America, there are differences (Aguirre et al., 2011); for example, only about 36 per cent of women in the Gulf Co-operation Council countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) work outside the home, compared with about 75 per cent of women in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries (Aguirre et al., 2011).

However, gradually, women in Arab countries are securing more leadership roles. For example, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is ranked as a leader in gender equality in the Arab world, where women are empowered at all levels and play a significant role in society (Global Women's Forum, 2016). The UAE has set a precedent in terms of gender balance, as women now constitute 66 per cent of the public sector workforce, compared with the global average of 48 per cent, with 30 per cent in senior and decision-making positions. Women who run their own businesses and are members of the chamber of commerce and industry numbered 22,000 in March 2016 (Moran, 2016).

In a small-scale study of women in senior positions in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates – a traditionally male dominant culture – Aguirre et al. (2011) found that the women who had broken boundaries shared the following three characteristics: (i) constant improvement, which manifests in unending development; (ii) studied discomfort (taking on new challenges with a willingness to go outside their comfort zone); and (iii) quiet confidence (a certainty in their abilities). Elgamal's (2012) study of 101 successful experienced female leaders in Kuwait, Tunisia and Egypt noted that the female leaders were perceived as superior to male leaders with respect to their approach to cooperation, aggressiveness, competitiveness and concern about interpersonal relationships.

Personalised developmental support options

Leadership development must incorporate a constellation of practices in order to be effective (e.g. Mintzberg, 2004; Mumford et al., 2000). Because leaders face unique challenges in different situations and at different stages of their development journey in various environments, it has been argued that 'one-size-fits-all' interventions are not an appropriate strategy for leadership development (Guillen & Ibarra, 2010). Leadership development interventions should be tailored to fit the goals, aspirations, potential and capabilities of each leader. Context is very important (Grint, 2005; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). The best leaders select from a wide variety of available interventions and resources and make their choices about which options suit them as individuals, the cultures they belong to and the context (Passmore, 2010). Given the unique challenges and opportunities faced by aspiring female leaders in the Arab world, executive coaching may emerge as an appropriate intervention to consider in this context.

Coaching

Passmore (2010, p.7) proposes a range of ways in which coaching can contribute to leadership development: transferring learning from theory to the workplace; enhancing skills; developing greater self-awareness; enhancing motivation; developing confidence and self-regard; and improving wellbeing. A meta-analysis conducted by Theeboom et al. (2014) highlighted that coaching has significant positive effects on performance and skills, wellbeing, coping, work attitudes,

Table 1: **Demographics of the participants.**

Participant	Ethnic origin	Education level	Leadership position
P1	Arab – United Arab Emirates (UAE)	Master's degree	Chief Executive Officer
P2	Arab – United Arab Emirates (UAE)	PhD	Senior Director
P3	Arab – United Arab Emirates (UAE)	Bachelor's degree	Human Resources Specialist
P4	Arab – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)	Master's degree	General Manager
P5	Arab - Jordan	Bachelor's degree	Manager
P6	Arab - Jordan	MBA	Business owner
P7	Arab - Lebanon	PhD	Business owner
P8	Arab - Lebanon	Master's degree	Business owner

and goal-directed self-regulation. Their meta-analytic findings indicated that coaching is an effective tool for improving the functioning of individuals in organisations.

It has also been suggested that coaching is an important mechanism for supporting women in senior roles (Simpson, 2008), impacting positively on confidence. Simpson contends that the impact of the coaching, with its resultant increase in the participants' confidence, led to new thinking, new tools, strategies and knowledge, and new behaviour.

Continued research into the effectiveness of coaching is needed (Grant et al., 2010), using a range of methods to deepen our understanding of coaching as a force for good in organisational and individual wellbeing (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). To move the evidence base forward, Grant (2012) argues for the need to increase the use of standardised outcome measures, to augment other measures. In a discussion about the current state of research into coaching, Theeboom (2016) posits that research needs to shift its focus from the question 'Does it work?' to 'How does it work?' to uncover the causal mechanisms underlying effective coaching.

Method

The Participants

Homogeneity and intentional selection are crucial characteristics of samples, according to interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) methodology, whose participants have common experiences about specified conditions (Willig, 2008). The eight participants (Table 1) occupied middle to senior leadership positions in a variety of industries in Arab countries. Five of the participants had received coaching, but this was not a condition of being interviewed for the research. Participants were recruited from the professional network of the researcher and through recommendations by clients. Having received a letter of invitation, participants signed a consent form prior to their interview, which was conducted at their office or via Skype.

Data collection

The participants engaged in a 30 to 45 minute semi-structured interview with questions designed to help them make meaning of their personal experience as female leaders in the Arab world. The questions covered: (i) their experiences of their leadership jour-

ney and development; (ii) personal challenges faced as female leaders; and (iii) the kinds of support available to them for their leadership development. The questions were deliberately general and broad (Smith et al., 2009) to allow participants to go into detail and provide specific examples from their daily experiences and life. Despite all participants being native Arabic speakers, they chose to conduct the interview in English. Therefore, the participants were given ample time to express themselves freely. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, then transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (Smith, 2009) was chosen as the most appropriate research design due to its suitability for gaining a rich idiographic account of each participant's experiences. It allowed the researcher and participants to engage in an analytic dialogue within the framework of double hermeneutics, known as the two-stage interpretation process (Smith & Osborn, 2008), where the interviewee is interpreting their own experiences as they speak, while the researcher is interpreting the participant's words.

During the data analysis stage, the researcher implemented IPA's systematic and practical principles (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Careful consideration was given to each individual participant's experience, as it represents a unique and new psychological world and at the same time offers distinctive voices within the shared experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher listened at least twice to each recorded interview and read verbatim transcriptions at least three times to ensure that the semantic content of each response was captured, and that an active engagement in the social and mental world of each participant was accomplished (Smith et al., 2009).

Each transcript was analysed individually. The researcher drafted initial notes in the right margin. This interpretative note-taking on the use of language and key phrases helped the researcher become more familiar with the participants' experiences and stories (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Next, all words, phrases or sentences that would contribute to the emerging themes were identified and labelled in the left margin. The raw analytical data was reduced by connecting the emerging themes across participants within clusters, superordinate themes and sub-themes (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This process was repeated for each of the transcripts individually.

Table 2: **The themes of the participants' experiences.**

Themes	Quote
Theme 1: A continuous, exhausting struggle	'…even if you go for a business dinner, you are socially misunderstood, and you are not taken seriously…'
Theme 2: Fulfilment and pride in achievements	'…It was a wonderful experience on the personal and on the work side… it made me stronger and better…'
Theme 3: Adoption of coping strategies	'You learn to accept it and find avenues of getting around it…'
Theme 4: Engagement in personal and professional development	'Coaching… was one of the most important training I got because it was focusing on my personal skills and issues that I need to develop…'

Ethical considerations

Throughout the study, the British Psychological Society *Code of Ethics and Conduct* (2009) was followed. Ethical approval was granted by the Research Ethics Committee at the University of East London.

Reflexivity

As an Arabic female leader, the researcher knew it was essential to take actions to minimise the effect of bias. Through ongoing reflection, discussion with her supervisor and the use of a reflexive journal, she isolated her personal experience, feelings and biases (Merriam, 2002) and accepted participants as experiential experts, both during the interview and throughout the data analysis. The analytic process, however, necessarily reflected the mutual evaluation of both the researcher and the participants (Smith et al., 2009). This analytic process included the researcher sharing the outcomes of the research with participants, inviting feedback or comment.

Results

The results are shown in Table 2. As female leaders in the Arab world, all participants had experienced a challenging journey. Despite the challenges, two of the participants had also found their leadership journey to be fulfilling.

Theme 1: A continuous, exhausting struggle

All participants had found being a female leader in the Arab world to be exhausting, draining and difficult. They had experienced barriers in their current positions as female leaders, through the cultural boundaries imposed by society; for example, their communities rejecting women leaders, and not acknowledging the importance of a woman's career success:

> *'It's been very exhausting…'* (P6)

> *'This is a very harsh war…'* (P1)

> *'You are harshly criticised by the community… even when I had to go and visit institutions you would be taken lightly by male counter[part]… even if you go for a business dinner, you are socially misunderstood, and you are not taken seriously…'* (P6)

The participants' work environments did not encourage female leadership. The participants in this study experienced a lack of co-operation from male colleagues. Some participants did not have basic facilities such as transportation and financial support:

> *'…maybe offline conversations happen that relate to work… culturally, women don't go out for lunch with their male bosses… so if my bosses go out for lunch with my peers who are men, they have some conversations… they will say, oh we forgot to tell you we made this decision during lunch…'* (P2)

All eight participants touched on the topic of marital status, hinting that being married may hinder their leadership progress as females in the Arab world due to the culture that imposes more family responsibilities on women:

> *'I got married and I now have responsibilities, and trying to have work life balance… it's been extremely difficult to maintain my leadership role, and at the same time keep my family together and look after my child and my husband…'* (P6)

Theme 2: Fulfilment and pride in achievements

Despite the struggles and the challenges they faced, two of the participants expressed pride in their exceptional achievements, which were a source of happiness and fulfilment:

> *'…as an entrepreneur I learned a lot, because I started from zero, I had no support whatsoever, but I managed to establish a very successful business, and it was the number one recruitment agency in the country for four years…'* (P6)

> *'I was the only woman in the company… in that high position… and after the first year I earned the respect from everybody because I… achieved above the target by 300 per cent, which was an amazing thing to do and nobody did it before me… It was a wonderful experience on the personal and on the work side… it made me stronger and better…'* (P4)

Regardless of the difficult experiences that they had encountered, and the many hindrances they had faced during their development journey, participants had found ways to cope with and overcome the challenges. First, they had adopted a range of coping strategies; and second, they had prioritised their own personal and professional development.

Theme 3: Adoption of coping strategies

All participants had adopted coping strategies. Ways of coping included being determined to demonstrate their abilities and worth to male colleagues, learning to accept the challenges, and finding different ways to work around them. All participants believed they had proved themselves through high performance and positive results despite their circumstances:

> *'…once you prove you are competent… they will start taking you seriously and accepting you as a leader… I work really hard, I put in an endless amount of effort, but at the expense of my health… I always meet the challenge and I always deliver regardless.'* (P6)

Participants had found other ways of dealing with the challenges, building trust and staying positive in an attempt to work around the hindrances. They also coped through their strong focus on moral values, courage, honesty and integrity:

> *'So I keep myself thinking positively and I try to find other ways to get what I want… You learn to accept it and find avenues of getting around it…'* (P4)

> *'…one of the things that makes you a better leader are the moral values…'* (P1)

> *'…it's really important to take risks in order to achieve your goals, you need to have courage otherwise you cannot move forward, …you have… to have some integrity, you have also to always tell the truth…'* (P8)

Theme 4: Engagement in personal and professional development

Participants prioritised their personal and professional development as another strategy for responding to the challenges of their leadership journey. Continuous learning was experienced as important, with females needing to maintain an active personal interest in their own development to make sure they were up to date in this fast-moving world:

> *'…you always need more because everything moves fast… technology is moving so fast forward you have to attend training, you have to keep on developing yourself, your skills non-stop… It is a continuous learning journey…'* (P8)

> *'…this is a personal interest, intrinsically… (you) need to stimulate yourself intellectually…'* (P1)

A range of development opportunities were used, including reading, conferences, training sessions, open days and study. Almost all of the participants' horizons were broadened through travel, as a means of accessing development opportunities which would not otherwise be available:

> *'I started going to conferences'.* (P2)

> *'I studied a lot…conferences, open days… executive coaching for me is part of this.'* (P7)

> *'I travelled frequently and that played a great part in my development…' (P6)*

> *'…I consider it [travel] also as a good back-*

bone since it gives you a lot of experience that you cannot earn in schools…' (P8)

Sources of support for development were varied. Some participants received little or no support from their organisation. Others were supported by their families, their employer, or through government sponsorship. Support from their employer included mentoring and learning 'on the job':

'I always have to dig up information about training, trips and workshops… I have always had to fight for them to accept and to give me some time off to join those training sessions… I have to join in the evenings or during weekends… I financed all of them…' (P6)

'I was groomed for the next level… It was a lot of on the job development, I learned a lot on the job and as I was progressing…' (P2)

'I was sponsored by the government to be sent to the UK.' (P1)

'The development initiative… some of it was by the organisation I worked for.' (P8)

'I've had the support from my family… my bosses have always been supportive and they are men… I've been very lucky because I had leaders who were men and who believed in me.' (P2)

All participants highlighted the benefits of coaching as a development tool, and five participants had experienced coaching. They were particularly struck by the impact on their personal skills, and by the ability of coaching to 'unlock' their inner resources:

'Coaching… it is amazing when you have someone who can help you to unlock your creativity and maximise your potential… how you can manage your life smartly…' (P6)

'Coaching… was one of the most important training I got because it was focusing on my personal skills and issues that I need to develop… I always knew that I had issues to fix… it helped me find my way and draw a map… it increased my self-confidence…' (P4)

Discussion

This study used interpretative phenomenological analysis to contribute to our knowledge of the experiences of female leaders in the Arab world. It sought to increase our understanding of female leaders' experiences, and the potential role of coaching to contribute to their leadership development.

The challenges

The findings of the IPA study revealed that the participants experienced significant challenges, which echoed the barriers facing women in corporate America (LeanIn & McKinsey&Company, 2015), of a persisting leadership gap, gender diversity not being a priority, and inequality at home.

Although the participants acknowledged the sense of fulfilment and pride in their achievements, they also highlighted significant difficulties and struggles experienced during their leadership journey. Despite the modest positive changes in the environment in the Arab world, the participants of this study still experienced a wide range of challenges, such as the cultural boundaries imposed by society, lack of co-operation from male colleagues, and difficulties with transport. In fact, the participants' description of the work environment implies a lack of trust in female capabilities, compounding the difficulties and placing more pressure on them because they feel unsupported. Another challenge that emerged was that marital status impacts female leadership progress, since women have to handle many other responsibilities within and outside of the home, due to what LeanIn and McKinsey&Company (2015) have described as 'the persistent inequality at home'.

The participants' experiences of these challenges confirm that they faced a steeper path towards growth than women in some other societies. Barriers include: a society that does not encourage female leadership;

the unwelcoming working environment; and conditions that add extra constraints because gender diversity is still not widely believed to be a priority for many organisations.

Leadership development

It was evident that personal development was a personal interest initiated by the participants themselves. They demonstrated a certain passion for learning that gave them a sense of fulfilment and motivation. Learning through travelling gave exposure to other cultures, and learning about best practices in different countries.

As they recalled their experiences to the researcher, the participants commented that younger Arab females were now enjoying better conditions for development than the participants had experienced. They also spoke of their disappointment that in school they had not been encouraged to adopt leadership roles.

Almost all participants highlighted coaching as their preferred tool for development, and participants spoke of their disappointment that they had not engaged in coaching at an earlier stage in their leadership journey. Participants explained the direct impact of coaching on their leadership skills and development. They spoke of increasing self-awareness; space to self-reflect, to overcome their fears and weaknesses, and to increase their self-confidence by reflecting on their ability to perform and become a better person. They had experienced the coach as someone pushing them to get the best out of themselves, and helping them to find a way, so that together with the coach they could draw a map to achieve their goals. These experiences are consistent with Passmore's (2010, p.7) proposals for ways in which coaching can contribute to leadership development: transferring learning from theory to the workplace; enhancing skills; developing greater self-awareness; enhancing motivation; developing confidence and self-regard; and improving wellbeing. The experiences are also compatible with those in Simpson's (2008) study, where the participants' increased confidence from coaching led to new thinking, new tools, strategies and knowledge, and new behaviour.

Implications for practice and future research

This study illuminated the experiences of eight female leaders in the Arab world. Similar research could be conducted to study the experiences of other self-identified groups. The study also highlighted the need for personal and professional development opportunities to support female leadership. Coaching is identified by some of the participants as an appropriate and positive intervention in this context. It is clear that the eight female Arab leaders in the study faced significant challenges, which go beyond the challenges of their male counterparts and involve barriers specific to their culture and societies. We therefore tentatively propose that coaching has the potential to contribute to the leadership development of female Arab leaders. Coaching may give individual female leaders the opportunity to craft their own 'one-size-fits-one' roadmap at an early stage of their development journey.

Further research is needed on the role of coaching in increasing the individual leadership potential of females. In particular, it may be valuable to conduct qualitative research about the experience of using Ershad coaching, a model of coaching proposed by van Nieuwerburgh and Allaho (2017) for coaching in Islamic cultures, which may allow female leaders to grow and develop in ways that are appropriate for faith and society.

Limitations

To the authors' knowledge this study is the first published interpretative phenomenological analysis of the developmental experience of female leaders in the Arab world, and a number of limitations and weaknesses should be acknowledged. The language barrier was a limitation in the study. All participants were native Arabic speakers who were given the choice of conducting the interview in Arabic or English. All participants chose

English. During the interviews participants took their time to answer some of the questions. Because the interviewer is an Arabic speaker, occasionally she found it difficult to prevent herself from prompting the participants to find their words in English. Therefore, it is possible that participants' answers to the questions may have been different if the interviews had been conducted in their first language. In addition, the participants were successful female leaders recalling their experiences, so there may have been an element of hindsight bias (Evers Browers & Tomic, 2006).

The use of IPA is a consideration, rather than a limitation. It was appropriate for interpreting the participants' accounts of their experiences, and it enabled the researcher to gather idiographic accounts. However, IPA researchers focus on the particular rather than the universal (Smith, 1995), and IPA does not permit generalisation. This study does not seek to generalise; instead, it offers idiographic data that is of practical relevance to practitioners and clients, potentially pointing the way to further practice-focused research and larger scale studies.

Conclusion

Through an exploration of the experiences of eight female leaders in the Arab world, this study tentatively concludes that coaching may be a useful intervention to support aspiring female Arab leaders. Evidently, aspiring female Arab leaders are having a positive impact despite perceived challenges. Further consideration and new research into the social and cultural factors and workplace challenges identified by the participants may provide valuable insights and suggest culturally-appropriate practical adaptations that will unlock the potential of female leadership in the Arab world.

Maya Mattar, Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Margaret Barr & Yannick Jacob
University of East London, UK

References

Aguirre, D., Cavanaugh, M.M. & Sabbagh, K. (2011). The future of female leaders in the Middle East. *Strategy Business, 63*, 98–77.

British Psychological Society (2009). *Code of ethics and conduct: Guidance published by the Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society*. Leicester: Author.

Elgamal, M.A. (2012). An empirical analysis of female leadership in the Arab world. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research, 5*, 95–102.

Evers, W.J.G., Brouwers, A. & Tomic, W. (2006). A quasi-experimental study on management coaching effectiveness. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research, 58*, 174–182.

Global Women's Forum (2016). *Global Women's Forum Dubai, 23–24 February*. Available at www.globalwomensforumdubai.com

Grant, A.M. (2012). The efficacy of coaching. In J. Passmore, D. Peterson & T. Freire (Eds.) *Wiley Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring* (pp.15–39). Chichester: Wiley.

Grant, A.M., Passmore, J., Cavanagh, M.J. & Parker, H.M. (2010). The state of play in coaching today: A comprehensive review of the field. *International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 25*(1), 125–167.

Grint, K. (2005). Problems, problems, problems: The social construction of 'leadership'. *Human Relations, 58*(1), 40–50.

Guillen, L. & Ibarra, H. (2010). *Seasons of a leader's development: Beyond a one-size fits all approach to designing interventions*. Abu Dhabi: INSEAD Case.

LeanIn.org & McKinsey&Company (2015). *Women in the workplace 2015*. Available at womenintheworkplace.com/2015

LeanIn.org & McKinsey&Company (2016). *Women in the workplace 2016*. Retrieved from womenintheworkplace.com/2016

Merriam, S.B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mintzberg, H. (2004). *Managers not MBAs: A hard look at the soft practice of managing and management development*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

Moran, T. (2016, 8 March). On International Women's Day UAE has many milestones to celebrate gender equality and political, economic, educational and social empowerment. *WAM Emirates News Agency*. Available at www.wam.ae/en/details/1395292530044

Mumford, M.D., Marks, M.A., Connelly, M.S. et al. (2000). Development of leadership skills: Experience and timing. *Leadership Quarterly, 11*(1), 87–114.

Passmore, J. (2010). Leadership coaching. In J. Passmore (Ed.) *Leadership coaching: Working with leaders to develop elite performance*. London: Kogan Page.

Passmore, J. & Fillery-Travis, A. (2011). A critical review of executive coaching research: A decade of progress and what's to come. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 4*(2), 70–88.

Paustian-Underdahl, S.C., Walker, L.S. & Woehr, D.J. (2014). Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 99*, 1129–1145.

Porter, L. & McLaughlin, G. (2006). Leadership and the organizational context: Like the weather? *Leadership Quarterly, 17*, 559–576.

Rosinski, P. (2010). *Global coaching: An integrated approach for long-lasting results.* London: Nicholas Brealey.

Simpson, M. (2008). *The impact of a short-term coaching programme on women in senior roles in a UK-based not for profit organisation.* Unpublished Master's thesis, Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen.

Smith, J.A (1995). Semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre & L. van Langenhove (Eds.) *Rethinking methods in psychology.* London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. (2009). Hermeneutics, human sciences and health: Linking theory and practice. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 2*, 3–11.

Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research.* London: Sage.

Smith, J.A. & Osborn, M. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp.53–80). London: Sage.

Theeboom, T. (2016). The current state of research. In C. van Nieuwerburgh (Ed.) *Coaching in professional contexts* (pp.187–197). London: Sage.

Theeboom, T., Beersma, B. & van Vianen, A.E. (2014). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching onindividual level outcomes in an organizational context. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 9*(1), 1–18.

Thomas, R., Cooper, M., Konar, E. et al. (2017). *Women in the workplace 2017.* McKinsey&Company and LeanIn.org. Available at womenintheworkplace.com

van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2017). Interculturally-sensitive coaching. In T. Bachkirova, G. Spence & D. Drake (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of coaching* (pp.439–452). London: Sage.

van Nieuwerburgh, C. & Allaho, R., (2017). *Coaching in Islamic culture: The principles and practice of Ershad.* London: Karnac.

Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method.* London: Sage.

CPIG Chair's report

Vicki de Prazer

IN CONVERSATIONS within the Australian Coaching Psychology community, we acknowledge that coaching has evolved significantly over the last decade, and we recognise our vision as psychologists involved in coaching must also expand.

Leadership remains a key focus, along with the maximisation of productivity and performance, balanced with health and well-being objectives.

However, the challenges of a constantly disrupted environment, made more complex by copious amounts of information and digital noise, means coaching expertise is increasingly sought across diverse industries and communities. Coaches are engaged to assist individuals and organisations to build resilience in response to progressive disruption, to encourage innovation, to assist in the effective utilisation of digital resources and to pursue self-actualisation.

This raises the question of how is an evidence based, theoretical and psychologically informed approach to coaching ensured. This is a question that must be shared and explored by the global coaching community.

In line with this reality the Coaching Psychology Interest Group has rethought the Congress we had been planning for late 2018 and have now partnered with the Queensland University of Technology's Business School and are planning for a Congress for June 2019. We invite divergent thinkers to address the issues of disruption in a digital world.

We will keep you informed about this event on our website, via social media and via correspondence within the global coaching community.

Our state committees have throughout the last six months continued to offer fantastic PD opportunities for members via face-to-face workshops and teleconferences. In the next 12 months we seek to expand our personal development options by connecting more with the global community. We would like to compile a series of pre-recorded conversations around a set of questions exploring the challenges of disruption and a digital world, and in turn share these with the wider coaching community.

Vicki de Prazer

SGCP Chair's Letter

David Webster

Enhancing the *Review*

Professor Jonathan Passmore, who you would have thought had had his fill of committee work at the Special Group in Coaching Psychology and wrestling with the vagaries of various publications, is firmly back as editor with his second publication as the editor of the *ICPR*. He has done a cracking job of refreshing the editorial board, with new editorial members from New Zealand, South Africa, Poland and France joining. These are all part of the *ICPR*'s efforts to increase its diversity and international profile. The team have also ben working to produce a new ethical publications policy, which is Committee on Publication Ethics compliant, while also working with the BPS team to improve the 'searchability' of the publication, and thus improve its accessibility to researchers interested in evidenced-based coaching.

Following the resignation of Professor Sandy Gordon, our Australian editor and the difficulties of the Australian Group in finding a replacement, Jonathan has created an editorial team to support the publication going forward. We welcome Natalie Lancer and Yi Ling Lai in the role of editorial assistants to the fold. They will be engaging our community – members, students and academics alike, to broaden the readership and engagement with the publication.

Dave Tee, editor of the *ICPR*'s sister publication, *The Coaching Psychologist* (*TCP*) has also been looking at ways to improve *TCP* publication, and continues to do a great job. Both editors remain keen to hear from you with ideas for publications or book reviews – please contact them directly.

Building the research base

Another important standard to build the knowledge base is led by Professor Sarah Corrie, who heads up our Research Team. Sarah and her colleagues will be showcasing a new SGCP offer in the Autumn. A recent SGCP membership survey told us that although practitioners were committed to sharing their learning, they were asking for support in understanding more about the research process, as well as how to go about using that learning to improve their practice and then be able to share that learning in as robust and meaningful way. This wellspring of experience, of members out in the field continually refining their craft and working with a whole variety of clients, is a critical resource for us all, so being able to tap into it would be wonderful. Through this offer, aimed at helping our members sharpen their research, we can expect to strengthen the SGCP as the leading coaching psychology research body in the UK, and make a valuable continuation to the wider coaching profession. It enhances our ability to truly be evidence-based in our work. Whether it be through publications, seminars, workshops and our conference, our position will be enhanced, and our broad and vibrant community strengthened.

Sharing our learning: Conference 2017 and 2018

You will see if you have dipped into *The Coaching Psychologist* that our latest conference was held in Birmingham in December 2017. It was very well received by those who were able to attend, and one piece of feedback was particularly welcome – that our conferences provide a depth and breadth of thinking and intellectual and practical challenge which

members crave. Our keynotes comprised leading academics and practitioners: Professor Devi Jankowicz who spoke eloquently on the work and application of George Kelly; Professor Tom Sensky who shared his leading-edge work as a psychiatrist on Chronic Embitterment; and Myles Downey shared his thinking on a coach's identity and the way forward for the coaching profession. Workshops with Dr Carole Pemberton on resilience and Nikki Williams on the menopause provided a practical and well researched contribution to our debates. Current doctorate students also generously shared their work in a session that went down very well and in a format that we will be using again in our next conference. Indeed, we were very pleased to be able to attract a good number of students at various stages of their studies and professional careers and from various disciplines.

Our next conference, will be a refreshed offer – we are moving the conference from December to June. We aim for this shift in timing to work better for a whole variety of reasons and we hope that even more will be able to come along. So our next conference, led by Dr Laura Rees-Davies, SGCP Chair Elect and Kazia Anderson, whom we welcomed to the Committee at the start of the year, will be in June 2019. It will contain two full days of workshops, symposia, research papers and presentations, and high-calibre keynotes. We are back in London and given that London is so often talked of being a travel hub, we hope also to attract the regular contributions from around the UK and from abroad – academics, students and practitioners alike. We very much look forward to welcoming you all to the conference, and hope that you are moved to come and share your thinking and your research, and contribute to the vibrant debates we shall, I am sure, have. There is plenty of time to submit your research if you would like to do that, but in the meantime, save the date – 6–7 June 2019, and go to our website for further details. We very much look forward to welcoming you.

David Webster

The British Psychological Society
Special Group in
Coaching Psychology

Call for papers

International Coaching Psychology Review
The case for evidenced-based coaching

The *ICPR* is an international publication with a focus on the theory, practice and research in the field of coaching psychology. Submission of academic articles, systematic reviews and other research reports which support evidence-based coaching are welcomed for this special issue.

Papers may include:

- Systematic reviews of the literature within an area of coaching practice (ie mindfulness coaching or cognitive behavioural coaching).
- Meta-analysis.
- Comprehensive reviews of the evidence within an area of practice, such as solution focus or team coaching.

Papers should be emailed to the Editor Jonathan Passmore

First draft to be submitted by:	30 January 2020
Peer review completed by:	30 March
Revisions completed by:	30 April
Sent to publishers:	30 May

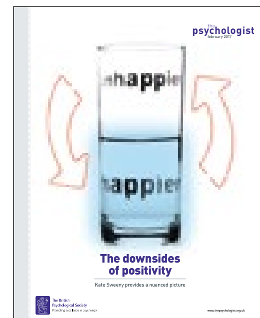
jonathancpassmore@yahoo.co.uk and will be subject to a peer review process.

For information on how to submit your manuscript, please visit www.bps.org.uk/sgcp and click 'Publications'

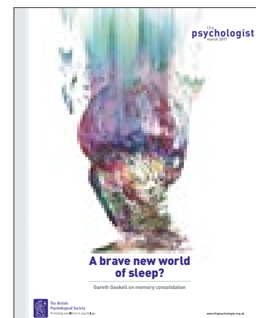
what can the psychologist do for you?

Access The Psychologist:
Your Psychologist, your way:
in addition to The Psychologist website at
http://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk, Society
members can read via app, digital edition and
more by logging in using their Society web
details at tinyurl.com/yourpsych.
Not a member? Become an E-subscriber
or Affiliate via www.bps.org.uk/join

Connect with The Psychologist:
Find us on Twitter (@psychmag)
and Facebook (tinyurl.com/psychmag).



Write for The Psychologist:
We publish a wide range of news, views,
reviews, interviews and much more.
To reach 50,000 psychologists,
see www.thepsychologist.org.uk/contribute



Advertise in The Psychologist:
Want to tell our large, prime
audience about a job, course,
conference or product?
See www.thepsychologist.org.uk/advertise

The British
Psychological Society

www.thepsychologist.org.uk

The British Psychological Society

Promoting excellence in psychology

Research. Digested. Free.

Now including **PODCAST** and **APP**

www.bps.org.uk/digest

'Easy to access and free, and a mine of useful information for my work: what more could I want? I only wish I'd found this years ago!'
Dr Jennifer Wild, Consultant Clinical Psychologist & Senior Lecturer, Institute of Psychiatry

'The selection of papers suits my eclectic mind perfectly, and the quality and clarity of the synopses is uniformly excellent.'
Professor Guy Claxton, University of Bristol

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.

  Passmore, J. (2010). A grounded theory study of the coachee experience: The implications for training and practice in coaching psychology. *International Coaching Psychology Review, 5*(1), 48–62.
- SI units must be used for all measurements, rounded off to practical values if appropriate, with the Imperial equivalent in parentheses.
- In normal circumstances, effect size should be incorporated.
- Authors are requested to avoid the use of sexist language.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc., for which they do not own copyright.

6. Brief reports

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

7. Publication ethics

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

8. Supplementary data

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

9. Post acceptance

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

10. Copyright

To protect authors and publications against unauthorised reproduction of articles, the British Psychological Society requires copyright to be assigned to itself as publisher, on the express condition that authors may use their own 'Accepted' version at any time without permission. For permission to reproduce 'Published' versions please email permissions@bps.org.uk. On acceptance of a paper, authors will be requested to sign an appropriate assignment of copyright form.

11. Checklist of requirements

As a general guide we would expect most papers to include the following sections, and approximate word lengths:

- Abstract (100–200 words – this should include a sentence or two summarising each of the main sections)
- Title page: Including title, author name, author affiliations, full contact details, a brief 25-word maximum bio)
- Full paper (4500–6000 words, double spaced with number pages and anonymised) including:
  - References
  - Tables, figures, captions and images (suitable for reproduction in black and white)

12. Ethical standards for publication

This publication has adopted a statement of compliance with COPE, as part of its ethical standards of publication. A copy of the policy can be downloaded from the ICPR website.

Contents

4 Editorial
Jonathan Passmore

Papers

6 The effectiveness of person-centered coaching intervention in raising emotional and social intelligence competencies in the workplace
Miselina A. Lemisiou

27 A dream of a retirement: The longitudinal experiences and perceived retirement wellbeing of recent retirees following a tailored intervention linking best possible self-expressive writing with goal-setting
Julie Round & Jolanta Burke

46 Crossing the line? A qualitative exploration of ICF master certified: Coaches' perception of roles, borders and boundaries
Carley Sime & Yannick Jacob

62 'Adjusting to that new norm': How and why maternity coaching can help with the transition back to work after maternity leave
Jane Moffett

77 A role for coaching to support leadership development? The experiences of female Arab leaders: An interpretative phenomenological analysis
Maya Mattar, Christian van Nieuwerburgh, Margaret Barr & Yannick Jacob

The SGCP Committee

87 CPIG Chair's report
Vicki de Prazer

88 SGCP Chair's Letter
David Webster

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK
t: 0116 254 9568 f: 0116 247 0787 e: mail@bps.org.uk w: www.bps.org.uk

© The British Psychological Society 2018
Incorporated by Royal Charter Registered Charity No 229642