



the british
psychological society
special group in
coaching psychology

International Coaching Psychology Review

Volume 14 No. 2 – Autumn 2019



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, Director,
Changeworks Pty Ltd, Sydney, Australia

Tatiana Bachkirova, PhD,
Oxford Brookes University, UK

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

Patricia Bossons, PhD, 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

Annette Fillery Travis
Head of the Wales Institute for
Work-based Learning, Wales

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

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

Suzy Green, Psych (Clin), The Positivity
Institute, and University of Melbourne

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

Rainer Kurz, PhD, Head of Research
Cubiks, UK

Ho Law, PhD, Cambridge Coaching
Psychology Group, UK

Terrance Maltbia, PhD, Columbia
University, USA

Michel Moral, HEC, Paris, France

Lindsay Oades, PhD, University of
Melbourne

Manfusa Shams, PhD, The Open
University

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

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.

Continued on inside back cover.

The British Psychological Society
Special Group in Coaching Psychology



International Coaching Psychology Review



Volume 14 No. 2 – Autumn 2019



Contents

- 4 **Editorial**
Jonathan Passmore

Papers

- 7 **Workplace stress in senior executives: Coaching the 'uncoachable'**
Caroline Rook, Thomas Hellwig, Elizabeth Florent-Treacy & Manfred Kets de Vries
- 24 **The impact of three forms of mindfulness training on mindfulness, wellbeing and goal attainment: Findings from a randomised-controlled trial and implications for coaching**
Gordon B. Spence & Michael J. Cavanagh
- 44 **Intentional personality change coaching: A four-year longitudinal study**
Jesse Martin-Allan, Peter Leeson & Lesley Sue Martin
- 56 **Family life coaching: A growing practice**
Kimberly I. Allen, Margaret Machara & Tara C. Baker
- 69 **Coaching psychology: Exploring definitions and research contribution to practice?**
Jonathan Passmore & Yi-Ling Lai
- 84 **Listening to your heart or head? – An interpretative phenomenological analysis of how people experienced making good career-decisions**
Gabriela Viorela Pop & Christian van Nieuwerburgh

Book Reviews

- 97 **An Introduction to Existential Coaching**
Yannick Jacob
Reviewed by Aboodi Shabi
- 99 **Advanced Coaching Practice: Inspiring Others to Change**
Christian van Nieuwerburgh & David Love
Reviewed by Jonathan Passmore
- 101 **Obituary – Professor David Gray**

Reports

- 102 **CPIG Australia National Chair's Report**
Vicki de Prazer
- 103 **SGCP Chair's Report**
Laura Rees-Davies

Editorial

Jonathan Passmore

IN THIS EDITION I am delighted to welcome Michael Cavanagh, University of Sydney, back to *ICPR* who joins me as co-editor. Michael has a long history of involvement with this journal dating back to its inception. After a spell away, he is now rejoining the editorial team bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to our work.

A second change to the team is a new partnership with the BPS, who from the next issue onwards will be providing project management support through Karen Goldsmith. All submissions should be submitted to the new *ICPR* address: ICPRsubmissions@bps.org.uk

We have also been continuing to add to our editorial team – bringing a stronger international feel to the board. A huge debt of thanks is due to the board who give their time for free, reviewing papers and providing support and guidance to myself, but also to contributors through their detailed feedback.

The final change is after 15 years of the journal, Dave Tee (editor of *The Coaching Psychologist*) and I have been collaborating over the past year, with help and suggestions from the editorial board, to select the best 25 papers. These have been collated into a new book to be published by Wiley; *Coaching Researched*. The papers will also be available through Wiley's online platform. Our aim through this project is to share coaching psychology research with new audiences. The royalty income will be returned to the BPS for reinvestment in future projects.

We have been making other changes to the journal. This has included extending our partners to other psychological societies. Our most recent additions are the members of the New Zealand Psychological Society.

This is all part of a wider plan to build collaboration across the coaching psychology field, sharing knowledge, research and expertise, to build a truly international community through the national professional bodies, which regulate and supervise our profession.

If you are an *ICPR* reader, and a member of a professional coaching psychology body outside of the UK, we would be delighted to hear from you. We are always interested in exploring ways the UK's Special Group in Coaching Psychology can collaborate with other coaching psychologists across the world.

Now, turning to the last issue on NLP coaching. As we hoped, this provoked significant discussion. I have received more emails about this issue than any other issue of the journal. My belief is that by including contentious papers, we can stimulate your thinking and encourage greater debate about what makes science, knowledge and evidence in the field of coaching. You can expect more of this in future issues.

This brings us nicely to future issues. We have a current call for papers out for systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses across the field of coaching. As we look to other fields, there has been a wealth of high quality randomised control trials (RCT) published which have informed the development of evidenced based practice. In coaching we are still struggling to reach 50 such papers. Further in other fields, such as medicine or counselling, systematic literature reviews and meta-analysis papers have become common place – in coaching we so far only have four meta-analysis papers and two systemic reviews. If our desire is to see coaching as an evidenced based discipline, we as a community must work harder in our

research using such methods to drive up the quality of research.

Now, finally, to the current edition, which contains the usual diverse range of papers, including papers on stress, mindfulness and coaching for personality change. In addition, we have a special paper continuing the work by the SGCP committee exploring the nature and boundaries of coaching psychology.

We hope you enjoy this issue.

Correspondence

Jonathan Passmore

Henley Centre for Coaching,
Henley Business School, UK
& University of Evora, Portugal.
Email: j.passmore@henley.ac.uk



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 ICPRsubmissions@bps.org.uk and will be subject to a peer review process.

Issue	Copy to publisher by
Spring 2020	1 December 2019
Autumn 2020	26 May 2020

**For information on how to submit your manuscript,
please visit www.bps.org.uk/sgcp and click 'Publications'**

Workplace stress in senior executives: Coaching the 'uncoachable'

Caroline Rook, Thomas Hellwig, Elizabeth Florent-Treacy & Manfred Kets de Vries

Purpose: Workplace stress is becoming an acknowledged problem, and employee assistance programmes are widely invested into reducing workplace stress. However, there is still a group of people who are neglected: senior executives. There is a taboo among this group about admitting to overwhelming stress, as the executives themselves can consider it a sign of weakness. Executive coaches often pick up symptoms of underlying stress, including sleep deprivation, or substance abuse in leadership development programmes or executive coaching sessions. However, unless the coach is a trained stress expert, medical doctor, or psychotherapist, he or she may feel unequipped to help a senior executive deal with stress. This article introduces an interpretative protocol to gauge senior executive stress to flag up potential stress issues and areas to be addressed in coaching or by health professionals.

Methods: Based on a literature review on common workplace stress factors and symptoms, we identified five areas in which senior executive stress may arise. In a next step, following a psychodynamic approach, we developed an interpretative protocol that can be used in conversational or observational approach to gauge stress in these areas.

Conclusions: Our intent was to achieve a delicate balance between flexibility, face validity, and academic rigour. The protocol helps the coach to detect and interpret stress indicators despite possible self-deception and impression management by the coachee.

Keywords: Executives, stress, psychodynamic lens, executive coaching, taboo.

STRESS among executives is an increasing challenge for individuals, teams, and organisations as executives face high job demands and high work intensity (Cavanaugh et al., 2000). Although the consequences of 'life in the fast lane' for health and wellbeing such as insomnia, exhaustion, and depression are well known (Nyberg et al., 2015), high-profile cases still tend to shock and surprise the public; e.g. Zurich Financial's CFO; Swisscom's CEO, who committed suicide in 2013 allegedly because of unbearable work pressure; the CEOs of Lloyds Bank and AkzoNobel, who were diagnosed with severe fatigue in 2011 and 2012 respectively (for a detailed case description see Rook et al., 2015). Calls have been made in the academic literature to consider stress issues in leadership development in order

to maintain the wellbeing of leaders (e.g. Lovelace et al., 2007; Campbell, Innis-Bates, Martin & Meddings, 2007). In addition, although we know that burnout may occur if an individual denies experiencing strain, and fails to muster the resources to create resilience (Campbell Quick et al., 2008), the specific context of stress at senior executive level is an increasing problem that does not seem to be adequately addressed.

Leaders' health problems can also have a negative impact on the share price of organisations and on the trust of employees and shareholders in the ability of the leader (Florent-Treacy & Manzoni, 2012; Steinglass, 2012). For example, when Ton Buechner (CEO of AkzoNobel) went on sick-leave due to fatigue, the company's shares dropped and the following headlines could be read

in the media: 'If this could be more serious, it's a bad thing. But if it's just temporary, people will wonder whether he's able to head the company's transformation as there's so much still to be done' (Mutlu Gundogan, analyst at ABN Amro, as cited in Bloomberg, September 18, 2012). Then, '[o]n announcement that Ton Buchner will return at the end of the year the shares went up 3.7% (to 44.32 Euros)' (Reuters, October 17, 2012).

Taboos are a universal feature of social systems, first described by Captain Cook in 1777 when discovering Tonga, referring to the tacit constraints on what can be said and even thought (Schoemaker & Tetlock, 2012). Talking about individual stress appears to be taboo among executives (Florent-Treacy & Manzoni, 2012): tough executives do not talk about stress as something to be feared but rather as something to be proud of. To take one high profile case, when António Horta-Osório (CEO of Lloyds Banking Group) suddenly collapsed in a board meeting in 2011, everyone, including Horta-Osório, himself was caught by surprise. Although Horta-Osório later described that period in detail – saying that he hadn't slept for five days due to work stress – at the time of his collapse, the serious nature of his stress level had gone undetected: 'Lloyds boss goes sick with "stress": Shock departure' (*The Daily Mail*, November 3, 2011).

We focus on senior executives in this article because they appear to be particularly susceptible to high levels of stress. It is seen as normal for executives to be under constant pressure, sleep four hours a night, and work during weekends. But the behaviour that propelled them to the top may have a downside. Senior executives themselves admit that any sign of fatigue or stress could have a negative impact on their career progression. As Bailey (2014) noted: 'Executives may worry that colleagues would snicker if they knew about [the executive's] stamp collection or daily meditation sessions. These vital activities [that allow for renewal/stress

reduction] might be perceived as signs of weakness.' Many executives believe this may compromise their career progression and professional success. This hints at another problem, which is the syndrome of 'loneliness at the top.' Most executives will admit to having a very limited number of people they consider peers. This limits the opportunities to discuss increasingly dangerous levels of stress.

As a result, despite the highly visible cautionary tales, most executives either deny or belittle the problem: stress applies to others but not themselves. In addition, boards and key shareholders are not equipped to cope with the problems that could arise if they acknowledge that a highly visible top performer is at risk. We call this phenomenon the 'taboo of executive stress'. Unfortunately, the normalisation of executive stress strengthens the taboo and distorts the fact that excessive negative stress is dysfunctional, and eventually may lead to burnout.

To sum up, despite the plethora of leadership training, workshops, coaching, and other opportunities for people to address stress in the workplace, senior executive stress continues to go unrecognised due to resistance both from the organisation, and from the at-risk individuals themselves. Thus, a rigorous approach to flag up potential stress issues in executives is needed. Stress and leadership development inventories do not always pick up on stress issues be it from a lack of self-awareness, or as a result of self-deception and the expectations and pressures of the system of which the executive is a part. A common language and robust protocol is needed to develop, and increase the confidence of executive coaches who are often the first in line to be confronted with stress-impacted managers but are not trained stress experts, psychotherapists or medical doctors. Limits of the current work-related stress evaluation tools are that they disregard the unaware and unconscious aspects of work experience. A psychodynamic approach to

stress would allow examining the individual experience of work and how it influences levels of performance and health at work. Psychodynamic scholars, for example, highlight personal agency in the stress experience and the importance of contextualising it within the person's life experience as a whole (e.g. Driver, 2014). One may actually enjoy stress if it is directly linked with an important goal (Bicknell, 2010 & Liefvooghe, 2010) or the satisfaction of a psychological need. Firefighters, for instance, may enjoy the stress and strain of rushing into a burning building to save someone. The enjoyment comes from the adrenaline rush and feelings of accomplishment during and after the rescue mission. For the firefighter, this can be a meaningful and therefore positive experience. We also observe in other helping professions a secondary gain through stressful situations and the existence of the rescuer syndrome (Kets de Vries, 2010).

Given what we have learned about stress, we need to explore the topic in a systemic manner in order to evaluate whether the experienced stress has negative consequences such as burnout or can be seen as a challenge, i.e. an opportunity for positive change.

Based on a psychodynamic approach, we developed an interpretive protocol that aims to achieve a delicate balance between flexibility, validity with the coachee, and academic rigour. It is designed to provide professionals – who find themselves coaching people with high stress levels (without being stress experts, medical doctors, or psychotherapists) – with a rigorous framework to gauge executive stress. While providing guidelines to enable executive coaches to overcome the taboo, the protocol is not intended as a form of prevention or treatment but rather is designed to highlight areas of potential concern and provide information on ways to create resilience. Thus, the protocol is not intended to formally diagnose stress but to highlight potential areas of stress that could be addressed in coaching or indeed might need to be addressed by a health professional.

Below we present the common manifestations of executive stress and the challenges of evaluating stress, before outlining how we developed the protocol and the psychodynamic lens on collecting and interpreting data as the base of the new interpretative protocol and making recommendations for its use in practice.

Manifestations of executive stress

In this section we introduce different stress models and provide an overview of common stress issues of executives. We do not aim to provide a detailed literature review on workplace stress antecedents, symptoms, and outcomes but rather to outline areas of the workplace stress experience that are relevant for executives. Excellent reviews of workplace and executive stress (from an organisational psychology perspective) are provided, for example, by Campbell Quick and colleagues (2008) and Dewe, Cooper, and Driscoll (2001).

What is stress?

Stress can be conceptualised as a feature in the external environment or as an individual's psychological, behavioural, and physical response to environmental demands. The latter approach resembles the most influential stress theory, called the transactional model (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), according to which stress comes from the interaction between the environment and the individual and does not reside exclusively in either. The transactional approach states that stress is psychologically mediated, connecting the individual's subjective impression of stress to systemic demands often related to perception of loss of control and lack of support (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Performance issues might be perceived as the most prevalent source of stress for executives. However, it is the impression of having lost control over a situation or lacking the resources to achieve the performance target that determines whether an individual experiences stress; the feeling of an inability to cope (Karasek, 1979).

Other existing theoretical models of work-related stress also see stress as a product of the (im)balance between demands and the individual's perceived resources. The occupational stress literature argues that employees experience physical and mental health issues due to excessive job demands, coupled with a lack of control over their work and inadequate resources such as social support (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Van der Doef & Maes, 1999).

The Effort Reward Imbalance (ERI) Model (Siegrist, 1996), on the other hand, puts its emphasis on reward rather than control on how one's experiences work. The model outlines that two characteristics, effort to cope at work (e.g. external stimuli of workload, internal stimuli of over-commitment), and occupational rewards (e.g. salary, job security, self-esteem) are relevant for the stress experience. An imbalance between effort and reward (i.e. high effort and low reward) leads to distress and eventually strain.

Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) also highlighted the importance of integrating the social context (i.e. interactions with others inside and outside work and the broader work environment) into (work characteristics) models that explain the stress experience at work. By doing so, they added to the existing work characteristics models and considered new mediators and moderators: knowledge, social characteristics, and contextual characteristics.

Current theoretical developments divide these work characteristics into job demands and job resources (e.g. job-demand-resources model; JD-R model; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job resources such as social support are work characteristics that buffer stress. In contrast, job demands such as high workload or lack of control undermine wellbeing. Job resources are defined by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) as physical, psychological, social, and organisational aspects of a job that are required to achieve a goal, reduce job demands and costs, and stimulate growth

and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001).

In addition to job resources, personal resources and their role in the stress experience are also examined in the stress and wellbeing literature. Diener (1994), Warr and Clapperton (2009), Daniels (2011), and Warr (2013) amongst others point to the relevance of individual characteristics such as personality traits (extraversion and neuroticism) and to cognitive behaviour (such as comparisons in relation to work demands of fellow employees) as antecedents of stress and there is also research on the role of resources of the individual for maintaining and enhancing wellbeing (see Hobfoll, 2002). The study of resources goes back to the 1960s when Caplan (1964) explored how individuals preserve wellbeing in wartime, highlighting a resource that is an aspect of the self (sense of mastery) and a resource that is an aspect of an individual's social environment (social support). Other resources of individuals that have been researched widely in psychology are self-esteem and goal pursuit (see Hobfoll, 2002).

Antecedents and moderators of executive stress

Today's work trends include longer working hours and increasing managerial demands and leaders can be seen as having an exponentially higher experience of these pressures as they have more demands and responsibilities due to their position (Lovelace et al., 2007). The most stressful leadership challenges were lack of resources and time.

Yet, while it is commonly presumed that the higher one rises in the leadership hierarchy, the more the pressure and stress increase, past research has found that leaders experience less stress than their subordinates, and that 'higher ranking' leaders experience less stress than 'lower ranking' leaders (Zaleznik et al., 1977). Sherman and colleagues (2012) compared leaders with non-leaders in terms of their stress levels (self-rated anxiety level and cortisol level)

and found that leaders were less stressed. Furthermore, those higher up the leadership hierarchy experienced less stress than leaders lower in the hierarchy. They tested whether the sense of control mediated the relation between leadership level and the stress experience and found that it did. They argued that for leaders higher in the hierarchy, the existence of a large number of subordinates as well as a sense of substantial authority contributed to the sense of control.

In the literature on executive health (Campbell Quick et al., 2008), particular individual characteristics that contribute to the executives' experience of negative stress are workaholism, anxiety, neuroticism, low tolerance for ambiguity, and type A behaviour. Individual behaviours of executives that have been found to lead to negative stress are physical inactivity, unhealthy eating habits, and substance abuse (alcohol and cigarettes). Particular stressors for executives outside of work seem to be home-work pressures such as family problems and work-life conflict. Prevalent work characteristics for executives leading to stress seem to be work overload, travel, conflicts with colleagues, role ambiguity, career stress, organisational and executive culture such as merger and acquisition conflicts.

Impact of stress on healthy functioning and performance of executives

Psychological strain is a common outcome of work stress (van der Doef & Maes, 1999). Forms of psychological strain include depression, anxiety, and exhaustion. Psychological strain has also been linked to physiological and behavioural side effects. Physiological outcomes of stress include 'cardiovascular, biochemical, and gastro-intestinal symptoms (Cooper et al., 2001), such as high blood pressure and heart attacks (Ganster & Schaubroeck, 1991). Particularly for executives, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and a high heart rate are prevalent physiological stress symptoms (Cooper et al., 2001).

Behavioural strain is another outcome

of stress and refers to the ways in which stress causes an individual to act. Examples are antisocial behaviour that includes work role disruptions, aggressive behaviour at work, disruptions to non-working life and self-damaging behaviours (Kahn & Byosiére, 1992) such as excessive drinking and smoking (Cooper et al., 2001).

'Burnout is a particular risk for executives and is the result of energy loss without recovery' (Cambell Quick et al., 2008, p.31). It leads to a loss in connectedness and productivity (Leiter & Maslach, 1988) as it is characterised by exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001).

Evaluating executive stress

Traditional evaluation approaches

There are challenges to measuring stress: any assessment relates to a moment in time and many stress evaluation tools are self-reports in the form of questionnaire responses. Stressors are measured on a scale that captures the experience of critical life events (Social Readjustment Rating Scale; SRRS; Holmes & Rahe, 1967; SRRS-R; Hobson et al., 1998), daily hassles (Hassles and Uplift Scale; Kanner et al., 1981; Daily Stress Inventory; DSI; Brantley et al., 1987), or presence/absence of work characteristics (e.g. control and demand questionnaire; Karasek, 1985). The stress experience or coping ability is measured on scales such as the Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1983) or Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Krohne et al., 1996). In the physiological stress research, indicators of stress include measures of cortisol levels, heart rate, and blood pressure (Everly & Lating, 2013).

As stress is often measured through self-reports, evaluating senior executive stress is particularly challenging due to the self-deception and impression management prevalent among many executives. However, stress manifests itself in ways that can also be evaluated by observers rather than just listening to what the person has to say (Cranwell-Ward & Abbey, 2005), such as

thought patterns, emotional and behavioural reactions, and physical symptoms (Health and Safety Executive; HSE, n.d.).

A psychodynamic approach to evaluating stress

Applying a psychodynamic approach to the study of organisations, in particular to executive stress, helps to identify core issues as this approach identifies processes that underlie human behaviour (Kets de Vries, 2004, 2011). The psychodynamic approach addresses conscious and unconscious aspects of individual and collective behaviour, enabling to address emotional, relational, and political issues (French & Vince, 1999) that would otherwise not be identified.

As outlined, using simple surveys limits understanding of the individual's stress experience due to possible denial and impression management. Furthermore, most surveys capture responses on Likert-scales on pre-formed answer options but do not check how the individual experiences and copes with stress depending on the context they are operating in. A more qualitative, holistic approach to understanding the stress concept can, however, explore how individual characteristics and environmental factors interact with each other. By looking at individual characteristics through a psychodynamic lens (inner theatre – typical cognitive, emotional response patterns, past experiences) (see Kets de Vries & Cheak, 2015) and including context factors through a systemic approach (focus on environmental characteristics in a multitude of layers and interactions with each other), more information will be gathered. Examples of individual, environmental, and systemic factors are the socio-demographic attributes of the individual, characteristics of the individual's support system (family, peers, organisational climate), scope and pervasiveness of stressors (acute, chronic, perceived intensity), individual's experience of support system (past experience with stress and coping), availability of resources

and coping strategies, and situational facilitators and hindrances.

In addition, an interpretative approach (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) can capture the subjective reality of executive stress through a process of interaction by focusing on how people perceive what happens to them, on what events and objects mean to them, and on how they adapt their behaviour. It underlines that a brief moment of experience holds endless information that is embedded within different strata of awareness (Polkinghorne, 1983) and also enables the exploration of conscious and unconscious aspects of people's experience (Long & Harding, 2013).

Socio-analytical methods (Long & Harding, 2013), for example, allow for reflection and use signs to create working hypotheses about the unconscious background of certain behaviour and experiences. Socio-analytic interviewing (Long & Harding, 2013), for example, expands the traditional social science approach to interviewing (where the interviewer pays attention to the content, emotional texture and body language of the interviewee's expressed experience) by including signs of unconscious phenomena that affect the interviewee's experience. Defences can be detected which are normally used to enable functioning but are in fact dysfunctional, and lead to negative outcomes for the individual. Indications of what kind of defences are used, can be found in the interview context, such as slips of the tongue, issues that are left out, incongruence between the affect displayed and content of a response, or repeated lateness for the interview (Long & Harding, 2013). Furthermore, there is also such a thing as unconscious communication (e.g. Sandler, 2008) between coach and coachee that will provide useful data (transference and countertransference processes). Hence the interviewer has to be not only proficient in traditional interview skills but also skilfully leverage the use of a psychodynamic lens in conversations: active listening, prompting for

more detail, and careful observation are key (Long & Harding, 2013). Reflective practice is particularly useful to tune into the unexpressed or unthought known (Hinshelwood, 2013). Based on the outlined stress experience of executives and the psychodynamic approach to collecting data in conversations (i.e. not a psychodynamic tool or therapy approach), we now outline the Stress APGAR protocol.

The Stress APGAR Protocol

Due to taboo surrounding executive stress, our objective to 'collect data' on senior executive stress is to gather it on two levels in a coaching conversation. First, factual responses to symptoms of stress, clues from the context/surroundings and appearance of the person; second, how the person responds/reacts to specific questions (defences, silences, perception of control etc.). The unthought known and reoccurring themes can be discovered this way (Long & Harding, 2013).

The interpretation of the data should be theory driven (Long & Harding, 2013). We therefore use the RADIO indicators (adapted from Kernberg, 1980) as a lens through which responses of the coachee should be interpreted: (1) reality testing (e.g. is the person sufficiently in touch with what is happening around him or her?); (2) affect management (e.g. do they show stable and appropriate emotions when answering the various questions?); (3) defences (e.g. what kind of defences are used: primitive or more mature defences?); (4) sense of identity (e.g. does the person know what he or she stands for?); and (5) object relations (e.g. does the person have a rich or deficient network of relations with others?)

We chose the name 'Stress APGAR' for the protocol to highlight that it is similar to the APGAR neonatal assessment used by paediatricians and obstetricians for over 50 years (Casey et al., 2001; Zieve & Kaneshiro, 2011); it is easy to recall; it is quick; it indicates the danger zones that require urgent

professional attention; and it is well-known. The neonatal APGAR score does not claim to be absolutely precise or to detect the origin of the distress of the newborn baby; it aims to highlight the need for action for those identified as being in the danger zone. The assessment needs to be done by a trained and experienced health care provider, can be carried out in a relatively short time frame, and must be repeated frequently to notice the change of the wellbeing of the baby.

Our developed Stress APGAR has a similar objective: we want it to be relatively easy to use for an experienced practitioner (e.g. coach, counsellor, mentor), repeatedly carried out to assess changes in wellbeing over time. It is not a coaching tool or assessment tool or diagnosis instrument but an interpretative conversation protocol that can be used for the initial coaching-contracting conversation to allow the coach to determine the degree of stress concerns in terms of the client's health and functioning, and to judge the appropriateness of coaching as opposed to involving other helping professionals (psychotherapists or even doctors). Furthermore, the Stress APGAR determines whether there are particular areas that might be useful to explore in coaching to facilitate a well-functioning and resilient professional and personal life. It can be used in a coaching conversation that is designed to evaluate and discuss problems with stress and assess changes of the levels of stress over time. The protocol gives an overview of antecedents, symptoms, and outcomes that should be considered when aiming to address senior executive stress.

After we established the purpose and functioning of the Stress APGAR, we conducted a systematic literature review in order to establish antecedents, symptoms, and outcomes of stress (e.g. Cranwell-Ward & Abbey, 2005; Michie, 2002; Quick Campbell et al., 2001; HSE, n.d.). Indeed, the identified stress indicators fit into five categories starting with the initials A, P, G, A, and R. In these five categories we assembled aspects

of executives' stress experience in terms of job demands (e.g. such as work challenges, difficult work relationships, organisational climate) and resources (e.g. development opportunities, positive work relationships) and individual characteristics (e.g. personality characteristics) and resources (e.g. health behaviours), symptoms of stress in the areas of physiological (e.g. weight gain, sleep quality) and psychological (e.g. lack of concentration, lack of creativity) symptoms, and social resources (e.g. supporting relationships inside and outside of work). The purpose of the Stress APGAR protocol is not to provide systematic review/overview of all established antecedents, symptoms, outcomes and moderators of workplace stress but rather to provide an indicative overview for coaches and other professionals. The five categories are: (A detailed overview of indicators for each dimension is given in the appendix.)

1. Appearance (e.g. sleep patterns, eating habits/weight control, exercise, energy levels, hypertension).
2. Performance (e.g. ability to take decisions, concentration and memory, innovation capability, generating new ideas).
3. Growth and self-development (e.g. satisfaction with opportunities for personal growth and learning – too much? not enough?).
4. Affect management (e.g. ability to feel, understand, control and show emotions appropriately).
5. Relationships (e.g. perceived quantity and quality of relationships with life partner, family, friends and with professional peers and superior).

The protocol is used as a guideline for the coach to look for signs of stress through skilful interviewing and observation techniques that can be learned over time. There are no particular questions to be asked, but the objective is to uncover stress symptoms or information based on observation

and active listening. In order to check face validity of the protocol, we presented the developed protocol to 23 executive coaches at a leading European Business School and to 20 participants at the 32nd IPSO Annual Meeting (International Society for Psychoanalytic Study of Organizations) and invited feedback on the Stress dimensions and practicality of the tool. They agreed with the presented Stress dimensions and some participants in both groups highlighted two key aspects that should be considered when using the protocol. First, in relation to skilful interviewing based not on asking specific questions but gathering information through having a general conversation, observation, and active listening, they highlighted that it is important to speak the language of the executive. For example, talking about what currently impairs their performance is relevant for the executive and gives insights into potential stressors. Second, it might also be important to highlight in a conversation particularly with executives who may experience high levels of stress, that their stress does not signify a personal failure. For example, asking 'Can you see how these organisational problems are coming down to you?' might create a conversation and reflections on this.

In order to get to a realistic assessment of a person's functioning (and make interpretations from the insights collected) we suggest using RADIO indicators in order to interpret the 'factual data' and observations from the coaching conversation. The RADIO framework enables the coach to make sense of the data collected in the interview through a psychodynamic lens rather than just considering the cognitive 'facts'. One can look for signs of stress or depression by, for example, registering responses that are extremely positive or flat to a question about how they are generally doing, for references to having low energy, sleep problems or gastrointestinal issues; physical indicators such as being over- or underweight or having a strained complexion (physiological symptoms associated with stress and depression). Seemingly

unimportant details such as the executive forgetting what question was asked several times (a possible sign of the use of defence mechanism or mental confusion) are indicators that further evaluation of possible stress problems is going to be useful. For detailed case vignettes, see Rook et al. (2015). In order to check whether the RADIO framework indeed is a useful interpretation approach in conjunction with the Stress APGAR dimensions, we provided instructions to four executive coaches who used the conversation protocol during a leadership development programme. We had offered to the participants of a general management programme to engage in a voluntary stress coaching session of 45 minutes in the third and last module with a coach not previously known to them. The coaches did not have any deeper knowledge about the context and the real objective of the participant. The experienced coaches involved in the study received a short briefing about the psychodynamic interpretative stress evaluation method the day before they met the participants for the first time. The sessions were entitled as stress coaching but entirely voluntary. A third of all participants of the programme chose to participate. Two case vignettes were provided by one of the participating coaches and are described in detail by Rook et al. (2016). In debriefing conversations with the participating coaches, they indeed confirmed that the protocol is useful not in terms of providing coachees with all the 'answers', but rather to encourage them to reflect upon their observations and interpret their impressions frequently. This needs to occur within a safe and supported environment provided by the coach or development professional. Certain assessments and interpretations made through the use of the Stress APGAR by the coach also need to be reviewed within the supervision of the coach in order to avoid certain biases and ensure professional use of the protocol. In supervision, it can be discussed, for example, how the RADIO dimensions were applied for the

interpretation of conversations and observations of the coaching session. Overall, the successful application of the RADIO dimensions depend on the psychodynamic training of the coach.

Recommendations for future practice

In summary, the Stress APGAR adds several new aspects to the field of stress management. First, not only 'facts' and self-perceptions regarding stress are looked at. The conversation with the coachee enables the coach to interpret the answers on multiple levels. With the help of the Stress APGAR protocol, a person's defences and coping behaviours, which might influence the trajectory of the stress experience can be determined. Second, the format of this protocol is new. It is not a clinical interview but can be administered in 'normal' situations and in the 'normal' environment of the executive, for example, during an existing coaching engagement or as part of a developmental training. This way, the stress experience can be more or less reliably gaged despite (1) the taboo of executive stress and (2) the unconscious repression of stress signs and their psychosomatic responses. Furthermore, the protocol helps to prepare for successful coaching on stress issues by identifying issues linked to the 'knowing-doing-gap'. Although there are self-assessment stress tests and books for executives on how to identify and deal with stress, no approaches exist which help (in a coaching conversation) to move the senior executive to a place where they are ready for change.

The protocol can also be used by experienced professionals in a non-coaching context to determine whether there are concerns, in terms of the person's health and functioning. For example, HR or development professionals could pick up on signs of possible stress and initiate a conversation with the individual to determine whether further help is needed. Employers have a duty of care for employees and relevant individuals should be able to detect warning

signs in order to ensure the welfare of their employees. Having said that, to use the protocol in its full functionality, i.e. using RADIO as interpretive lens, professionals who use the protocol would need adequate psychodynamic training.

Conclusions

The protocol introduced here uses a psychodynamic lens for gaging stress in order to allow for stress indicators to be detected by coach and coachee, even if there is possible lack of self-awareness, and in the presence of self-deception or impression management. It indicates high risk and points to areas that may require professional attention. This kind of conversational protocol is, in our experience, non-threatening, and can provide a starting point for a more explicit discussion of how the executive is feeling.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the support of the Dutch Alumni Research Fellow in Leadership, Diversity, and Governance.

Caroline Rook, Thomas Hellwig, Elizabeth Florent-Treacy & Manfred Kets de Vries

Caroline Rook

Caroline is a Lecturer at Henley Business School. Her research relates to creating healthy workplaces. She has been involved in research and practice related to leadership, wellbeing and coaching at Lord Ashcroft International Business School, INSEAD and University of Exeter.

Thomas Hellwig

Thomas works as a researcher, teachers and programme director for INSEAD in the field of Organisational Behaviour. He is a trained physician with a doctorate in psychotherapy and an MBA from INSEAD. He is also a graduate of the Tavistock Institute for group relations (London).

Elizabeth Florent-Treacy

Elizabeth is a Senior Lecturer and Dutch Alumni Research Fellow in Leadership, Diversity, and Governance and Thesis Director – INSEAD Executive MA in Change. Elizabeth's research focuses on best practices in leadership development, authentic leadership, and the links between narrative writing and identity work. She also works as an Executive Coach and programme facilitator in the areas of leadership development and family business, and she is trained in individual and group coaching with senior executives (INSEAD Diploma in Clinical Organizational Psychology, and MA with Distinction).

Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries

Manfred is the Distinguished Clinical Professor of Leadership Development and Organisational Change and the Raoul de Vitry d'Avaucourt Chaired Professor of Leadership Development, Emeritus, at INSEAD. He is the founder of the INSEAD Global Leadership Centre.

Correspondence

Caroline Rook

Henley Business School,
University of Reading, UK
c.rook@henley.ac.uk

References

- Bailey, J. (2014). Why leaders don't brag about successfully managing stress. *HBR Blog*. Retrieved from <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/10/why-leaders-dont-brag-about-successfully-managing-stress/> (accessed 22 May 2015).
- Bakker, A.B. & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328.
- Bicknell, M. & Liefoghe, A. (2010). Enjoy your stress! Using Lacan to enrich transactional models of stress. *Organization*, 17(3), 317–330.
- Campbell, M., Innis Bates, J., Marin, A. & Meddings, K. (2007). *The stress of leadership*. Center for Creative Leadership. Retrieved from www.ccl.org
- Campbell Quick, J., Cooper, C.L., Gavin, J.H. & Quick, J.D. (2008). *Managing executive health. Personal and corporate strategies for sustained success*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Caplan, G. (1964). *Principles of preventative psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books.
- Casey, B.M., McIntire, D.D. & Leveno, K.J. (2001). The continuing value of the Apgar score for the assessment of newborn infants. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 344, 467–471.
- Cavanaugh M.A., Boswell, W.R., Roehling, M.V. & Boudreau, J.W. (2000). An empirical examination of self-reported work stress among U.S. managers. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85, 65–74.
- Compennolle, T. (1999). *Stress, friend and foe! Vital stress management at work... and at home*. Tiel: Synergo Press.
- Cooper, C.L., Dewe, P.J. & O'Driscoll, M.P. (2001), *Organizational stress: A review and critique of theory, research, and applications*. London: Sage.
- Cranwell-Ward, J. & Abbey, A. (2005). *Organizational stress*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Nachreiner, F. & Schaufeli, W.B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 499–512.
- Diener, E. (1994). Assessing subjective well-being: Progress and opportunities. *Social Indicators Research*, 31, 103–157.
- Donaldson, S.I. & Ko, I. (2010). Positive organizational psychology, behavior, and scholarship: A review of the emerging literature and evidence base. *The Journal of Positive Psychology: Dedicated to furthering research and promoting good practice*, 5(3), 177–191.
- Driver, M. (2014). The stressed subject: Lack, empowerment and liberation. *Organization*, 21(1), 90–105.
- Everly, G.S. & Lating, J.M. (2013). *A clinical guide to the treatment of the human stress response*. London: Springer.
- Florent-Treacy, E. & Manzoni, J.-F. (2012). Stress and the city (B). António Horta-Osório, CEO Lloyds Banking Group. *INSEAD Case Study*.
- French, R. & Vince, R. (1999). Learning, managing and organizing: The continuing contribution of group relations to management and organization. In R. French & R. Vince, *Group relations, management, and organization* (pp.3–19). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hobfoll, S.E. (2002). Social and psychological resources and adaptation. *Review of General Psychology*, 6(4), 307–324.
- Ganster, D.C. (2005). Executive job demands: Suggestions from a stress and decision-making perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 30(3), 492–502.
- Ganster, D.C. & Schaubroeck, J. (1991). Work stress and employee health. *Journal of Management*, 17(2), 235–271.
- Hinshelwood, R.D. (2013). Observing anxiety: A psychoanalytic training method for understanding organisations. In S. Long, *Socioanalytic methods: Discovering the hidden in organisations and social systems* (pp.47–66). London: Karnac.
- Health and Safety Executive (n.d.). *Stress. Signs and symptoms*. Retrieved from: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/furtheradvice/signsandsymptoms.htm> (accessed 22 May 2015).
- Johnson, J.V. & Hall, E.M. (1988). Job strain, work place social support, and cardiovascular disease: A cross-sectional study of a random sample of the Swedish working population. *American Journal of Public Health*, 78(10), 1336–1342.
- Kahn, R.L. & Byosiore, P.B. (1992). Stress in organizations. In M.D. Dunnette & L.M. Hugh (Eds.). *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, (pp.571–650). Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Karasek, R.A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 24, 285–308.

- Karasek, R. & Theorell, T. (1990). *Healthy work: Stress, productivity, and the reconstruction of working life*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kernberg, O. (1980). Neurosis, psychosis, and the borderline states. In A.M. Freedman, H.I. Kaplan & B.J. Sadock *Comprehensive textbook of psychiatry* (Vol. III). Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins.
- Kets de Vries, M. (2004). Organizations on the couch. A clinical perspective on organizational dynamics. *European Management Journal*, 22(2), 183–200.
- Kets de Vries, M. (2010). Leadership coaching and the rescuer syndrome: How to manage both sides of the couch. *Working paper, INSEAD*, December 2010.
- Kets de Vries, M. (2011). *Reflections on groups and organizations. On the couch with Manfred Kets de Vries*. Chichester: Jossey-Bass.
- Kets de Vries, M.F.R. & Cheak, A. (2015). Psychodynamic approach. In P.G. Northouse *Leadership: Theory and practice* (7th edn, pp.295–328). London: Sage.
- Lazarus, R.S. (1999). *Stress and emotion. A new synthesis*. New York: Springer.
- Leiter, M.P. & Maslach, C. (2004). Areas of worklife: A structured approach to organizational predictors of job burnout. In P.L. Perrewe & D.C. Ganster *Research in occupational stress and well-being* (Vol. 3), (pp.91–134). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Leiter, M.P. & Maslach, C. (1998). Burnout. In H. Friedman (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of mental health* (pp.202–215). New York: Academic Press.
- Long, S. & Harding, W. (2013). Socioanalytic interviewing. In S. Long *Socioanalytic methods: Discovering the hidden in organisations and social systems* (pp.91–106). London: Karnac.
- Lovelace, K.J., Manz, C.C. & Alves, J.C. (2007). Work stress and leadership development: The role of self-leadership, shared leadership, physical fitness and flow in managing demands and increasing job control. *Human Resource Management Review*, 17, 374–387.
- Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W.B. & Leiter, M.P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397–422.
- Michie, S. (2002). Causes and management of stress at work. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 59, 67–72.
- Nyberg A., Leineweber, C. & Magnusson Hanson, L. (2015). Gender differences in psychosocial work factors, work–personal life interface, and well-being among Swedish managers and non-managers. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health*, 88, 1149–1164.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1983). *Methodology for the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Rook, C., Hellwig, T. & Florent-Treacy, E. (2015). Executive stress – Taboo or opportunity for change?. In M.F.R. Kets de Vries, K. Korotov & E. Florent-Treacy & C. Rook *Coach and couch. The psychology of making better leaders* (2nd edn, pp.230–240). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rubin, H. & Rubin, I. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sandler, C. (2011). *Executive coaching. A psychodynamic approach*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Schoemaker, P. & Tetlock, P. (2012). Taboo scenarios: How to think the unthinkable. *California Management Review*, 54(2), 5–24.
- Siegrist, J. (1996). Adverse health effects of high-effort/low-reward conditions. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 1, 27–41.
- Steinglass, M. (2012). AkzoNobel chief not yet fit to return. *The Financial Times*, 12 October. Retrieved from: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/acf316ec-1473-11e2-8ef2-00144feabdc0.html> (accessed 12 October 2012).
- van der Doef, M. & Maes, S. (1999). The job demand-control (-support) model and psychological well-being: A review of 20 years of empirical research. *Work & Stress*, 13(2), 87–114.
- Warr, P. (2013). Jobs and job-holders: Two sources of happiness and unhappiness. In S. David, I. Boniwell & A. Conley Ayers (Eds.) *Oxford handbook of happiness* (pp.733–750). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Warr, P. & Clapperton, G. (2009). *The joy of work? Jobs, happiness and you*. Hove: Routledge.
- Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E. & Schaufeli, W.B. (2009). Reciprocal relationships between job resources, personal resources, and work engagement. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 74(3), 235–244.
- Zaleznik, A., Kets de Vries, M.F.R. & Howard, J. (1977). Stress reactions in organizations: Syndromes, causes, and consequences. *Behavioral Science*, May, 151–162.
- Zieve, D. & Kaneshiro, N.K. (2011). APGAR. MedlinePlus. Retrieved from: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003402.htm> (accessed 22 May 2015).

Appendix – The Stress APGAR dimensions

The stress indicators outlined in the protocol are based on a review of the stress literature (e.g. Cranwell-Ward & Abbey, 2005; Quick Campbell et al. (2001); HSE, n.d.). The purpose of the Stress APGAR protocol is not to provide systematic review/overview of all established antecedents, symptoms, outcomes, and moderators of workplace stress but rather to provide an indicative overview for coaches and other professionals.

1. APPEARANCE

Behaviour

■ Sleep

Suboptimal sleeping patterns which indicate stress include:

- insomnia (trouble falling asleep or staying asleep)
- lack of sleep
- waking up tired

■ Eating habits

Suboptimal eating habits which indicate stress include:

- too much or too little food intake
- loss of or increased appetite
- preference for fast food
- craving certain foods more than usual

■ Stimulants

Suboptimal use of stimulants which indicate stress include:

- using stimulants to relax or to increase energy
- using stimulants to deal with stress
- stimulants include alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, sugar etc.

■ Exercise

Suboptimal exercise patterns which can lead to stress or are a symptom of stress include:

- lack of exercise (victim of lifestyle)
- intensive exercise

■ Sexual activity

Changes in libido which indicate stress include:

- increased libido
- decreased libido

■ Physical activity

Suboptimal physical activity indicators which indicate stress include:

- restlessness
- uncontrollable nervous twitches or manners
- difficulty sitting still
- pacing
- finger or foot tapping
- nail biting

Physical composition

■ Vigour

Suboptimal aspects of vigour which indicate stress include:

- feeling fatigued
- having low energy
- feeling exhausted
- hypervigilance

■ Digestion

Suboptimal digestion symptoms which indicate stress include:

- stomach or gastrointestinal issues
 - acid stomach
 - heartburn
 - diarrhoea
 - cramps
 - gas
 - constipation

■ Head

Symptoms which indicate stress include:

- tension headaches
 - migraines
 - ocular migraine
 - eye strain
 - ringing in ears

■ Muscular skeletal

Suboptimal conditions of the muscular skeletal system which can be symptom of stress include:

- tense muscles
 - in neck
 - in back
 - in jaw (and/or grinding teeth)

■ Weight

Suboptimal issues regarding weight which can be symptoms of stress include:

- weight gain
- weight loss

■ Blood pressure

Suboptimal symptoms related to blood pressure which can be symptoms of stress include:

- high blood pressure
- palpitations

■ Felt body temperature

Suboptimal felt body temperatures which indicate stress include:

- feeling cold
- freezing
- cold, sweaty hands

2. PERFORMANCE

■ **Decisiveness**

Suboptimal decisiveness behaviour which indicates stress include:

- finding it hard to make decisions

■ **Concentration**

Suboptimal concentration patterns which indicate stress include:

- inability or difficulty concentrating (get distracted easily)
- repetitive thoughts
- obsessive thoughts
- procrastination
- cannot think rapidly

■ **Memory**

Suboptimal memory patterns which indicate stress include:

- poor memory
- mental confusion
- poor judgment

■ **Creativity**

Suboptimal creativity levels which indicate stress include:

- reduced creativity
- not contributing new ideas to projects

■ **Productivity**

Suboptimal productivity levels which indicate stress include:

- less productive than the person used to be
- less productive than the person would like to be
- not enough time to respond to email and voice messages
- missing deadlines

■ **Self-esteem**

Antecedents of stress are for example:

- self-consciousness
- no confidence in own abilities
- thinks other people find them boring
- feels inferior when they compare themselves to peers
- sees themselves as someone who is not successful

3. GROWTH TENSION

■ **Internal capacity to learn**

Antecedents and moderators of stress are for example:

■ **Desire to learn**

- think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how they think about themselves and the world
- like learning new things
- open to new experiences
- interested in the world

■ **Capacity to learn**

■ **Self-efficacy**

- believe they can solve difficult problems if try hard enough
- believe they can deal efficiently with unexpected events

■ **Self-reflection**

- Reflecting on strengths and weaknesses
- Reflecting on goals, values, needs

■ **External capacity to develop**

Antecedents and moderators of stress are for example:

- Learning objects
- External forces
 - mentors available
 - advancements possible in organisation
 - experiences pleasure from work
 - has job autonomy
 - able to use skills in the job
 - opportunity to learn new things in the job
 - a chance to show how capable one is

4. **AFFECT MANAGEMENT**

■ **Emotional disposition**

Antecedents of stress are for example:

- Positive affectivity
 - shows positive emotions often
 - ‘is positive’
 - is an extravert
 - (Be careful here that positive affectivity is not learned/fake.)
- Negative affectivity
 - shows negative emotions often
 - is pessimistic
 - is neurotic

■ **Control of emotions**

Symptoms of stress are for example:

- Own emotions (internal management)
 - emotions are felt too intensely
 - gets overtaken by emotions
 - suppresses emotions
 - can’t get unstuck from one emotion
 - doesn’t react when and how they should
 - doesn’t feel emotions other people do
 - lack in confidence in interpreting own emotions
 - negative meta-cognitions and emotions
- interaction with others (external management)
 - can’t express emotions
 - doesn’t know how to handle emotions of others

- lack of empathy
- emotional over-involvement of others (especially if person is not well)

5. RELATIONSHIP TENSIONS

■ Work relationships

Antecedents of stress are for example:

- cannot handle challenges
- cannot handle conflicts with others
- cannot manage key people (superior, reports, peers)
- is preoccupied by office politics
- little contact and communication with colleagues

■ Social relationships (family and friends)

Moderators of stress are for example:

- person has no partner
- person has no family
- person has no friends
- low quality and quantity of time spent with family or friends
- difficulties in relationships with spouse/partner or family or friends

■ Communication

Symptoms of stress are for example:

- the person withdraws to themselves and avoids social situations
- tries to avoid direct social contact when possible

The impact of three forms of mindfulness training on mindfulness, wellbeing and goal attainment: Findings from a randomised controlled trial and implications for coaching

Gordon B. Spence & Michael J. Cavanagh

Scholarly interest in mindfulness has increased dramatically over the past 15 years and its relevance to coaching has been widely acknowledged. However, much of this empirical work has been narrowly focused on perspectives drawn from Eastern contemplative traditions, rather than the broader body of psychological science. This study sought to examine the efficacy of three different approaches to mindfulness training based on an Eastern contemplative perspective (meditation), a cognitive-attentional perspective (attention training) and a socio-cognitive perspective (mindful creativity). Using a randomised controlled trial, 72 participants were assigned to one of three experimental conditions (or a control group) for the duration of a six-week mindfulness training programme. Data collection occurred at three time points (i.e. pre-, post- and three-months follow-up) and included measures of self-reported mindfulness, psychopathology, subjective wellbeing, psychological wellbeing and goal attainment. Findings indicated that all forms of mindfulness training were associated with significant increases in mindfulness, with each training approach showing a different pattern of improvements on mental health and wellbeing variables. Interestingly for coaching, all forms of mindfulness training also produced pre-post increases in goal attainment, even though goal progression was not a feature of any programme. These findings are discussed and the implications for coaching practice briefly explored.

Keywords: Mindfulness, wellbeing, goal attainment, coaching, attention, self-regulation, creativity, randomised controlled trial.

The man who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things...will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.

William James

Introduction

MINDFULNESS is being increasingly used as part of coaching interventions, and as a stand-alone intervention in organisational settings (Reb & Atkins, 2015). There is growing evidence that, as an intervention, mindfulness is able to enhance physical and emotional wellbeing, reduce stress and increase produc-

tivity (Marianetti & Passmore, 2009). While the literature on the benefits of mindfulness is substantial and growing, less work has been done on the mechanisms of action by which mindfulness enhances the coaching process, or on exploring how best to develop mindfulness skills within a coaching context (Cavanagh & Spence, 2013; Reb & Atkins, 2015).

There are a range of potential mechanisms by which mindfulness may influence the coaching process. Feedback-loop models of self-regulation suggest that the success or failure of self-regulatory efforts are influenced by at least three variables: (i) access to clear and consistent *standards*; (ii) consistent *monitoring* of one's actions and states; and (iii) an ability to effect change (*operate*) whenever the current state falls short of a standard (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996). Mindfulness is believed to enhance the effective use of each of these variables. As highlighted by Cavanagh and Spence (2013), receptive awareness and attention to presently occurring psychological and/or behavioural events is thought to help: (i) establish clearer standards (or goals) via the clarification of values, (ii) enhance monitoring by providing individuals with access to important feedback information, and (iii) assist individuals to interrupt and prevent habitual responses that might otherwise lead to undesirable outcomes (Baumeister & Heatherton, 1996; Brown & Ryan, 2004; Shapiro et al., 2006). Given that mindfulness has the potential to enhance these important self-regulatory processes, it is important to understand just how the mindful processing of information is thought to work.

Defining mindfulness

As noted by Cavanagh and Spence (2013), defining mindfulness is no simple matter, as it can be used to denote a system of beliefs (philosophies), habitual predispositions (traits), a deliberate process (practices), or the resulting cognitive phenomena (states). The focus of this paper is on the cultivation of mindfulness through practice and better understanding the psychological mechanisms that underpin its beneficial effects. Hence, its philosophical and trait-related dimensions are not of immediate relevance. With that in mind, this study begins with a working definition of mindfulness as 'a motivated state of decentred awareness brought about by receptive attending to present moment experience' (Cavanagh &

Spence, p.117). This definition links both process (receptive attending), the resulting cognitive state (decentred awareness), and is compatible with the three major perspectives on how mindful processing of information may bring about its benefits.

The first major perspective is the *Eastern contemplative* perspective (a term we use to reflect common features of Buddhist, Hinduism and other Asian contemplative traditions). This places particular importance on disciplined mental practice aimed at decentering the self in the processing of experience (Kemp, 2017). The next is the *socio-cognitive perspective*. This perspective argues that mindfulness is not so much tied to dedicated mental practice, but to the maintenance of an open and 'limber' state of mind, where mental structures (e.g. beliefs, schemas) are actively refreshed and updated (Langer, 2016). A lesser known, third perspective is the *cognitive-attentional perspective*, derived from information-processing models. This perspective focuses on disrupting habitual attentional processing routines and building attentional resources. This deliberate use of attention enables the person to access different information, thereby enhancing cognitive and emotional functioning (Wells & Matthews, 1994).

Theoretically, each perspective is potentially valuable for understanding how mindful awareness might be associated with the many benefits that have been reported. Indeed, understanding the differential contribution of each of these mechanisms, may have great utility in both guiding mindfulness interventions, and in informing the development of mindfulness skills in the workplace. As such, this paper seeks to empirically examine the utility of mechanisms underlying these three perspectives, via three six-week mindfulness training (MT) programmes delivered to adult community samples. The research was designed to investigate two primary questions. First, do the different approaches to MT produce different effects? Second, to what extent does MT enhance goal-directed self-regulation?

Three perspectives on the cultivation of mindfulness

Many forms of psychotherapy are underpinned by the premise that behaviour change can be achieved through modifications of awareness and attention (Prochaska & Norcross, 2003). For example, in cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) clients are assisted to restructure thinking patterns by first raising *awareness* of their negative cognitions (e.g. 'I'm no good at my job'), before disputing these cognitions by directing *attention* towards irrational content and examples of positive functioning that disconfirm such cognitions (e.g. work success). Similarly, other forms of psychotherapy (e.g. rational-emotive or narrative therapy) also seek to modify current thinking and perceptions, by applying attentional resources to drive the modification of 'behaviours, cognitions, emotions and/or other personal characteristics in directions that [clients] deem desirable' (Prochaska & Norcross, 2003, p.5).

Brown and Ryan (2003) note that whilst most people have the capacity to attend and be aware, individuals differ in their 'propensity or willingness to be aware and to sustain attention to what is occurring in the present' (p.822). Mindfulness interventions seek to directly target these malleable attentional processes (Weng et al., 2013). In the sections that follow, each of the above mindfulness perspectives are described and a simple example provided to illustrate how the perspective might be reflected in practice.

Eastern contemplative perspective

Buddhist and other Eastern contemplative traditions have tended to see mindfulness as being important for disrupting the personalisation of attention, which is the source of suffering and distress (Gunaratana, 2015). The central premise here is that interpreting experience through a filter of its meaning and impact on the self, inevitably leads to a misinterpretation of reality and suffering due to the over-valuing of the self-relevant information and difficulties. Over the past

three decades, Eastern mindfulness practices have increasingly captured the interest of clinical psychologists and led to the development of several treatment programmes, including *mindfulness-based stress reduction* (Kabat-Zinn, 1990), *mindfulness-based cognitive therapy* (Teasdale, 2004), *acceptance and commitment therapy* (Hayes et al., 2003) and *dialectical behavior therapy* (Linehan et al., 2001). Whilst the components of these programmes vary, all share a common belief that the non-judgmental (or decentered) observation of thoughts, emotions, sensations, and environmental stimuli plays a key role in the amelioration of psychological and behavioural dysfunction. In other words, a decentred (metacognitive) view of their mental processes enables the person to realise 'I am not my thoughts'.

As recently noted by Spence (2017), the research of mindfulness-based interventions has grown noticeably in the past decade, as evidenced by an increase in the number of published systematic reviews and meta-analyses (see Table 2, p.115). Whilst this literature has generally found it to be efficacious when used in clinical settings (see Khoury et al., 2013), a non-clinical literature is also developing (for a meta-analysis see Virgili, 2015). This includes the use of mindfulness to enhance workplace resiliency (Aikens et al., 2014), facilitate psychological detachment from work (Michel et al., 2014), develop self-compassion (Flook et al., 2013) and assist workers better manage roles with high emotional labour (Krasner et al., 2009). Whilst workplace mindfulness interventions have not been clearly shown to outperform generic stress management interventions, enough positive findings exist to support their use with working adults (Virgili, 2015).

From this perspective, when an individual is mindful in the world they are able to greet a range of circumstances with equanimity and poise. As an example, consider the responses of a highly mindful worker (Nick) to a boss (Jane) who tends to micromanage him. When faced again with her controlling

behaviours, Nick would be capable of dispassionately observing her behaviours, such that his responses are not ego-involved and driven by a perceived insult to his competence. It is this metacognitive stance that enables Nick to respond with compassion and poise.

Socio-cognitive perspective

Socio-cognitive approaches to mindfulness, such as Langer's (1989) theory, place more emphasis on the act of noticing rather than the centredness of attention. Hence they are not primarily focused on the alleviation of clinical dysfunction or psychopathology, but rather on the role of attention in learning. Hence, empirical support for Langer's model has been derived from a wide variety of studies focused on learning in children (Carson et al., 2001) and adults (Bodner & Langer, 1995), memory recall in the elderly (Levy et al., 2001), marital satisfaction (Coates-Burpee & Langer, in press), as well as mental health in university students (Gallego et al., 2014), heart rate control (Delizonna et al., 2009), the attractiveness of mindful adults to children (Langer, Cohen & Djikic, 2012), the attenuation of prejudice (Langer, Bashner & Chanowitz, 1985), and orchestral performance (Langer, Russel & Eisenkraft, 2009).

Like the Eastern contemplative traditions, Langer's (1989) theory advocates for an orientation to immediacy and the present. However, this orientation is important, not because it negates interpretive distortion, but because the noticing of novelty and difference is critical to the person's capacity to remain awake to whatever information is presently available. As such, mindfulness requires a 'limber' state of mind, one that is also characterised by openness to experience, sensitivity to different contexts, and awareness of multiple perspectives (Langer, 1994). According to the theory, *mindless* behaviour occurs because people process contextual information through rigid (and unexamined) schemas. This leads to a diminished sense of control, the percep-

tion that situations are fixed and permanent, and susceptibility to well-practiced, habitual (or mindless) responses (Langer, 1989). Thus, from the socio-cognitive perspective, any effort to notice difference, change the context surrounding a situation, or refresh cognitive structures (e.g. schemas) is by definition a mindful act.

When this version of mindfulness is applied to the example of Nick and his micromanaging boss, an important difference emerges. That is, mindfulness exists not in the act of non-judgemental acceptance, but rather in being highly curious about Jane's choice of action. Nick is likely to seek to (i) look for any contextual triggers that might help to explain Jane's action, (ii) attempt to view the situation from her perspective, and (iii) consider whether his categorisation of Jane (i.e. micromanager) might be inaccurate or incomplete.

Cognitive-attentional perspective

Unlike the Eastern traditions and the socio-cognitive approaches which seek to directly disrupt centred processing, and enhance the noticing of difference, the cognitive-attentional approach addresses mindfulness more obliquely. It seeks to reinforce mechanisms underpinning the creation of mindful states – namely the ability to volitionally control attention. Drawing on clinical experience, Wells and Matthews (1994) have argued that metacognitive routines in the control of attention form part of the aetiology of affective disorders and emotional dysregulation. According to the Self-Regulatory Executive Function (S-REF) model, information processing is governed by an executive process that alerts individuals to the presence of self-relevant information (internal or external) and towards processing routines aimed at assessing such information and neutralising perceived threats.

For example, a feeling of light-headedness would signify a self-relevant internal event for most people and possibly trigger S-REF processing. However, whether this makes the

person highly anxious will depend on how their attention is deployed. Person A may drink a glass of water, sit down, and wait for the feeling to subside, while deliberately focusing attention away from their physical concerns and/or toward schemas that help them to remain calm. In contrast, Person B might also drink a glass of water and sit down, but be captured by a cycle of rumination on the possibility of dire outcomes and their powerless to cope. As such, according to this perspective, distress and dysfunctional beliefs are often the output of habitual plans for dealing with self-relevant threats, rather than their input. Hence, it is possible to create states of 'detached mindfulness' via the use of attention training procedures that build volitional attentional strength and flexibility, that enable the person to select more adaptive responses to threat (Wells & Matthews, 1994).

Returning again to the example of Nick, the cognitive-attentional perspective would consider mindfulness to reside in his ability to choose more adaptive processing routines when faced with Jane's controlling actions. He might, for example, choose to discuss the interaction with Jane and seek a mutually useful outcome, rather than becoming locked in vicious cycles of rumination and maladaptive attention. As this example shows, the expectation of this perspective is that when the client has the capacity to deliberately apply attentional resources, they will do so in adaptive ways. Therefore, interventions do not directly target problematic beliefs or processing routines. Rather, they seek to build attentional strength through exercises using competing auditory targets (i.e. everyday sounds). Whilst a growing body of clinical evidence exists to support the validity of this approach (M. Cavanagh, 2003; Papageorgiou & Wells, 1998, 2000; Wells, 1990; Wells, White & Carter, 1997) no studies have been reported on the efficacy of this approach in non-clinical usage.

The value of studying three different perspectives on mindfulness

These three approaches focus on different aspects of mindfulness; the maintenance of decentred awareness, the development of attentional agility (through noticing novelty and difference), and building capacity for deliberate attentional control. We believe an appreciation of these differences is important for considering the use of mindfulness training within coaching contexts. That is because mindfulness training practices differ in respect of the cognitive demands they place on individuals and, as such, not all will be suitable for use with all individuals, in all situations. This study sought to test the effectiveness of three different MT programmes and to assess their suitability for use with non-clinical (coaching) populations. Three main hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1 proposed that participation in MT would lead to greater mindfulness compared to a control group. As this is the first time these mindfulness interventions have been compared experimentally, no prediction was made about the superiority of one program over another.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that mindfulness training would be associated with improved mental health (as indicated by decreases in levels of depression, anxiety and stress) and corresponding improvements in subjective and psychological wellbeing (particularly for dimensions related to self-acceptance and environmental mastery).

Hypothesis 3 was formed on the basis of the observation that whilst early research has identified that MT can improve various aspects of mental health and wellbeing (see Brown & Ryan, 2003), its relationship to self-regulated behaviour remains largely theoretical. However, given the important role that attention and awareness play in human self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1998) and findings linking mental focus to successful self-regulation (Lee et al., 2003), it was predicted that mindfulness training would be associated with greater levels of personal goal attainment.

Methods

Participants and procedure

The study was promoted via announcements placed in four local newspapers and an advertisement posted on a university internet site. The training programmes were advertised as life skills courses that would provide participants with basic training in simple techniques designed to improve self-management. As the mindfulness training programmes were expected to be widely beneficial, no specific inclusion or exclusion criteria were set. Whilst participants reporting previous experience with mindfulness interventions and practise were not excluded, only five people reported any previous formal experience.

Participants registered their interest via the internet or in writing and 80 participants attended an information night to learn more about the study. Once informed consent had been provided, participants completed a packet of pre-training (Time 1) questionnaires and were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: attention training, mindfulness meditation, mindful creativity, or a control group. In total eight participants withdrew from the study within its first two weeks, reducing the sample to 72 participants. The characteristics of the final sample are presented in Table 1.

Mindfulness training programmes

To test the efficacy of mindfulness training derived from the three perspectives outlined above, the follow programmes were developed.

Attention training

This cognitive-attentional programme was based on a clinical technique developed by Wells and Matthews (1994), and a subsequent refinement by Cavanagh (2003). In brief, the exercises are designed to improve attentional control via three auditory attention tasks (i.e. selective attention, attention switching, divided attention) performed to a soundscape of increasing complexity. In keeping with Cavanagh's (2003) methodology, the training involved completing weekly (guided) attention training sessions and home-based practice. The attention training was conducted using a professionally produced audio file of eight everyday sounds, which included (in order of presentation) an instructor's voice, ticking clock, ringing telephone, muffled voices, birds singing, lawn mower, traffic noise, and a dog barking in the distance. Each exercise lasted approximately five minutes, with the full set of exercises taking approximately 15 minutes to complete. The group training sessions were 60 minutes in duration and commenced with a review of the daily practice exercises, followed by a full set of exercises and an accompanying discussion. For the home-based practice, participants were provided with an MP3 file for twice daily use.

Mindfulness meditation

In this Eastern contemplative programme, participants attended a series of meditation

Table 1: Sex and Age of Participants

	Attention Training (N=18)	Mindfulness Meditation (N=18)	Mindful Creativity (N=19)	Control (N=17)	Total (N=72)
Female	78%	83%	74%	65%	75%
Male	22%	17%	26%	35%	25%
Mean Age (SD)	45.17 (12.35)	43.78 (13.18)	41.95 (12.18)	38.82 (11.80)	42.47 (12.35)

classes at a local Buddhist education centre. Weekly meetings were conducted by a highly experienced Buddhist monk using an array of basic Vipassana meditation techniques (including breathing, walking and sitting meditations). Classes commenced with an open discussion about meditative practice (10 to 15 minutes), followed by 30 to 45 minutes of guided mediation and concluded with 15 to 20 minutes of facilitated discussion (including guidance on how to complete homework exercises).

Mindful creativity

This socio-cognitive programme invited participants to work on a six-week creative project. This activity was selected because it was expected to be a more robust training in mindfulness than the laboratory proce-

dures (e.g. word-production tasks) used in previous studies (e.g. Alexander et al., 1989). At the first meeting participants were asked to nominate a project (e.g. painting, clay sculpture), with the only stipulation being that it be something they had never done before, or not done in the previous five years. Informed by Langer’s (1989) socio-cognitive theory, the components were designed to stimulate novel, creative thought via mindful engagement in project tasks (see Table 2). At each group meeting participants reviewed progress and discussed how elements of the theory might stimulate greater creativity. The programme concluded with an informal exhibition of creative works, where participants displayed their work and reflected on their experience.

To ensure comparability of the programs, a standardised training structure was used.

Table 2: Outline of Mindful Creativity Programme

Weekly Themes	Description
Week 1: Living as a Process	Introduction to the programme. Distinction drawn between outcome-focused and process-focused thinking patterns. Participants were encouraged to use the creative project as a way of strengthening their present-moment (i.e. process) focus.
Week 2: Taking a Fresh Look	Categorisation processes and cognitive commitments discussed. Participants asked to imagine that their usual tools (e.g. paintbrushes) were unavailable for use and that they were to find (and work with) novel alternatives during the following week.
Week 3: Openness to Experience	Discussed how habituation processes lead to mindlessness by reducing the amount of attention that individuals pay to experiences perceived as familiar. Mindfulness presented as involving an active search for novelty and difference; an attitude the participants are encouraged to adopt.
Week 4: Using Context	Described the effect of context on perception and appraisal processes. Identified that individuals can alter contexts by choosing what meaning will be attached to circumstances. Manipulated context by announcing an ‘Art Exhibition’ to be held in the last week of the programme.
Week 5: Developing Perspectives	Discussed the actor-observer effect and tendency to view events from a single perspective. Participants are shown that mindfulness can be induced by varying perspective and attending to sources of information that are new or previously overlooked.
Week 6: Staying Mindful	Review and discussion of programme content. Participants take part in an informal exhibition of artworks and give a brief description of their creative experience. A second creative project is recommended as a way of maintaining a mindful approach to living.

That is, all the groups met on the same weeknight for a total of six weeks. They met for the same amount of time (i.e. 75 minutes), were set an equivalent amount of home-based practice (i.e. 20 minutes per day) and received a programme manual that included a rationale for the training, weekly journal sheets and homework completion logs. Homework completion was rated on a 5-point scale (*0 = no completion, 4 = full completion*).

Measures

Participants were measured at three times points; pre-training (Time 1), post-training (Time 2) and at a 3-month follow-up (Time 3). All data was collected via a dedicated university website. For all experimental participants and controls, data collection prompts were provided by the first author and managed via email reminders and telephone follow-ups (where necessary).

In this study, mindfulness was measured using the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS), a 15-item measure rated on a 6-point scale (*1 = almost always, 6 = almost never*). Items include 'I rush through activities without being really attentive to them' and 'I find myself doing things without paying attention'. The instrument has good test-retest reliability and internal consistency ranging from 0.80 to 0.87 (Brown & Ryan, 2003). The sample alpha was 0.81.

Psychopathology was measured using the 21-item Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Measured on a 4-point scale (*0 = not at all, 3 = very much*), sample items included 'I felt downhearted and blue' (depression), 'I felt I was close to panic' (anxiety) and 'I found it hard to wind down' (stress). The scale has good test-retest reliability and internal consistency (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.87 to 0.94 for both clinical and community samples (Antony et al., 1998). In this study, the subscale alphas ranged from 0.72 to 0.89.

Wellbeing was measured using three

well-researched measures of psychological and subjective wellbeing. The 54-item version of the Scales of Psychological Wellbeing (Ryff & Keyes, 1995) measures eudaimonic wellbeing across 6 subscales. Sample items (and sample alphas) for these include 'I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus' (Autonomy; 0.82), 'In general, I feel in charge of the situation in which I live' (Environmental Mastery; 0.77), 'I have a sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time' (Personal Growth; 0.72), 'Some people wander aimlessly through life but I am not one of them' (Purpose in Life; 0.86), 'I know that I can trust my friends, and they know that they can trust me' (Positive Relations with Others; 0.74), and 'In general, I feel positive and confident about myself' (Self-Acceptance; 0.89).

Dual measures were used for subjective wellbeing (SWB). The cognitive component of SWB was measured using the 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), which is scored on a 7-point rating scale (*1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree*) using items like 'The conditions of my life are excellent'. The affective component of SWB was measured using the 10-item Positive-Negative Affect Scale (10-items; Bradburn, 1969). This scale gauged participants' emotional experience (over the previous 2-week period) by having them rate 5 positive adjectives (e.g. happy, joyful) and 5 negative adjectives (e.g. anxious, frustrated) using a 6-point scale (*1 = Not at all to 6 = Extremely so*). Sample alphas for these variables were satisfaction with life = 0.86, positive affect = 0.90, and negative affect = 0.83.

Measuring the impact of MT on goal attainment. To investigate the impact of MT on goal attainment, it was necessary to (i) elicit a set of personal goals from each participant, and (ii) ensure the training did not incorporate elements that might facilitate (or coach) participants towards the attainment of goals. This would allow any changes in goal attainment to be more directly attributable to the effect of MT, rather than to the acquisition

of specific goal attainment strategies and/or techniques. As such course instructors were asked to avoid extended discussions of how MT exercises might relate to the attainment of personal goals.

Using a goal setting booklet, participants were asked to articulate three salient personal goals. In line with the procedure employed by Grant (2003), each personal goal (e.g. 'Complete a financial needs statement') was then rated for its perceived difficulty on a 4-point scale (*from 1 = very easy to 4 = very difficult*) and for degree of previous attainment (0% = *no attainment* to 100% = *total attainment*). Mean goal attainment scores were calculated as follows:

$$\text{Goal Attainment} = \frac{(\text{Goal 1 Difficulty} \times \text{Attainment}) + (\text{Goal 2 Difficulty} \times \text{Attainment}) + (\dots)}{\text{Total Number of Goals}}$$

The advantage of this method is that, by weighting each goal for its perceived difficulty, the measure becomes more sensitive to change because goals with higher degree of difficulty can exert more influence over the overall attainment scores than goals with lower difficulty ratings. Post-training attainment scores were obtained by presenting participants with their Time 1 goals and asking them to re-rate difficulty and attainment of those goals. To minimise ratings bias, Time 1 ratings were removed from the goal questionnaires prior to obtaining the Time 2 attainment ratings.

Table 3: Means, Standard Deviations and ANOVA for Programme Engagement Factors

	Attention Training		Mindfulness Meditation		Mindful Creativity		One Way ANOVA	
Variable	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	MS	F(2,52)
Rationale	79.4	17.1	70.8	21.1	85.3	12.5	971.05	3.29*
Expected Benefit	70.3	21.0	80.0	15.7	79.7	20.5	556.81	1.50
Meeting Attendance	4.50	1.25	4.78	1.26	5.05	1.07	1.41	0.98
Homework Completion	1.76	0.65	2.64	0.74	2.00	0.79	3.52	6.54**

Note: Maximum values for Rationale = 100, Expected Benefit = 100, Meeting Attendance = 6, and Homework Completion = 4. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (2-tails).

Results

Programme engagement

Before assessing the relative effects of the training programmes, a manipulation check was conducted to determine whether the groups were equivalent with regard to their understanding of the training rationale and expectancy of benefit. After the first meeting with their instructors (at which the programmes were outlined in detail), participants used a 100-point scale (0 = *Not at all*, 100 = *Very much*) to rate how much they: (i) understood the rationale for their programme, and (ii) expected it would benefit them.

As shown in Table 3, participants reported both a satisfactory understanding of the rationale for mindfulness training, along with a reasonable expectation the programmes would be beneficial (mean ratings all >70). No differences existed between the groups for expected benefit. In general, the sessions were well attended and no difference was found for group attendance. However, between-group differences did exist for homework completion, with the attention training group completing significantly less daily practice than both the mindfulness meditation ($p < .001$) and mindful creativity ($p < .05$) groups. It seems likely that this was due to the more demanding nature of the Attention Training tasks.

Data analysis

To determine the impact of the MT programmes, data was analysed using a mixed design repeated measures ANOVA with one between-subjects factor (group) and one within-subjects factor (time). Planned comparisons were also used to compare the three experimental groups to the control group. In addition, post hoc results (without Bonferroni corrections) were examined to determine any possible differences across training groups and to examine the interaction of time and group.

Hypothesis #1. Statistically significant increases in mindfulness occurred across all the training groups (see Table 4), providing support for our first hypothesis. Whilst the control group also reported a pre-post increase, this difference was non-significant. As participation in research has a tendency to heighten self-awareness in individuals (Langer, 1994), such an increase is understandable in this study.

A significant group x time interaction was found ($F(6, 136) = 3.18, p < .05$). As shown in Table 5, post hoc analysis revealed that MAAS scores for all the MT groups significantly increased between Time 1 and Time 2. As shown in Figure 1, mindfulness decreased for all groups during the post-training period (Time 2 v 3), with the attention training and mindfulness meditation groups reporting significant decreases during this

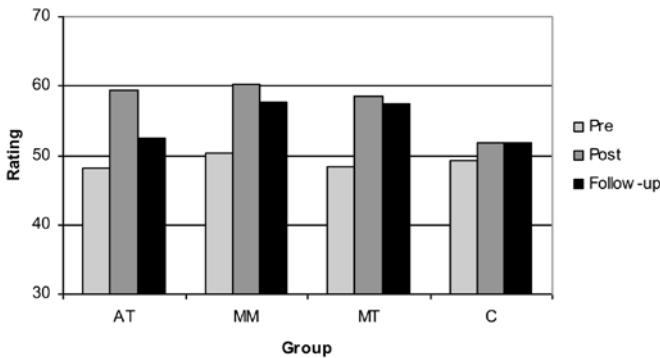
Table 4: Means and Standard Deviations for mindfulness scores

		AT Training (N = 18)		MM (N = 18)		MC (N = 19)		C (N = 17)	
Measure		Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
MAAS	M	48.2	59.3	50.3	60.3	48.4	58.6	49.3	51.9
	SD	8.1	11.1	8.7	10.4	10.3	6.9	9.6	11.2
	<i>p</i>		<.001		<.01		<.001		.08
	<i>d</i>		1.00		0.96		1.48		0.23

Note: Paired *t*-tests were used for tests of significance. All *p*-values are 2-tailed.

AT = Attention Training; MM = Mindfulness Meditation; MC = Mindful Creativity

Figure 1: Mean mindfulness scores at pre-, post- and follow-up



period (p 's $<.001$ and $<.05$ respectively). The non-significant decrease in mindfulness suggests that the skills learnt in the Mindful Creativity group may have been more easily applied to everyday situations than those learnt in the attention training and mindfulness meditation groups. Nonetheless, all MT programmes appear to have been effective in achieving sustained increases in mindfulness, with the mindfulness meditation and mindful creativity groups reporting significant increases between Time 1 and Time 3 (both $p <.001$). The increase in attention training group approached significance ($p <.06$).

Finally, comparisons between the groups at Time 2 (post-training) and Time 3 (follow-up) are shown in Table 5. Whilst all three MT groups were significantly more mindful than controls at Time 2, no differences were found between the experimental groups themselves. By Time 3 mindfulness had decreased across all groups to the extent that they were no longer statistically different to controls.

Hypothesis #2. The second hypothesis predicted that MT would be associated with significant pre-post reductions in depression, anxiety and stress. The pre-post mean scores for the mental health variables are shown in Table 6 and displayed graphically in Figures 2, 3 and 4.

The analysis of pre-post mean *depression* scores revealed a significant main effect for time ($F(1, 68) = 7.74, p <.01$) but not for group.

No interaction effect was found. Although the attention training group did report a statistically significant pre-post decrease, this did not significantly differ from controls. Furthermore, post hoc comparisons using Time 3 data indicated that this improvement was not sustained, with participants reporting a significant increase between Time 2 v 3 ($p <.05$). Whilst levels of depression did drop in the attention training condition between Time 1 and Time 3, this difference was not significant ($p = .09$). In contrast, although the mindfulness meditation and mindful creativity groups reported non-significant decreases between Time 1 v 2, and Time 2 v 3, the overall decrease between Time 1 v 3 was statistically significant for both ($p <.05$).

Similarly, a significant main effect for time ($F(1, 68) = 13.67, p <.0005$) was found from the analysis of pre-post *anxiety* scores, along with a significant group x time interaction effect ($F(3, 68) = 2.71, p <.05$) but no main effect for group ($p = .09$). Planned comparisons found that when anxiety scores were averaged across time, both the attention training and mindfulness meditation groups reported significantly less anxiety compared to controls ($p <.05$). The mindful creativity group did not significantly differ from the control group, nor did the training groups differ from each other.

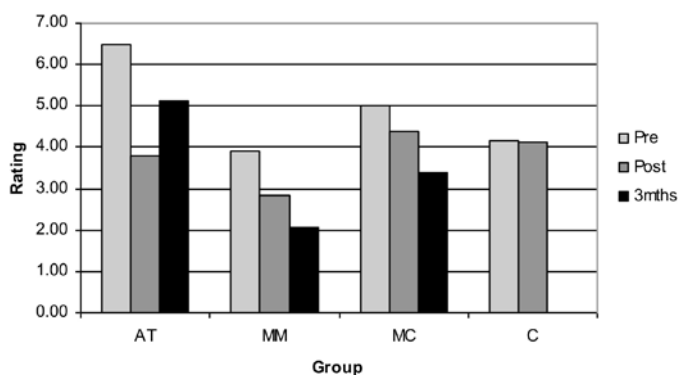
Although anxiety levels increased in both the attention training and mindfulness meditation groups during the post-training

Table 5: Post Hoc Comparisons by Group and Time for mean mindfulness scores

Group	Time	Difference	SE	<i>p</i>	Time	Group	Difference	SE	<i>p</i>
AT	1 v 2	-11.06	2.31	<.001	2	AT v C	7.34	3.38	<.05
AT	2 v 3	6.92	1.26	<.001	2	MM v C	8.34	3.38	<.05
AT	1 v 3	-4.14	2.18	.06	2	MC v C	6.64	3.33	<.05
MM	1 v 2	-9.94	2.31	<.001	2	AT v MM	-1.00	3.32	.76
MM	2 v 3	2.63	1.26	<.05	2	AT v MC	0.70	3.28	.83
MM	1 v 3	-7.32	2.18	<.001	2	MM v MC	1.70	3.28	.61
MC	1 v 2	-10.21	2.25	<.001	3	AT v C	0.42	3.25	.89
MC	2 v 3	1.09	1.23	.38	3	MM v C	5.71	3.25	.08
MC	1 v 3	-9.12	2.11	<.001	3	MC v C	5.55	3.21	.09
C	1 v 2	-2.59	2.38	.28	3	AT v MM	-5.29	3.20	.10
C	2 v 3	0.00	1.30	1.0	3	AT v MC	-5.13	3.16	.11
C	1 v 3	-2.59	2.24	.25	3	MM v MC	0.16	3.16	.96

Notes: AT = Attention Training; MM = Mindfulness Meditation; MC = Mindful Creativity

Figure 2: Mean depression scores at pre-, post- and follow-up



period, post hoc comparisons revealed these increases were non-significant. As such, both appear to have been helpful for sustaining lower levels of anxiety over time. Overall, the decrease in anxiety between Time 1 v 3 was significant for attention training ($p < .05$) and approached significance for mindfulness meditation ($p < .09$).

Stress. The analysis of pre-post stress scores revealed a significant main effect for time ($F(1, 68) = 7.74, p < .01$) but not for group or the group x time interaction. As shown in Figure 4, all groups were less stressed at the conclusion of the training period, although only mindfulness meditation reported a significant pre-post difference and was

Figure 3: Mean anxiety scores at pre-, post- and follow-up

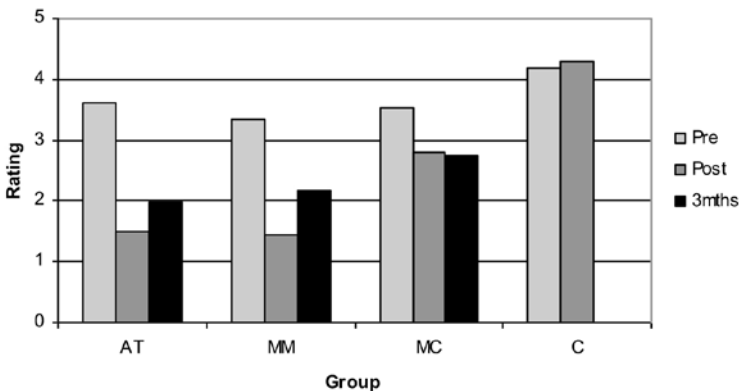
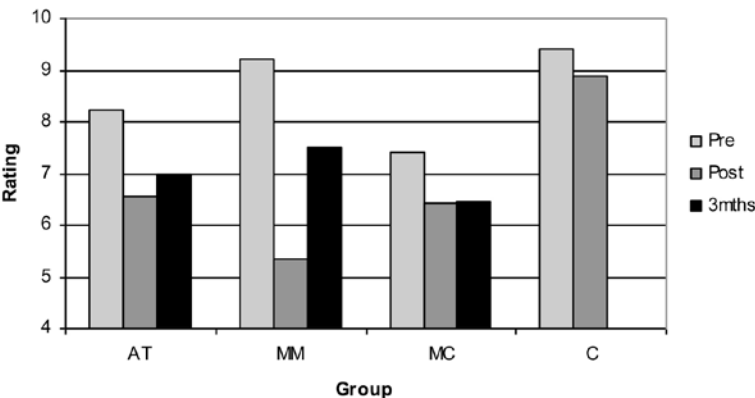


Figure 4: Mean stress scores at pre-, post- and follow-up



significantly different from the control group at Time 2 ($p < .05$). This improvement was not sustained, however, with follow-up data indicating that these participants became significantly more stressed between Time 2 v 3 ($p < .01$), which made the Time 1 v 3 stress reduction non-significant ($p = .185$).

Subjective and Psychological Wellbeing. In contrast to the mental health results just outlined, MT appears to have had minimal impact on subjective and psychological wellbeing. Although increases were observed for all wellbeing variables, few were significant when compared to controls. Nonetheless, mindfulness meditation and attention training participants

reported significant pre-post increases for self-acceptance (both $p < .05$), increases that were maintained at Time 3. This is intriguing because both of these training programmes are underpinned by techniques designed to promote a ‘loosening’ of attachments to the self. In mindfulness meditation this occurs through the practice of non-judgmental observance of self (Shapiro et al., 2006), whilst in attention training self-focused attention is reduced through the practice of auditory exercises designed to improve attentional control (Wells & Matthews, 1994). In addition, environmental mastery increased across all experimental groups, although the pre-post difference was only significant for

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for Mental Health and Wellbeing Variables

Measure	Attention Training (N = 18)					Mindfulness Meditation (N = 18)					Mindful Creativity (N = 19)					Control (N = 17)				
	Pre	Post	p	d		Pre	Post	p	d		Pre	Post	p	d		Pre	Post	p	d	
Depression	6.5 (4.3)	3.8 (4.3)	<.01	0.63		3.9 (3.2)	2.8 (3.2)	.32	0.34		5.0 (3.9)	4.4 (4.9)	.41	0.12		4.1 (4.0)	4.1 (3.5)	.98	0.00	
Anxiety	3.6 (2.7)	1.5 (1.8)	<.01	1.17		3.3 (2.4)	1.4 (1.7)	<.01	1.12		3.5 (2.5)	2.8 (2.5)	.19	0.28		4.2 (3.3)	4.3 (3.7)	.88	0.03	
Stress	8.2 (4.2)	6.6 (4.1)	.17	0.39		9.2 (4.9)	5.3 (3.5)	<.01	1.11		7.4 (3.9)	6.4 (4.5)	.36	0.22		9.4 (4.3)	8.9 (4.1)	.37	0.12	
SWB Satisfaction With Life	17.2 (6.7)	19.5 (7.4)	<.05	0.31		21.8 (7.7)	24.1 (8.1)	.08	0.28		19.7 (5.8)	22.9 (7.2)	<.05	0.44		20.3 (6.7)	21.5 (7.1)	.23	0.17	
SWB Positive Affect	19.7 (4.6)	21.2 (5.6)	.11	0.27		19.6 (5.7)	21.3 (5.8)	.20	0.29		21.4 (5.8)	22.6 (5.6)	.23	0.21		23.0 (4.7)	22.1 (4.8)	.38	0.19	
SWB Negative Affect	18.8 (5.3)	14.9 (6.1)	<.01	0.64		17.1 (5.4)	14.7 (6.3)	.12	0.38		16.7 (5.6)	14.6 (6.3)	.14	0.33		17.0 (5.5)	15.2 (5.4)	<.05	0.33	
PWB Autonomy	35.4 (7.3)	38.7 (7.3)	.08	0.45		38.7 (7.5)	40.4 (5.2)	.37	0.33		38.6 (6.9)	40.1 (6.8)	.31	0.22		37.6 (8.3)	38.5 (9.2)	.34	0.10	
PWB Environmental Mastery	34.0 (6.9)	37.5 (7.8)	.09	0.45		34.9 (8.6)	38.9 (8.5)	.09	0.47		35.6 (7.5)	39.8 (6.6)	<.01	0.64		37.2 (6.1)	37.4 (7.0)	.79	0.03	
PWB Personal Growth	41.2 (5.9)	45.1 (4.9)	<.01	0.80		45.3 (5.8)	46.6 (5.8)	.49	0.22		44.8 (4.8)	46.3 (4.3)	.09	0.35		44.1 (5.2)	43.7 (5.7)	.61	0.07	
PWB Purpose in Life	36.1 (5.8)	39.3 (7.2)	.09	0.44		41.6 (5.6)	43.0 (6.9)	.52	0.20		38.7 (6.1)	39.8 (5.1)	.15	0.22		40.7 (6.7)	41.3 (7.0)	.48	0.09	
PWB Positive Relations	35.9 (10.1)	38.9 (9.2)	.11	0.33		38.6 (8.9)	41.9 (8.7)	.12	0.38		39.4 (8.4)	41.7 (8.1)	<.05	0.28		38.4 (8.9)	39.9 (8.1)	.11	0.19	
PWB Self-Acceptance	31.3 (8.4)	36.1 (9.6)	<.05	0.50		37.2 (9.9)	41.6 (7.5)	<.05	0.59		37.3 (8.1)	38.8 (8.9)	.36	0.17		38.4 (7.9)	38.6 (6.0)	.86	0.03	

Note: Paired *t*-tests were used for tests of significance. All *p*-values are 2-tailed. SWB = Subjective Well-Being, PWB = Psychological Well-Being

the mindful creativity group ($p < .01$) and was maintained at Time 3. This suggests that MT bolstered perceptions of resourcefulness and effectiveness in managing the surrounding world (Ryff, 1989). If MT does enhance perceptions of mastery, it might also be expected to enhance goal-directed action (the focus of hypothesis 3).

Taken together, these findings provide limited support for Hypothesis 2. That is, whilst attention training and mindfulness meditation were found to positively impact dimensions of psychopathology (i.e. depression, stress and anxiety), no impact was found for mindful creativity. Also, as just described, whilst the different MT programmes did impact wellbeing variables these impacts were rather narrow and idiosyncratic.

Hypothesis #3. The final hypothesis predicted that MT would significantly increase pre-post ratings of goal attainment. Pre-post means and standard deviations for goal attainment ratings are displayed in Table 7. As explained earlier, goal attainment in this study was calculated using ratings of both goal difficulty and past attainment. As such, it is possible that any pre-post increases in goal attainment may occur not as a result of increases in actual attainment but rather because participants perceived their goals to be more difficult (thus increasing the overall attainment score). Preliminary analysis of the data indicated that this was not the case, however, with a paired samples t -test revealing that difficulty ratings actually *decreased* slightly across the groups; a difference that was found to be non-significant ($p = 0.35$).

Upon the completion of MT, statistically significant increases in goal attainment were reported by all the training groups (see Table 7) but not the control group. In order to examine differential change by group, one-way ANCOVAs were performed on post-training (Time 2) attainment ratings, with pre-training (Time 1) ratings used as the covariate. This analysis revealed a significant between group difference for goal attainment ($F(3, 64) = 3.57, p < .05$). A closer inspection

of these results using planned comparisons revealed that all groups significantly differed from the control group (attention training $p < .05$, mindfulness meditation $p < .005$ and mindful creativity $p < .05$). Post hoc analysis found no differences between the experimental groups themselves. As such, these results seem to indicate that MT enhances goal-directed self-regulation, and provide support for Hypothesis 3.

Discussion

This study provides empirical evidence that mindfulness can be cultivated in a variety of ways, using procedures that seek to develop attentional capacities through the use of both internal and external stimuli. The results indicate that mindfulness meditation, attention training and mindful creativity all increased levels of mindfulness and goal attainment, with some idiosyncratic improvements in mental health and wellbeing.

The impact on mental health and wellbeing

The finding that increased mindfulness was accompanied by improvements in the mental health and wellbeing is not new, given that the beneficial effects of mindfulness meditation and other attentional training programs have been widely reported (e.g. Baer, 2003; Grossman et al., 2004; Papa-georgiou & Wells, 2000). What the findings reported in this study do suggest, however, is that the effects that accrue from mindfulness training programmes vary according to the different perceptual points they explicitly target. Stated differently, different techniques seem to activate different psychological processes, evidenced in this study by the different pattern of effects noted across the three experimental groups.

Attention Training. It was not surprising to see decreased levels of depression and anxiety in this group, as attention training seeks to increase the attentional control needed to interrupt dysfunctional processing routines that might otherwise lead to excessive amounts of self-focused attention and

Table 7: Means and Standard Deviations for Goal Attainment

		AT Training (N = 18)		MM (N = 17)		MC (N = 17)		C (N = 17)	
Measure		Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
Goal Attainment	M	67.2	109.6	73.6	112.4	63.9	129.8	55.5	51.3
	SD	48.4	74.7	55.4	73.8	68.5	102.2	56.7	59.1
	<i>p</i>		<.05		<.05		<.01		.55
	<i>d</i>		0.67		0.59		0.76		0.07

Note: Paired *t*-tests were used for tests of significance. All *p*-values are 2-tailed.

AT = Attention Training; MM = Mindfulness Meditation; MC = Mindful Creativity

an escalating spiral of rumination and fear (Wells & Matthews, 1994). By reducing attentional load, attention training may help individuals liberate attentional resources and direct those resources towards forms of information that support, rather than thwart, adaptive thought and action (Wells & Matthews, 1994).

Mindfulness Meditation. Given the growing body of evidence related to the efficacy of MBSR and various other forms of mindfulness-based therapy (Baer, 2003), it was not surprising to find participants in this group reporting lower levels of anxiety and stress. A core aim of mindfulness meditation is to improve an individual's ability to dispassionately observe ongoing experience, such that they become less enmeshed in the content of their cognitions and associated emotions (Kornfield, 2004). Lower levels of anxiety would therefore be expected in this group, as anxiety provoking thoughts are likely to have been met with lower levels of emotionality. In addition, because meditation is also useful for inducing relaxation (Baer, 2003), the regular practice of these exercises was expected to have a positive effect on stress levels.

Mindful Creativity. In contrast to attention training and mindfulness meditation, participants in this group appeared to feel more efficacious, capable of effectively managing their surrounding world (environmental

mastery), whilst also reporting better quality interpersonal relationships (positive relations with others). Given that the mindful creativity programme encouraged participants to mindfully engage with the world (by relaxing cognitive commitments and creating new categories or schema), it is not surprising that programme participants reported greater mastery over aspects of their external experience, compared to their internal experience.

The impact on goal attainment

Whilst the MT programmes examined in this study did not coach participants towards the attainment of personal goals, significant pre-post increases in goal attainment were still reported. This is intriguing as it suggests all three forms of MT may have importance for enhancing goal-directed self-regulation and be a useful inclusion in interventions that target goal attainment. This raises the obvious question, why should the regular practice of attentional exercises lead improvements in self-regulation? Again, the mechanisms that underpin these improvements are likely to differ for each of the programs examined in this study.

Attention Training. The most obvious mechanism by which attention training might have an impact on goal attainment is through the liberation of attentional resources. Given the human attentional

system only has a limited capacity (Ward, 2004) and depression, anxiety and worry are attentionally demanding (Wells & Matthews, 1994), the presence of these emotions can lead people to feel 'captured' by them and unable to focus on anything other than their emotional experience. As attention training is designed to help individuals develop attentional control, it may facilitate goal attainment by helping individuals to redirect limited resources toward forms of information that promote self-regulation and support adaptive functioning. Secondly, the *experience* of attentional control might create a renewed sense of self efficacy in the person, further liberating behavioural and attentional options for the person.

Mindfulness Meditation. Goal-directed effort can be compromised by a wide variety of psychological states (e.g. urges, negative thoughts) that trigger unwanted behavioural responses. In this regard, mindfulness meditation may have supported goal attainment by helping participants become more aware of these states and more adept at disrupting habitual thought-action sequences that might otherwise jeopardise goal progression. As Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) point out, self-regulation is difficult if problematic thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviours go unnoticed. Whilst awareness of these processes does not necessarily guarantee an adaptive response, the interval of time created by such awareness should (at worst) allow the temporary suspension of a habitual response and (at best) result in the substitution of a more useful alternative.

Mindful Creativity. Given this study found mindful creativity to be associated with an increase in environmental mastery, greater goal attainment in this group seems related to changes in perceived efficacy. Participants in this group were encouraged to adopt a more mindful stance towards the world (through creative pursuits). This involved being open to experience, seeking out novelty and difference, being sensitive to context, and varying perspective. It seems plausible that, in applying

this stance towards the completion of a creative project, participants were also able to apply it to other personal goals. In so doing, they may have become more adept at identifying the resources and support they needed for progressing towards their goals, along with greater confidence that they could obtain those resources and support; cognitions akin to *pathways thinking* and *agency thinking* (Snyder, 2000).

Implications for practice

The most obvious implication of the findings reported here is that multiple roads may lead to improvements in mindfulness, wellbeing and goal attainment. Nevertheless, even in the absence of more detailed studies, the link between rationale and intervention should not be neglected. Coaches should be careful in selecting mindfulness procedures that clients see as matching their needs. Hence, coherence between agreed case conceptualisation and intervention rationale is critical. For example, if the agreed case conceptualisation suggests that the client is habitually applying an ego-centric response to situations and events, a more meditative approach, with its emphasis on de-centering, may be seen as the most effective by the client. If the client recognises a need to be more effective in noticing difference and novelty, then an approach that emphasises context, novelty and creativity may prove most acceptable. Finally, for clients that experience themselves as caught in perseverative loops of ruminative or circular processing, then an approach that emphasises the development of attentional control might be most convincing and effective.

Directions for future research

Our findings suggest a range of potentially valuable research questions. Firstly, further deconstruction studies are required to investigate the particular differential effects of each of the approaches to mindfulness. This would also include whether matching clients to particular mindfulness interventions along the lines suggested above improves outcomes over and above the random use of mindfulness proce-

dures. Secondly, further studies might seek to identify whether the addition of mindfulness interventions to existing coaching interventions may enhance outcomes. For example, a combination of cognitive behavioural coaching and attentional training may be useful for clients whose presentation is characterised by anxiety. A combination of mindful creativity and developmental coaching may enhance outcomes for clients seeking to explore bigger perspectives. Of course, this line of research would need to carefully consider the theoretical rationale and practical implementation of such mixed methods approaches.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that need to be considered when interpreting the results of this study. First, due to the voluntary nature of this study, participants most likely possessed an interest in mindfulness not representative of the general adult population. As such, the findings may not generalise to other groups. Second, as the study was not placebo controlled, it cannot be conclusively stated that MT caused the observed improvements in mindfulness, mental health and wellbeing. Rather, it may be that the presentation of a credible rationale for MT (as reported in Table 2) encouraged participants to expect and report these improvements. Third, as our sample was relatively small, the study is likely to have been poorly powered, thereby increasing the possibility of a Type II error. Finally, whilst efforts were made in this study to standardise the programmes being researched (e.g. using manuals), it is possible the results simply reflect a positive effect of the programme instructors more than the programmes themselves. As such, future studies would be enhanced by

further efforts to reduce the influence of non-specific factors. This might include the use of websites or mobile applications that permit more uniform programme delivery in respect of the session delivery schedule, session duration, guide instructions, monitoring of practice, etc.

Conclusion

Mindfulness has been shown to be useful in decreasing psychopathology and increasing wellbeing in a range of clinical studies. However, little research has been conducted into the relative efficacy of different approaches to mindfulness. This paper is the first to examine the relative efficacy of three types of mindfulness intervention: mindfulness meditation, attention training and mindful creativity in a non-clinical population. The present study has shown that mindfulness procedures can also ameliorate depression and anxiety, increase wellbeing, and support wellbeing and goal attainment among non-clinical participants, at least in the short term. The question of which intervention is most suited to which client remains open, however, the analysis of the underlying mechanism addressed by each approach suggest future pathways for research.

Gordon B. Spence

Sydney Business School,
University of Wollongong

Michael J. Cavanagh

School of Psychology, University of Sydney

Correspondence

Dr Gordon Spence

Sydney Business School,
University of Wollongong
gspence@uow.edu.au

References

- Aikens, K.A., Astin, J., Pelletier, K.R. et al. (2014). Mindfulness goes to work: Impact of an online workplace intervention. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 56(7), 721–731.
- Alexander, C.N., Langer, E.J., Newman, R.I., Chandler, H.M. & Davies, J.L. (1989). Transcendental meditation, mindfulness, and longevity: An experimental study with the elderly. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 950–964.

- Antony, M., Bieling, P.J., Cox, B.J., Enns, M.W. & Swinson, R.P. (1998). Psychometric properties of the 42-item and 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress scales in clinical groups and a community sample. *Psychological Assessment*, 19(2), 176–181.
- Baer, R.A. (2003). Mindfulness training as a clinical intervention: A conceptual and empirical review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 10(2), 125–143.
- Baumeister, R.F. & Heatherton, T.F. (1996). Self-regulation failure: An overview. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(1), 1–15.
- Bodner, T. & Langer, E.J. (1995). *Mindfulness and attention*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bradburn, N.M. (1969). *The structure of psychological well-being*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Brown, K.W. & Ryan, R.M. (2003). The benefits of being present: Mindfulness and its role in psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84(4), 822–848.
- Brown, K.W. & Ryan, R.M. (2004). Fostering healthy self-regulation from within and without: A self-determination theory perspective. In P. A. Linley & S. Joseph (Eds.) *Positive psychology in practice* (pp.105–124). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.
- Carson, S., Shih, M. & Langer, E.J. (2001). Sit still and pay attention? *Journal of Adult Development*, 8(3), 183–188.
- Carver, C.S. & Scheier, M.F. (1998). *On the self-regulation of behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cavanagh, M. (2003). *The prevalence, nature and treatment of hypochondriasis: Towards a metacognitive approach to health anxiety*. (Doctoral Dissertation), Macquarie University, Sydney.
- Cavanagh, M.J. & Spence, G.B. (2013). Mindfulness in coaching: Philosophy, psychology or just a useful skill? In J. Passmore, D. Peterson & T. Freire (Eds.) *Handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Coates-Burpee, L. & Langer, E.J. (in press). Mindfulness and martial satisfaction. *Journal of Adult Development*.
- Delizonna, L.L., Williams, R.P. & Langer, E.J. (2009). The effect of mindfulness on heart rate control. *Journal of Adult Development*, 16(2), 61–65.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R.A., Larsen, R.J. & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49(1), 71–75.
- Flook, L., Goldberg, S.B., Pinger, L., Bonus, K. & Davidson, R.J. (2013). Mindfulness for teachers: A pilot study to assess effects on stress, burnout, and teaching efficacy. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 7(3), 182–195.
- Gallego, J., Aguilar-Parra, J.M., Cangas, A.J., Langer, Á.I. & Mañas, I. (2014). Effect of a mindfulness program on stress, anxiety and depression in university students. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 17. doi:10.1017/sjp.2014.102
- Grant, A.M. (2003). The impact of life coaching on goal attainment, metacognition and mental health. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 31(3), 253–264.
- Grossman, P., Niemann, L., Schmidt, S. & Walach, H. (2004). Mindfulness-based stress reduction and health benefits: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 57(1), 35–43.
- Gunaratana, B. H. (2015). *Mindfulness in plain english*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Hayes, S.C., Strosahl, K.D. & Wilson, K.G. (2003). *Acceptance and commitment therapy: An experiential approach to behavior change*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kabat-Zinn, J. (1990). *Full catastrophe living: Using the wisdom of your body and mind to face stress, pain, and illness*. New York: Delacorte.
- Kemp, T. (2017). Mindfulness and coaching: Contemporary labels for timeless practices? In T. Bachkirova, G.B. Spence & D. Drake (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of coaching* (pp.381–398). London: Sage Publishing.
- Khoury, B., Lecomte, T., Fortin, G. et al. (2013). Mindfulness-based therapy: A comprehensive meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 33(6), 763–771.
- Kornfield, J. (2004). *Meditation for beginners*. Boulder, CO: Sounds True.
- Krasner, M.S., Epstein, R.M., Beckman, H. et al. (2009). Association of an educational program in mindful communication with burnout, empathy, and attitudes among primary care physicians. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 302(12), 1284–1293.
- Langer, E. (2016). *The power of mindful learning* (2nd edn). Boston, MA: De Capo Lifelong Books.
- Langer, E., Russel, T. & Eisenkraft, N. (2009). Orchestral performance and the footprint of mindfulness. *Psychology of Music*, 37(2), 125–136.

- Langer, E.J. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Langer, E.J. (1994). Mindlessness-mindfulness. In R.J. Corsini (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Langer, E.J., Bashner, R.S. & Chanowitz, B. (1985). Decreasing prejudice by increasing discrimination. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 49(1), 113–120.
- Langer, E.J., Cohen, M. & Djikic, M. (2012). Mindfulness as a psychological attractor: The effect on children. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 42(5), 1114–1122.
- Lee, F.K., Sheldon, K.M. & Turban, D.B. (2003). Personality and the goal-striving process: The influence of achievement goal patterns, goal level, and mental focus on performance and enjoyment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(2), 256–265.
- Levy, B.R., Jennings, P. & Langer, E.J. (2001). Improving attention in old age. *Journal of Adult Development*, 8(3), 189–192.
- Linehan, M.M., Cochran, B.N. & Kehrer, C.A. (2001). Dialectical behavior therapy for borderline personality disorder. In D.H. Barlow (Ed.) *Clinical handbook of psychological disorders: A step-by-step treatment manual* (pp.470–522). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Lovibond, P.F. & Lovibond, S.H. (1995). The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress scales (DASS) with the Beck Depression and Anxiety inventories. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 33(3), 335–343.
- Marianetti, O. & Passmore, J. (2009). Mindfulness at work: Paying attention to enhance well-being and performance. In P.A. Linley, S. Harrington, N. Garcea & N. Page (Eds.) *Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work* (pp.189–200). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Michel, A., Bosch, C. & Rexroth, M. (2014). Mindfulness as a cognitive–emotional segmentation strategy: An intervention promoting work–life balance. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87(4), 733–754.
- Papageorgiou, C. & Wells, A. (1998). Effects of attention training on hypochondriasis: A brief case series. *Psychological Medicine*, 28(1), 193–200.
- Papageorgiou, C. & Wells, A. (2000). Treatment of recurrent major depression with attention training. *Cognitive and Behavioral Practice*, 7(4), 407–413.
- Prochaska, J.O. & Norcross, J.C. (2003). *Systems of psychotherapy: A transtheoretical analysis*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Reb, J. & Atkins, P. (Eds.). (2015). *Mindfulness in organizations: Foundations, research, and application*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ryff, C.D. (1989). Happiness is everything, or is it? Explorations on the meaning of psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57(6), 1069–1081.
- Ryff, C.D. & Keyes, C.L.M. (1995). The structure of psychological well-being revisited. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69(4), 719–727.
- Shapiro, S.L., Carlson, L., Astin, J.A. & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62(3), 373–386.
- Snyder, C.R. (2000). *Handbook of hope: Theory, measures, and applications*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Spence, G.B. (2017). Mindfulness at work. In L.G. Oades, M.F. Steger, A. Delle Fave & J. Passmore (Eds.) *The psychology of positivity and strengths-based approaches at work* (pp.110–131). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Teasdale, J.D. (2004). Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. In J. Yiend (Ed.) *Cognition, emotion and psychopathology: Theoretical, empirical and clinical directions* (pp.270–289). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Virgili, M. (2015). Mindfulness-based interventions reduce psychological distress in working adults: A meta-analysis of intervention studies. *Mindfulness*, 6(2), 326–337.
- Ward, A. (2004). *Attention: A neuropsychological approach*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Wells, A. (1990). Panic disorder in association with relaxation-induced anxiety: An attentional training approach to treatment. *Behavior Therapy*, 21, 273–280.
- Wells, A. & Matthews, G. (1994). *Attention and emotion: A clinical perspective*. Hove: Psychology Press.
- Wells, A., White, J. & Carter, K. (1997). Attention training: Effects on anxiety and beliefs in panic and social phobia. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 4(4), 226–232.

Intentional personality change coaching: A four-year longitudinal study

Jesse Martin-Allan, Peter Leeson & Lesley Sue Martin

Introduction: *There is an emerging literature which suggests that personality can be changed intentionally through coaching methods, however, the long-term efficacy of such interventions has not been tested. This study aimed to determine the long-term efficacy of an intentional personality change coaching intervention used in Martin, Oades, and Caputi (2014) by conducting a four-year follow-up study.*

Method: *Of the original 50 participants eligible for this follow-up, 23 females and two males (total = 25) completed a NEO PI-R personality questionnaire and a COPE questionnaire on coping styles four years after completing the intervention.*

Results: *The findings indicate that significant personality change was still present four years after the original personality change intervention was conducted.*

Discussions: *These findings suggest that the step-wise process proposed by Martin, Oades, and Caputi (2014) is an effective means of instigating long-term intentional personality change.*

Conclusions: *These findings extend upon the preliminary findings of Martin et al. (2014), suggesting that intentional personality change coaching may be able to produce significant desirable changes in personality which remain stable over time.*

Keywords: *Personality, coaching, follow-up, intentional change, volitional personality change.*

A RECENT STUDY found that up to 95 per cent of young adults would like to change aspects of their personality (Robinson et al., 2015). Despite these findings, there are few studies which examine whether individuals can purposefully change undesired aspects of their personality (Hudson & Fraley, 2015).

This lack of exploration may in part be due to a long history of debate as to whether personality change even occurs at all in adult life (Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006). Costa and McCrae (1992), who developed the Five Factor Model (FFM) of personality, found limited change in personality beyond age 30. This led them to believe personality was the product of genetic and biological factors and did not change past 30. Roberts et al. (2006) noted that Costa and McCrae's research targeted too specific populations (e.g. only males, or only Americans), and was based upon single longitudinal studies. They argued that this methodology

limited the validity of their broader claims about personality (i.e. that it is fixed). Hence they conducted a meta-analysis of 92 studies finding significant change in personality throughout middle and old age. In addition, research suggests major life events such as marriage, remarriage and death of a spouse can have a significant effect on personality (Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991; Specht et al., 2011). Subsequent to the findings by Roberts et al. (2006), Costa Jr and McCrae (2006) acknowledged that personality change did occur in middle-late adulthood, however, at a slower rate than early life.

Research also indicates that personality change can occur during the course of interventions not directly targeting personality. For example, both meditation and yoga interventions were found to cause personality change in anxiety and conscientiousness respectively, with changes from meditation continuing at a three-year follow-up (Akhilesh & Nagendra, 2015; Orme-Johnson & Barnes,

2014). Furthermore, a number of studies have found that both psychotherapy and coaching interventions can result in significant personality change (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Hollon et al., 2005; Maeda et al., 2008; Piedmont, 2001; Santor et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1980; Tang et al., 2009). Studies which conducted follow-up measures such as Maeda et al. (2008) and Piedmont (2001) indicated personality change was maintained for six months and 15 months respectively. Thus, preliminary evidence indicates that interventions, therapeutic or otherwise, can lead to incidental and sometimes long-lasting changes in personality.

This raises the question as to whether interventions designed to target personality specifically could achieve long-lasting, intentional personality change. Intentional personality change refers to an individual targeting specific aspects of their personality they wish to be different and volitionally changing them (Martin et al., 2014). Hudson and Fraley (2015) tested whether a 16-week intentional personality change intervention delivered online resulted in desired changes. Participants were assigned to one of three groups: A control, an unstructured intervention and a structured intervention. Setting unstructured goals (e.g. list three ways that you can try and attain the changes you desire over the week) resulted in no significant change as individuals would set vague, unattainable goals (e.g. be friendlier). They found desired change occurred, however, when individuals made structured plans that were situation specific (e.g. I will go out every Friday and talk to two new people).

Robinson et al. (2015) conducted four studies across three different countries (UK, Iran and China), exploring young adults' goals and plans to change their personality. Across these countries 95 per cent of young adults reported the desire to change at least one personality dimension. Robinson et al. (2015) measured these students' personality before setting goals and at a 12 month follow-up, finding no effect for goals to

change extroversion, agreeableness and openness to experience. Having goals to increase conscientiousness and reduce neuroticism, however, resulted in changes opposite to those desired after 12 months. They suggested this counter-intuitive finding may have been due to rapid environmental changes occurring in the population (i.e. young adults who are just entering university). This may have led to personality change goals becoming secondary to more pressing concerns (e.g. assignments or socialising) which could hinder desired change. This lack of change may lead to self-appraisals of failure in goal-directed efforts for self-improvement, which would increase neuroticism and decrease perceived conscientiousness. Furthermore, the majority of individuals made general (e.g. be more friendly) or semi-specific change plans (e.g. have more conversations with people). Unstructured approaches to personality change, as Hudson and Fraley's (2015) research suggests, are not effective.

Martin et al. (2014) examined the effects of a 10-week intentional personality change coaching programme on 54 participants' personality. The intervention involved a 10-step process which included identifying gaps between the current and ideal self and developing coaching plans using an eclectic approach drawing from a range of fields (e.g. cognitive-behavioural, positive psychology and acceptance and commitment). This was based upon the view that, because the FFM covers such a broad range of human behaviour, no single approach would be adequate in changing the 30 facets outlined in the NEO-PI-R.

Individuals were asked to target one or more facets they wished to change, and they received one-to-one coaching from a psychologist for 10 one-hour sessions. The study was conducted using a wait-list control, and found that, on average, individuals in the intervention group achieved personality change in targeted facets compared to control. An analysis of Martin et al.

(2014) performed by Allan, Leeson, and Martin (2014) indicated that the three most commonly targeted personality traits were anxiety, self-discipline and anger. Of the 30 facets, only altruism, ideas, values, tender-mindedness and aesthetics were not chosen for change by at least one person.

There are a number of factors which suggest that the changes achieved in Martin et al. (2014) could result in long-term change. Firstly, the changes made were maintained at a three-month follow-up, indicating at least some degree of stability. Secondly, a number of studies which measured incidental personality change associated with interventions (e.g. meditation, drug rehabilitation, emotional intelligence) noted sustained changes ranging from six months up to three years (Maeda et al., 2008; Orme-Johnson & Barnes, 2014; Piedmont, 2001).

Furthermore, a number of theoretical perspectives within the intentional change literature would suggest the step-wise process employed by Martin et al. (2014) should result in long-term change. Boyatzis, Boyatzis, and Akrivou (2006) proposed that for long-term change to occur, it firstly should be intentional, and secondly should follow a specific process. The process includes identifying gaps between the current self and ideal self, building on strengths and addressing gaps through repeatedly practicing new thoughts, thus creating new neural pathways that support ongoing change. Studies utilising this intentional change process have achieved change in emotional, social and cognitive intelligence (Boyatzis, Boyatzis & Saatcioglu, 2008; Boyatzis & Leonard, 2008), with changes in these areas being maintained up to seven years. As the step-wise process utilised by Martin et al. (2014) closely mirrors these steps, it is possible any changes made in personality will also be maintained long-term.

Roberts and Pomerantz (2004) propose that changeability of personality can be conceptualised in a three-level perspective. The first level is comprised of 'top-level'

broad constructs of personality dimensions and facets, which are most resistant to change, but once changes are made, should be most enduring. The second level incorporates narrower 'mid-level' constructs, such as routines and habitual responses related to personality traits. This level is less enduring, but more changeable and it serves as a bridge between personality traits, and their associated states. The third, most changeable 'bottom-level' is comprised of transient states, thoughts, feelings and behaviours. This is, however, furthest from personality itself. For changes at this level to result in personality change a bottom-up approach is required, where changes in concrete behaviours or thoughts develop into habits and are eventually internalised as a change in personality. Traditional coaching interventions and behaviour therapies tend to focus on concrete changes to behaviour (which would be bottom-mid level changes), but are also able to produce incidental changes in personality (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Hollon et al., 2005; Maeda et al., 2008; Piedmont, 2001; Santor et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1980; Tang et al., 2009). The changes associated in personality in these interventions would be bottom-up.

Allemand and Fluckiger (2017) propose that both top-down and bottom-up approaches contribute to long term personality change. Elements of the step-wise process used in Martin et al. (2014) conform to these proposed processes.

Processes within Martin et al. (2014) may have facilitated bottom-up change, for example, through helping participants develop and repeat helpful thoughts and behaviours (bottom-level) so they become habitual (mid-level) and become internalised as part of personality (top-level). Top-down change refer to a shift in a top-level construct (i.e. personality) that translates into mid and bottom-level changes. Top-down change may have been facilitated in the intervention as well. Participants set personality change goals consistent with

their ideal self (top-level), identified related habits and thought-patterns (mid-level) and enacted associated thoughts and behaviours (bottom-level). If the strategies used in Martin et al. (2014) did cause top-down and bottom-up change, they will have altered the most durable top-level construct (i.e. personality), and thus have the potential to cause enduring change.

Allemand and Fluckiger (2017) also propose two pre-conditions that need to be present to support long-term intentional personality change. Firstly, the client needs to be intrinsically motivated to change aspects of their personality. Intrinsic motivation is a significant predictor of change maintenance in a range of areas (Teixeira et al., 2012; Vancampfort et al., 2013). The intervention employed in Martin et al. (2014) focused on fostering thoughts and behaviours consistent with the ideal self. This process may be intrinsically motivating as these new thoughts and behaviours are likely to provide internal rewards such as feelings of self-actualisation. This could help to create a self-sustaining reward system, where enacting these thoughts and behaviours is rewarding within itself, thus perpetuating changes once the intervention is completed.

The second precondition proposed by Allemand and Fluckiger (2017) is that experiential and behavioural changes need to become habitual to sustain changes. In Martin et al. (2014), this aligned with implementing change plans which included modifying thinking and behaviours over 10 weekly coaching sessions, with between session homework to consolidate change. Lally et al. (2010) found that, in a number of different activities, habits take a median of nine weeks to form and become automatic (i.e. they are performed without conscious effort). Thus, given the length of the intervention (10 weeks), and the potentially intrinsically rewarding nature of the habits fostered within the intervention, it is likely that these changes would be maintained.

Whilst there are a number of factors

which suggest the intervention used in Martin et al. (2014) should result in long-term change, the original study did not assess participants' personality beyond a three month follow-up. The long-term outcomes of personality change interventions are an important consideration. Theories that propose personality is fixed often suggest that short-term personality change can appear to occur due to transient changes in moods (which may briefly alter characteristic patterns of thoughts and behaviours), but that this change will eventually revert back to a baseline (Costa & McCrae, 1994). Thus, in order to determine whether an intervention has the capacity to change personality, long-term follow-ups are required.

The current study aimed to determine whether the intentional personality changes made in Martin et al. (2014) were maintained at a four-year follow-up. During the course of Martin et al. (2014), participants chose specific personality facets they wished to change (e.g. anger and gregariousness) and received one-on-one coaching in order to fulfil change goals. The current study tested the hypothesis that this process would result in desired change in the average of targeted facets at a four year follow-up.

Method

Participants

The intervention group were recruited exclusively from the pool of participants in Martin et al. (2014). Of the 54 participants which engaged in Martin et al. (2014), 50 had a complete data set (i.e. from pre-intervention to three-month follow-up). Thirty-eight were able to be contacted, however, four participants did not agree to participate in the follow-up. A further nine participants did not return their questionnaires. This left a total of 25 which contributed data to the follow-up. Of this group, two were male and 23 were female, with an average age of 50.08 ($SD = 11.56$).

Materials

NEO-PI-R (Costa Jr & McCrae, 2006). The NEO-PI-R is a Five-Factor Model questionnaire which assesses five dimensions of personality: Neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, openness and conscientiousness. Each dimension is further composed of six facets which encompass more specific elements. Each facet is formed from eight questions for a total of 240 items. Examples of these items include, 'I'm not a worrier' and, 'I really like most people I meet.' The responses are measured on a five point Likert scale (zero = strongly disagree, four = strongly agree). The self-report NEO-PI-R was used to measure the personality of participants in the follow-up study. The coefficient alpha of the facets targeted within the NEO-PI-R ranged from .59 to .81 (McCrae et al., 2011) indicating acceptable reliability.

Procedure

Participants in Martin et al. (2014) were originally recruited via a local newspaper article, an online advertisement on the University of Wollongong website and word of mouth. It was a requirement that participants be 18 years or older, and participants with major psychopathology (e.g. AXIS II disorders, active psychosis or current drug and alcohol abuse) were screened from the study. Participants were then placed in one of two groups: A waitlist control group or a coaching group. The participants in the coaching group received 10 weeks of intentional personality change coaching provided by registered or provisionally registered psychologists. After the coaching group had completed the intervention the wait-list group then proceeded to engage in the same 10 week coaching intervention.

A researcher contacted the participants of Martin, Oades and Caputi (2014) via telephone and email. Those who agreed to participate were given the participation package (which included an instruction sheet, an information sheet, consent form, NEO-PI-R question and answer sheet and

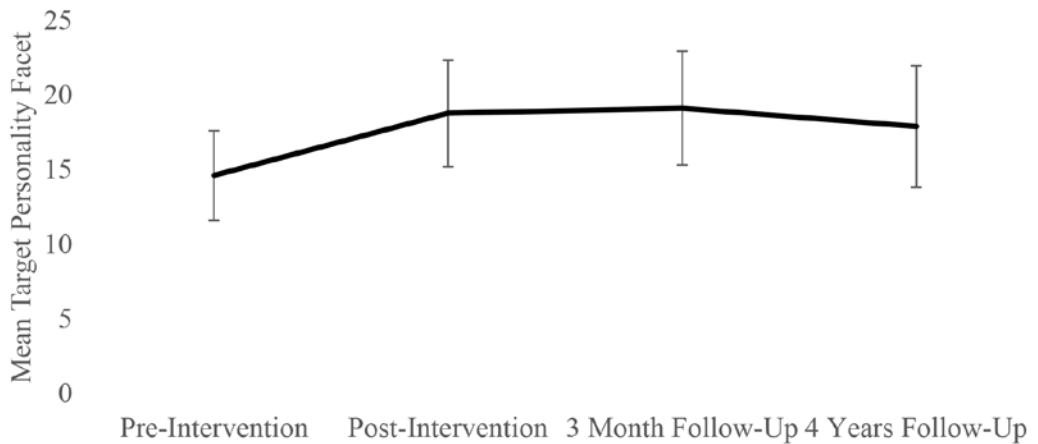
COPE question and answer sheet). The participants were instructed to fill out the NEO-PI-R questionnaire and the COPE, sign the consent form and return once completed.

Results

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was used to determine personality change in mean targeted facets of 25 participants over four time points (pre-intervention, post-intervention, three-month follow-up, four-year follow-up). Prior to running this ANOVA, binary logistic regressions were conducted testing differences between follow-up participants and dropouts in terms of personality and age. Individuals who completed the follow-up were significantly older and more conscientious compared to drop-outs. Regressions testing the influence of age and conscientiousness on personality change, however, found no effect, and were thus unlikely to confound results. A binary logistic regression was used to determine whether personality change from pre-intervention to post-intervention predicted the binary outcomes completion or non-completion. The effect of personality change during the intervention on retention was non-significant, suggesting that level of change during the intervention and three-month follow-up did not predict likelihood to participate in the four-year follow-up.

All participants who targeted facets within neuroticism wished to reduce them. As such these facets were reverse coded, such that an increase in mean targeted personality across all facets corresponded with desired change. Mauchly's test was significant $W = .42$, $p = .001$, indicating the assumption of sphericity was violated. This violation would suggest that variance in degree of personality change over time was not homogenous between participants. The degree to which sphericity is met is represented by a statistic called epsilon (ϵ), where $\epsilon = 1$ indicates perfect sphericity. In cases where sphericity is not met, the degrees of freedom need

Figure 1: Mean targeted personality facet levels over time



to be adjusted using a lower epsilon. The Huynh-Feldt Epsilon is an epsilon which can be calculated in these cases, and adjusts the degrees of freedom to compensate for lower sphericity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The degrees of freedom for this study were multiplied by a Huynh-Feldt Epsilon ($\epsilon = .79$) which was calculated to adjust for this violation.

The ANOVA indicated that significant personality change occurred between the four time points, $F(2.37, 17.49)$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .42$. This was a large effect size (Cohen, 1977). Pairwise comparisons with a Bonferroni corrected alpha revealed that targeted personality facets changed significantly from pre-intervention ($M = 14.56$, $SD = 3.25$) to post-intervention ($M = 18.76$, $SD = 3.66$). Furthermore, there was significant change from pre-intervention to three-month follow-up ($M = 19.15$, $SD = 4.01$), and from pre-intervention to four-year follow-up ($M = 17.67$, $SD = 4.30$). There was no significant difference in targeted personality facets from post-intervention to four-year follow-up. The standardised mean difference from pre-intervention to four-year follow-up was $d = .96$. These results are summarised in Figure 1.

Discussion

The finding that targeted personality facets significantly changed in the desired direction between pre-intervention and the four-year follow-up supports the literature suggesting personality is changeable (Bolger & Eckenrode, 1991; Roberts et al., 2006; Specht et al., 2011). Furthermore, it supports the growing body of research suggesting that interventions may facilitate positive personality change (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Hollon et al., 2005; Maeda et al., 2008; Orme-Johnson & Barnes, 2014; Piedmont, 2001; Santor et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1980; Tang et al., 2009). More importantly it extends upon the findings that intentional personality change is possible (Hudson & Fraley, 2015; Martin et al., 2014), indicating these changes may be maintained long-term. This contradicts Costa and McCrae (1994), who proposed that personality fluctuates around a baseline, and that short-term changes could not be maintained after the age of 30.

The intervention's strategies for moving the current self toward the ideal self paralleled with Boyatzis et al. (2006) which formed the basis of the motivational theory for participants in the research. Intentional change theory has been found to support sustained

changes in emotional, social and cognitive intelligence (Boyatzis et al., 2008; Boyatzis & Leonard, 2008). The current study indicates that Boyatzis' intentional change model is also applicable in a personality change context.

A comparison between the outcomes observed in the current study and other personality change literature suggests that a number of factors are important for facilitating and maintaining change. Robinson et al. (2015) explored whether students who set goals and made plans to change personality dimensions were able to produce desired changes. This process was limited to goal setting and relatively unstructured planning by the participant themselves at one point in time, and resulted in no changes to personality or changes opposite to those desired by the individual one year later. In contrast, the intervention delivered by Martin et al. (2014) incorporated a more structured and comprehensive process including 10 weekly one-hour sessions with a coach, specific coaching plans, and homework activities to consolidate learning. This higher level of structure may be a factor which led to better personality change outcomes long-term. This is consistent with the findings of Hudson and Fraley (2015), who found that the more structured participants' personality change plans were, the more likely they were to achieve desired goals. These combined findings suggest that a high level of structure may be an important requirement for personality change interventions both in the short and long-term.

In comparison to Hudson and Fraley (2015) (the only other structured intentional personality change intervention reviewed) the current study found a considerably larger effect size for personality change, even after four years. The standardised mean difference for intentional personality change from pre-intervention to four-year follow-up ($d = .96$), was greater than Hudson and Fraley (2015) ($d = .17$) over the course of their 16-week study. A number of factors may explain the larger effect found in the current study over Hudson and Fraley (2015).

Firstly, the intervention delivered to participants in the current study was considerably more structured than even the structured intervention used in Hudson and Fraley (2015) (i.e. an online task where students set their own goals and plans with the instruction that it be specific). Thus, as Hudson and Fraley (2015) found their structured goals were better than unstructured goals in producing change, the added level of structure in the current study may have contributed to the greater level of change.

Secondly, Martin et al. (2014) focused more upon top-level factors (i.e. personality as a whole, as opposed to associated behaviours and thoughts). This approach incorporated conceptualisation of the ideal self, ensuring change is consistent with values and exploring importance of change to the participant. These combined factors may have made the process of change more intrinsically rewarding, which in turn is associated with long-term change (Teixeira et al., 2012; Vancampfort et al., 2013). Developing thoughts and behaviours consistent with the ideal self could produce feelings of self-actualisation (which would serve as an intrinsic motivator), creating a self-sustaining reward system that may be maintained once extrinsic motivators (e.g. coach encouragement) are removed (Wolters, 1998). Hence, this increased focus upon top-level factors may have boosted the current study's effect size in comparison to Hudson and Fraley (2015), and is likely a significant factor aiding in the maintenance of these changes over four years.

Furthermore, the intervention in Hudson and Fraley (2015) was performed without the aid of a psychologist, which likely limited participants awareness of strategies to facilitate and maintain change. In addition, Hudson and Fraley (2015) targeted dimensions (e.g. neuroticism) as opposed to the current study which targeted facets (e.g. anxiety). As dimensions encompass a number of facets, they may require greater effort to change. It is important to note, however, that the number of facets chosen had no effect on

change capacity in Martin et al. (2014). The two interventions have the scope to be used in different contexts. Whilst the intervention proposed by Martin et al. (2014) produced large changes in individual facets, it required the aid of a psychologist. Whereas Hudson and Fraley (2015) produced more modest changes in dimensions, their model has the advantage of being purely online, and is thus considerably more accessible and cheaper to administer.

The research on intentional personality change is still in its infancy, however, the current body of research suggests that commitment to change alone is not sufficient to produce change (and in some cases may result in changes opposite to those desired). Structured interventions which employed evidence based coaching and clinically-informed techniques such as Martin et al. (2014a) and the structured condition in Hudson and Fraley (2015) produced changes where unstructured interventions did not. The importance of structure and evidence-informed techniques is highlighted by the fact that even in the absence of desire to change personality, clinical interventions can produce significant changes in personality.

The use of mean targeted facet change (i.e. averaging participants' facets to one score) to measure personality change has some limitations, however, it also allowed for the guiding principles of the intervention to be tested in a quantitative manner. That is, participants were able to choose from a large number of facets, which allows for intentionality in the change process (as opposed to being told they can only change one facet, or choose from a more limited number of facets). Using mean targeted facet change however also detracted from the ability to infer or assess potential consequences of the intervention beyond a change in personality. This is because no particular facet was independently targeted for change across all participants, and thus the effects of a change in personality are difficult to infer as personality encompasses such a broad

spectrum of traits. Nevertheless, as there is scant research exploring intentional personality change (and the original study was the first of its kind), it is first important to establish whether personality can be intentionally changed at all, which the current study has intended to do. A more recent study found that targeted change within conscientiousness was possible using a similar model to that used within Martin et al., (2014) (Allan, Leeson, De Fruyt & Martin, 2018). Future research within more narrow domains of personality such as this could usefully inform the literature as to what traits are able to be changed within personality. This, in combination with studies which explore lower level outcomes and measurable behaviour changes would be helpful in order to further elucidate the consequences of personality change.

Another confounding factor in the current study is the possible impact of natural longitudinal change in the participants. Roberts et al. (2006) found natural changes occurred in conscientiousness and neuroticism over a 10-year period in the same direction observed as the current study. The standardised mean difference over four years for the current study ($d = .97$) was considerably larger than the differences reported over 10-year periods by Roberts et al. (2006) which ranged from $d = -.05$ to $d = .37$. Furthermore, personality change typically decelerates until early adulthood, meaning longitudinal changes would have been less applicable to this older population (Terracciano et al., 2010). Thus, whilst natural longitudinal changes may have had some effect, the magnitude of the effect size in this study that processes within the intervention caused change over and above what would be expected to occur naturally as individuals' age.

A further limitation in this study was participant attrition. A possible contributor was that a follow-up study was not originally planned as part of Martin et al. (2014). Hence processes for updating participants contact details were not in place, and participants were not aware

of the follow-up until they were contacted four years later. This meant that some of the participants could not be contacted, and 50 per cent of the participants eligible for the follow-up were not retained. Whilst an attrition rate of this number is not uncommon in longitudinal research (Roberts et al., 2006), it nevertheless has the potential to impact upon the validity of findings. In the current study, those who were retained were more conscientious and older than those who were not. Neither conscientiousness, nor age, however, impacted upon change over the four-year follow-up period. Furthermore, change within the intervention did not increase likelihood of response. Thus it is unlikely the finding of personality change over four years was inflated due to attrition.

The finding that conscientiousness did not affect personality change could be considered unexpected for a number of reasons. Firstly, conscientiousness describes the propensity to pursue goal-directed behaviour, delay gratification and plan (Roberts et al., 2009). Thus, individuals higher in conscientiousness could be expected to adhere more to structured plans which appear to be vital for personality change and maintenance (Hudson & Fraley, 2015; Martin et al., 2014). Secondly, the intervention used in Martin et al. (2014) focused on pursuing goal directed behaviour, which is another aspect of conscientiousness. Thirdly, conscientiousness is correlated with self-regulation of learning and maintenance of behaviours in a coaching context (Eilam et al., 2009; Stewart, Palmer, Wilkin & Kerrin, 2008). Given personality change maintenance was the outcome measured in this study, this non-significant result runs against intuitive expectations.

There are also a number of findings which suggest that conscientiousness may inhibit intentional personality change. Stewart, Carson, and Cardy (1996) found that high conscientiousness predicted lower gains in an intervention designed to increase self-discipline, which the authors attributed to a ceiling effect. Furthermore, Schnell and Becker (2006) found that conscientious indi-

viduals are more self-actualised. As the current study focused upon movement towards ideal self, individuals who are more self-actualised may experience less change. Both these studies indicate the possibility of conscientiousness inhibiting personality change due to a ceiling effect. The current study attempted to reduce the possibility of a ceiling effect by focusing upon the follow-up period (i.e. post-intervention to four-year follow-up). Individuals may be less likely to change in this period and consequently less likely to hit a ceiling in such change.

It is possible, however, that a ceiling effect could carry over to the follow-up period. Assuming an individual wished to increase a facet during the intervention, there are three possible trajectories post-intervention: The facet increases, the facet remains stable or the facet decreases. If highly conscientious individuals are more self-actualised, the gap between the ideal self and current self pre-intervention may have been smaller, making it easier to reach their ideal self within the intervention. Thus there may have been less scope to continue changes beyond the intervention and the facets may have remained stable or decreased post-intervention. If less conscientious individuals are less self-actualised before the intervention, they may still have a gap between the ideal and current self post-intervention, and thus they may have had more scope to increase targeted facets post-intervention. Therefore, whilst highly conscientious individuals may be less likely to decline (due to their ability to maintain coaching behaviours and enact self-discipline), individuals low in conscientiousness may have more scope to continue change beyond the intervention. These two opposing factors in combination may have nullified any effect, potentially explaining the non-significant result of conscientiousness on personality change. Another possible explanation for the non-significant finding is that once cognitive and behavioural habits had been developed within the intervention,

they may have required little energy to maintain. Thus, the capacity for directed effort that is encompassed within conscientiousness may be of little benefit, as expression of these personality facets becomes effortless.

The finding that intentional personality change can be maintained over four years has beneficial implications for the individual and society. Firstly, as up to 95 per cent of young people may wish to change some aspect of their personality (Robinson et al., 2015), this intervention offers a means to do so with relatively enduring outcomes. Secondly, personality change may result in secondary changes to a wide number of outcomes associated with personality (e.g. happiness, occupational choice, quality of relationships, criminal activity, spirituality) (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). This approach may be advantageous over targeting specific behaviours in situations where a broader change is desired (e.g. an individual may wish to be more self-disciplined so that they can be a better worker, a better partner, drink less and be more financially responsible). Targeting an underlying, top-level construct which predicts each of these variables such as conscientiousness (Bogg & Roberts, 2004; Kelly et al., 1992; Viinikainen et al., 2010; Whiteside & Lynam, 2001), may be a more efficient change mechanism than attempting to change each individual behaviour through coaching.

Thirdly, the study employed a clinical design (i.e. utilising one-on-one sessions with psychologists) and the intervention in Martin et al. (2014) utilised techniques based in clinical therapy (e.g. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment therapy). This suggests that these techniques can be used to instigate meaningful change beyond just treatment of pathology.

One such application is the prevention of pathology in vulnerable populations (e.g. abuse victims, soldiers or those who have recently recovered from mental illness). Some facets within neuroticism (e.g. anger, depression and anxiety) in their extremes manifest

as mental illness. This intervention is relatively short (10 one hour weekly sessions), and has the capacity to result in long-term changes (up to four years) in chosen facets. Future research examining the intervention's efficacy in populations where mental health is a concern (e.g. as a relapse preventative) could benefit practice and usefully inform both personality and clinical literature.

Another potential application is within the workplace, which already has had an extensive body of research in applying coaching methods to improve outcomes (Jones et al., 2016). Coaching and therapy in both of these fields (i.e. mental health and workplace coaching) have established methods which have been found to result in incidental personality change (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Hollon et al., 2005; Maeda et al., 2008; Piedmont, 2001; Santor et al., 1997; Smith et al., 1980; Tang et al., 2009). Regardless of whether personality-change is the focus of an intervention in this context, acknowledgement of potential personality change as an outcome in these contexts may help participants to make (or simply be aware of) more wide-ranging change that can occur in any type of coaching or therapeutic intervention. It is currently unknown whether intentional personality change interventions can result in wide-ranging changes in behaviour as would be expected (both theoretically from top-down mechanisms, and due to the wide-ranging correlations between personality and various behaviours outlined above). The use of purely self-report measures of personality was one limitation of this study that could be addressed in future research examining behavioural changes. This would help to determine whether participant changes in personality are simply due to a change in responding on a questionnaire, or have real-world consequences.

Conclusion

The current study examined the long-term effects of a 10-week personality change intervention. It was found that the intervention

used in Martin et al. (2014) resulted in change which was maintained four years later. This suggests that the step-wise process outlined in Martin et al. (2014) has the capacity to produce changes in personality which may be sustainable in the long-term. Further research which explores the outcomes associated with personality change, as well as applying it to areas which may benefit from such changes in outcomes (e.g. mental health, workplace coaching) would usefully inform the literature and elucidate further practical benefits which may be possible via personality change.

References

- Akhilesh, C.S.K.K. & Nagendra, H. (2015). Effect of yoga on conscientiousness and performance of employees: An action research study. *Innovative Journal of Business and Management*, 4(3), 45–51. doi:10.17010/pijom/2015/v8i8/75049
- Allan, J., Leeson, P. & Martin, L.S. (2014). Who wants to change their personality and what do they want to change? *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(1), 6–19.
- Allan, J., Leeson, P.R., De Fruyt, F. & Martin, L.S. (2018). Application of a 10 week coaching program designed to facilitate volitional personality change: Overall effects on personality and the impact of targeting. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 16(1), 80–94.
- Bogg, T. & Roberts, B.W. (2004). Conscientiousness and health-related behaviors: A meta-analysis of the leading behavioral contributors to mortality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130(6), 887–919. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.130.6.887
- Bolger, N. & Eckenrode, J. (1991). Social relationships, personality, and anxiety during a major stressful event. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61(3), 440–449. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.61.3.440
- Boyatzis, R., Boyatzis, R.E. & Akrivou, K. (2006). The ideal self as the driver of intentional change. *Journal of Management Development*, 25(7), 624–642. doi:10.1108/02621710610678454
- Boyatzis, R., Boyatzis, R.E. & Saatioglu, A. (2008). A 20-year view of trying to develop emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies in graduate management education. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(1), 92–108. doi:10.1108/02621710810840785
- Boyatzis, R. & Leonard, D.C. (2008). The impact of learning goals on emotional, social, and cognitive intelligence competency development. *Journal of Management Development*, 27(1), 109–128. doi:10.1108/02621710810840794
- Cohen, J. (1977). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (revised edn). New York: Academic Press.
- Costa Jr, P.T. & McCrae, R.R. (2006). Age changes in personality and their origins: Comment on Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer (2006). *Psychological Bulletin* 132(1), 26–28.
- Costa, P.T. & McCrae, R.R. (1992). Normal personality assessment in clinical practice: The NEO Personality Inventory. *Psychological Assessment*, 4(1), 5–13. doi:10.1037/1040-3590.4.1.5
- Costa, P.T. & McCrae, R.R. (1994). *Can personality change?* Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- De Fruyt, F., Van Leeuwen, K., Bagby, R.M., Rolland, J.-P. & Rouillon, F. (2006). Assessing and interpreting personality change and continuity in patients treated for major depression. *Psychological Assessment*, 18(1), 71–80. doi:10.1037/1040-3590.18.1.71
- Eilam, B., Zeidner, M. & Aharon, I. (2009). Student conscientiousness, self-regulated learning, and science achievement: An explorative field study. *Psychology in the Schools*, 46(5), 420–432. doi:10.1002/pits.20387

Jesse Martin-Allan

University of Wollongong

Dr Peter Leeson

University of Wollongong

Lesley Sue Martin

Independent Researcher

- Hollon, S.D., DeRubeis, R.J., Shelton, R.C. et al. (2005). Prevention of relapse following cognitive therapy vs medications in moderate to severe depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 62(4), 417–422. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.4.417
- Hudson, N.W. & Fraley, R.C. (2015). Volitional personality trait change: Can people choose to change their personality traits? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109(3), 490–507. doi:10.1037/pspp0000021
- Jones, R.J., Woods, S.A. & Guillaume, Y.R. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89(2), 249–277.
- Kelly, T., Soloff, P.H., Cornelius, J., George, A., Lis, J.A. & Ulrich, R. (1992). Can we study (treat) borderline patients? Attrition from research and open treatment. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 6(4), 417–433.
- Lally, P., Van Jaarsveld, C.H., Potts, H.W. & Wardle, J. (2010). How are habits formed: Modelling habit formation in the real world. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 40(6), 998–1009. doi:10.1002/ejsp.674
- Maeda, T., Kurihara, H., Morishima, I. & Munakata, T. (2008). The effect of psychological intervention on personality change, coping, and psychological distress of Japanese primary breast cancer patients. *Cancer Nursing*, 31(4), 27–35. doi:10.1097/01.NCC.0000305746.49205.f8
- Martin, L.S., Oades, L.G. & Caputi, P. (2014). Intentional personality change coaching: A randomised controlled trial of participant selected personality facet change using the Five-Factor Model of Personality. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(2), 196–209.
- McCrae, R.R., Kurtz, J.E., Yamagata, S. & Terracciano, A. (2011). Internal consistency, retest reliability, and their implications for personality scale validity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 15(1), 28–50.
- Orme-Johnson, D.W. & Barnes, V.A. (2014). Effects of the transcendental meditation technique on trait anxiety: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*, 20, 330–341. doi:10.1089/acm.2013.0204
- Ozer, D.J. & Benet-Martinez, V. (2006). Personality and the prediction of consequential outcomes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 57, 401–421.
- Piedmont, R.L. (2001). Cracking the plaster cast: Big Five personality change during intensive outpatient counseling. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 35(4), 500–520. doi:10.1006/jrpe.2001.2326
- Roberts, B.W., Jackson, J.J., Fayard, J.V., Edmonds, G. & Meints, J. (2009). *Handbook of individual differences in social behavior*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Roberts, B.W. & Pomerantz, E.M. (2004). On traits, situations, and their integration: A developmental perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(4), 402–416. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr0804_5
- 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. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.132.1.1
- Robinson, O.C., Nettle, E.E., Guo, J., Asadi, S. & Zhang, X. (2015). Goals and plans for Big Five personality trait change in young adults. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 59, 31–43. doi:10.1016/j.jrp.2015.08.002
- Santor, D.A., Bagby, R.M. & Joffe, R.T. (1997). Evaluating stability and change in personality and depression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(6), 1354–1362.
- Schnell, T. & Becker, P. (2006). Personality and meaning in life. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41(1), 117–129. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2005.11.030
- Smith, M.L., Glass, G.V. & Miller, T.I. (1980). *The benefits of psychotherapy*. Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Specht, J., Egloff, B. & Schmukle, S.C. (2011). Stability and change of personality across the life course: The impact of age and major life events on mean-level and rank-order stability of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(4), 862–882. doi:10.1037/a0024950
- Stewart, G.L., Carson, K.P. & Cardy, R.L. (1996). The joint effects of conscientiousness and self-leadership training on employee self-directed behavior in a service setting. *Personnel Psychology*, 49(1), 143–164. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.1996.tb01795.x
- Stewart, L.J., Palmer, S., Wilkin, H. & Kerrin, M. (2008). The influence of character: Does personality impact

- coaching success? *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 6(1), 32–42.
- Tabachnick, B.G. & Fidell, L.S. (2007). *Experimental designs using ANOVA*. Sydney, AU: Thomson/Brooks/Cole.
- Tang, T.Z., DeRubeis, R.J., Hollon, S.D. et al. (2009). Personality Change During Depression Treatment. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 66(12), 1322–1330. doi:10.1001/archgenpsychiatry.2009.166
- Teixeira, P.J., Silva, M.N., Mata, J., Palmeira, A.L. & Markland, D. (2012). Motivation, self-determination, and long-term weight control. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, 9(1), 1–13. doi:10.1186/1479-5868-9-22
- Terracciano, A., McCrae, R.R. & Costa, P.T. (2010). Intra-individual change in personality stability and age. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 44(1), 31–37.
- Vancampfort, D., De Hert, M., Vansteenkiste, M. et al. (2013). The importance of self-determined motivation towards physical activity in patients with schizophrenia. *Psychiatry Research*, 210(3), 812–818. doi:10.1016/j.psychres.2013.10.004
- Viinikainen, J., Kokko, K., Pulkkinen, L. & Pehkonen, J. (2010). Personality and labour market income: Evidence from longitudinal data. *Labour*, 24(2), 201–220. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9914.2010.00477.x
- Whiteside, S.P. & Lynam, D.R. (2001). The Five Factor Model and impulsivity: Using a structural model of personality to understand impulsivity. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30(4), 669–689. doi:10.1016/S0191-8869(00)00064-7
- Wolters, C.A. (1998). Self-regulated learning and college students' regulation of motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90(2), 224–235. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.90.2.224

Family life coaching: A growing practice

Kimberly I. Allen, Margaret Machara & Tara C. Baker

Objectives: *Family Life Coaching (FLC) is a growing, evidence-based practice for families that has grown in literature and numbers. However, there is a deficit of research describing theoretical foundations, competencies, and processes of those practicing FLC.*

Design: *This study sought to further understand and define FLC through qualitative case study inquiry using semi-structured interviews with 14 family life coaches across the US.*

Results: *The results suggest that FLC has theoretical underpinnings in family science and coaching psychology. Competencies of FLC include support, listening skills, client-centred approach, effective help giving, and translational skills. The FLC process mirrors those used in coaching psychology. Additionally, results suggested a strong desire for unified professionalism, rigor, and training standards amongst practicing family life coaches; as well as a desire for business practice knowledge, such as marketing.*

Conclusion: *This study provides a pragmatic examination of FLC with practical recommendations for those coaching on family life issues.*

Family life coaching's emerging literature

FAMILY LIFE COACHING (FLC), combines the fields of coaching psychology and family life science as a practice in helping families improve relationships and reach goals (Allen, 2013). The field and literature of coaching psychology has grown exponentially over the past two decades, establishing evidence of the efficacy of coaching to improve performance (Theeboom et al., 2013), to show behavioral changes (Shirley et al., 2015), and to improve the efficacy of workplace outcomes through coaching (Jones et al., 2015). While the need for research and practice to grow the science of family psychology is evident (Sexton, 2014), there is a gap in the literature of how coaching might fit with psychologists and practitioners that work specifically with families.

While a unified definition is still under study, we begin to define family life coaching as a strengths-based process between coach and client(s) working collaboratively on family life issues that fosters positive familial change. FLC engages the family as a partner

in the change process, working alongside as they gain insight, knowledge, and skills to make meaningful life changes. Those practicing family life coaching provide services to individuals or family units on topics related to family science; such as parenting, relationships, maternity, divorce, special needs, and a host of other family life issues. While the term family life coach is an umbrella term used to describe a coach that works within the family life realm, many of these coaches refer to themselves in a specific discipline; such as a parent coach, a relationship coach, etc. These specialised practitioners would fall underneath the designation of family life coach since there is overlap with both coaching practice and family science topics.

Although the concept of FLC is relatively new, the practice of using coaching as a delivery mode for helping families is not. The field of social work has been exploring coaching approaches to serving families for years (Beyer, 2008; Heimendinger et al., 2007). Rush et al. (2003) used coaching as an effective way to reach families requiring early intervention. Early intervention specialists partnered with families by getting to know

their interests, priorities, and values; thus allowing the specialists to align and reinforce the families' goals. This client-led process empowers change through acceptance, and builds family strengths and self-efficacy. Medical and child development fields have supported families through coaching for more than a decade (Rush et al., 2003). Coaching used with families of children with diabetes was found to help families manage the illness more effectively (Feenstra et al., 2015). Parents, guided by an occupational performance coach, establish difficult but obtainable goals for their children and for ameliorating familial problems (Graham et al., 2009).

There is also a growing literature set using coaching as an approach to parent education. Salisbury, Cambray-Engstrom, and Woods (2010) utilised coaching in home visits. A similar study by Timmer, Zebell, Culver and Urquiza (2009) used in-home coaching methods to guide parents in their parent-child interactions and improve communication to encourage desired behavior changes. Results from this study found that parents receiving coaching reported less parental stress and more tolerance for their child's behaviour.

Additionally, coaching methods are used for helping parents promote healthy family outcomes through distance technology (Hamren & Quigley, 2012). A study by Meadan, Meyer, Snodgrass, and Halle (2013) addressed the needs of parents living in rural areas; providing auditory-verbal education and therapy while increasing access to evidence-based practices for children with ASD. Website resources have also been used to support weekly telephone coaching to help parents more effectively handle behavior of their children diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (Ellis et al., 2014).

Emotion coaching is another coaching technique used by parenting professionals to promote family wellbeing (Ellis et al., 2014; Lunkenheimer et al., 2007). Emotion coaching is a process of validating chil-

dren's emotions; parents are encouraged to teach or coach their child about how to handle their emotions as opposed to dismissing their child's emotions.

While the research on the effectiveness of coaching families is growing, there is a distinct lack of literature on the theoretical underpinnings, processes, and competencies of FLC. There is some literature that highlights the differences between coaching and other forms of family interventions, such as therapy and psychology (Hart et al., 2001). Until recently, however, there was scant literature on the topic of family life coaching. Allen (2013) introduced family life coaching as a model that blends family life education and coaching psychology. In essence, FLC is the intersection of the coaching process and the family life content knowledge. Allen and Huff (2014) identified a need for more information on the practice of FLC, since a deficit still remains on the 'how' and 'what' of FLC. This study seeks to inform by exploring the theory, competencies, and process of FLC.

Methodology

When trying to understand a phenomenon not yet fully established in literature, qualitative research has particular use (Patton, 2015). Qualitative case studies are a unique form of qualitative inquiry that is based on a constructivist paradigm, meaning the truth is relative and dependent upon an individual's personal perspective (Yin, 2003). A qualitative case study is appropriate methodology to use for research questions asking the how and why of a phenomenon in a bounded context, and is useful in the development of theory and in developing interventions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In order to add to the field of coaching psychology and family science research, this qualitative case study aimed to explore the practice of coaching in the realm of family life through qualitative interviews with those self-identifying as coaches practicing in the family life realm. As this is a new approach to serving families, the types of questions asked where both in-depth

and surface level questions. The researchers sought to understand the perceptions and experiences of those providing services; as well as more quantitative aspects of family coaching, such as the theories and practices used.

The field of family life coaching continues to grow, as does the need for evidence on the practice, techniques, theories, and efficacy of coaching. There was a time when the work of research and publishing was left to the academics and researchers; but more and more, there is a need and a call for practi-

tioners to publish their findings. Jarvis (1999) contends that change agents in the field are often the optimal holders of knowledge on practices that work, and sharing those findings is a critical component of growing our field. The practitioner-researcher model assumes that those in the field, doing the work, have much to contribute to their area of science. Jarvis (1999) documents the surge of publications from practitioner-research in fields like nursing, medicine, and counselling. This article proposes a need to hear from family life coaches about strategies that

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

US States	Education & Credential	Specialty	Work Place Type	Gender
NC	MSW, Coaching Certification	Child Welfare	University	Female
MN	M.A., CFLE, CPCC	Leadership, Health Coaching	Hospital	Female
CT	MD	Psychology	Medical Practice	Female
OH	LSW, CFLE, Coaching Certification	Parenting & training	Business Owner	Female
MN	MA, Coaching Certification	Parenting	University	Female
NC	MA, CC-SLP	Early Childhood, DD	State Gov.	Male
AZ	MA, CFLE,	Parent and chemical dependency	Retired from University	Female
NC	MPA	Early childhood Ed	Children's Services Gov Agency	Female
IL	MBA	Parenting, Child Development	Family Serving Non-Profit Organisation	Female
WA	BA, Coaching Certification	Elementary Ed, ADHD	Family Serving Non-Profit Organisation	Female
NJ	BA, Coaching Certification	Parenting	Business Owner, Family Practice	Female
NY	M.ED., Coaching Certification	Parenting, Early Childhood	Business Owner, Family Practice	Female
AK	BA, Coaching Certification	Parenting	Business Owner, Family Practice	Female
NH	PhD, Coaching Certification	Family, Parenting	University and Business Owner	Female

work, experiences in the field, and about the business of family life coaching.

Participants

A purposeful sample of practitioners currently coaching on family life issues was utilised for this study. Participants were recruited to the study through the use of identified publications, list serves, social media, and direct email to professionals practicing in family science and coaching psychology fields. Recruitment focused on selecting participants from multiple perspectives; diverse philosophies, geographic locations, and specialties within family life coaching. Qualifiers for inclusion included self-identification of coaching in the realm of family life; including parenting, relationships, families with special needs, and family life. Recruitment was open internationally, but only coaches in the US responded to the call for interviews.

After recruitment, 17 family life coaches from 12 different US states volunteered and were contacted by telephone and asked to participate in upcoming interviews to discuss the process of family life coaching. Of those, 16 agreed to participate. Interviews were conducted until saturation was reached at 14 interviews.

Data collection

Consistent with qualitative case study methodology, researchers met with participants via distance technology to engage in open-ended, semi-structured interviews lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. Researchers also reviewed websites of the participants to gain further understanding of practice. After the first five interviews, the researchers felt they had consensus on methodology and began to conduct interviews independently with participants. Researchers met to discuss results after each interview. Researchers recorded and transcribed interviews, took research notes and reviewed websites of the participants. Participants were asked demographic and background questions regarding

location, education and years of experience, as well as questions about their experiences coaching families.

Data analysis

Analysis included an inductive approach, or looking at the data to discover patterns, themes, and interrelationships (Patton, 2015). Researchers looked for themes and patterns and put them in researcher notes. Afterward two types of coding were used to analyse the interview data; open coding, through researchers reviewing the transcripts and creating tentative labels for data, and selective coding, when core concepts emerged from the open coding. After each transcript was coded, researchers met to gain consensus.

Credibility of qualitative research comes from using techniques such as peer debriefing, the use of multiple participant perspectives, and the use of multiple coders (Patton, 2015). This study used these processes to help build credibility. Researchers collaborated on the coding process first individually and then collectively by meeting for a debriefing after each interview. Member checking was also used, with participants having the ability to review the results and provide comments and suggestions to the authors.

Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the 'how' and 'what' of family life coaching by inquiring about the theoretical backgrounds, competencies, and processes of current coaches. Of the 14 participants, 13 were female and one male and all reported residing in the US. The years of service in family practice ranged from 6 to 30+ years and the participants came from 11 different states in the US. The sample was highly educated, as all held an undergraduate degree, and 10 of the 14 held graduate degrees. In terms of employment, five were self-employed in their own business, four worked for a university or college, two worked for a governmental

agency, two worked in a non-profit organisation, and two worked in the medical field (note, one person selected both a private business and university). See Table 1, p.59.

Theoretical underpinnings of family life coaching

Participants were asked to identify the theoretical base of their coaching practice. The theoretical underpinnings that were reported fell primarily into three categories: family science, psychology, and coaching psychology. Most participants first identified family science theories; primarily Adlerian Parenting theories (*i.e. STEP/Dinkmeyer/McKay, Dreikurs, child rearing, parenting techniques, Scream Free, home visits*) but also relationships and communication theories (*Gottman, Love Languages, Marshall Rosenberg, Doherty*), and Systems Theories (*Bronfenbrenner, Living Systems; and Family Systems including Bowen, and Satir*).

Psychological theories mentioned were mostly Humanistic theories (*Rogers/Client Centered, Fromm, Gestalt, Cognitive Behavioral Theory*) and developmental theories (*child development, Emotional Intelligence, Gardner/Multiple Intelligence, Life Course, Attachment, Human Development, Learning Style, Transactional, Interactionism, Solution Focus*).

Coaching and coaching psychology practices were discussed often. Nearly all participants talked of the importance of using *Positive Psychology & Strengths Based Approaches*. Other coaching practices and theories mentioned were *Appreciative Inquiry & 4-D, Whitmore, Brittan & Potter/supervision, Margaret Wheatley/organizational behavior, Goal Orientation, Transactional, Change Theory, Mindfulness, and Powerful Questioning*.

As shown in the variety of theories above, a theme emerged regarding the importance of using a variety of underpinnings. One participant stated, 'It is a balance between coaching and education, family systems, family strengths, transactional analysis... this translates well into coaching.'

Competencies of family life coaching

All participants shared ideas and experiences about the skills necessary to be a successful family life coach. Competencies that emerged included support, listening skills, client-centred perspectives, effective help giving, and translational skills.

Support

Two aspects of support were identified: client support and coach support. Participants identified building a positive relationship and using strengths-based methods as important skills. One participant noted, 'It is about the relationship building and using open-ended questions. Families will say no if you give them a chance, so you build the relationship to help them move forward.' Another stated that she strives to be 'strengths-based, respectful, and more enthusiastic underlining family strengths.' Participants also agreed that networking and receiving support from other family life and parenting coaches is critical for success. 'Experience is so helpful; the more I do, the more I get it. The other thing that has been helpful is the support of other parent coaches. I started a regional group of group support. It has been so reaffirming and supportive.'

Listening, powerful questions and Rogerian attributes

While Rogers was certainly mentioned by name as a theoretical attribute, the majority of coaches referenced his work when identifying essential skills for successful coaching. Skills such as being genuine, reflection and active listening, and offering positive regard were identified. One coach reflected, 'I also think coaching is a way of subtly saying "you can do this" – many times parents just need someone to lean on to give them support, encouragement, and praise when things go well.' On the importance of listening, one participant said, 'It is sometimes hard to keep asking questions, but I continue to try to be better and better. [I use] active listening; making sure that I truly hear what the parent is saying and not jumping in with my own ideas, but reflecting their ideas.'

Client centred process

The third identified skill was using a client centred coaching process, which includes abilities such as holding people accountable and partnering with the client. For example, one participant noted, 'I follow the client'. Another stated, 'As an educator, you are above them. You look down. You are the expert.' She went on to explain that in coaching, you partner with the client in a client centred approach. In coaching, you stand 'side by side – it is a completely different scenario for the parent.'

Effective help giving

This theme includes openness and utilisation of a nonjudgmental and respectful approach towards helping, as well as having passion for helping families. Empowering families by bringing out their strengths and educating families on developmental issues such as family relationships and child development are examples of effective help. A prominent emerging theme, that exemplifies the uniqueness of a family life coach, was blending the use of education and coaching. One participant stated, 'Information is brought to the table. The education piece is tiny; the coaching piece is huge.' Another stated, 'Coaching is one on one. I sometimes use skills from parenting classes... however, in coaching, you follow the parents.' It is important to incorporate education, but also to find a balance between the two.

Translational experience and education.

Translational experience and education were identified as a critical theme. In order to coach in the family life realm, the participants described the importance of knowing the content and subject matter of family life. This was noted both in the questions on theory and the skills needed. 'It is hard to imagine coaching without having a background in child development. I think it should be part of a parent coaching program.' Knowledge of child development, family systems, and simply how relationships work were identified as

critical, as was the ability to translate personal experiences to appropriately support and model effective practices.

Processes of family life coaching

In order to better understand the process of coaching, the participants answered a question asking them to describe a typical coaching session; including what topics are usually addressed.

Typical family life coaching session

The coaches interviewed had some commonality in their perspective, function and techniques. There was some variability in frequency, format and structure. Participants noted that the importance of the coaching process relies on strengths of the client, and the progressive move toward positive change. One participant talked about the importance of positivity, 'Focus on strengths and their attention shifts to what is going well. Sometimes they have to dig deep, but they find it.' Another participant explained that in a typical session they 'Focus on what is working.' More than one participant used the language, 'What you focus on grows; focus on what you want.'

Coaches assessed and responded to the need to refer clients out for other services, such as mental health or parenting education, when necessary. For example, one participant stated for some parents the coach 'could refer to an [parent] educational course if they need more information.' Participants noted the importance of knowing when and where to refer for mental health issues. 'If it is therapy [the families] need, I help them find a therapist.' Another participant said she makes a 'referral to others when needed; we just need to support the families,' noting that the job of the family life coach is not to do therapy, but to support the client through a coaching process.

Coaching sessions ranged from three sessions to bi-monthly sessions for six months. On average, most family life coaches work with clients for 6–8 sessions, and many have repeat clients with new issues.

All participants mentioned the use of a variety of session formats, either independently or interspersed; face-to-face, online, and phone communications. Email was used for communication outside of the session as well as for follow-up after the coaching sessions, and a few offered unlimited email and phone calls between sessions.

Participant responses varied on the coaching process of a typical session. Most talked about the use of goal setting as a core skill, again relying on positive psychology and strengths. One participant stated, 'Goals are identified and then [we] brainstorm on how to reach some of the goals.' One noted how the prevalence of underlying issues arise through a typical session when identifying goals and strengths, 'one universal truth is that what a parent comes in with is not what we end up focusing on. So we don't always work on what is first identified in the session.'

Another common practice during a typical session is the 4-D Appreciative Inquiry approach. Appreciative Inquiry is an application for positive change over the life course and uses the 4-D Cycle: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. One participant stated how parenting is a continual learning process of change, 'Parents need to realize this is a life process. [Children] help us grow and we help them grow. I try to align with what [the family] or the child lack. Once they have the realization, they are ready to go.'

When asked about the structure of a typical session, it was noted that the client base varies. For most, they worked with a single individual. Understanding family and family issues is pivotal in the process, but it is a 'mixture of who gets coaching; mostly mom, sometimes both. I usually try to get dad on board, recognizing that everyone has something to contribute. Children are not as often involved.'

Topics of family life coaching

When asked what types of issues the families wanted help with, the answers were clumped into three themes; healthy relationship and

improved communication, family life issues, and how to get unstuck.

Healthy relationships and improved communication was the top answer of why families attend coaching. Families come 'to become better/closer. Most don't come looking for deep, introspective work. The average parent wants practical solutions.' Another stated, 'Respect almost always enters into the picture, and sometimes the respect is from the parent to the child, not just the child to the parent.' Parenting was the most common relationship issue. 'We seem to have an expectation that we automatically know how to be a parent, know what all do all. Parenting is like anything else; the more [we know] the more we grow.'

Family life issues included normative adjustment things such as a sibling rivalry, teen issues, school success, homework ('homework inevitably gets mentioned at some point'), time management and feelings of isolation. Wanting a calmer home, feelings of being overwhelmed, and parenting children with special needs were also mentioned. The topic of parenting children with special needs brought up a host of subthemes; including dealing with emotional intensity, logistics, organisation, educational needs, relationships outside the family, and the impact on the parent and caregiver. For example, one participant talked about a pilot programme at a local hospital that is pairing families and coaches to help with medical issues. 'If you want to coach kids with special needs, you need to understand the medical state. You need to know the content. But that doesn't replace the need for coaching skills.'

Families also came to coaching when they felt stuck, and are in a difficult and painful situation. One coach commented, 'They come to the realization that it is more painful to stay stuck than to take a step of hope that things can be different.' Another response was, 'So many people come and they are stuck. They have been repeating [behaviors] and aren't moving forward.'

Business of family life coaching

In addition to understanding the theories, competencies, and processes of family life coaches, questions were asked involving participants' business practices and websites were reviewed to understand the structure and prices of coaching. FLC is not identified as a billable intervention by insurance companies, therefore this topic was a big theme of importance for participants. Participants were asked to outline their FLC business practices.

Fees ranged from free (initial consultations) and sliding scale fees (\$40/hour), up to \$125/hour. Some fees for curriculum and webinars were more than \$200. The way in which fees are implemented varied; some begin the process with one free session, while some ask for session commitments. One participant explained, 'I start with a test session for no fee, then ask for a 3 session commitment.'

Marketing was the most common business topic. Marketing strategies utilised by family life coaches included community outreach, word of mouth, and online marketing through websites, social media and blogging. Many coaches started their marketing campaigns through parent education programming. One stated, 'I started with parent groups. Many of the clients I have gotten have been with word of mouth... people have [also] found me online.'

Once the FLC businesses were started, coaches continued to use similar marketing practices. One participant explained their six years of practice, the 'first three years lots of marketing, building relationships locally, talking, taking information to fairs, do it all. [The] last few years, no marketing other than Facebook.' Some talked about the need to spread information about what coaching is and how it helps; 'Families have some confusion about what a coach is and some are unsure about what they do.' Most participants did not have formal training on marketing and saw the business of coaching as an area necessary for professional development.

Professionalism and rigor of FLC Field

Participants noted a need to grow the field of FLC by normalising coaching, creating a unified credential and elevating training programmes. While there was no question specifically addressing the need for professionalism, the topic was brought up across all questions and was perhaps one of the most dominant themes among the participants. Professionalism begins with a universal definition. One coach reflected, 'I think there needs to be and the literature says, we need a common definition of what coaching is.'

Regardless of the definition, most participants spoke of their desire to have coaching available for all parents and families. 'It would be a dream to have every parent have a parent coach.' Many made reference to the importance of increasing access to coaching as a way to normalise the field. 'The more parents that receive coaching, the more normalized the field will become.'

Likewise, the need for a professional association that focuses specifically on coaches serving families was identified. One expressed a need for, 'a professional organization and more networking, conferences, and grass roots support.' Another participant stated, 'It is important to have exposure in a professional organization.' Participants noted that a professional organisation brings uniformity in training, credentials, ethics, and network at the national and international level, as well as help with 'business acumen and marketing.'

The need for standardised training was identified. In terms of training, there were strong opinions on standardised requirements; including qualifying background experiences and education. A background in child development, family systems, family science or a related field was noted as a need. 'There is a concern about coaching that is not specific to parents. General coaching programs [focus] only on techniques.' One participant said that FLC needs, 'specific training or background in family work... ethics, and we need to know family systems, family development, parenting.' Consistency

in training was universally noted. 'We need some guidelines; consistency and uniform identify what coaching should look like.'

There was also a desire to see FLC in higher education as a field of study. 'I would love to see parent coaching with graduate programs and people getting degrees or PhD in coaching.' The desire for credentials specific to FLC emerged. 'I'd also like to see a national licensure or credential that truly elevates parent coaching.' One participant shared a need to 'professionalize and legitimize our field [because] there is a fear of people hanging a shingle without training or credential, or getting training from substandard organizations.' Another stated, 'If we had credential[s] and licensure, it [would be] seen as a position that everyone knows about and people will seek it out. Without support of credentials, people still ask "what is parent coaching" and if you don't know it exists, you don't get the help.' One participant noted that her 'consumers are pushing for a credential. They want a recognition.'

Recommendations and advice for budding family life coaches

Participants were asked to share advice for budding family life coaches. Skill development was noted as important for new coaches, as was the need for withholding judgment, 'Do not go in with preconceived notions. No judgment or ideas about who they are or what they should be.' Additionally, there was consensus on the importance of partnering with clients rather than leading them. 'As a partner to my clients we get to explore what is working or has worked [in the past] and in this emerges the "right" answer – which is different for everyone. I love this about coaching!' Coaching is, 'Not about making someone wrong or how to heal past wounds; it is about acceptance, compassion, and connection on a relationship level.'

Another theme was the importance of having a passion and a love for families. 'You have to have passion.' Also, 'it isn't an 8–5 job, so you have to love it.' To be an effective

coach, one participant said a coach must, 'love helping people and building deep relationships.'

Discussion

Results from this study suggest that there is an integrated process and practice of family life coaching that is congruent with the practices of family science. Results suggest that coaches need foundational family science knowledge, as well as theoretical perspectives from the field of psychology. Another notable theme was the need for professionalism of family life coaching and networking. Results are congruent with research suggesting that FLC is an up and coming approach to serving families and that there is a deficit of resources and information for those doing this work.

When a field is new, it is imperative to generate norms and begin to identify commonalities of practice to help make sense of the gaps. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) identified six characteristics of a profession: barriers to entry, shared knowledge, formal qualifications, regulatory body, membership, ethics, and credentialing. This study begins to reveal some of the commonality of FLC, including the newly formed shared knowledge. However, gaps still exist on identifying meaningful barriers to entry, qualifications, ethics, and credentialing.

Blumberg (2014) conducted a review of the literature on coaching to identify competencies of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics of coaches (KSAO). Family life coaching is a developing profession and as such, there is a need to develop all six professional categories (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) and KSAOs of FLC. Results of this study begin to address the characteristics of a profession and identify KSAOs of FLC. This research shows that practicing family life coaches rely on theoretical underpinnings from psychology, family science, and coaching psychology.

Allen (2013) suggested a model for FLC that merged the theories and practice of family life coaching with coaching

psychology. This study suggests that the theoretical foundations for FLC are congruent with those in family life education, family science, and coaching psychology. The inclusion of these three theories grounds FLC in science and creates the foundation for which processes and methodologies family life coaches will practice, as well as establishing the necessary components for future implications and training models of FLC.

In terms of skills, coaching competencies identified in this study include supportiveness, listening skills, a client-centred approach, effective help giving, and translational skills. These techniques are well grounded in coaching psychology literature. Having the ability to support clients and get support, as well as the effective use of listening skills, is consistent with coaching competencies (Bono et al., 2009). The client-led, coach approach is an effective way to giving help due to the partnership created between coach and client (Seligman, 2007; Rush et al., 2003). The coaching partnership develops through relationship building skills and effectiveness at helping and influencing others. These prominent coaching skills are congruent with the coaching literature (Blumberg, 2014). However, the competencies listed are in no way full or conclusive. Additional research is needed specifically to elaborate on the competences of FLC.

The ability to use a coaching process to help a family or individual achieve positive change was duly noted throughout the interviews. Although there are some nuances to the various types of coaching, the most common elements of coaching include (see International Coach Federation, 2011): problem identification, goals clarification, exploring options, action steps, and observing results and evaluation.

This study suggests that the process identified by family life coaches is consistent with other coaching fields. What was distinct from the coaching psychology literature was the use of education as part of the coaching process. Having the knowledge and expertise to integrate research-based education into

coaching where and how appropriate emphasises the importance of proper training for family life coaches. Coaching psychology and the coaching industry literature generally discourages the offering education as part of the coaching process.

Another distinction agreed upon by the participants is the line between coaching, therapy, and education. While all three components work together for the client and his goals, there are times when clients need more than coaching, and as such, this study suggests that it is the coach's responsibility to guide the client toward the necessary means of help. This makes knowledge of family science, in order to recognise those instances, an important part of family life coaching. Therefore, family life coaching integrates, yet is distinct from, the related fields that it pulls from. In relation to the business of coaching, none of the participants were able to bill for services. Unlike family psychologists that can bill to a third party, the practice of coaching families has not yet been identified as an evidence-based approach and therefore is not yet billable. This makes payment for services a highly sought topic.

Implications

The findings of this research are beneficial in both identifying ways to support the work of family life coaches, as well as providing new tools for other professionals such as psychologists and family life educators. Coaching provides a structured means by which knowledge can be imparted, skills can be shared in a reciprocal process and further honed, and nurturing feedback can be given to family members (Rush et al., 2003). Further research could explore the uses and benefits of integrating coaching within other types of work with families, as well as information on how coaches recruit families and why they can but do not typically engage with the full family in coaching sessions. Future research looking at similarities and differences of other professions that work with families can

add to the discussion of the how and why of family science. It was noted that FLC is not a commonly known family science practice and is not covered under insurance policies. Linking family life coaches with family practitioners such as family psychologists, parent educators, case managers, and pediatricians is one way to support payment. Still needed is an increased awareness of family life coaching and research in the field to show efficacy and gain insurance acceptance.

Finally, the need for professionalism, including a unified credential and training was identified; which is congruent with Allen's and Huff's (2014) assertion for the need for professionalism in FLC. A unified credential and training criteria would help to eliminate unqualified persons and programmes, thus helping families identify appropriate assistance

A limitation of this study was that participants were purposefully recruited and likely share similar characteristics of practice. Another limitation was that the guiding questions were at times specific, seeking to better understand the day to day practices of family life coaching, thus providing more a series of details rather than an account of lived experience. The questions were meant to gain a better understanding of the theories, processes, and competencies of those that identify as coaches in the realm of family life, but does not necessarily reflect an objective reality. This research is a beginning to better understanding of family life coaching.

References

- Allen, K. (2013). Family life coaching: Introducing the topic. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 7(1), Retrieved from: http://www.sgcp.org.uk/publications/international-coaching-psychology-review/international-coaching-psychology-review_home.cfm
- Allen, K. & Huff, N. (2014). Family coaching: An emerging family science field. *Family Relations* 63(5), 569–582. doi:10.1111/fare.12087
- Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559.
- Beyer, M. (2008). Visit coaching: Building on family strengths to meet children's needs. *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, 59(1), 47–60. doi:10.1111/j.1755-6988.2007.00004.x
- Blumberg, K. (2014). Executive coaching competencies: A review and critique with implications for coach education. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*, 5(2), 87–97. doi:10.1002/jpoc.21143

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to create a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings, processes, and competencies of family life coaching through a pragmatic qualitative methodology. Based on the results of this study, there are clearer theoretical underpinnings guiding FLC. The process of FLC is similar to that of other coaching practices with the addition of an educational component that helps families do better when they know better. These common attributes of FLC can help the profession better prepare for professionalism and forward movement. The field of family life coaching is becoming a profession and as such, it is imperative that standardised trainings, credentialing, and networking be professionally established.

Kimberly I. Allen, Ph.D.

Kimberly_Allen@ncsu.edu

North Carolina State University

Margaret Machara, PhD, CFLE

mmachara@tnstate.edu

Tennessee State University

Tara C. Baker

Tmbaker2@ncsu.edu

North Carolina State University

Corresponding Author:

Kimberly Allen

Kimberly_Allen@ncsu.edu

North Carolina State University

- Bono, J.E., Purvanova, R.K., Towler, A.J. & Peterson, D.B. (2009). A survey of executive coaching practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62(2), 361–404. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-6570.2009.01142.x
- Ellis, H., Alisic, E., Reiss, A., Dishion, T. & Fisher, P. (2014). Emotion regulation among preschoolers on a continuum or risk: The role of maternal emotion coaching. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 23, 965–974.
- Feenstra, B., Lawson, M., Harrison, D., Boland, L. & Stacey, D. (2015). Decision coaching using the Ottawa Family Decision Guide with parents and their children: A field testing study. *BMC Medical Informatics & Decision Making*, 15, 1–10.
- Graham, F., Rodger, S. & Ziviani, J. (2009). Coaching parents to enable children's participation: An approach for working with parents and their children. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* 56, 16–23. doi: 10.1111/j.1440-1630.2008.00736.x.
- Grant, A.M. & Cavanagh, M.J. (2004). Toward a profession of coaching: Sixty-five years of progress and challenges for the future. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 2(1), 1–16. Retrieved from <http://ijebcm.brookes.ac.uk/documents/vol02issue1-paper01.pdf>
- Hamren, K. & Quigley, S. (2012). Implementing coaching in a natural environment through distance technologies. *The Volta Review*, 112(3), 403–407.
- Hart, V., Blattner, J. & Leipsic, S. (2001). Coaching versus therapy. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 53(4), 229–237. doi: <http://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/1061-4087.53.4.229>
- Heimendinger, J., Uyeki, T., Andhara, A. et al. (2007). Coaching process outcomes of a family visit nutrition and physical activity intervention. *Health Education & Behavior*, 34(1), 71–89. doi:10.1177/1090198105285620
- International Coach Federation (ICF). *Core competencies*. Retrieved from <http://www.coachfederation.org/files/FileDownloads/CoreCompetencies.pdf>
- Jones, R.J., Woods, S.A. & Guillaume, Y.R.F. (2015) The Effectiveness of Workplace Coaching: A Meta-analysis of Learning and Performance Outcomes from Coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. ISSN Online: 2044-8325
- Lunkenheimer, E., Shield, A. & Cortina, K. (2007). Parental emotion coaching and dismissing in family interaction. *Social Development*, 16(2), 232–248. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9507.2007.00382.x.
- Meadan, H., Meyer, L., Snodgrass, M. & Halle, J. (2013). Coaching parents of young children with autism in rural areas using Internet-based technologies: A pilot program. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 32(3), 3–10.
- Patton, M.Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice (4th edn)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rush, D., Shelden, M. & Hanft, B. (2003). Coaching families and colleagues: A process for collaboration in natural settings. *Infants & Young Children: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Special Care Practices*, 16(1), 33–47. Retrieved from <http://cehs01.unl.edu/ECSE/960/RushShelden.pdf>. doi:10.1097/00001163-200301000-00005
- Salisbury, C., Cambray-Engstrom, E. & Woods, J. (2010). Providers reported and actual use of coaching strategies in natural environments. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 32(2), 88–98. doi: 19.1177/0271121410392802.
- Seligman, M. (2007). Coaching and positive psychology. *Australian Psychologist*, 42(4), 266–267. doi:10.1080/00050060701648233
- Sexton, T.L. (2014). Moving forward: Next steps in the evolution of the Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice. *Couple and Family Psychology: Research and Practice*. 3(3), 137–140. doi.org/10.1037/cfp0000027
- Sonesh, S.C., Coultas, C.W., Lacerenza, C., Marlow, S.L., Benishek L.E. & Salas, E. (2015) The power of coaching: a meta-analytic investigation. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 8-2, 73–95.
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B. & Van Vianen, A.E.M. (2013). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(10), 1–18. doi:10.1080/17439760.2013.837499
- Timmer, S., Zebell, N., Culver, M. & Urquiza, A. (2010). Efficacy of adjunct in-home coaching to improve outcomes in parent-child interaction therapy. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 20(1), 36–45. doi:10.1177/1049731509332842
- Yin, R.K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd edn)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Coaching psychology: Exploring definitions and research contribution to practice?

Jonathan Passmore & Yi-Ling Lai

This paper aims to provide an analytic review of contemporary coaching evidence and future research directions through reviewing the development of coaching (e.g. executive, health and life coaching) and coaching psychology definitions. We offer alternative perspectives from psychologist and non-psychologist coaching practice in the development of both traditions over the past two decades. As part of this paper we will summarise systematic reviews and meta-analyses in workplace coaching and outline the key messages for evidence-based practice. Three key messages are identified from this review. First, coaching itself is a professional helping relationship since the process mainly relies on reciprocal actions between the coach and coachee. Second, coachees should be placed in the centre of the coaching relationship, recognising their motivation to change is the essential antecedent for coaching success. Third, social psychological perspectives are an important element in dyadic coaching interactions. Our aim in this paper is to encourage coaching scholars and practitioners towards future research collaborations in the interest of developing evidenced based practice in coaching.

Keywords: Coaching, coaching psychology, health coaching, executive coaching, analytic literature review, coaching pedagogy.

Introduction

SINCE COACHING started its journey of development as a separate discipline in the early 1980s (Brock, 2012; Passmore & Theeboom, 2016); definitions of coaching have been part of the debate within coaching practice and research, across the literature from practitioner's guides to academic texts. While there has been broad agreement over these years, the focus and emphasis has varied reflecting the orientation and focus of different writers (e.g. Whitmore, 1992; Grant & Palmer, 2002; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

The search for a formal definition of coaching may be considered to be an academic pursuit. However, Grant (2011) argues that a clear definition is needed for the purpose of the development of evidence-based practice, such as coach training and education. Summarising from previous discussions on

the need for a standardised coaching definition, we conclude that marking the boundaries of a domain is vital for three reasons. First, it is essential for practice, a standardised definition of an intervention makes it clear to clients what they can expect from a service provider (their coach), namely a regulated professional service. This view is shared by the International Coach Federation (ICF), who encourage coaches to include an exploration of the nature of coaching during the contracting phase with clients, ensuring both have a shared understanding of the process and what the client can expect (ICF, 2017). Second, it's vital for research. We need to clearly delineate the domain to understand the phenomena being studied. As coaching is still an emerging research domain, it is crucial to define the key components to differentiate coaching from other similar helping interventions (e.g. counselling) and provide a platform

from which theoretical contributions can develop. Third, a consistent definition is vital for coaching education and qualification; with a scientific-based framework to support its pedagogy. Meanwhile, we consider a distinct description and characterisation of coaching helps us to have a better understanding of whether coaching psychology is a unique discipline, and what the essential body of knowledge is to support its theoretical domain.

This paper starts with reviewing the definitions of coaching following with the distinctions between sub-specialised practices under coaching, such as executive, health and life coaching. In addition, we also provide a comparative analysis to differentiate coaching from other similar professional helping interventions (e.g. counselling). Moreover, we summarise the interpretations of psychology-based coaching approaches considering that the term, coaching psychology, has been used and perceived as a developed (or developing) discipline in some regions (e.g. Australia and UK). Nevertheless, it is still not widely accepted or used in other parts of the world. Therefore, we attempt to clarify whether the theoretical foundation of what so called 'coaching psychology' is different to coaching and what the body of knowledge is under its domain from existing research evidence through reviewing the most used definitions. The term 'coaching psychology' is used hereafter to maintain the consistency in this paper. Finally, we integrate key perspectives and finding from recent systematic reviews and meta-analyses on coaching to consider psychological contribution to coaching practice.

Defining coaching

Grant (2001) indicated the first reference to coaching in the workplace dates back to 1937. This has subsequently been cited by multiple research papers over the past two decades. The paper, a journalist's report by C.B Gordy, the Detroit editor of *Factory Management and Maintenance*, examined

the role of worker development (through training and coaching) to improve factory processes. The journalist offered little in the way of a formal definition of coaching. In fact, the only reference to coaching by Gordy comes at the very end of the paper: '*whereas supervisors found it advisable in the early years to coach employees in the importance of spoiled work and cost reduction, it is now found the older men voluntarily assume this task in training the younger employees*' (Gordy, 1937, p.83). Gordy appeared to suggest that coaching and training are almost synonymous, with a progress from what might be a short and informal approach to training (coaching) to a more formal training intervention.

Our own literature search, using the term 'coaching' through the Henley One database which searches multiple business databases, has revealed earlier references to the term. As early as 1911 the term was being used in journals to reflect its use as an educational tool within university and school debating societies; helping members improve their debating skills (Trueblood, 1911; Huston, 1924). As with Gordy, there is little description in these papers of the process, nor explicit definition of the term. Also like Gordy, the term appears to be used inter-changeably with training. More workplace coaching papers continued during the 1930s (Bigelow, 1938). At the same time sports coaching was developing too, where the first connections were made between coaching and psychology (Griffiths, 1926). But these works were relatively few and far between, until the eruption of coaching in the 1980s.

As the literature evolved from a sporadic collection of papers, often with little if any definition of terms, Whitmore's seminal book placed a marker in the sand, and provides a clear definition of coaching. For Whitmore, coaching was about '*unlocking a person's potential to maximise their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them – a facilitation approach*' (Whitmore, 1992, p.8). Whitmore drew heavily on Timothy Gallwey's inner game model. Gallwey had noted in sport performance that

the internal state of a player was a significant factor. He went further to argue that it was more significant even than the opponent in individual sports like tennis and golf. If the individual could control their self-talk, sizable performance gains could be made (Gallwey, 1986). At the core of coaching for John Whitmore was a belief that the purpose of coaching was helping individuals develop greater self-awareness and personal responsibility: *'Performance coaching is based on awareness and responsibility'* (Whitmore, 1992, p.173).

Other founding writers offered alternative definitions. Laura Whitworth one of the pioneers in the US, along with Thomas Leonard (Brook, 2009), developed co-active coaching which defined coaching as *'a relationship of possibilities... based on trust, confidentiality'* (Whitworth, 1998).

These perspectives highlighted the nature of the coaching process and its dependency on people, interpersonal interactions and collaboration. This relational aspect distinguishes coaching from other tutoring, or training interventions, where arguably knowledge exchange is at the heart of the process and has led to one stream of coaching research focusing on interpersonal and relational aspects, in the belief that if the relationship is sound, effective outcomes will result.

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) offered a more process-based definition in an attempt to differentiate coaching from mentoring, counselling and other conversation-based approaches to change. They suggested coaching involved *'a Socratic based dialogue between a facilitator (coach) and a participant (client) where the majority of interventions used by the facilitator are open questions which are aimed at stimulating the self awareness and personal responsibility of the participant'*.

Bachkirova et al. (2010) have suggested that coaching is *'a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change for the benefit of the coachee...'* (Bachkirova et al., 2010, p.1). While Lai (2014) suggested coaching is defined as a

'reflective process between coaches and coachees which helps or facilitates coachees to experience positive behavioural changes through continuous dialogue and negotiations with coaches to meet coachees' personal or work goals'. Again, positive behavioural changes are pointed out as the main purpose of coaching, with a recognition that a structured process is involved. Moreover, 'negotiation' is put forward in Lai's re-interpretation of coaching that reflects back the previous definitions, coaching is a relationship-based learning and development process.

Sub-specialised practices under coaching

As the coaching industry has grown, definitions have split into a series of sub-sets of coaching. These have included 'executive coaching', 'health coaching', 'life coaching'. The following sections summarise the definitions and characteristics of these most prevalent sub-specialised areas of coaching.

Executive coaching

The application of coaching in the workplace and specifically with senior managers has led to the development of what has been labeled executive coaching. At its simplest executive coaching could be defined as coaching for senior, or c-suite, managers. Kilburg suggested executive coaching was distinctive in being *'a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organization within a formally defined coaching agreement'* (Kilburg, 1996, p.142).

Similarly, de Haan et al. (de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013), echoing earlier relational definitions, indicated executive coaching is a relationship-focused development intervention. Their research and practice perceive executive coaching as a form of leadership development that takes

place through a series of contracted, one-to-one conversations, with a qualified 'coach.' The process itself is tailored to individuals, so that they learn and develop through the reflective conversation, but that such learning occurred because of the unique relationship based on trust, safe, and support.

Both definitions highlight the professional working relationship in the coaching process and the importance of 'contracting' beforehand. However, the definition by de Haan et al. (de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013) specifies the term 'qualified coach' which raises the awareness of a 'standard' coaching qualification. Given that de Haan's own background as facilitator and coach trainer, this is not surprising, but his definition opens up the discussion, what does 'qualified coach' mean and who decides.

Health coaching

A further strand that has emerged and is continuing to grow in popularity is health coaching. The approach has grown in both the UK, within the National Health Service (NHS) (Evidence Centre, 2014), in the US through private providers and globally. A literature review identified 275 published studies, with the approach now widely used by nurses, doctors and allied health professionals such as physiotherapists and health advisors (Evidence Centre, 2014).

The study defined health coaching as: *'a patient-centred process that is based upon behaviour change theory and is delivered by health professionals with diverse backgrounds. The actual health coaching process entails goal setting determined by the patient, encourages self-discovery in addition to content education, and incorporates mechanisms for developing accountability in health behaviours'* (Evidence Centre, 2014, p.3).

A similar definition was offered by Palmer, Stubbs and Whybrow (2003), who defined health coaching as *'the practice of health education and health promotion within a coaching context, to enhance the wellbeing of individuals and to facilitate the achievement of their health-related goals'* (Palmer, Stubbs & Whybrow, 2003, p.91). The distinction being

the focus on self-discovery, which echoes Whitmore's primary aims of coaching: self-awareness and personal responsibility.

However, what is less clear from these definitions is where health coaching starts and finishes. If coaching is employed to help individuals with chronic conditions and to improve health outcomes, does this include approaches such as motivational interviewing, which are widely used for drug and alcohol treatment, or brief solution focus therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy, which might be considered to be included within the definitions above, but which the practitioner delivering it might consider to be counselling or therapy. This lack of a more clearly defined boundary has made it difficult to study and compare coaching interventions within this health (Boehmer et al., 2016).

One useful, although controversial, distinction we have offered is to use the time focus of the conversation, with coaching focused on future behavioural change for health improvement, while counseling or therapy focus on coping with, managing or making sense of the past.

Life coaching

Like health coaching, life coaching has become a popular means of helping non-clinical populations in setting and reaching goals and enhancing their wellbeing (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006).

Life coaching can be broadly defined as a collaborative solution focused, result-orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of life experience and goal attainment in the personal and/or professional life of normal, non-clinical clients (Grant, 2014). In other words life coaching has often been considered to be coaching outside of the work arena, for example in education (Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007) or coaching for wellbeing (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006).

One possible distinction between life coaching and health coaching is that while health coaching is often defined in terms of

the qualification of those providing it: health coaching is coaching delivered by health professionals, while life coaching is delivered by those outside of the health sector. In the UK and Australia, the term itself has slipped in popularity being replaced by the term wellbeing coaching. Although the term life coaching remains popular in North America, coaching continues to grow and spread to new areas beyond business and sports to areas including driving development (Passmore & Rehman, 2012; Wilmott & Wilmott, 2018), safety coaching (Passmore, Krauesslar & Avery, 2015), maternity and childcare (Golawski et al., 2013) and marital relationships (Williams & Williams, 2011; Ives & Cox, 2015).

Reflections of the developing nature of coaching definitions

Reflecting back on the wide-ranging definitions, a common theme is the facilitative nature of coaching. First, the role of the agent (the coach) is not to guide, direct or instruct, but to 'facilitate'. The process is to support the client (coachee) in new discoveries, insights and move closer to their goals. A second observation from reviewing these multiple definitions is that coaching has been refined and redefined continually over this period as it has changed, developed and spread into new areas. This brings not only challenges, but could also be considered to be coaching's strength, reflecting a vibrant, dynamic and developing area of practice. As Palmer and Whybrow note '*definitions seldom stay static, unless the area has stagnated*' (2007, p.3).

The situation has been less fluid in coaching psychology. While there have been various definitions of coaching psychology offered since the turn of the millennium, the variety and volume of change has been markedly different, with only two or three alternative definitions offered in publications (Passmore et al., 2013).

The differences between coaching and other helping interventions

One way of understanding the essential defining elements of coaching is a comparison

to other relevant facilitation activities. Traditionally, coaching has been compared to therapy/counselling and mentoring (Bachkirova, 2008) because they share very similar features and process. In this discussion we also include a discussion about organisational change. Various writers have discussed the key similarities and differences among coaching, therapy/counselling, mentoring and change agent (e.g. Bachkirova, 2008; Leonard et al., 2013). Table 1 on pp.73–74 summarises the key features subsequent to reviewing a number of related papers and book chapters (Joo, 2005; Gray, 2006; Bachkirova, 2008; McDowall & Mabey, 2008; Passmore et al., 2013).

Coaching compared to counselling/therapy

The need for a clearer differentiation between counselling/therapy and coaching is emerging as the use of psychological models and tools in coaching interventions has increased considerably (Bachkirova, 2008). Such a differentiation is essential to ensure a quality coaching engagement if the clearer orientation and required knowledge are defined in the coaching evaluation and training agenda. The similarities between the counselling/therapy and coaching domains are that both are concerned with the 'relationship', there is a need for engagement or 'client's/coachee's commitment' and both rely on the 'practitioner's (coaches) self-awareness' to facilitate both the relationship and keep the conversation moving forward. In both cases the aim is to facilitate a person's change through an interpersonal interactive process, the relationship between practitioner and client and how the practitioner facilitates an effective relationship are essential for a positive outcome. In addition, the counselling/therapy and coaching principle share a number of basic required professional skills such as listening, questioning, summaries, reflection and affirmations.

We suggest that there are at least three differentiating aspects. First, the initial

Table 1: The differences and similarities between coaching other similar professional helping interventions

Aspects	Counselling/ Therapy	Coaching	Mentoring	Change agent
Ultimate purpose and benefits.	Development and wellbeing of individual.	Development and wellbeing of individual (if sponsored, also benefit for the sponsoring organisation).	Development and wellbeing of individual (if sponsored, also benefit for the sponsoring organisation).	Development and organisational change.
Initial motivation.	Eliminating psychological problem and dysfunctions.	Enhancing life, improving performance.	Enhancing life, improving performance.	Enhancing life, improving performance at the workplace.
Context of interventions.	Open to any and potentially to all areas of client's life.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.	Specified by the contract according to the client's goals, the coach's area of expertise and the assignment of a sponsor if involved.
Client's expectations for change.	From high dissatisfaction to reasonable satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.	From relative satisfaction to much higher satisfaction.
Possible outcome.	Increased wellbeing, unexpected positive changes in various areas of life.	Attainment of goals, increased wellbeing and productivity.	Attainment of goals, increased wellbeing and productivity.	Attainment of goals, increased wellbeing and productivity.
Theoretical foundation	Psychology and philosophy.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management, health and social care etc.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management, health and social care etc.	May include psychology, education, sociology, philosophy, management and organisational change theories etc.

(Revised from Joo, 2005; Gray, 2006; Bachkirova, 2008; McDowall & Mabey, 2008; Passmore et al., 2013)

Table 1 (continued)

Aspects	Counselling/ Therapy	Coaching	Mentoring	Change agent
Main professional skills	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.	Listening, questioning, feedback, use of tools and methods specific to particular approaches.
Importance of relationship in the process.	High.	High.	High.	High.
Importance of the client's commitment	High.	High.	High.	High.
Role of the practitioner's self in the process.	Very important.	Very important.	Important.	Less important.
Degree of formality.	High.	High.	Less formal.	High.
Frequency.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, but usually several sessions needed based on client's individual situations.	Variable, usually based on the original contract with the organisation.
Ownership of data/feedback.	It is confidential data. Only shared between therapist and client.	Coach and individual, some data often shared with line manager. It depends on the agreed contract.	Mentor and the mentee. Some data and information are shared with the organisation based on the initial agreement.	Most of the data and information are shared with the organisation.

motivation of clients to undertake counselling/therapy is different from coaching. For example, the individual usually expects to eliminate psychological problems and dysfunctions through counselling/therapy sessions. In this sense it may be considered to be primarily problem focused. In contrast coaching clients are seeking more. The coachee arrives in anticipation of an improvement in personal and professional

development. In this sense it may be considered to be solution focused. Second, the focus of counselling/therapy may involve any matters relevant to the client's personal well-being, while the coaching process is usually restricted to the agreed and contracted goals. The expected outcomes and evaluation methods are usually defined prior to the first session with the involved parties (e.g. coachee, supervisors and other stake-

holders). Third, the time horizon for the work is longer. While the coach may contract for four, six or possibly twelve sessions, the therapists, contracts week by week, with a view that it takes as long as it takes.

Coaching compared to mentoring

The similarity between coaching and mentoring is that they both provide a one-to-one relationship that is designed to enhance a person's career development (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). However, there are notable differences between these two activities. First, mentoring is a form of tutelage, which means a more senior or experienced mentor conveys knowledge and insight to a junior mentee about how to improve in a specific job, role, vocation or organisation. Passmore (2013) referred to the definition of mentoring from Eby, Rhodes and Allen (2007, p.16): workplace mentoring involves a relationship between a less experienced individual (protégé) and a more experienced person (the mentor), where the purpose is the personal and professional growth of the protégé. The mentor may be a peer at work, a supervisor, someone else within the organisation, but outside the protégé's chain of command. Both coaching and mentoring disciplines highlight the importance of 'relationship', however, coaching is typically conducted without the expectation of a more equal relationship between the two parties, with less focus on technical knowledge (Joo, 2005). Besides, the main purpose of coaching is considered to be on improving performance or workplace wellbeing through self-awareness and learning, whereas the purpose of mentoring varies widely from socialisation of newcomers to management development (Joo, 2005). Some have also argued that coaching also differentiates from mentoring in its use of a structured process, involving specific tools and assessments, to provide both awareness in the client and the development of specific plans for improvement (Joo, 2005), which is in turn reflected in the timelines, with

mentoring often running over several years and coaching over several months.

Coaching compared to change agent

A change agent is defined as being an individual who initiates and manages change in the organisation (Lunenburg, 2010). Similar to the coaching intervention, the change agent can be assigned from internal (e.g. managers or in-house HR professionals) or hired from external specialists (Tschirky, 2011). Integrating contemporary theoretical interpretations between the coach and change agent, these two roles share several common features and historical development processes. First, coaches and change agents are commissioned to transform individuals to fit into the norms (e.g. behaviours, attitudes, performance, thinking styles) of societies or organisations at the early stage of both practices (Bennis et al., 1969; Kilburg, 1996; Parsloe, 1999). A 'planned' change in the organisational setting is usually expected by the change agency (i.e. the sponsored organisation) back to the late 1950s (Lippitt, Watson & Westley, 1958). The primal definitions of coaching also emphasis on the purposes of coaching are related to 'corporate vision and goals', 'team performance', 'organisational productivity' and 'professional development' (Parsloe, 1996; Sperry, 2008). These descriptions of being a coach and change agent focus on the task, instead of people; and the process is viewed as an instrumental tool generating the conformity in the organisation. Nevertheless, a broader view of both practices is established alongside with the development of relevant theories, such as motivation to change. For instance, Zaltman and Duncan (1977) indicated the change agent is any individual who transforms the status quo even though the operation is not sanctioned. In addition, Caldwell (2003) indicates the role of change agents has been shifted away from a planned approach to change, with a bottom up approach advocated. Meanwhile, the objective of coaching is expanded from specific corporate-related goals to a stimulation of personal potential and responsibility (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

The evolution of both practices is grounded on that people's behavioural change is highly associated with their intention (i.e. motivation) to change (Webb & Sherran, 2006). Accordingly, the focus of changing process research transfers to change recipients' needs and intrinsic motivation in this changing and learning process. Second, facilitating a collaborative and equal working relationship is encouraged in both practices. Zaltman and Duncan's study (1977) indicates change agents are more likely to be effective if they keep a flexible working relationship with the change recipient; for instance, acknowledging their needs, maintaining a collaborative process and being receptive to new ideas. In the meantime, the quality of the professional helping relationship is recognised as an essential antecedent for positive coaching outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018; de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013) through numerous primary studies. Third, psychology takes an essential part in both practices. The involvement of psychology in the change process can be traced back to 1970s. Several papers indicate change agents as 'consultants in behavioural clothing' or 'psychological consultants' (Reddin, 1971; Pearl, 1974).

The explicit inclusion of a psychological perspective within coaching can be attributed to Grant (2001). Following Grant's PhD (2001) the consideration of the psychological effects of coaching, both processes and outcomes have been a popular area of research (Bono et al., 2009; Smither, 2011). More recently several systematic reviews and meta-analyses have established psychological informed research at the vanguard of coaching research (Theeboom, Beersma & Vianen, 2014; Jones, Woods & Guillaume, 2016; Bozer & Jones, 2018; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). Nevertheless, in terms of practice some papers (e.g. Bono et al., 2009; Passmore, Palmer & Short, 2010) have argued that there is little evidence of differences in practice between coaching psychologists and non-psychological trained coaches. Despite these debates as to whether psychological training informs coaching practice, we would

argue there is little doubt that psychology theory, be it behavioural change theory or psychological theories of human relationships, have informed all coach training. The understanding of human behaviour, emotions, cognition and motivation are key skills for all coaches, not just psychologists. Fourthly, both practices involve managing a complex social context. According to O'Neill (2000), the change agent often has no direct authority over the implementer; therefore, it is a natural triangle working relationship between the sponsor-implementer-agent. A similar relationship exists in the coaching context. More and more coaching studies (Louis & Fatien Diochon, 2014; Ianiro, Lehmann-Willenbrock & Kauffled 2015; Shoukry and Cox, 2018) have acknowledged the significance of the social dynamic in the coaching process. For example, Ianiro and Kauffled's study (2015) highlighted the importance of interpersonal interactions between the coach and coachee and how these are altered by different social circumstance.

Defining coaching psychology

Given this debate the question remains, what, if anything, is the difference between coaching and coaching psychology? At its birth, coaching psychology's Godfather, Anthony Grant, offered a definition of coaching psychology that subsequently established the foundation of coaching psychology definition within the British Psychology Society. According to Grant (2001, p.10):

'Coaching psychology can provide a useful platform from which to investigate the psychological factors involved in purposeful, directed behavioural change in normal populations, and in this way further the contribution of psychology to the enhancement of performance, productivity and quality of life of individuals, organizations and the broader social community.'

In Grant's (2001) definition coaching psychology is:

1. An empirically-validated framework of

- change which facilitates the coaching process.
2. A model of self-regulation which allows delineation of the processes inherent in self-regulation, goal setting and goal attainment.
 3. A methodology of how behaviour, thoughts and feelings interact, and how behaviour, thoughts and feelings can be altered to facilitate goal attainment.

Drawing on Grant's PhD thesis, Palmer and Whybrow reformulated the definition for the British Psychological Society SGCP. Coaching psychology is for: *'enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches'* (Palmer & Whybrow 2006).

Passmore (2010), as noted above, argued such definitions draw a false distinction between non-psychologist coaches and coaching psychologists. He argued that many coaches draw upon psychological models in their practice and that coach training has over the past two decades become more evidenced based approaches, thanks in part to the work of Grant, Cavanagh, Green, Bachkirova and Palmer, who have published widely, and argued the case for evidenced based coaching. Passmore's position appears to be supported by research evidence, which suggests in terms of behaviours (Jenkins, Passmore, Palmer & Short, 2012), and in wider practice (Passmore, Brown & Csigas, 2017), there is little difference between coaches and coaching psychologists and coaches.

In contrast to focusing on psychological approaches, he sought to recast coaching psychology as a separate domain of study, parallel to occupational, health or forensic psychology. He defined coaching psychology as *'the scientific study of behaviour, cognitive and emotion within coaching practice to deepen our understanding and enhance our practice within coaching'* (Passmore, 2010, p.4).

Passmore suggested that while there are few observable differences between coaches and

coaching psychologists in their practice, the study of psychology can enhance practice, and may lead to materially different outcomes. This view however remains the subject of debate. In this paper we might go further to suggest that coaching psychologists may be able to more clearly articulate what they do and the underpinning theory supporting their approach. Further, as a result of the robust ethical standards set by national psychological societies such as the British Psychological Society (BPS), Australian Psychological Society (APS), New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS), Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), Canada Psychology Association (CPA) and American Psychological Association (APA), psychologists may act to raise ethical standards when working with coaching clients. This last point of course is highly contentious, given the complex, and diverse nature of ethics, what is ethical and the diversity of ethical standards between different coaching body members and different national cultures (Passmore, Brown & Csigas, 2017).

In response to an invitation (Passmore, Stopforth & Lai, 2018) researchers and practitioners have responded with their own definitions of coaching psychology. Our role here is not to suggest that one is right or wrong, but recognise that different traditions, cultural perspectives and working environments shape and influence these different perspectives. Our purpose is to simply bring these perspectives together as part of the debate.

Grant offers a fresh take from the vantage point of Australia. *'Coaching psychology is a branch of psychology that involves the systematic application of behavioural science to the attainment of professional or personal outcomes that are valued by the coachee. Such outcomes or goal typically focus on the enhancement of personal or professional life experience, work performance and/or well-being, and can be used for individuals, groups and/or organisations. Coaching does not aim to treat issues related to mental illness'* (Grant, Personal Communication 2018).

Michel Moral, a leading name in French coaching, research and practice, has suggested that *'coaching psychology is a way of doing coaching which uses and combines all the theatrical and*

technical resources of psychology in intrapersonal, interpersonal and systemic areas of knowledge. It allows the coach to be fully aware of what they are doing in service of the coaching mission' (Moral, Personal Communication 2018).

The South African Psychologists Coaching Group draw on the work of Odendaal, and Le Roux, (2016, p.3) in the following definition of coaching psychology: *'Coaching Psychology, as practiced by a registered practitioner, is a conversational process of facilitating positive development and change towards optimal functioning, well-being and increased performance in the work and personal life domains, in the absence of clinically significant mental health issues, through the application of a wide range of psychological theories and principles. The intervention is action-orientated with measurable outcomes, and is also reflective towards creating greater self-awareness and meaning, and is directed at individuals, groups, teams, organisations and communities within a culturally-specific context'* (Gail C. Wroge-mann, Chair Group Sub-Committee, PsySSA, Personal Communication, 2019).

The New Zealand Psychological Society Special Group use the following definition: *Coaching psychology... 'draws on and develops established psychological approaches, and [is] the systematic application of behavioural science to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations who do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress.'* (Jonathan Black, Co-Chair of CPSIG, Personal Communication, 2019).

While different psychological groups, and practitioners hold differing perspectives, a common feature is the link to psychological theory and a common purpose to promote evidence-based practice through a psychological understanding of what it is to be human, within a 'normal' (non-clinical) range of functioning.

Coaching psychology is 'the well' which refreshes the wider coaching profession. It is the heart of scientific enquiry about coaching practice for work with non-clinical populations and while practices may not diverge, understanding of psychological

theory, ethical standards and contribution to research, mark coaching psychologist, and coaching psychology apart.

Key findings from recent systematic reviews on coaching psychology

While the on-going debates between the psychologists and non-psychologists have continued, several systematic reviews on coaching psychology have identified key factors for a positive coaching outcome (Bozer & Jones, 2018; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). First, the working alliance which refers to the quality and strength of the collaborative relationship between the client and therapist (Hatcher & Barends, 2006) has been recognised as a key indicator of coaching outcomes (Lai & McDowall, 2014; Grover & Furnham, 2016). Second, self-efficacy which focuses on how individuals perceive their acquisition of a skill or knowledge (Gist & Mitchell, 1992) has been found to be an important antecedent of affective coaching outcomes as reflected in perceived coaching effectiveness (de Haan, Duckworth, Birch & Jones, 2013; de Haan, Grant, Burger & Eriksson, 2016; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Third, the coachee's readiness to change (i.e. motivation to change) is a critical variable to outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Moreover, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory (Aryee, Budhwar & Chen, 2002), which explains the support from the coachee's leader and organisation to their coachee, has a key role to play in outcomes (Bozer & Jones, 2018).

Summarising from these critical reviews on existing coaching evidence, we can conclude psychology continues to play a significant part in shaping contemporary coaching research, specifically, frameworks from psychotherapy (e.g. the working alliance framework) and organisational psychology (e.g. motivational theory and LMX). As coaching research continues, we suspect that the contribution of both psychological theory and psychological research methods will inform and shape the development of evidence based coaching practice. Secondly, that evidenced based practice will increasingly become the core modality for

qualified coaching practitioners, as the draw from the well of coaching psychology research.

Discussion

This review paper answers several questions on contemporary coaching study, practice and the need for coach's training and development. We can initially conclude that coaching intervention cannot be detached from psychological perspectives in considering that the main activity embedded in the coaching process relies on 'interpersonal interactions', such as dialogues and conversations. In addition, some research (Ianiro et al., 2015) indicated 'body languages' and 'unspoken manners' between the coaching dyad act a key role for a successful coaching outcome. Therefore, the psychological professional relationship is embedded in all coaching setting, regardless of the technique or framework.

Second, most of the current research evidence indicated theories in psychotherapy, such as therapeutic working alliance, provides a theoretical foundation in coaching alliance study. Nevertheless, social psychological perspectives are highlighted in recent coaching research domain due to the power dynamics and cultural differences in most of the coaching contexts (e.g. hierarchy in the social settings of coaches and expectations in different cultural backgrounds). Moreover, motivational theories which are usually studied in organisational psychology and adult learning areas are identified as the fundamental factor for an effective coaching alliance. Therefore, building trust and rapport at the beginning of the coaching relationship is the key to open up the coachee's mind and enhance their motivation to change. Consequently, we argue that while psychology is not the only theoretical discipline to facilitate an effective coaching process and outcome, it plays an essential part in this human-relationship focused intervention.

Conclusions

The evidence for investment in coaching intervention will continue to be a major concern for scholars in relevant domains,

as well as for organisational stakeholders. While, the development of coaching has been transformed from a 'business model or service' (Briner, 2012) towards a more scientific rooted profession, more rigorous research is still required to inform practice.

Coaching research has evolved from the 'infant' stage and has moved towards its teenage years. It has established that coaching works and produces moderate effect sizes (Theeboom et al., 2014). Further, it has a role beyond the coaching dyad, such as sponsoring organisations, cultural influences and coachees' social environments (Passmore & Theeboom, 2016). Its next stage of development must be to identify the active ingredients in coaching, and measure what effect each has. Secondly, it must start to differentiate between individuals and presenting problems. What type of coaching fits what type of person and what type of issue. To suggest that all are equal (Kilburg, 2005) is not supported by the growing evidence from other behavioural change domains, such as motivational interview (MI) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). These have shown that different approaches can be better suited to specific types of presenting problem. We hypothesise that coaching will find that personality factors of the coach and coachee, as well as presenting problems and levels of readiness to change all influence outcomes: My coaching need, is not your coaching need. To move closer to this understanding a renewed energy is needed, with closer collaborative between coaching psychologists with the research skills and coaching practitioners to deliver the hundreds of data points needed for this type of research to bear fruit. If the past 15 years of coaching psychology have been growing and learning, the coming decade of coaching psychology will be a coming of age.

Jonathan Passmore, Henley Business School,
University of Reading

Yi-Ling Lai, University of Portsmouth

References

- Athanasoupoulou, A. & Dopson, S. (2018). A systematic review of executive coaching outcomes: Is it the journey or the destination that matters the most? *Leadership Quarterly*, 29(1), 70–88.
- Aryee, S., Budhwar, P.S. & Chen, Z.X. (2002). Trust as a mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes: Test of a social exchange model. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behaviour*, 23(3), 267–285.
- Bachkirova, T. (2008). Role of coaching psychology in defining boundaries between counselling and coaching. In S. Palmer & A. Whybrow (Eds.) *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners* (2nd edn, pp.351–366). Hove: Routledge.
- Bachkirova, T., Cox, E. & Clutterbuck, D. (2010). *The complete handbook of coaching*. London: Sage.
- Bennis, W.G., Benne, K.D. & Chin, R. (1969). *The planning of change*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc.
- Bigelow, B. (1938). Building an effective training program for field salesmen. *Personnel*, 14, 142–150.
- Boehmer, K.R., Barakat, S., Ahn, S., Prokop, L.J., Erwin, P.J. & Murad, M.H. (2016). Health coaching interventions for persons with chronic conditions: A systematic review and meta-analysis protocol. *Systematic Reviews*, 5(1), 146.
- Bono, J., Purvanova, R., Towler, A. & Peterson, D. (2009). A survey of executive coaching practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62(2), 361–404.
- Bozer, G. & Jones, R.J. (2018). Understanding the factors that determine workplace coaching effectiveness: A systematic literature review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 27(3), 342–361.
- Briner, R. (2012). Does coaching work and does anyone really care? *OP Matters*, 17, 4–12.
- Brock, V. (2009). Coaching Pioneers: Laura Whitworth and Thomas Leonard. *International Journal of Coaching in Organisations I*(1), 54–64.
- Brock, V. (2012). *The sourcebook of coaching history* (2nd edn). Self published.
- Caldwell, R. (2003). Models of change agency: A fourfold classification. *British Journal of Management*, 14(2), 131–142.
- de Haan, E., Duckworth, A., Birch, D. & Jones, C. (2013). Executive coaching outcome research: The contribution of common factors such as relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 65(1), 40.
- de Haan, E., Grant, A.M., Burger, Y. & Eriksson, P.-O. (2016). A large-scale study of executive and workplace coaching: The relative contributions of relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 68, 189–207.
- Feldman, D.C. & Lankau, M.J. (2005). Executive coaching: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Management*, 31(6), 829–848.
- Eby, L.T., Rhodes, J.E. & Allen, T.D. (2007). Definition and evolution of mentoring. *The Blackwell handbook of mentoring: A multiple perspectives approach*, pp.7–20. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Evidence Centre (2014). *Does health coaching work?* Retrieved on 10 January 2019 from <https://eoeleadership.hee.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/Does%20health%20coaching%20work%20-%20summary.pdf>
- Gallwey, T. (1986). *The inner game of tennis*. London: Pan.
- Golawski, A., Bamford, A. & Gersch, I. (2013). *Swings and roundabouts: A self coaching workbooks for parents and those considering becoming parents*. Abingdon: Karnac Books.
- Gordy, C. (1937). Everyone gets a share of the profits. *Factory Management & Maintenance*, 95, 82–83.
- Grant, A.M. (2001). *Toward a psychology of coaching: The impact of coaching on metacognition, mental health and goal attainment*. Sydney: Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney.
- Grant, A. (2011). Developing an agenda for teaching coaching psychology. *International Coaching Psychology Review* 6(1), 84–99.
- Grant, A.M. & Palmer, S. (2002). Coaching Psychology. Meeting held at the Annual Conference of Division of Counselling Psychology, British Psychological Society, Torquay, 18 May.
- Grant, A. M. (2014). Autonomy support, relationship satisfaction and goal focus in the coach–coachee relationship: Which best predicts coaching success?. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 7(1), 18–38.

- Green, S. Anthony Grant, A.M. & Rynsaardt, J. (2007). Evidence-based life coaching for senior high school students: Building hardiness and hope. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(1), 24–32.
- Green, L.S., Oades, L.G. & Grant, A.M. (2006). Cognitive-behavioural, solution-focused life coaching: Enhancing goal striving, well-being, and hope. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(3), 142–149.
- Griffith, C.R. (1926). *Psychology of Coaching: A study of coaching methods from the point of view of psychology*. New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons.
- Grover, S. & Furnham, A. (2016). Coaching as a developmental intervention in organisations: A systematic review of its effectiveness and the mechanisms underlying it. *PLoS one*, 11(7), e0159137.
- Huston, R.E. (1924) Debate coaching in high school. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education*, 10, 127–143.
- Ianiro, P., Schermuly, C. & Kauffeld, S. (2013). Why interpersonal dominance and affiliation matter: An interaction analysis of the coach-client relationship. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 6(1), 25–46.
- Ianiro, P.M., Lehmann-Willenbrock, N. & Kauffeld, S. (2015). Coaches and clients in action: A sequential analysis of interpersonal coach and client behaviour. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 30(3), 435–456.
- Ives, Y. & Cox, E. (2015). *Relationship coaching: The theory and practice of coaching with singles, couples, and parents*. Hove: Routledge.
- Hatcher, R.L. & Barends, A.W. (2006). How a return to theory could help alliance research. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training*, 43(3), 292–299.
- ICF (2017). *ICF Core Competencies*. Retrieved on 5 February 2019 from <https://coachfederation.org/core-competencies>
- Jenkins, L., Passmore, J., Palmer, S. & Short, E. (2012). The nature and focus of coaching in the UK today: A UK survey report. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Practice & Research* 5(2), 132–150.
- Joo, B.K.B. (2005). Executive coaching: A conceptual framework from an integrative review of practice and research. *Human Resource Development Review*, 4(4), 462–488.
- Jones, R., Woods, S. & Guillaume, Y. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89(2), 249–277.
- Kilburg, R.R. (1996). Toward a conceptual understanding and definition of executive coaching. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 48(2), 134–144.
- Kilburg, R.R. (2005). Executive coaching: The road to dodoville needs paving with more than good assumptions. *Consulting Psychology Journal Practice and Research*, 57(1), 90–96. doi:10.1037/1065-9293.57.1.90
- Kimsey-House, H., Kimsey-House, K., Sandahl, P. & Whitworth, L. (2011). *Co-active coaching: Changing business, transforming lives* (3rd edn). Boston: Nicholas Brealey.
- Lai, Y.L. & McDowall, A. (2014). A systematic review (SR) of coaching psychology: focusing on the attributes of effective coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(2), 120–136.
- Lai, Y.L. (2014). *Enhancing evidence-based coaching through the development of a coaching psychology competency framework: Focus on the coaching relationship*. School of Psychology, University of Surrey, Guildford, UK.
- Leonard, H.S., Lewis, R., Freedman, A.M. & Passmore, J. (Eds.). (2013). *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of leadership, change and organizational development*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lippitt, R. (1958). *The dynamics of planned change: A comparative study of principles and techniques*. New York: Harcourt, Brace.
- Louis, D. & Fatien Diochon, P. (2014). Educating coaches to power dynamics: Managing multiple agendas within the triangular relationship. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*, 5(2), 31–47.
- Lunenburg, F.C. (2010). Managing change: The role of the change agent. *International Journal of Management, Business and Administration*, 13(1), 1–6.
- O'Neill, M.B. (2000). *Executive coaching with backbone and heart*. San Francisco: CA Jossey-Bass.
- Odendaal, A. & Le Roux, A. (2016) Contextualising coaching psychology within multicultural context. In L.E. van Zyl, M.W. Stander & A. Odendaal *Coaching psychology: Meta-theoretical perspectives and applications in multicultural context* (pp.2–25). New York: Springer International Publishing.

- Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychological Review*, 1(1), 5–11.
- Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2007). *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners*. London: Routledge.
- Palmer, S. Stubbs, I. & Whybrow, A. (2005). Health coaching to facilitate the promotion of healthy behaviour and achievement of health-related goals. *International Journal of Health Promotion*, 14(3), 91–93.
- Parsloe, E. (1992). *Coaching, mentoring, and assessing: A practical guide to developing competence*. New York: Nichols Publishing Company.
- Passmore, J. Peterson, D. & Freire, T. (2013). The psychology of coaching and mentoring. In J. Passmore, D. Peterson & T. Freire (Eds.) *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring* (pp.1–13). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Passmore, J., Palmer, S. & Short, E. (2010) *Results of an online UK survey of coaching and coaching psychology practitioners*. Unpublished survey.
- 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, Practice & Research*, 4(2), 70–88.
- Passmore, J. Krauesslar, V. & Avery, R. (2015). Safety coaching: A critical literature review. of coaching in high hazard industries. *Industrial & Commercial Training*, 47(4), 195–200. doi:10.1108/ICT-12-2014-0080
- Passmore, J. & Rehman, H. (2012). Coaching as a learning methodology – a mixed methods study in driver development using a randomized controlled trial and thematic analysis. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 7(2), 166–184.
- Passmore, J., Brown, H. & Csigas, Z. (2017). *The state of play in European coaching and mentoring*. Henley on Thames: Henley Business School & EMCC.
- Passmore, J., Stopforth, M. & Lai, Y-L. (2018). Defining coaching psychology: Debating coaching and coaching psychology definitions. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 14(2) 120–124.
- Passmore, J., Rowson, T. & Sinclair, T. (In Press). *Becoming a coach: The ICF definitive guide*. New York: Springer.
- Shoukry, H. & Cox, E. (2018). Coaching as a social process. *Management Learning*, 49(4), 413–428.
- Smither, J. (2011). Can psychotherapy research serve as a guide for research about executive coaching? An agenda for the next decade. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26(2), 135–145.
- Sperry, L. (2008). Executive coaching: An intervention, role function, or profession? *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 60(1), 33–37.
- Theeboom, T., Beersma, B. & van Vianen, A.E.M. (2014). Does coaching work? A meta-analysis on the effects of coaching on individual level outcomes in an organizational context. *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 9(1), 1–18.
- Trueblood, T.C. (1911) Coaching a debating team. *Public Speaking Review*, 1, 84–85.
- Tschirky, H. (2011). *Managing innovation-driven companies: Approaches in practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Webb, T.L. & Sheeran, P. (2006). Does changing behavioural intentions engender behaviour change? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 132(2), 249–268.
- Whitworth, L., Kinsey-House, H. & Sandahl, P. (1998). *Co-active coaching: New skills for coaching people towards success in work and life*. Mountain View: Davies Black.
- Whitmore, J. (2009). Interview with Jonathan Passmore at the University of East London Coaching Conference.
- Whitmore, J. (1992). *Coaching for performance*. London: Nicholas Brealey.
- Williams, J. & Williams, J. (2011). *Marriage coaching*. Springfield: GTRC.
- Wilmott, G. & Wilmott, C (2018) *Who's in the driving seat*. Oldham: Active Driving Solutions.

Listening to your heart or head? – An interpretative phenomenological analysis of how people experienced making good career decisions

Gabriela Viorela Pop & Christian van Nieuwerburgh

Objective: *This study aims at building some knowledge concerning the connection between the decision-making process and the career-related outcomes. This knowledge is to help coaches to engage an efficient coaching process to provide the best support for clients with career decision-making problems. It examines the experience on the thinking processes undergone by eight people, in relation to their career choices which are subjectively perceived as ‘good decisions’.*

Design: *Based on the social constructivism paradigm, it is a qualitative research design.*

Methods: *Semi-structured interviews were used for data collection and interpretative phenomenological analysis for data examination.*

Results: *Four main themes emerged: ‘Emotional connection’ and positive feelings; Serendipity; Inside battle; Congruence between heart and head.*

Conclusions: *The decision-making process is perceived as a positive, easy and ‘smooth’ experience when the emotional and rational thinking align. Participants’ own conclusions converge on the importance of one being aware of both inner voices – head’s and heart’s. Being a new research topic, it requires further exploration, through qualitative and quantitative studies, as well. Specific implications and directions for future research are discussed.*

Keywords: *Intuitive thinking, rational thinking, decision-making process, good career-choices.*

Objectives

THIS RESEARCH is relevant for career-coaching practitioners and researchers:

- It aims to investigate the underlying thinking process of decision-making regarding positive career choices;
- Another objective is to explore the influence of intuitive versus rational thinking when making career choices;
- It aims to open directions for further research on this rich topic;
- It may support coaches to get a better understanding of how people make decisions and to have an appropriate approach to their clients’ struggle with decision-making about careers.

As this study casts light over the decision-making process linked to good career-choices, it may validate experience of individuals who have been, are or will be in the midst of similar thinking process.

Introduction

Research, the arts and philosophy have been interested in how people make decisions. Lehrer (2009) voices this everlasting curiosity: ‘as long as people have made decisions, they’ve thought about how they made decisions’. We have always been concerned with how to take the good choice, and decisions about careers play a significant part of our lives (Yates, 2014). They appear throughout life in diverse shapes, varying from selecting a university degree to

changing jobs or retiring (Redekopp, 2015).

The 21st-century career path is characterised by a great number of options, now influenced by the advancement of technology and globalisation (Yates, 2014), increasing the degree of uncertainty about the outcomes (Hastie & Dawes, 2010) and the complexity of decisions. The ‘paradox of choice’ (Schwartz, 2004), the rapid changes which imply uncertainty and hinder decision-making, and indecisiveness have become the most frequently addressed topics in career coaching sessions (Gati, 1996).

There are many normative theories about how to make good career decisions, but the main critique is their lack of ecological validity. The descriptive theories which present real-life thinking processes are insufficient (Yates, 2014). This study aims to investigate the authentic experience of career decision-making and to inspire further research on the topic. For example, it might be interesting to investigate whether there are any differences in gender, age, economic status, or professional domain when individuals make decisions about their career choices. In this study, we explore the emotions and thoughts of people who engaged in a decision-making process in relation to their careers. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) has been used to make sense of the experience of participants in this study and to analyse the data that were collected.

This study was conducted in order to explore how people experienced the career decision-making process. Aiming at casting light particularly on the link between thinking processes and career-related outcomes, the focus is on the experiences related to positive career choices – those that were subjectively perceived as being satisfying. This knowledge may be helpful to coaches who work with clients who are in the midst of a career change. By gaining knowledge about the authentic experience people have, coaches may develop empathetic understanding of their clients, which could

further facilitate building strong coaching relationships. It has been proposed that a solid coaching relationship is an important factor in the coaching process (Bernard & David, 2018).

The importance and occurrence of career decision-making in individuals’ lives as well as the poorly researched link between the real-life thinking processes and career-outcomes justify the necessity of an IPA study, addressing the question: *how do participants experience the process of making good decisions in relation to their careers?*

Literature review

A large body of research focuses on factors influencing career decisions (Paulsen & Betz, 2004; Colozzi, 2003; Hargrove et al., 2002), and on career decision-making styles (Amir & Gati, 2006; Mau, 2002), but the actual process has been less investigated within the field of career guidance.

The decision-making process

Research conducted over the last decades shows that the decision-making process is complexly defined by two complementary thinking processes (known as Type 1 and Type 2 – Evans & Frankish, 2009) which are operated by two distinct thinking systems, generally referred to as S1 and S2 (Samson & Voyer, 2012).

S1 is responsible for automatic processing, operating with shortcuts (Samson, 2016) which make it liable to biases and mistakes (Redekopp, 2016). Being driven by feelings and highly intuitive thoughts (Samson & Voyer, 2012), S1 is mainly unconscious (Wilson, 2004) and emotional. The merit of this system is that it can compute complex data at a high speed, with low cognitive effort (Kahneman, 2011).

In comparison with S1, S2 deploys attention, logical rules ‘acquired through formal learning’ (Samson & Voyer, 2012) and cognitive control when generating complex computations. It is a reliable information-processor due to the use of

rational norms (Kahneman & Frederick, 2002). Nevertheless, because it requires significant cognitive resources, effort and attention, the thinking process is slow and demanding (Evans & Frankish, 2009). In summary, S1 is driven by feelings, emotions, whereas S2 involves rational, logic thinking. It has been suggested in neuroscience literature that there is a distinction between feelings and emotions; however, due to the aim of this study and in accordance to Kahneman's tautology, we use the terms interchangeably throughout the entire article, as they are both related to S1.

Several studies (Tversky & Kahneman, 1986; Stanovich & West, 2000; Kahneman, 2003) demonstrate that depending on the type of thinking involved in the decision-making process, different outcomes can be achieved. The results suggest that better performance for complex exercises can be achieved by deploying rational thinking rather than emotional thinking. However, these studies used experimental designs to the detriment of ecological validity. By contrast, descriptive theories show that people tend to rely on instincts more frequently than on conscious rationality (Iamets, 1997; Yates, 2015).

Career decision-making process

21st century career decisions have become very complex (Yates, 2014). Some literature on the decision-making process in confusing situations (Gladwell, 2006), characterised by incomplete information, too many alternatives and uncertain outcomes showed that gut instinct does work effectively in these cases (Gigerenzer, 2007). Being strongly connected to creativity (Kahneman, 2011), emotional thinking may find an insightful solution to solve a complex career-related dilemma. Thus, some literature suggests that when it is not possible to compute all the variables, it may be 'better to go with a rule of thumb' (Walsh, 2017).

In contrast to this, there are a few studies which point on the negative influence emotional thinking might have on

career decision-making (Redekopp, 2015; 2016). For instance, loss-aversion may lead someone to stay in an unhappy job instead of looking for a new role. (Redekopp, 2016, p.2). There is limited research on the career decision-making process and it tends to focus on factors (i.e. career decision-making self-efficacy) influencing the process (Greenbank & Hepworth, 2008; Dik et al., 2008) or difficulties generally encountered in the process (Mau, 2004; Saka et al., 2008). It is stated that a less crystallised career plan (Amir & Gati, 2006) and lower economic resources (Thompson & Subich, 2006) each correlate to lower career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE). A factor that positively relates to CDSE is emotional intelligence (Brown et al., 2003).

Thus, the contrasting results as well as the limited number of studies on real-world decision-making process in the career arena justify the need of this exploratory study.

Method

The research was designed from a relativist ontological position which believes that there are multiple versions of reality based on personal experiences and built through research (Clarke et al., 2015), as opposed to realism, which sustains an absolute reality, discoverable through research. 'Reality' is produced by the participant's words and interpreted by the researcher, establishing an interaction between researcher and participant (Madhill & Gough, 2008). Thus, at an epistemological level, the social-constructivist position (i.e. knowledge is constructed through interaction with others) was adopted.

This approach matches the qualitative methods which are designed to explore the meaning people attribute to their own experiences (Howitt & Cramer, 2007). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because the purpose is to increase understanding of how people uniquely experience the thinking processes which underpin positive career choices.

For a proper investigation that would meet the aim of the study as well as to the adopted ontological (i.e. the researcher relationship with the reality of his study) and epistemological positions (i.e. the nature of knowledge, justification, and the rationality of belief), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected. Due to the phenomenological philosophy that underpins the IPA methodology, the individuals' past experiences and subjective perceptions are examined in detail. The intention is to give voice to each participant. A focus is placed on individuality, and not generalisability (McLeod, 2003) – the phenomenological origins of IPA are consistent with the socially constructed paradigm, showing that 'methodological choices tend to follow epistemological positions' (Larkin, 2015).

A main currency for IPA is the exploration of the meaning which individuals hold for their past happenings (Smith & Osborn, 2015). IPA involves a double hermeneutic approach, which combines two types of interpretation-understanding: *empathetic hermeneutics* – empathising with the participants while trying to make sense of their world, trying to understand the participants' experience from their own point of view (Smith, 2015) – and *questioning hermeneutics* – grasping how the participants make sense of their account, employing critical questions and an in-depth analysis of the participants' thinking about their experience. Thus, a two-stage interpretation process is employed in order to sustain a rich analysis. The rationale for using both lenses lays with the motivation to better understand the participants' experiences, capturing their thoughts and emotions (with the help of the empathetic hermeneutics) as well as identifying the connections they made in order to integrate their experience in their life-story and exploring how they made sense of it (with the help of the questioning hermeneutics).

IPA adopts an idiographic mode of inquiry (Smith et al., 1995) as the interest is on particularity. It is concerned with the examination of particular cases, which permits making

specific claims about those participants. Hence, IPA involves exploring in detail how people constructed their own reality but the access to this is impacted by the researcher's own conceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The researcher's influence on the interpretation process may be a limiting factor, but this is one of the compromises that qualitative methods accept in favour of a more holistic and close-to-the-participant view over a specific socially-constructed reality. The practice of reflexivity helps the researcher in critically reflecting on her impact on the process.

Participants

IPA is dedicated to the idiographic examination of individual cases (Smith & Osborn, 2015), aiming to give an in-depth analysis of the individuals' perceptions about a particular experience, rather than making general claims (Smith et al., 2009). Hence, a small size sample was preferred. This study consists of 8 participants, with age ranging from 30 to 67, who in the last seven years made a decision which they consider to be a positive career choice. The time-limit of seven years was chosen in order to allow participants' recall of the thinking processes. The sample was collected by spreading information about this research through professional and personal networks. Seven out of eight participants are postgraduate students at the School of Psychology, University of East London. Seven out of eight participants are female.

The purposive sampling led to a homogeneous sample (Eatough & Smith, 2008) whose boundaries are also profession-related: all participants are currently working or have been working in counselling and/or coaching related professional contexts. We consider it important to mention that although most of the participants were trained in psychology, the coach is still considered to be the end-user of the insights gained on these participants' experiences, and the findings of this study might apply to the coaching practitioners' work.

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of East London. Individuals who met the particularity required by the research question and agreed to contribute to the study were emailed to arrange an interview date. They received an invitation letter and the description of the study via email and an information sheet and consent form were presented and signed before the start of one-to-one interviews. Seven out of eight interviews were held face-to-face and one through Skype due to practicalities.

Following the IPA methodology, semi-structured interviews (Willig, 2013) were conducted with each participant. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. An open-question guide was used in order to allow free answers to interviewees, and also provided them with prompts where needed.

Data analysis

The data was analysed thoroughly and systematically, according to the process described by Smith et al. (2015). Each transcription was read multiple times in order to get ‘intimate’ with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Trying to make sense of the participants’ accounts, notes were made on

significant phrases and sayings, relevant to the research question. Then, a list of initial themes was made for each participant, which afterwards was reduced to a mind-map of eight larger, overarching themes. Themes were checked to ensure that they represented the participants’ thinking processes precisely during decision-making. Changes (specifically, themes-substitution/removal) were made where themes seemed to be rather reflecting the factors that led to the actual decision-making process. Throughout the interpretative process, the analysis was discussed with an academic supervisor. A mind-map of final themes was created for each participant’s account, written on a separate piece of paper. The two authors of this article created a master table of four themes to identify similarities and particularities in participants’ experiences and to capture the connections across the cases.

Minor changes were made to the four clusters (specifically, the labelling), which is typical for the dynamic process of writing in a qualitative study (Smith & Osborn, 2015). The findings are presented in the following narrative form and supported with verbatim extracts from the participants’ accounts.

Table 1: Resulting Themes

Super-ordinate Theme	Sub-ordinate Theme
1. 'Emotional connection' and positive feelings	Career as a calling 'The feeling of what feels right' Self-assurance Excitement
2. Serendipity	Quick decision-making process The experience of easiness
3. Inside battle	Contrasting thoughts Anxiety and risk-aversion The 'trapped/stuck' feeling
4. Congruence between heart and head	Being in tune with each other Awareness of both rational and emotional voice

Findings

The main findings of the research will be discussed in this section. Each participant has a unique and personal experience. It is possible to identify four over-arching themes (Table 1) that connect their experiences.

1. Experiencing an ‘emotional connection to the job’ and positive feelings

(i) ‘I felt... almost like, a calling’

Participants clearly talked about the feeling of being attracted towards a particular career option in the midst of the decision-making process. Kelly¹ confidently stated ‘I do put that down to the fact that it was a heart decision and I was drawn to it’. Peg used the same words to express her strong attraction to the job, which overcame her husband’s requirements to renounce that job (‘My husband... “Why you’re doing this? Forget this. Don’t go back and do this job anymore again” but I was just drawn to it’). Cindy reflected that ‘the bottom line is actually... I think I felt, you know?, almost like a calling.’ Cindy’s thoughtful manner in selecting the word ‘calling’ may suggest the search of a perfect linguistic label to accurately express the connection she felt to that career choice. She also mentioned the feeling of ‘this is what I’m meant to do.’ Kelly shares the same belief ‘I have every faith and confidence that it was all meant to be’. These comments reveal a powerful relationship with the career option.

The strong link to a particular career is expressed by Ronna as ‘an emotional connection to my job’ explained by ‘the whole driver for me to getting into that was to help people and so, to do better in the world’. Experiencing the drive for being helpful to a purposeful cause was also expressed by Hanna (she felt that ‘it was a privileged position[...] to create something which is going to benefit both an organisation and the

people in it’). Jenny mentioned several times that during the decision-making process she thought of which career option would give the greater sense of making a difference (‘OK, I’m gonna make it happen, that people could pay the bills’ or ‘OK, I’m gonna make a difference’). The idea expressed by Ronna of emotional connection to a job is also evident in Jenny’s account who claimed that having experienced dementia as a caregiver strengthened her connection to that job-choice (‘My father having [dementia]... had a massive impact on my decision’).

(ii) ‘The feeling of what feels right’

Some participants, like Jenny, mentioned ‘I felt that that was the right thing to do.’ This ‘it-felt-right’ emotion may be generated by a congruence between the person’s interests, values, aims and those owned by the chosen career and organisation – this rapport of congruence may not have been consciously experienced but rather masked under the feeling of ‘it was the right thing to do’. The ‘being right’ emotion may also refer to ‘being the right time to do it’. Hanna’s saying supports this temporal connotation (‘It felt naturally ending’) when referring to the decision of retiring early. She lists a few rational arguments for this choice as she said ‘I had every reason to look forward to being retired’. However, other participants related to this ‘being right’ in a more emotional manner. For instance Kelly claimed ‘It felt like it was a time in my life to take that risk’ and Jenny reflected: ‘sometimes you just have to go when you’ve got the feeling of what feels right. And it felt right.’

Hence, the ‘feeling of what feels right’ may include both the career-choice itself and the decision-making time to give the sense of it being proper to make that specific decision at the particular moment. Kelly nicely summarised this idea: ‘I’m a big believer in “the right things happen at the right time”’.

¹ All names have been changed for confidentiality.

(iii) Self-assurance

Most participants conveyed strong feelings of determination and confidence that they experienced in relation to a specific career-option. Peg stated that she had 'no hesitation' to apply immediately when she saw the advertisement about a job that interested her ('I didn't even hesitate to say "Let me apply to this"'). Her determination is best captured in this statement 'I don't think that anything could have kept me back. I didn't have any apprehension thinking or supposing that I don't get the job', and reinforced in the sentence 'Nothing stopped me. Didn't stop me at all'.

Ronna claimed that she experienced no stress, no anxiety when deciding to go volunteering in South East Asia ('I didn't have any fear') and that she felt confident it would be enjoyable ('I got some guide books and thought "yeah, that would be great. I'm sure I'll like doing that"'). As Ronna was in her 20s, the youth-confidence symptom may have fed her self-assurance ('I wasn't afraid of anything then, I wasn't really stressed about anything'). Whereas, Kelly reflected intense positive feelings in relation to the choice she made at a more mature age: 'each time it was all inside where I was really thinking positively', 'So I felt really positive about it'. Determination sparkles out from her saying: 'It came clear that there was nothing stopping me applying'. She even perceived the decision of giving up an old job for a new one as 'a good risk', suggesting that any basic anxiety for newness was reframed unconsciously as a beneficial challenge. Hanna also had positive emotions associated with a job offer in the educational environment: 'It felt very optimistic, positive'.

(iv) Excitement

A feeling of elation, joy and animation was experienced during the decision-making process in connection with a particular career choice. Bryan positively exclaimed: 'Finding this [role] I really loved and I really enjoyed'. Kelly felt strong exhilaration when

finding a new job opportunity – she shouted 'Oh my Gosh, this could be it!!!', adding that 'I felt really excited. It was very exciting'. Her elation was almost surreal: at the first sight of the job offer she also thought 'Too good to be true'. Ann's thought of the idea of applying for a particular degree also indicates enthusiasm: 'I thought "Yeah! What a great idea!"'. Ronna recalled a whole set of passionate feelings she had regarding the decision of volunteering abroad: 'it was where my passion laid', 'It was REALLY what I wanted to do', 'Everything about it was cool; it was just so interesting', 'I was just thinking like "That looks exciting, that looks fun"'. Peg similarly, exclaimed whole-heartedly the enthusiasm she felt 'Oh, I was EXCITED, I felt excited'.

2. Serendipity

All eight interviewees conveyed in some way that the decision-making process connected to positive career choices was perceived as being easier and quicker than for other choices.

(i) Quick decision-making process

There were participants who experienced lightning-fast decision-making. Ronna recalled that as quickly as she saw the advertisement about the volunteering opportunity she emailed to the organisers: 'I found it and that's where I found the volunteering thing and just emailed them and said "Are you still looking for someone?". They said "Yeah". So, everything was very quick. I remember just finding it and then, I just emailed them.' A similar experience happened to Peg: 'One day I saw a little advert in the newspaper [for an interesting job] so I said "Yes! Something I would like to do, something I had actually always thought about doing"'. Cindy passed very quickly through the process of deciding to quit her job: 'I had this REALLY strong kind of sense. I've got a "I just can't!". It was REALLY a gut-thing and I made that decision quickly in... about 2:30pm – well, I had that strong feeling at 2:30, I drove back, I wrote my

letter of resignation and put it on the desk. It was like “it just has to happen” (laughing). It was not like an all-consuming feeling, it was [an] instantaneous feeling, really.’

(ii) The experience of easiness

As Cindy’s last sentence in the excerpt above suggests, the high-speed decision-making is connected with the ‘easiness’ perception, probably because there is less complex thinking, options-evaluation when the decision is made in the blink of the eye (Gladwell, 2006).

Jenny clearly stated ‘I felt it was a very easy decision to make’. She had previously reached the decision to quit the current job (but not acted accordingly) and then, decided to accept a position in a charity: ‘that decision [of quitting the job] has already been made. So, I think it was the charity that came along at the right time. It was a bit easier’. Interestingly, this paragraph reveals a potential link between the ‘feeling of what feels right’ and perceiving the decision-making process as an easy one. Indeed, Jenny’s decision-making process may have been facilitated by the fact that half of the decision had already been made (‘If the opportunity hasn’t arisen for working with the charity, I think I would’ve still left the old job’).

Bryan explained that it was the congruence between rational and emotional thinking that facilitated the decision-making process: ‘It was rational and gut with, both, and I said “Right, there’s no reason not to do this”. So, it was MUCH easier. Rationally, the four main things are there, but my gut was saying “It’ll be great.” So much easier. MUCH, much easier.’ Ann remembered that she did less critical thinking, such as assessing options, when choosing the university for her degree (‘that didn’t actually feel like it took a lot of deciding’), but rather ‘part of the things was like, a bit of serendipity’. She reinforces this idea: ‘It felt like serendipity at the time, you know?’. Hanna expressed the easy experience of decision-making by ‘It just fell together very nicely’ and ‘it all went very well’.

3. Inside battle

Most participants experienced ‘a daily battle’ during the decision-making, implying many doubts, incongruence between feelings and practical issues, distress and consuming negative emotions. Moreover, it was usually linked to a longer decision-making process, suggesting a real feeling of agony.

(i) Contrasting thoughts

Cindy experienced this inside battle as ‘trying to convince myself it would be a good thing [to keep herself in the previous job]’ and Ann as ‘nagging doubts’ which she tried ‘to squash down’. She captured the struggle to rationalise a choice with which she didn’t feel happy: ‘Your head says “Stay in this job, it’s a good job, you’re paid-well, you’ve got a good reputation, it’s local etc.” and you know?, all those things... So, you squash down how you really feel about something, you just say “No, I can’t leave this job, I’ve just gotta find a new way”.’ This mental struggle echoed through repetitive thoughts: ‘When it’s on auto-pilot, when it’s not being engaged correctly, your head just does... repetitive thoughts. These are “I must pay the bills, I must go to work, there must be stability”. So, your head is saying “This is fine, I can cope with everything else because I have to have these bits”. But inside your heart, you say “I can’t do this, I hate it, I just wanna do something that makes me happy”.’

A great deal of emotional discomfort was generated by the contrast between feelings and rational thoughts towards the same option – Ann encapsulated the intense distress of contrasting thoughts and emotions when trying to decide whether to quit her job in the educational context: ‘I used to have this daily battle, every day I got up and I thought “Oh my God, I can’t do this again” and then I’ve got “It’s okay, it’s fine, it’s fine”. But it’d just become a sort of anxiety... bigger.’

(ii) Anxiety and risk-aversion

Ann clearly declared she was ‘highly anxious about’ making the decision to leave her job. An aspect of this was the fear of disap-

pointing people: 'I thought to leave him [her manager] would be really letting him and lots of people down.' Bryan resonated with the anxiety feeling but it is more related to the fear of the unknown: 'Fear. Not knowing what's coming next.' This is interconnected with the risk-aversion feeling which was unfolded in Ronna's account, as well: 'There's some risk because you know?, what if we'll have a financial down-side, what if I can't find a contract? There are so many WHAT IF'S, things that could go wrong'.

(iii) The 'trapped/stuck' feeling

Another sub-theme which inter-related with risk-aversion and high anxiety is the feeling of being trapped/stuck. This link is neatly illustrated by Ann's confession: 'What that job did make me feel was that I had no choices, and I mean, you know?, what could be worse than walking out of a stable job after 13 years?! It was a big risk'. The acute negative emotions and robust perception of having no other option than the current job generated a feeling of captivity: 'When I was really in the bad time in my work, I would've said "I cannot see a time when I don't work in this school, I cannot see a time when I enjoy my work". I just saw: I was done, doomed, trapped...'

The 'limited sense of what jobs there are' that Ann talked about was reflected in Kelly's account, as well: 'I felt like I didn't know what my options were, so it was quite hard at that point'. She repeated that she 'felt trapped again'. Similarly, Bryan expressed by repetition a strong feeling of career-constraint ('I felt completely stuck, like COMPLETELY stuck') produced by not seeing a better alternative to the current job, although they were unhappy in that situation: 'I couldn't find my way out of that'. This usually led to a prolonged decisional process, as Bryan stated. Whereas, Ronna considers that the lack of confidence was responsible for slowing down the decision-making process, because this obstructed her to assume earlier the implied risk ('my own confidence lacked so much, you know').

4. Congruence between heart and head

(i) Heart and Head: Being in tune with each other

Five participants neatly encapsulated a complementary rapport established between heart and head when they were in the process of decision-making which led to a positive outcome. Bryan clearly indicates that the rational and emotional thinking 'kind of aligned very well'. His comments reflect a reciprocal approval of the head's and heart's voices: 'Those rational things were kind of, like "yeah, this is good", but my gut was telling me to do it, as well'.

This alignment is echoed in Peg's reflections, as well: 'Yeah, yeah, my heart was telling me "This is something you've got to do". And my head didn't speak any other language to me. It was combined. It's... emm, everything led to the same conclusion'. Hanna also supports the theme by her personal experience 'When I made the decision, it's like they came together [head and heart]. It was the heart saying "Uhm, I think it would be a good thing for me to be with people". And the brain said "You know what? You've got it right".' Ronna even explained the contribution of each part (emotional and rational) in her decision, by helping her to take the risk of a career-change: 'My gut instinct was that I could do it but it was the rational side of me that said "This is the evidence to show that you can do it".'

(ii) Awareness of both rational and emotional voice

Cindy emphasised the importance of paying attention to both heart and head when making a good career-decision: 'I sort of subscribed to the way of understanding my psyche as though I have several parts that all need different source of attention'. Hanna also revealed the awareness of the whole self, which integrates both heart and head: 'I think I listened to myself and myself feels like my heart and my head'.

With regard to the rapport established between rational and emotional thinking,

it can be concluded that when these two were in tune with each other, the individuals experienced a quicker decision-making process compared to the situations when the decision-makers perceived a mental battle between contrasting thoughts and feelings during the decisional process. Participants clearly stated the importance of the emotional thinking being congruent with the rational one. Two participants did not specifically mention it but referred to it throughout the interview – Jenny points on the drive to help people, the personal experience as a caregiver for dementia, but also some practical things she considered, such as management-type, flexibility; Ann – similarly, mentioned some practicalities (she knew the university, benefited from a reduction, local access) as well as the serendipity feeling and the excitement she had when she first thought of the idea of applying for that particular degree. There is one person who confidently declared ‘I do put it down to the fact that it was a heart decision’.

Practical implications

The insights from these participants might suggest that the natural, unguided decision-making process can be supported through a better understanding of how people make decisions about career. Moreover, our findings could be helpful for coaches in gaining a more nuanced understanding of the underlying decision-making processes that contribute to positive career outcomes. Another implication is that by acknowledging the separate and possibly complementary influences of the heart and the head, the coach might demonstrate empathy to address relevant questions. Last but not least, our findings may open a new perspective on the struggle people might undergo when facing a career decision, and this intimate perspective may lead to an empathetic approach which is essential in building a solid relationship between coach and coachee. All in all, considering the findings of this study, it would seem that coaching may be a helpful vehicle

to support people in making positive career choices.

Limitations and further research

This exploratory study has raised some insights about the lived experience of the participants. Further qualitative and quantitative research is required in order to gather further insightful data and to test some of the assumptions that have been presented here. Further studies are encouraged to be undertaken with more varied samples. Personality traits (such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, or neuroticism) and gender might be investigated as mediating factors, considering that gender differences may affect levels of emotionality (Hess et al., 2000; Lithari et al., 2010), and that neuroticism implies emotional instability (Lahey, 2009). It would also be helpful to conduct exploratory research on the characteristics of the appropriate questions to be addressed in exploring emotional and rational reasons when making a decision. It would be interesting as well to research the concepts of the ‘heart of the mind’ and respectively ‘the mind of the heart’. For this we recommend further study of what neuroscience informs us about the relationship between the heart and the mind.

Discussion and conclusion

Our findings revealed four main themes which describe the mental process that participants experienced when engaged in making a positive career choice. In general, when participants revealed inner decisional dilemmas and intense negative emotions, such as anxiety and feeling ‘trapped’, they delayed making a decision and experienced a prolonged process. According to Kahneman’s theory (2011), emotional thinking can be associated with quick decision-making but our findings suggest that actually deploying both types of thinking in a complementary way is what may support a quick and easy decision-making process which leads to positive career outcomes.

Hence, there may be a link between the

heart-head congruence and the feeling of serendipity. Furthermore, it seems that these two themes also interact with the theme of 'emotional connection' and positive feelings. The idea of congruence could be identified particularly in the sub-ordinate theme of 'career as a calling' which connects many statements of 'being attracted, drawn to a job', 'it was like a calling'.

All in all, perceiving an emotional connection to a specific career may imply a bidirectional attraction force: there is something in that particular career which draws people towards it and something inside which pushes people towards it (the drive for meaning). This mutual attraction may be due to the congruence between the individual's interests, characteristics, values and the organisation's values, culture and the job's specifics. The compatibility of these aspects connects to the idea of congruence. The sub-themes of 'the feeling of what feels right', self-assurance and excitement connect with the perceptions of a relatively easy decision-making process.

The desire to have meaning in their professional work is echoed in some way across all the accounts. The quest for meaning seems to be a main currency in the career-decision making process. What does meaning involve—rational or emotional thinking? The answer might be both (Wong, 2013) and one participant's account actually reflects this: she intentionally assessed the career-options to see with which she would experience a greater sense of meaning. For this she used visualisation which is deployed in career-coaching for helping the clients to find out whether they would experience a sense of professional identity within a particular career (Yates, 2014).

References

- Amir, T. & Gati, I. (2006). Facets of career decision-making difficulties. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 34(4), 483–503.
- Bernard, M.E. & David, O.A. (Eds.). (2018). *Coaching for rational living: Theory, techniques and applications*. New York: Springer.

The findings regarding the mental process, including rational and emotional thinking, might provide career-coaching practitioners with valuable information on the authentic process that people might undergo when making career-decisions. With this knowledge acquired, coaches might be more accepting and empathetic as well as more sensitive to some themes, such as their clients' calling for any career, their clients' emotional connection to any career. The exploration process of the clients' inside battle might be made more thoughtful, careful and structured on a few topics that emerged as themes or sub-themes in this IPA study.

To conclude, this IPA study investigates the link between the subjective thinking process involved in career decision-making that led to positive career-outcomes. Collecting data from eight participants and analysing it according to the IPA method, four main themes emerged: 'Emotional connection' and positive feelings; Serendipity; Inside battle; and Congruence between heart and head.

The findings of this study may have application in career coaching practice as it provides a better understanding of the phenomenon and give coaches some insights about the experiences of people making positive career decisions.

Gabriela Viorela Pop

University of East London

Email: gabriela.gpop@gmail.com

Correspondence

Professor Christian van Nieuwerburgh

University of East London

Email: chrisvn@uel.ac.uk

- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage publications.
- Brown, C., George-Curran, R. & Smith, M.L. (2003). The role of emotional intelligence in the career commitment and decision-making process. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 11(4), 379–392.

- Clarke, V., Braun, V. & Hayfield, N. (2015). Thematic analysis. In J. Smith (Eds.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd edn). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Colozzi, E.A. (2003). Depth-oriented values extraction. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 52(2), 180–189.
- Coolican, H. (2014). *Research methods and statistics in psychology* (6th edn). London: Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Creed, P.A. & Patton, W. (2003). Predicting two components of career maturity in school based adolescents. *Journal of Career Development*, 29(4), 277–290.
- Dik, B.J., Sargent, A.M. & Steger, M.F. (2008). Career development strivings: Assessing goals and motivation in career decision-making and planning. *Journal of Career Development*, 35(1), 23–41.
- Eatough, V. & Smith, J.A. (2008). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative psychology*. London: Sage.
- Evans, J.S.B. & Frankish, K.E. (2009). *In two minds: Dual processes and beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gigerenzer, G. (2007). *Gut feelings*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gladwell, M. (2006). *Blink*. London: Penguin Books.
- Greenbank, P. & Hepworth, S. (2008). *Working class students and the career decision-making process: A qualitative study*. HECSU. Retrieved from: https://repository.edgehill.ac.uk/3164/1/working_class_students.pdf
- Hargrove, B.K., Creagh, M.G. & Burgess, B.L. (2002). Family interaction patterns as predictors of vocational identity and career decision-making self-efficacy. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(2), 185–201.
- Hastie, R. & Dawes, R.M. (2010). *Rational choice in an uncertain world: The psychology of judgment and decision making*. London: Sage.
- Hess, U., Senécal, S., Kirouac, G., Herrera, P., Philippot, P. & Kleck, R.E. (2000). Emotional expressivity in men and women: Stereotypes and self-perceptions. *Cognition & Emotion*, 14(5), 609–642.
- Howitt, D. & Cramer, D. (2007). *Introduction to research methods in psychology*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Kahneman, D. (2003). A perspective on judgment and choice: Mapping bounded rationality. *American Psychologist*, 58(9), 697.
- Kahneman, D. & Frederick, S. (2002). Representativeness revisited: Attribute substitution in intuitive judgment. In T. Gilovich, D. Griffin & D. Kahneman (Eds.) *Heuristics of intuitive judgment: Extensions and applications*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Lahey, B.B. (2009). Public health significance of neuroticism. *American Psychologist*, 64(4), 241.
- Larkin, M. (2015). *Choosing your approach*. In J. Smith (Eds.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (3rd edn). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Lehrer, J. (2009). *How we decide*. New York: Mariner Books.
- Lithari, C., Frantzidis, C.A., Papadelis, C. et al. (2010). Are females more responsive to emotional stimuli? A neurophysiological study across arousal and valence dimensions. *Brain Topography*, 23(1), 27–40.
- Mau, W.C.J. (2004). Cultural dimensions of career decision-making difficulties. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 53(1), 67–77.
- Madill, A. & Gough, B. (2008). Qualitative research and its place in psychological science. *Psychological Methods*, 13(3), 254.
- McLeod, J. (2003). *Doing counselling research*. London: Sage.
- Paulsen, A.M. & Betz, N.E. (2004). Basic confidence predictors of career decision-making self-efficacy. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 52(4), 354–362.
- Redekopp, D.E. (2015). Every decision is a career decision [Video file]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8NLqDlhwig>
- Redekopp, D.E. (2016). Irrational career decision-making: Connecting behavioural economics and career development. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 1–10. *Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 27.
- Saka, N., Gati, I. & Kelly, K.R. (2008). Emotional and personality-related aspects of career-decision-making difficulties. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 16(4), 403–424.

- Samson, A. (Ed.) (2016). *The behavioural economics guide 2016 (with an introduction by Gerd Gigerenzer)*. Retrieved from: <http://behavioraleconomics.com>
- Samson, A. & Voyer, B.G. (2012). Two minds, three ways: Dual system and dual process models in consumer psychology. *AMS review*, 2(2-4), 48–71.
- Schein, E.H. (1978). *Career dynamics, matching individual and organizational needs*. Reading, MA: Addison-Weasley.
- Schwartz, B. (2004). *The paradox of choice*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Smith, J. & Osborn, M. (2015). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. Smith (Eds.) *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*, (3rd edn). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Smith, J.A., Harre, R. & Van Langenhove, L. (1995). *Idiography*. In J.A. Smith, R. Harre & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.) *Rethinking psychology* (pp.59–69). London: Sage.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London: Sage.
- Stanovich, K.E. & West, R.F. (2000). Advancing the rationality debate. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 23(05), 701–717.
- Thompson, M.N. & Subich, L.M. (2006). The relation of social status to the career decision-making process. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 69(2), 289–301.
- Tversky, A. & Kahneman, D. (1986). Rational choice and the framing of decisions. *Journal of business*, S251–S278.
- Walsh, W.B. & Osipow, S.H. (Eds.). (2014). *Career decision making*. London: Routledge.
- Walsh, V. (2017). *There is no such thing as being good under pressure*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2017/04/26/vincent-walsh-39-there-is-no-such-thing-as-being-good-under-pressure-39.aspx>
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Wilson, T. (2004) *Strangers to ourselves: Discovering the adaptive unconscious*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Yates, J. (2014). *The career coaching handbook*. London: Routledge.
- Yates, J. (2015). ‘The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of’: The role of the unconscious in career decision making. *Journal of the National Institute for Career Education and Counselling*, 35(1), 28–35.

Book Review

An Introduction to Existential Coaching

Yannick Jacob

Reviewed by Aboodi Shabi

*'Variable, and therefore miserable condition of Man;
this minute I was well, and am ill, this minute.'*

Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions, John Donne

EXISTENTIAL *angst* (the German word for anxiety) is part of being alive, whether we choose to address it, or even to name it, or not. In the movie, *Fight Club*, Tyler Durden expresses the stark truth that 'you are not a precious or unique snowflake; you are the same decaying organic matter as everything else.' And, in the same week as I was asked to write a review of this book, I was re-reading David Lodge's novel, *Small World*, where a middle-aged academic muses aloud as to whether all that awaits him is impotence, illness and death.

This *angst* is a central paradox of coaching: what is the point of coaching, with its emphasis on goals and outcomes, when we live with the knowledge that 'we are born and then we exist towards our body's inevitable demise'? (Jacob, 2019, p.37).

Yannick Jacob's book is a welcome contribution to the endeavours of being-focused coaches to articulate approaches to our work which are more meaningful than seeing coaching as just another way of (like 'technology and consumerism') reinforcing the belief 'that it is possible to live comfortably on a continuous basis' (*ibid*, p.20).

Aimed at both the general reader with a broad curiosity about coaching, and the coach wishing to develop an existential approach, Jacob's book begins with a history

of coaching. It is worth pointing out that there is no mention of Werner Erhard, recognised by most as a key figure in the emergence of the coaching profession. This is not a solely historical omission. Central to the work of Erhard (and of Landmark, the learning organisation he founded) is the notion that 'life is empty and meaningless, and it is empty and meaningless that it's empty and meaningless' – something which is at the core of existential coaching's attempts to work with a client's questions of meaning and purpose in the face of the inevitable end. The modern coaching profession has its roots in this existential dilemma.

That said, Jacob makes a good case for the need for coaching that goes beyond merely supporting clients in setting goals and reaching them, and establishes the context for the benefits for both individual clients and organisations from deeper exploration of who they are and what they are about. Whilst setting out that, underneath all coaching issues and goals, there is always – whether explicitly acknowledged or not – existential anxiety, Jacob recognises that this is not always comfortable for the coachee – nor sometimes for the coach – and concedes that 'traditional coaching for performance will show clearer, more immediate results for the client than existential coaching' (*ibid*,

p.82). He takes these concerns on, in part by highlighting the sustainability of addressing underlying causes that lie behind more symptomatic issues.

There are, however, a couple of significant weaknesses in the book – there were numerous avoidable (through more thorough editing and proofreading) errors, and on a number of occasions the meaning was lost in over-long sentences and even, in one sentence (what I suspect was), the omission of a crucial ‘not’.

At times, too, especially in the section on bringing the existential approach to coaching practice, there was not enough clarity on the difference between existential and other coaching methodologies. For example, Jacob claims that ‘the existential coaching space is different. It is a place for deliberate exploration, a place where the client wants to identify patterns in their thinking and in the assumptions they make that result in them feeling stuck... a place where they can challenge their unhelpful beliefs and assumptions’ (*ibid*, p.62), but this space is merely what we might expect any coach adhering to the ICF core competencies to provide. Similarly, the importance of the coach remaining curious

and non-directive is by no means limited only to existential coaching.

Such short-comings aside, this book remains a call to action and enquiry for those who feel that the need for exploring beneath the surface of our desires and wants is a worthwhile endeavour.

Jacob clearly knows his subject well and is passionate in his belief that ‘we live a richer life when we allow ourselves to come face to face with our human condition... to look into the abyss and to consider some of the big questions despite the eerie feeling of anxiety that goes with such an exploration.’ (*ibid*, p.105). This, in our current times of change and uncertainty, is the challenge and possibility for coaching.

Reviewed by Aboodi Shabi, Lecturer in Coaching and Behavioural Change, Henley Business School, University of Reading, UK
a.shabi@henley.ac.uk

Reference

Jacob, Y. (2019). *An introduction to existential coaching*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Book Review

Advanced Coaching Practice: Inspiring Others to Change

Christian van Nieuwerburgh & David Love

ISBN 978 1 5264 21231

Sage, London

Reviewed by Jonathan Passmore

ADVANCED COACHING PRACTICE might be considered to be the follow-up to Christian van Nieuwerburgh's *Introduction to Coaching Skills*, originally published by Sage in 2014, with a second edition in 2017. Both titles are slim, share a similar front cover design and bring a clear and direct writing style which makes them instantly accessible.

Both authors will be well known to many in the coaching field, Christian is a professor in the University of East London's positive and coaching psychology team, while David Love has a commercial practice and has been active as a coach and trainer with several well known consulting companies.

The book starts with an exploration of 'advanced'. What is this concept? How does it apply to coaching? Certainly I, and others, have grappled with this idea before, using terms such as 'mastery' or 'maturity' in our own writings on the topic. For all of us there has been a desire to help coaches move from the competency based approach common in many of the accredited coach training programmes, and which is an essential ingredient for the beginner, towards a deeper understanding of who we are, our ability to reflect on who we are, who others are and our interactions located in a specific place and time. Thirdly our developing under-

standing of the evidence across a breadth of approaches and models and finally how we seek to integrate these elements with who we are; our beliefs, values and prejudices. It was with this in mind, when I picked up *Advanced Coaching Practice*, in the hope, and expectation, this new book would contribute towards my own journey of development.

Let's get the things I did not like about the book out of the way first! While I have never thought about it before, the book's shape, a square, made it more difficult to read than a more commonly used rectangle. Not a factor I had ever considered, but I found the shape an irritation as I tried to read. The second criticism was that the title felt relatively short. My guess is the book is just about 5000 words. While this adds to its accessibility, as a person who devours books I would have welcomed a further 20,000 words to make me feel as if I had been fully rewarded for selecting this title. These points aside, there are many good things to say about the book.

I most enjoyed the writing style of the two authors, which meant that it was an easy read – one I could enjoy on a plane flight or the sofa. Secondly, the authors have engaged with what is a difficult topic, highlighting a number of areas which have not been neglected by the traditional literature; such

as creativity, humour and balancing the use of our thick and thin skinned selves.

Bob Newhart classic therapy comedy sketch: 'Stop it' is referred to by the authors. If you have not seen it, it's worth checking out on Youtube, particularly if you feel your own coaching session was less productive for your client than you had hoped. The authors note how humour can play an important role, both relationally and in creating fresh insights. How we bring humour into our work can be more difficult. Humour is highly contextual and relationship. Some people have this ability, and some don't. As Theresa May, 'the Dancing Queen' discovered, humour can back-fire.

A second theme introduced by the authors is the use of creativity. The authors note that this is not the preserve of artists or playwrights, coaches too can make use of creative processes to facilitate fresh conversations and new insights. While not being prescriptive the authors offer a series of principles which can help coaches think about their current practice to inject a fresh approach. This may range from organising a walk in a rose garden with a client, to the use of sketches and cartoons.

A third example was the exploration of what can be considered the use of our thick and thin skinned selves, and what the authors touch upon in 'being tenacious and encour-

aging autonomy'. In my view coaches need to have the ability to move beyond open question, to be provocative. To move their client's comfy chair closer to the fire, and by doing so hold their client's feet to the flames. By doing so the coach can help enable new insight and renewed energy which may not be achieved alone from a pleasant fireside chat. However, the dilemma is the coach only gets permission to 'torture' their client, creating discomfort, by creating and sustaining a relationship based on concern for the client and expressing empathy. Van Nieuwerburgh and Love discuss these dilemmas offering new insights which can help coaches balance the inherent dilemma of relationship and provocation.

Finally for those who like movies to accompany their books, this has loads of mini clips to view, supporting the text. Personally that's not my thing, but for those on a coaching course, this is a real added benefit to hear and see examples of the ideas discussed in the text.

In summary this new title makes an excellent read and is worth adding to your coaching book collection.

Reviewed by Jonathan Passmore,
Henley Business School, University of
Reading

Obituary – Professor David Gray

IT IS WITH SADNESS that we learned the passing of Professor David Gray on 7 March 2019. David has led a large number of coaching research programmes and has significantly contributed to disseminate the knowledge in coaching with the publication of many books and articles.

After graduating from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) in 1973, David became an economics lecturer. Thirteen years later he took up a post in training and development at the London Stock Exchange where he was director of a major training development initiative for the UK securities industry.

He became head of coaching academy and Professor of Management Learning at the University of Surrey in 1990. For more than two decades, David led many professional development programmes designed for adult learners in the workplace, and various masters programmes in management. He taught on the MBA of the School of Management for which he designed and taught the Action Consultancy module. More recent, David accepted a professorship at the University of Greenwich.

During these years at the University of Greenwich, David was particularly interested in doing research, supervising doctoral students and publishing about research methodologies and techniques. David's research interests include research methods, management learning, action learning, reflective learning, and e-learning.

In a professional capacity he was also active as a member of the International Coach Federation's (ICF) global research committee and with the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC).

He has written books on work-based learning, coaching and teacher education and also published in prestigious journals such as *Organization Studies*, *Management Learning*, and the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. His most popular title *Doing Research in the Real World* was first published in 2000 and is now at its 4th edition.

Michel Moral

ICPR Editorial Board

CPIG Australia National Chair's Report

Vicki de Prazer

HELLO to all of you doing amazing work in the field of coaching psychology. Our vision continues to be, ensuring evidence based psychology informs all coaching.

With this agenda, I'd like to remind you of the exciting collaboration between CPIG and QUT's Business School (Queensland University of Technology) in hosting the 2019 Leadership Coaching Congress, 22–23 November in Brisbane, Australia.

The Conference focuses on leaders, workers and coaching in the future of work. We have borrowed the concepts of a Hackathon, a Disco – Tech, a discovering technology panel, addressing pre-submitted audience questions, along with traditional presentations and workshops.

Our Hackathon experts will facilitate a session that instead of developing IT solutions, will ask academics, researchers, psychologists, coaches, and leaders to consider challenges in future of work and leadership. We are interested in how these challenges might be addressed by coaching psychologists, and what professional development will be essential for coaching psychologists.

A key theme in deciphering the future of work, is the talent – technology relationship.

How are the roles of technology and talent optimised; how do leaders make decisions about what technology they invest in and train employees to utilise, where will data be stored and optimised, and who do leaders recruit, what skills should they prioritise, what is the balance between full time employees and the gig economy.

A second theme is that of employee well-being; what is the impact when soft skills are prioritised above hard skills, when employee roles are replaced by automation and algorithms, when 'expert project teams' are often not even co-located but work globally, where availability is expected and privacy is not.

A third theme highlighted in the McKinsey Global Institute's report, May 2017, is the rise of digitally enabled independent work. While some individuals supplement their employment with independent work, others are forced to work independently, and some third world populations and exponentially liberated by this option. MGI, note that 'independent work overall, is growing rapidly, driven by the scale, efficiency, and ease of use for workers and customers that these platforms enable.'

Coaching psychologists themselves, may need to join this group of entrepreneurs, using technology more efficiently to engage with clients, to consider the scalability of their work and increase their accessibility globally.

We look forward to sharing our discoveries from this event, with our global network.

Please visit the APS events page <https://www.psychology.org.au/> for more details.

Regards

Vicki de Prazer

APS CPIG National Chair

www.deprazerconsulting.com

vicki@deprazerconsulting.com.au

SGCP Chair's Report

Laura Rees-Davies

I HAVE HELD the role of SGCP Chair since December 2019, and I am pleased to report that we continue maintaining progress towards meeting a number of key objectives for our members. We understand that as a group, we can deliver high quality support and opportunities for professional development. We encourage and facilitate cross-discipline collaborations at micro and macro level. As David noted in his Chair's report in the Spring issue of *ICPR*, we have the chance to apply our skills and experience in a variety of contexts. As the discipline of psychology evolves and becomes embedded with other disciplines, it is ever more important to recognise that coaching psychology has the opportunity to continue as an exemplar for effective cross-collaborations.

The 2019 SGCP Conference 'Embracing Diversity and Inclusivity – Challenges and Aspirations in Coaching Psychology' was a two-day event that included professionals from a broad range of disciplines coming together to share and inspire future research and practice in coaching psychology. Here we were reminded how important it is to maintain effective working relationships, and invite our members to communicate with the committee in developing our strategic aims. We look forward to hearing your views on the potential goals of the SGCP in the near future.

We are pleased to report that we have created a working group committed to developing professional accreditation routes for coaching psychologists. We understand that there are psychologists who are working in the coaching field, and there are coaches who are interested in psychological theory and practice. We look forward to being the

authoritative and public voice that will allow fledgling and established coaching psychologists to engage in continuing professional development and achieve formal recognition from the British Psychological Society.

The committee will drive forward our strategic aim to encourage research activity and evidence-based practice. As psychology and coaching evolves, there is opportunity to co-create the discipline for future generations. The SGCP committee have developed and continue to support a coaching psychology research hub where coaching professionals collaborate to deliver high quality output.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank David Webster for his dedication to our members and support for the committee. David volunteered to manage organisation of our fantastic 2019 Conference when I stepped into my role of SGCP Chair. David has now stepped down as Past Chair, and I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to him on behalf of the committee and our members. I would like to thank Sarah Corrie who is stepping down from her role as Research Lead in the committee. We have benefitted from Sarah's continued commitment over the years. We also lose Roger Hamill in the role of Ethics Lead, and we thank him for his continued motivation and help at the committee and our recent conference. We will feel the loss of our retired committee members and wish them well in their future endeavours, although I am sure we will continue our collaborations. As our network widens and diversifies, we thank and welcome our new members for offering their expertise in the committee moving forward.

Laura Rees-Davies
Chair SGCP



the british
psychological society
special group in
coaching psychology

SGCP Practitioner Masterclass and Webinar Programme 2019

Masterclass: 'Using motivational interviewing in coaching'

Dr Tim Anstiss, Health and Wellbeing Coach

10 & 11 October 2019; 09:30–17:00

www.bps.org.uk/events/using-motivational-interviewing-coaching-2-day-masterclass

Webinar: 'Coaching Psychology research update'

Dr Rebecca Jones, Henley Centre for Coaching, Henley Business School

6 December 2019; 12:30–13:30

www.bps.org.uk/events/coaching-psychology-research-update-webinar

For any queries regarding a webinar or masterclass session
please email **membernetworkservices@bps.org.uk**
quoting 'SGCP Practitioner Masterclass and Webinar Programme'
in the subject line.

4. Online submission process

- (a) All manuscripts must be submitted by email to: ICPRsubmissions@bps.org.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.

5. Manuscript requirements

- Tables and figures should be included as part of the article. Images should be supplied as separate JPG files. The resolution of digital images must be at least 300 dpi.
- The following structure is suggested, although may be varied with good reason: Abstract – summarizing each of the following sections in 2 or 3 sentences; Introduction – containing a review of the literature and a link to theory where relevant; Method – description of the process with sufficient detail that another researcher could repeat the process followed during the study; Results – what was found; Discussion – What do the results mean, when considered in the light of past research findings and theory, and the limitations of the research; Implications for Practice – what does this mean for coaches; Conclusions: a short summary of the paper
- 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. Publication ethics

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

Principles of Publishing – Principle of Publishing.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Checklist of requirements

As a general guide we would expect most papers to include the following sections, and approximate word lengths:

- Title and Abstract (100–200 words – this should include a sentence or two summarising each of the main sections, along with author names and affiliations)
- Full paper (4500–6000 words, with number pages and anonymised) including:
 - References
 - Tables, figures, captions and images (suitable for reproduction in black and white)

11. 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

- 7 Workplace stress in senior executives: Coaching the 'uncoachable'
Caroline Rook, Thomas Hellwig, Elizabeth Florent-Treacy & Manfred Kets de Vries
- 24 The impact of three forms of mindfulness training on mindfulness, wellbeing and goal attainment: Findings from a randomised-controlled trial and implications for coaching
Gordon B. Spence & Michael J. Cavanagh
- 44 Intentional personality change coaching: A four-year longitudinal study
Jesse Martin-Allan, Peter Leeson & Lesley Sue Martin
- 57 Family life coaching: A growing practice
Kimberley I. Allen, Margaret Machara & Tara C. Baker
- 69 Coaching psychology: Exploring definitions and research contribution to practice?
Jonathan Passmore & Yi-Ling Lai
- 84 Listening to your heart or head? – An interpretative phenomenological analysis of how people experienced making good career decisions
Gabriela Viorela Pop & Christian van Nieuwerburgh

Book Reviews

- 97 An Introduction to Existential Coaching
by Yannick Jacob
Reviewed by Aboodi Shabi
- 99 Advanced Coaching Practice: Inspiring Others to Change
by Christian van Nieuwerburgh & David Love
Reviewed by Jonathan Passmore

Reports

- 102 CFIG Australia National Chair's Report
Vicki de Prazer
- 103 SGCP Chair's Report
Laura Rees-Davies

St Andrews House, 48 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7DR, UK
t: 0116 254 9568 f: 0116 247 0787 e: info@bps.org.uk w: www.bps.org.uk

© The British Psychological Society 2019
Incorporated by Royal Charter Registered Charity No 229642

