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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.

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Continued on inside back cover.

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Editorial: Coaching psychology coming of age in the 21st century

Stephen Palmer & Michael Cavanagh

COACHING PSYCHOLOGY during 2010 to 2011 really did take off around the world. In a space of under 12 months different psychology professional bodies held five International Congresses of Coaching Psychology from London, Dublin, Barcelona and Stockholm to Pretoria in South Africa. This year the first congress event will be held in Sydney sponsored by the APS Interest Group Coaching Psychology (see announcement on page 137 for full details). Coaching psychology is certainly coming of age.

This bumper issue of the *International Coaching Psychology Review* covers a range of topics and debates. In Europe more undergraduate programmes are including a coaching psychology module and this is an area that needs further research. In the first paper Catherine Steele and Jane Arthur's study explored undergraduates' perceptions and experiences of coaching psychology during a 12-week optional module. They found that on completion of the module many students indicated that they had an understanding of how to apply psychological theory developed a range of skills and felt better equipped to plan their future career. In the next paper Ann-Marie Jarzebowski, Josephine Palermo and Robert van de Berg note that empirical findings are inconsistent regarding the motivational effect of feedback. Their research starts to address this by looking into the impact of regulatory fit on motivation after positive feedback. They assert that their study is the first to examine the effect of regulatory fit within feedback sign on motivation. They found that feedback framed to fit the regulatory focus of coachees is likely to increase the level of motivation. Therefore in some situations in coaching where it would be challenging to frame feedback, the coach could induce a regulatory promotion focus that could match the feedback to be provided. They suggest this could be achieved by asking the coachee to describe their ideal goal or type of aspirations they have and the strategies to support achievement of these ideal goals (promotion induction). Clearly more research is needed in this area but the implications are fascinating for coaching practice and we look forward to receiving any follow-up study the Deakin University group may undertake.

The third paper by John Franklin and Alicia Franklin reports on a controlled study researching into the long-term benefits of coaching. This paper follows up the participants from an earlier study first published in this journal (see Franklin & Doran, 2009) and reports on their academic performance 12 and 18 months after the completion of the seven-week coaching programme. Those in the Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning (PAAL) programme condition performed significantly better 12 and 18 months after the completion of the brief coaching programme. In the next paper, Helen Ogilvy and Vicky Ellam-Dyson look at line management involvement in coaching and ask is it a help or hindrance? A cross-sectional design was used to explore coachees' and line managers' perceptions of line management involvement, as well as facilitators and barriers to their involvement. The different factors are discussed and also the consequences for transfer of learning.

The fifth paper by Johan Bouwer and Jacoba van Egmond focuses on the moderating factors of the Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM). They found that the most important moderating factors of the VECM appeared to be the coachee's readiness to

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change, the client-coach relationship, the manager's role and the coach's expertise. The authors recommend conducting follow-up studies. The final paper in the first section of the journal is about the managerial gap and how coaching can help. Christine Porter and W. David Rees consider two models that may help clients identify their organisational roles and their willingness and ability to carry out such roles. The first model considered is that of the Managerial Escalator which seeks to help individual employees identify and cope with their likely accumulation of managerial responsibilities, particularly dealing with any Managerial Gap. The second, and linked, model is that of Role Set Analysis.

After our popular debate issue last year on developing an agenda for teaching coaching psychology (see Grant, 2011; Cavanagh, Palmer et al., 2011) we decided to publish another special debate issue on a topical subject. After a brief introduction by the special issue editors, Michael Cavanagh and David Lane launch the debate on: *Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: The challenges we face in the messy world of complexity.* Some of us heard this stimulating paper previously as it was based on a keynote delivered at the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology, London, in December 2010. Then, in our debate section, eight discussants give their feedback. As previously, the lead authors were given an opportunity to provide a brief response to the feedback. The debate issues were intended to produce stimulating and thoughtful contributions on matters of interest and importance in coaching psychology. They certainly seem to be meeting that goal. If you have a position on an important topic in coaching psychology and would like to provide a lead article for another debate issue, please contact one of us (Michael Cavanagh or Stephen Palmer).

We finish this issue with an International Congress report, and the news updates from the SGCP and IGCP provided by Professor Mary Watts and David Heap whose task it is to lead both of our organisations. We welcome new International Editorial Board members, Sarah Corrie, Paula Cruise, Jonathan Passmore, Catherine Steele and Lewis R. Stern who bring their knowledge and experience to the journal. We are very fortunate indeed to add these people to the already strong panel of international editors, and we look forward to their contributions into the future.

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Teaching coaching psychology to undergraduates – perceptions and experiences

Catherine Steele & Jane Arthur

Objectives: *This exploratory study examines undergraduates' perceptions and experiences of coaching psychology during a 12-week optional module.*

Design: *Qualitative data was gathered through short interviews with students at the start of the module and personal reflective statements at the end of the module.*

Method: *Students conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews at the start of the module. They were also required to complete a reflective piece of writing outlining their experiences of the module as part of their assessment. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.*

Results: *Students had very little knowledge of coaching psychology prior to completing the module as they had not seen or heard any reference to it elsewhere in their studies. On completion of the module many indicated that they had an understanding of how to apply psychological theory, developed a range of skills and felt better equipped to plan their future career.*

Conclusions: *As highlighted by Grant (2011) inclusion of coaching psychology on undergraduate programmes could aid the future of the discipline and, at the same time, provide students with a range of transferrable skills.*

Keywords: *Coaching Psychology; Teaching Coaching Psychology; Coach Training.*

COACHING PSYCHOLOGY is still a relatively new area of applied psychology. It has experienced rapid growth among practitioners as evidenced by the increasing membership of professional groups including the Special Group of Coaching Psychology and the International Society for Coaching Psychology in the UK. Increasingly it is developing an international presence, demonstrated by the 1st International Coaching Psychology Conference held in 2006 and the first International Congress in Coaching Psychology held 2010. Postgraduate courses in coaching psychology are emerging and a wide variety of professional training courses are available. However, at the moment the coverage of coaching psychology in undergraduate programmes in the UK seems to be limited (Grant, 2011). This paper aims to explore the perceptions of coaching psychology held by undergraduates and to consider their experiences of studying the subject. As Grant (2011) suggests 'if coaching psychology is to grow and develop, then some kind of education and teaching framework will eventually need to be established' (p.84). Considering the perspective of undergraduate students may go some way to assisting the development of such a framework.

Coaching in higher education

Much has been written about the benefits of coaching within a higher education context for both student well-being and for student performance (e.g. Cambell & Gardner, 2005; Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007; Short, Kinman & Baker, 2010). However, little has been written about how undergraduates can be introduced to this area as a potential future career. With the changing focus of higher education there is increasing pressure on universities to ensure their graduates are employable and have a clear range of skills to offer to employers. Looking to organisations there is evidence to suggest

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that an increasing number are training their managers in a coaching approach, employing in-house coaches and using coaching more widely as part of their development programmes (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009). Coaching in many organisations actually seems to be an area where expenditure has been increased despite the financial crisis (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2011). Spaten and Hansen (2009) indicated that as the coaching profession grows there is a need to ensure that psychology postgraduates obtain coaching skills during their studies. It is argued here that teaching students about coaching psychology should also be integrated into undergraduate programmes to enable students to develop these transferrable skills that are so desired by employers.

Peer coaching

Many definitions of peer coaching exist and these have been generated from various perspectives. For example, Showers and Joyce (1996) define it as a relationship between teachers where learning takes place through observation and skills transfer based on shared experiences. They emphasise various principles of peer coaching including the importance of avoiding direct verbal feedback. This is omitted to avoid supervisory or evaluative comments being made that would be detrimental to the coaching process. Ladyshesky and Varey (2005) describe an eight-stage model of peer coaching based around management education. The model provides a framework for outlining how the peer coaching relationship develops and outlines the implications if the objectives within a stage are not met.

Research evidence considering the effectiveness of peer coaching provides mixed results. Peer coaches have been perceived to be less credible than external coaches (Sue-Chan & Latham, 2004) and less effective than professional coaches in enhancing goal progression and commitment (Spence & Grant, 2006). Despite this there are several reported benefits from peer coaching including strengthened protection from psychological distress, knowledge frameworks, enhanced self-reflection and awareness (Ladyshewy & Varey, 2005; Short, Kinman & Baker, 2010). Within the research presented here peer coaching is used for practical reasons but also some researchers have shown that this approach also benefits the coach by developing their interpersonal skills (Ladyshewsky, 2006).

The study context

At the university where this research was based, students are able to select coaching psychology as one of their final year optional modules. The module is taught over a 12-week period and incorporates a number of the core areas of study identified by Grant (2011). The module employs an evidence-based approach, introducing students to the scientist practitioner model. Ethical issues such as recording and storage of session notes and client information are considered alongside CPD, supervision and discussion of the distinctions and relationships between coaching and other therapeutic techniques.

Through lectures and practical sessions, students are introduced to theories of goal setting, change and development and the use of psychometrics in coaching. Students are taught behavioural and cognitive behavioural techniques and given the opportunity to use the GROW and SPACE models in peer coaching practice sessions. Over the 12 weeks the students take part in eight supervised peer coaching sessions as coach and eight sessions as coachee. Evidence suggests that learning coaching skills over an extended period of time leads to deeper learning and understanding (Grant, 2007). It is hoped that scheduling the practical sessions throughout the semester will aid skill development. Due to the expertise of the teaching staff and the issues raised by the students the peer coaching sessions concentrate on career and stress management coaching.

This study adopts an exploratory qualitative approach, using both interview data and personal reflective statements. The research questions to be addressed are:

- What are the perceptions of coaching psychology as a discipline within an undergraduate student sample?
- What are the perceived benefits of undertaking a 12-week undergraduate coaching psychology module?

Method

Design

Qualitative data was gathered over two time periods; using semi-structured interviews during week 2 of the semester by examining reflective statements written by the students in week 12 as part of their final assessment.

Participants

The participants were all third-year psychology undergraduate students (N=27). The mean age of participants was 21 (SD=2.25). The sample consisted of nine males and 18 females.

Measures

At the start of the module students were provided with a short semi-structured interview template containing two questions with a number of suggested prompts. The questions were designed to assess the students' prior knowledge of coaching psychology.

At the end of the semester, in week 12, students were required to submit a portfolio which included a reflective piece of writing outlining their experiences of the module. Students were given guidance on reflective writing and asked to include reflection on their practical skills, academic knowledge and overall experiences of the module.

Procedure

At the start of the timetabled session in week 2 of the semester, students worked in pairs to conduct a short semi-structured interview using a script provided to them by the tutor. The pairs were predefined by the module tutor and allocated alphabetically. At this stage the students had only received a one-hour introductory lecture which focused on the timetable, assessments and general administrative issues relating to the module. The students were asked to transcribe their interviews and submit these anonymously to the tutor. The interviews were conducted peer to peer to enhance the free disclosure of participants' perceptions. While the interviews were taking place the module tutor was not in the same room as the students.

The participants then attended the optional module in coaching psychology for 12 weeks consisting of three hours per week theory and practice. The module focused on behavioural and cognitive behavioural approaches and students engaged in peer coaching. As well as coaching theory and practical coaching skills, supervision, ethics, evidence-based practice and careers in coaching were also considered. At the end of the module students submitted their reflective piece of writing as part of their final assessment. In line with the university's policy this piece of writing was submitted using student numbers not names to ensure the students felt free to express their views. All students gave their permission for their statements to be analysed for research purposes.

Results

Stage 1: Interviews

The interviews were designed to gather students' perceptions of the discipline of coaching psychology prior to commencing the module. Thematic analysis was used to analyse each of the questions and the themes identified were first defined by a researcher outside of the module teaching team. These themes were then confirmed by a second researcher who was one of the module tutors.

Question 1: Before you started the module what did you think coaching psychology was?

Four separate themes were identified in the answer to this question: (1) Helping others develop; (2) Sports performance; (3) Sim-

ilar, or the same as counselling; and (4) No awareness of it. Three out of the four themes identified suggest that some of the undergraduates in this group have some idea of what coaching psychology is but the boundaries are blurred with those of other disciplines with which they are more familiar, specifically sport and counselling. The fourth theme showed that some students have no awareness of coaching psychology as a discipline or profession.

(1) Helping others develop

Many of the students knew that coaching was about supporting the development of others, within this theme statements showed that students understood that coaching was related to improving well-being but lacked clarity over how this would happen or with whom.

> 'I had an initial understanding that coaching was a helping profession.'
>
> 'I'd heard of life coaching before as well so I knew it was something to do with that, but like I said using 'erm stuff from psychology to aid development and help people you know.'

(2) Sports performance

Students felt coaching psychology was something to do with sports performance and a technique applied exclusively within a sporting context.

> 'I really didn't know, I thought it was something to do with how you use psychology to coach people in sport, to improve their performance psychologically or as a team I guess. I just immediately associated it with sport.'
>
> 'I thought it was something to do with sport, you see there are sports coaches, I knew that. Though I didn't know specifically what they did. I mean look at football, the team I follow have a head coach and not a manager 'erm but I've never knew how to distinguish between a manager and a head coach.'

This indicates a misunderstanding of the terms 'coach' and 'coaching' within this sample.

(3) Similar, or the same as counselling

There is some overlap between this and the previous theme as the quotes again indicate a misunderstanding or confusion over the boundaries between coaching and closely related professions. Within this theme the misunderstanding related to the distinction between coaching and counselling rather than sport.

> 'I had some knowledge of coaching from doing counselling modules, I suppose it's a more basic model of counselling dealing with day to day standard issues as opposed to people who are ill.'
>
> 'I'd put coaching in the same league as counselling therapy – it's a similar area.'

(4) No awareness of it

Finally, several students indicated that they had no awareness of coaching psychology and did not know what to expect when they selected the module.

> 'In two years of studying psychology, coaching was never mentioned, not even in the broadest of textbooks.'
>
> 'I knew it was relatively a new area, due to the fact about A-levels and the first two years of the degree, you know, I never heard it mentioned.'

Perhaps this indicates there is a need to consider how coaching psychology could be integrated into the early parts of the psychology degree syllabus or even into A-level teaching.

Question 2: Before you started the module why did you think people went to see a coach?

Three separate themes were identified within the transcripts in relation to this question, similarly to the themes identified in Question 1, they indicate some confusion over the boundaries between coaching and related professions.

(1) Help, advice, direction, for a solution

Many of the students felt someone would see a coach for help and advice in the same way as you might approach a friend or family member.

> 'Successful people tend to see coaches as there is no stigma, if they just need pushing in the right direction. It's expensive though, it's not on the NHS, it's like buying another friend.'

(2) Sports performance

As indicated in the responses to question one many of the students felt that coaching psychology was linked to sport and this is the reason that someone would approach a coach.

> 'to improve their current level, if they're not performing very well.'

(3) Occupational issues

Interestingly, several transcripts referred to someone seeing a coach for work or career related issues.

> 'umm… I suppose I thought it would be mostly used in organisations, you know to improve targets, profits, that sort of thing.'
>
> 'to help them in certain things for example, at a workplace – to help them develop in their career for better jobs.'

However, this was not indicated in the answers to Question 1 when asked about what coaching psychology is.

The answers to the interview questions given at the start of the module indicate that the majority of students had limited or no understanding of the field of coaching psychology. From this, albeit small, sample it seems to suggest that more work needs to be done to make undergraduates aware of coaching psychology as a discipline. Some students commented that they had not been introduced to coaching psychology until their final year of studies. Perhaps this would be a good place to start, looking to see how it can be integrated into earlier parts of the syllabus to ensure students are aware of coaching as a career choice and as an evidence-based profession from the start of the studies to allow them the opportunity to develop skills and knowledge throughout their time at university.

Stage 2 – Reflective pieces

The reflective pieces were submitted by each student after completion of a 12-week coaching psychology module. These statements were subjected to thematic analysis and four key themes were identified. As in Stage 1, the themes identified were first defined by a researcher outside of the module teaching team. These themes were then confirmed by a second researcher who was one of the module tutors.

(1) Application of psychological theory

A number of students stated that learning about coaching psychology helped them to draw together and apply other aspects of their studies to real world situations.

> 'It has been easier to see the application of theory, subsequently this has also increased my understanding in other areas of my studies.'

The students also recognised that many coaching psychology techniques are grounded in mainstream psychological theory.

> 'Coaching psychology is based very strongly on theories and is influenced by behaviourists such as Skinner and Watson and humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers.'
>
> 'I was particularly struck by how coaching psychology drew on so many other aspects of psychology, such as the psychodynamic and humanistic approaches.'

It is encouraging to see that the students in this sample where able to connect their knowledge of coaching to mainstream psychological theories as this could be said to indicate an awareness of the evidence base for the discipline.

(2) Goal setting and career focus

Many of the statements referred to the use and application of goal setting in supporting their own career and study plans.

> 'I have felt encouraged and motivated by the theory of coaching to re-think my own career goals and to think about how

> I could apply these principles in my future work.'
>
> 'Being involved in being coached is useful, I came away with ability to set targets for myself, so gained ability to coach myself.'
>
> 'Another skill I have learnt is how to set achievable goals.'

Many students also indicated that the skills learnt within the module would be transferrable to their future careers.

> 'I will be taking some of the techniques learnt into my future career as it is likely that I will use them at some point. I would think the extra skills I could bring to the job might impress an employer. I also think if I was in a job I could utilise the techniques to encourage other employees.'

(3) Practical skills

A number of practical skills were identified as being developed throughout the module, for example:

> 'I have developed oral and written communication skills, listening skills, goal directed and facilitation skills.'
>
> 'The coaching module has significantly improved my confidence and communication skills from session one.'

With an increased focus on employability within higher education themes two and three suggest that coaching psychology could provide a platform for the development of transferrable skills within the undergraduate psychology degree.

(4) Self-development

Statements relating to the students self development included:

> 'I have gained a deeper understanding of my own strengths and weaknesses.'
>
> 'By nature I am not an outgoing, gregarious individual and, therefore, having to work with individuals that I did not know inevitably made me anxious but I am grateful that this was an integral part of the course because it meant that I could push myself to gain results through my own personal development'

The final theme of self-development indicates a more personal benefit to the students from learning about and practicing aspects of coaching psychology. Again this could be linked to employability skills but also to individual growth for the students.

Discussion

The findings from the interviews conducted at the start of the module indicate that the majority of students did not have a clear understanding of what coaching psychology was before they started their studies. Many knew it was related to helping others but a large number associated it with sports coaching or counselling. It is not surprising that there was some confusion over the boundaries between coaching psychology and related professions as this seems to be something that even professional coaches still grapple with (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). Some students indicated that they really had no awareness of what they were going to cover within the module. It should be noted that these findings are from a small sample (N=27) within one cohort, at one university in the UK. There is also an inherent bias within the sample as these students had already selected to undertake the module; however it would be useful to consider what prompted the group to select this module as their knowledge of the subject area was so limited at the outset. Despite these sampling limitations these findings do suggest that students can enter their third year of study with little or no awareness of one of the fastest growing areas of applied psychology. It would be interesting to assess their awareness of other applied areas as it may be that the first two years of study are largely theoretical and don't address the application of these theories in any area. Or it might be that the more popular areas amongst undergraduates such as clinical and forensic psychology dominate their thoughts at that stage.

The themes identified from the students' reflective writing indicate that they have identified some real benefits to learning

about coaching psychology at an early stage of their careers. Some indicated that it helped them to apply the theories they have learned such as humanistic and behavioural approaches. The development of transferrable skills was also noted, for example, communication skills, facilitation, listening skills. Consideration of future career planning using goal setting was also indentified by many as a benefit from completing the module. Finally a number of students reported that the module had developed them as individuals, enhancing confidence and assertiveness. Again, it is important to consider the potential bias that may have been introduced in the reflective statements. Students may have sought to present an overly positive perspective of the module as it contributed to their final grade and was being marked by module the tutors so there may be an element of social desirability contained within them. However, these statements are also in line with other studies that suggest students feel there are benefits to studying coaching psychology (Grant, 2003; Short & Baker, 2010).

The current paper set out two distinct aims. The first was to examine the perceptions of coaching psychology as a discipline within a sample of undergraduate students. The interview transcripts suggest that students either have little awareness of the discipline or their perceptions are a little distorted or inaccurate. Further research to reveal when and how undergraduate students' form their perceptions of the discipline might benefit the development of the growing number of postgraduate courses on offer. An examination of student or graduate perceptions of coaching versus coaching psychology might also be interesting and help to shape the future of the profession. Finally, making students aware of coaching psychology at early stages of their studies could help to encourage more research interest and practice in the area. The second aim of this paper was to consider the perceived benefits of teaching coaching psychology to undergraduates. The findings from the reflective statements suggest that there are some tangible benefits in terms of skill development and enabling the application of theory. Spaten and Hansen (2009) have indicated that they see it as necessary to incorporate the teaching of coaching skills in postgraduate programmes to enhance employability. The findings from the reflective statements considered here suggest that undergraduates may also benefit from this type of skills development. Grant (2011) outlined a suggested framework for teaching coaching psychology and the module used in this study incorporated the majority of these suggestions. Based on the findings from this study the authors suggest that a framework should be created that either embeds coaching psychology theory and techniques within the core psychology syllabus or sees it an additional subject area within that syllabus.

In summary this exploratory paper indicates that there is a need to expose undergraduates to coaching psychology earlier in their studies. The benefits of this early exposure include the opportunity for students to gain transferrable skills thus enhancing their employability, and introducing them to this area earlier in their studies may aid the future of the profession.

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When feedback is not enough: The impact of regulatory fit on motivation after positive feedback

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Objectives: *Feedback is widely used in coaching practice, however, empirical findings are inconsistent regarding the motivational effect of feedback. Positive or negative feedback can be framed in a way that aligns with an individual's preferred manner during goal pursuit, that is, their regulatory fit. This study is the first to examine the effect of regulatory fit within feedback sign on motivation. This study aimed to investigate the impact of positive feedback framed to fit or not-fit individuals' regulatory focus on level of motivation.*

Design: *A repeated measures randomly controlled study design was utilised.*

Method: *Participants comprised 29 coachees undertaking a five-session coaching programme. They were randomly allocated to two treatment groups whereby positive non-authentic feedback, framed to either fit or not-fit an individual's induced regulatory promotion focus was provided on an online leadership skills activity. In addition, level of motivation was measured pre and post feedback.*

Results: *A repeated measure anova analysis indicated that motivation was significantly higher after positive feedback in the regulatory fit condition than in the non-fit condition. There was no relationship between level of mood and motivation after feedback.*

Conclusions: *Findings suggest that feedback framed to fit the regulatory focus of coachees will increase level of motivation. Implications for coaching practice include that when providing feedback in coaching, feedback effectiveness may be increased by framing feedback to the individuals' regulatory (promotion) focus.*

Keywords: *Motivation; Feedback; Regulatory fit; Regulatory focus; Coaching; Promotion focus; Induction; Australia.*

FEEDBACK, which is information regarding individuals' current levels of performance, has been shown to influence motivation, job satisfaction and performance (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000; Gregory, Levy & Jeffers, 2008). Feedback is particularly relevant in coaching practice where it is provided to support self-awareness, learning, and to improve performance. This is the first study to test the relationship between feedback and work motivation in a coaching context. Work motivation has been described as 'a set of energetic forces that originate both within and or outside an individual, which initiates behaviour, directs its form, strength and duration, thus influencing performance' (Pinder, 2008, p.11). Despite frequent use of feedback in coaching, the empirical findings are inconsistent regarding the motivational direction (increase versus decrease of motivation) of feedback. Whilst one would expect that work motivation would increase after positive feedback, research from laboratory studies suggests that empirical findings are inconsistent regarding the motivational effect and direction of feedback (Higgins, 2000, 2005). A meta-analysis of 131 studies by Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found that while feedback in general improved performance, performance also decreased in 38 per cent of studies and this was not contingent upon whether positive or negative feedback had been received.

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Regulatory Focus (RF; Higgins, 1997, 1998) theory may provide an explanation for differing effects of feedback by considering the impact of general motivational orientations. RF theory has been found to predict motivation, memory, task enjoyment, creativity and emotion in non-coaching contexts (see review by Förster et al., 2009). RF theory addresses the purposes of pursuing a goal and considers two sources of motivation: the need for nurturance; and the need for security. These needs give rise to two distinct motivational self-regulatory orientations (foci), which are considered to be both dispositional and situational states. Dispositional focus is developed from different types of early child-caretaker experiences and is commonly measured by questionnaires. Situational regulatory focus is temporarily induced from environmental factors, such as task instructions and goal framing. The need for nurturance creates a promotion focus, which is concerned with aspirations and accomplishment of ideals. The need for safety creates a prevention focus, concerned with avoiding mistakes and fulfilling obligations and (Higgins, 1997).

When an individual's motivational orientation is predominantly promotion focused (by either dispositional or situational influences), referred to as in *promotion* focus, the aim of their goal directed behaviour is to decrease the distance between their current state and desired state (success). This entails a sensitivity to the presence or absence of positive outcomes or gains (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). Accordingly, in promotion focus, success is represented as the presence of positive outcomes (achieving goals), whilst failure is the absence of positive outcomes (not achieving goals). In contrast, when an individual's motivational orientation is predominantly prevention focused (by either dispositional or situational influences), referred to as *in prevention focus*, the aim of their goal-directed behaviour is to increase the distance between current and undesired states (failures). This entails sensitivity to the presence or absence of *negative outcomes*. Accordingly, in prevention focus, success is represented as the absence of a negative outcome (not missing a goal) while failure is represented as presence of a negative outcome (missing a goal). Consequently, adhering to negative feedback supports the avoidance of failure (the undesired state in prevention focus), whilst adhering to positive feedback supports the achievement of goals (the desired state in promotion focus). Empirical studies found positive feedback increased outcomes, such as motivation, performance and/or effort for individuals in promotion focus but not in prevention focus, whilst negative feedback increased the same outcomes in prevention focus but not in promotion focus (Förster et al., 2001; Förster, Higgins & Idson, 1998; Idson & Higgins, 2000; Idson, Liberman & Higgins, 2000; Medvedeff, Gregory & Levy, 2008; VanDijk & Kluger, 2004; Werth & Förster, 2007). These studies predict *when* motivation is likely to increase following positive or negative feedback, however, do not suggest *how* to maintain or increase motivation when certain feedback is given.

Regulatory fit

Motivation can be sustained or increased via *regulatory fit* (Higgins, 2000). For each regulatory focus there is a preferred manner during goal pursuit (Shah, Higgins & Friedman, 1998). The nature of this preference is derived from the ability of a strategy to either support gains or prevent losses. Eagerness strategies such as actively approaching a goal (approach goals) are preferred in promotion focus as these strategies support gains or advancements. Vigilance strategies such as carefully avoiding mistakes (avoidance goals) are preferred in prevention focus as these strategies prevent losses. For each preference, it is the ability to sustain the orientation that is important for motivation rather than attaining the end state itself (Freitas & Higgins, 2002). For example, a student who has a promotion focussed goal orientation will prefer eagerness strategies (and goals for that matter)

that ensure they will improve on past efforts (e.g. attaining an A grade after the attainment of B grades in the past). They will be more likely to be motivated by feedback on a draft assignment that is framed in such a way that emphasises how close they are to achieving the A grade (their ideal state, or stretch target). This might include feedback about the proportion of correct answers achieved as well as the proportion required to achieve the desired A grade. A student who has a prevention focussed goal orientation will prefer vigilant strategies and goals that ensure the minimisation of errors, in this case, strategies that ensure they will not fail on the assignment. They will be motivated by feedback that emphasises how close they are to meeting a pass standard (achieving a standards target), or feedback that emphasises how they carefully avoided incorrect answers on the assignment.

Regulatory fit occurs when an individual applies their preferred strategy during goal pursuit. The effect of fit has been shown to increase strength of commitment, engagement and motivation towards a goal (Higgins, 2005). Regulatory fit predicts that individuals will have a higher level of motivation if they apply an eagerness approach when in promotion focus or apply a vigilant approach when in prevention focus, compared to non-fit situations (promotion focus with vigilance strategies or prevention focus with eagerness strategies) (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins et al., 2003).

Regulatory fit has been examined in numerous studies outside coaching, including areas of: policy and tax compliance (Cesario, Grant & Higgins, 2004; Holler et al., 2008; Leder et al., 2010); marketing (Florack & Scarbis, 2006); smoking cessation (Zhao & Pechman, 2007); and health outcomes (Latimer, et al., 2008; Spiegel, Grant-Pillow & Higgins, 2004). These studies support the proposition that a message, information or instruction (spoken or written) is more effective in regulatory fit conditions (promotion/eagerness or prevention/vigilance) compared to non-fit conditions (promotion/vigilance or prevention/eagerness).

Regulatory fit, in combination with induction methods, was studied by Freitas and Higgins (2002), who induced participants to a promotion focus by asking them to identify and write down a hope or aspiration, and induced a prevention focus by asking them to identify a duty or obligation. They were then instructed to list five strategies that would ensure achievement of their aspiration or avoidance of failing to meet their obligations. Next, participants were given a scenario where they were to identify as many helpful or harmful four-sided objects as possible, among different drawn objects. Half of the participants were instructed that *'to do well on the task they needed to be eager to find the helpful four-sided objects'* (eagerness strategy). The other participants were instructed that *'to do well on the task they needed to be vigilant to eliminate the harmful four-sided objects'* (vigilant strategy). Supporting the regulatory fit hypothesis, the study found that independent of the actual outcome of the task (number of objects found), participants who were assigned strategies that fit their regulatory focus reported higher level of task enjoyment than those in non-fit.

In a study by Spiegel, Grant and Higgins (2004) participants were assigned to develop *approach related* eagerness plans or avoidance and *vigilance related* plans regarding when, how and where they would complete a written report. For example, they were instructed to capture 'as many details as possible to make the report vivid and interesting' (eagerness or approach strategy) versus 'avoid forgetting detail and being careful not to make the report bland and boring' (vigilance or avoidance strategy). Motivation was assessed by whether the report was returned within four weeks. Participants in the regulatory fit condition were 50 per cent more likely to hand in the report than participants in the non-fit condition. Where other studies used measures of intentions to infer motivation, Spiegel et al.'s study used an objective measure, the actual

return of the completed report, as the measure of motivation and effect of fit. Another study by Spiegel and colleagues (2004), examined the effect of a message recommending eating more fruit and vegetables. Regulatory fit was created by goal framing (achieving health or avoiding illness) and type of strategies presented (eagerness or vigilant). Participants in the fit condition were found to eat 20 per cent more fruit and vegetables the following week than participants in the non-fit condition. A similar design was applied in an advertisement study for grape juice, with findings again supporting the motivational effect of regulatory fit (Lee & Aaker, 2004).

To date regulatory fit has not yet been examined in relation to feedback framing. Based upon the consistent findings that instructional or persuasive messages framed according to individuals' regulatory fit increase motivation, it seems likely that a similar effect would be found for feedback messages. Feedback and instructions or persuasive messages share the common element of providing information. That is, feedback provides an individual with information about performance whilst instructions provide information about what will or should be performed. This study aimed to extend our understanding of the effect of feedback to feedback framing and regulatory fit on motivation in a coaching context. Framing refers to the instance when the structure, content and overall goal of a message is kept the same but alternative versions of that message exist. In this study, feedback framing involved maintaining the overall outcome information (success) but emphasising, a promotion goal with eagerness means (you achieved an ideal score by identifying correct answers) or a prevention goal with vigilance means (you met standards by avoiding incorrect answers). These versions emphasise different strategic means and goal purposes, modified to fit/not fit the recipients' regulatory focus

A measure of mood was included in this study to test whether the effect of regulatory fit on level of motivation is independent of mood. Pre-existing feelings or mood, although irrelevant to the target of judgement has been found to influence perception of that target. This suggests that people's ability to discriminate between different sources of their mood may be inaccurate (Clore, et al., 2001) and thus could influence the effect of regulatory fit. However, previous research found mood to be independent to the effect of regulatory fit in relation to the persuasiveness of text (Cesario, et al., 2004) and monetary evaluation of objects (Avnet & Higgins, 2002; Higgins et al., 2003).

This study aimed to examine positive feedback, framed to either fit or not fit a recipient's promotion focus. We hypothesised that positive feedback framed in a manner that emphasises promotion goals and eagerness means (fit), would lead to increased levels of motivation compared to feedback framed in a manner that considers prevention goals and vigilance means (non-fit). Secondly, we hypothesised that the difference between groups would be attributable to regulatory focus that was induced rather than dispositional regulatory focus. Thirdly, we hypothesised that there would be no relationship between level of mood and level of motivation following feedback.

Method

Research design

This study used a repeated measures between groups design where motivation was measured pre- (T1) and post- (T2) positive feedback provided on a leadership skills activity. The feedback was framed to fit or non-fit (between-subject factor) the individual's promotion focus.

Study setting

Participants were undertaking a Coaching for Leadership and Motivation (CALM) programme offered by Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, in 2010.

Description of the Coaching for Leadership and Motivation (CALM) programme

The CALM programme aimed to deliver coaching for leadership development and utilised a framework based upon the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM; Bass & Avolio, 2004). The programme consisted of five coaching sessions which occurred during a period of five to 15 weeks dependent upon coachee time availability. All coaches held psychology honours degrees and had undertaken a strength-based coaching training programme prepared by Deakin University staff. Participants were invited to participate in the CALM programme as coachees via information sessions, posters, emails directed to students and staff at three universities in Melbourne, Australia.

Participants

Twenty-nine coachee participants took part in this study. The majority were female (22 female, seven male). Participants were engaged in work or study, and were interested in developing leadership within these domains (nine were employed full-time; nine part-time and seven casual; seven were unemployed and studying full-time). Participants were randomly allocated to experimental conditions. There were 17 participants in the fit feedback condition and 12 in the non-fit condition. Overall the mean age group of participants was 25 to under 35 years. The sample age ranged between 18 to 55 years; five participants were over 35 years of age.

Procedure

Before the first coaching session, participants completed an online measure of dispositional regulatory focus. The experimental study, which was conducted approximately eight weeks later, involved priming participants into a promotional regulatory focus, asking them to undertake a leadership skills assessment activity, and then offering non-authentic feedback which was framed to fit or not fit that regulatory focus. This occurred towards the end of the coaching programme, between coaching sessions four and five. After coaching session four, participants were invited to complete an online activity. This online activity comprised: the promotion focus induction; a Leadership Assessment activity which was the event about which feedback was subsequently provided; feedback framed to fit or not fit a promotion focus; and pre- and post-feedback tests for mood and motivation. They were informed that this was part of their coaching programme, and would involve answering questions around leadership goals and strategies, motivation and effective leadership skills. Participants were asked to complete the activity in one sitting, at a time and place convenient to them. There was no time limit with the estimated average completion time being 25 minutes.

A thorough debrief of the activity was conducted in the subsequent coaching session by their allocated coach. The coaches received a script to assist this debrief, which included the purpose of the study, reason for deceptive feedback and information on how to find available support if needed. Based upon the positive nature of the deceptive feedback provided, negative consequences were not anticipated and were not reported.

Regulatory Focus Induction. The experimental RF induction procedure used by Freitas and Higgins (2002) was modified to fit the coaching context. It has been used successfully in numerous studies (for example, Cesario et al., 2004; Leder et al., 2010; Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda, 2002) and was chosen based upon the similarities to typical reflections undertaken in a coaching session. Promotion focus was experimentally induced in all participants.

> Promotion induction:
> You have now spent a few weeks focusing on a particular goal relating to your leadership style development. Now, you are asked to think about an additional goal. Please think about something you ideally would like to do in relation to

your leadership development. In other words, please think about a hope or aspiration you currently have.

Participants were asked write down their goal (an aspiration or hope), along with the description of five strategies which would support achievement of that goal (approach strategies). In alignment with previous studies, participants were asked to spend approximately 10 minutes on the goal and strategy selection. A summary of goals and strategies offered by participants as part of the promotion induction is displayed in the Appendix. Participants' responses reveal that they were able to identify an additional goal and indicate strategies to achieve that goal. This may have been heightened by the fact that they had been working on leadership development goals in their coaching programme and so the activity was highly relevant and salient to them.

Leadership Skills Activity. A 15-item multiple choice leadership skills activity[1] was used to represent the leadership factors included in the FRLM (Bass & Avolio, 2004). Response options ranged from 1 *(not at all)* to 4 *(frequently, if not always)*. Actual performance was not examined as the aim of the study was motivational effect following feedback, rather than level of leadership skills knowledge. Importantly, the leadership skills activity was chosen to address the lack of relevant performance tasks in existing RF literature. The leadership skills activity was considered relevant for two reasons: (a) participants were likely to be interested in developing their leadership skills as they had volunteered to undertake the CALM programme without remuneration and in their spare time; and (b) the leadership skills activity contained statements which related to common leadership situations and experiences, thus likely to have been encountered by participants in their leadership roles.

Feedback. Positive feedback refers to the information about an individual's performance which is in the desired direction towards, or equal to, a goal (London, 2003). To test the prediction that regulatory fit increases motivational effect of feedback, two differently framed versions of the same non-authentic positive feedback message were constructed. The structure, length and core content (a score of 90 per cent[2]) of the text was held constant, whilst messages were tailored to emphasise the different foci using words sourced from previously discussed RF literature. *Fit* feedback emphasised promotion focused goals (ideal score and accomplishment) and eagerness related means (finding, considering full range of options). *Non-fit* feedback emphasised prevention focused goals (meeting standards) and vigilance strategies (carefully avoiding). Consistent with the characteristics of effective feedback (McShane & Travaglione, 2008) the feedback message and delivery was developed to be specific, timely, credible and relevant. The two types of feedback are presented below.

[1] Used with permission from Ray Elliott, Director, MLQ International Pty Ltd.

[2] A challenge in the present study was to determine the specific score that would be believable to the participant. The risks of setting the score too high or too low would result in lack of credibility for the prevention and promotion framed version, respectively. Individuals tend to set different levels of goals dependent upon focus (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). Maximal or ideal goals are preferred in promotion focus, while minimal or 'meeting standards' goals are preferred in prevention focus. As the purpose of this study was to examine the motivational effect of positive feedback, the performance score had to be identical in both framing conditions to allow assessment of level of motivation based on different framing and not on different scores. A qualitative pilot study (N=10) was conducted to examine the two versions of the feedback message. Findings indicated that the initial use of 80 per cent to indicate level of performance on the leadership skills activity was set too low to be considered an 'ideal' score, particularly as the sample was to be drawn primarily from a university population, where performance may be higher than amongst the general population. Based on the pilot study the score to be provided was raised to 90 per cent, thereby replicating the success criterion used by Förster et al. (1998).

Fit feedback

Congratulations, you have achieved an ideal score on the Leadership Skills test by successfully finding the majority of correct answers. You have achieved 90 per cent of the correct answers.

Your score indicates that you are considering the full range of leadership behaviours in order to achieve an optimal match between your skills and a particular situation.

Non-Fit feedback

Congratulations, you have met the performance standard set by the test producers and successfully avoided most of the incorrect answers. You avoided 90 per cent of incorrect answers.

Your score indicates that you are carefully considering which type of leadership behaviour is appropriate for a particular situation in order to avoid substandard performance.

Both feedback versions were provided as text as well as a visual scale indicating the band in which participants' achieved performance.

Measures

Motivation. Motivation was measured before and after feedback. Two items were adapted to fit the coaching context from studies by Van-Dijk and Kluger (2004) and Freitas and Higgins (2002): 'How much effort have you invested in your leadership development so far?'; and 'Would you like to continue this coaching for leadership programme for another five sessions?'. An additional two items were also included: 'How motivated are you right now about your leadership development?'; and 'Would you like to have your leadership skills assessed?' Consistent with Van-Dijk and Kluger's study, the response scales were 11-point Likert scales, ranging from –5 *(i.e. not at all/definitely not)* to +5 *(i.e. very much/definitely).*

The same questions were used post feedback, but changed from present to future tense. The pre-post measure of motivation enabled reduction in error variance associated with individual differences present before the intervention. The pre-feedback motivation items and the post-feedback items were combined to a single scale of pre-motivation (α=.83) and post-motivation (α=.80). The scale had a high correlation with self-determined motivation (pre-motivation r=.78, post-motivation r=.62) from the Motivation and Work Scale (MAWS; Deci & Ryan, 1985). The MAWS measures type and degree of motivation (Forest et al., 2010) and was included in the present study as a means to examine concurrent validity of the four motivation questions. The MAWS was not included in further analyses due to its inappropriateness as a measure of motivational strength in this study. The MAWS measures the nature of motivation on a continuum from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation, whereas the motivational measures used in feedback studies in the past and replicated in this study (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004) measure the strength of motivation.

Mood. Four items previously used by Idson et al. (2000) were used to assess mood pre- and post-feedback. The response scale ranged from 1 *(not at all)* to 9 *(extremely).* Two items *(happy; relaxed)* related to the degree participants experienced positive mood (i.e. *How happy do you feel right now?*). These were combined to a single scale (pre-feedback α=.81; post-feedback α=.81). Two items *(tense; discouraged)* related to the degree participants experienced negative mood (i.e. *How discouraged do you feel right now?*). These were combined to a single scale (pre-feedback; α=.75; post-feedback α=.76).

Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ). The 11-item RFQ (Higgins et al., 2001) is a measure of individuals dispositional regulatory focus. It assesses participants subjective past success with using either promotion-related eagerness or prevention-related vigilance and was completed prior to the commencement of the coaching programme. The response scale ranged from 1

(never or seldom/certainly false) to 5 *(very often/certainly true)*. Five items contributed to the prevention scale, i.e. 'Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times' (α=.79). Six items contributed to the prevention scale i.e. "I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life" (α=.59). The RFQ was included to assess whether there were any differences in regulatory focus between groups prior to the induction procedure. The Cronbach alpha in this study was somewhat lower than in Higgins et al.'s (2001) study (promotion α=.73, prevention α=. 80). Therefore, item number 11 was excluded to increase the reliability of the promotion scale (α=.66). The exclusion was deemed justifiable based upon the item being different to other items, relating to behaviour in a defined area (hobbies) compared to behaviour in general. The RFQ is scored by subtracting the prevention score from the promotion scores. Zero or a negative score indicates prevention focus and a positive score, a promotion focus.

Results

Initial data screening revealed that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality for the four items of motivation before and after feedback was met (p<.001) and there were no univariate, multivariate outliers or missing data. Mean and standard deviations for the measures of mood and motivation before and after feedback for the two feedback conditions are presented in Table 1.

Preliminary One-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to examine potential group differences prior to the introduction of the independent variable. No significant differences were found between groups in any of the following variables: motivation (T1) (F(1,27)=2.55, MSE=11.23, p=.12) or positive mood (T1) (F(1,27)=.96, MSE=3.46, p=.34) or negative mood (T1) (F(1,27)=.89, MSE= 3.20, p=.35).

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine if mood was related to level of motivation. No significant correlations were found between mood (positive or negative) and motivation feedback (before or after) in either feedback conditions (fit or non-fit), neither between mood and motivation scores when the groups were combined. The Fischer's transformation revealed no significant correlations across time (T1 and T2). In line with previous findings (i.e. Higgins et al., 2003), this indicates that mean scores of motivation after feedback were independent of individuals' level of mood and that any differences would be due to random fluctuations.

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between dispositional regulatory focus (prevention or promotion) and level of motivation. No significant correlations were found between dispositional promotion focus, (r=–.01, N=29, p=.94) or prevention focus, (r=–.06, N=29, p=.74) and motivation scores after feedback. Based on the lack of significant

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviations for motivation and mood scores before and after feedback.

	Fit (N=17)				Non-fit (N=12)			
	T1		T2		T1		T2	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Motivation	7.63	2.41	8.43	2.25	8.90	1.53	8.90	1.52
Positive mood	6.12	1.93	6.33	1.90	5.42	1.84	5.71	1.67
Negative mood	3.89	2.09	3.24	1.86	3.21	1.59	3.21	1.79

Note: T1=before feedback; T2=after feedback.

correlations with the dependent variable, mood and dispositional regulatory focus were not included as covariates in the primary analysis.

To test the main hypothesis, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of positive feedback (fit and non-fit) on level of motivation (Time 1 and Time 2). Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure there was no violation to the assumption of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances and covariance. The ANOVA results showed that there was a significant interaction between time and type of feedback, (Wilks Lambda=.79, $F(1,27)=7.14$, $p<.05$), with a small effect size of partial eta squared=.21, observed power=.73. There was a significant main effect for time, (Wilks Lambda=.79, $F(1,27)=7.14$, $p<.05$), with a small effect size of partial eta squared=.21, observed power=.73. There was no main effect for type of feedback, ($F(1, 27)=1.32$, $p=.26$, partial eta squared=.05). This finding suggests that mean motivation scores increased in the feedback fit condition but not in the non-fit condition at Time 2 compared to Time 1 (see Figure 1).

A paired sample *t*-test revealed a significant increase in motivation scores in the fit-condition between T1 and T2 (refer back to Table 1 for descriptive data), ($t(16)=-3.56$, $p<.01$ (two-tailed)). The mean increase in motivation scores was .79 with a 95 per cent confidence interval ranging from .32 to 1.27. The eta square statistics indicated a large effect size (.48). There was no increase in motivation scores in the non-fit condition, from T1 to T2, ($t(11)=.00$, $p=1.00$).

To explore whether the effect of feedback and time on strength of motivation would be present if individuals were grouped according to their dispositional regulatory focus (promotion or prevention), a mixed design ANOVA was conducted. It comprised one between group factor (Disposition) and one within group factor (Time), each with two levels. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Figure 1: Mean scores of motivation level for Fit (*N*=17) and Non-Fit (*N*=12) conditions before and after feedback.

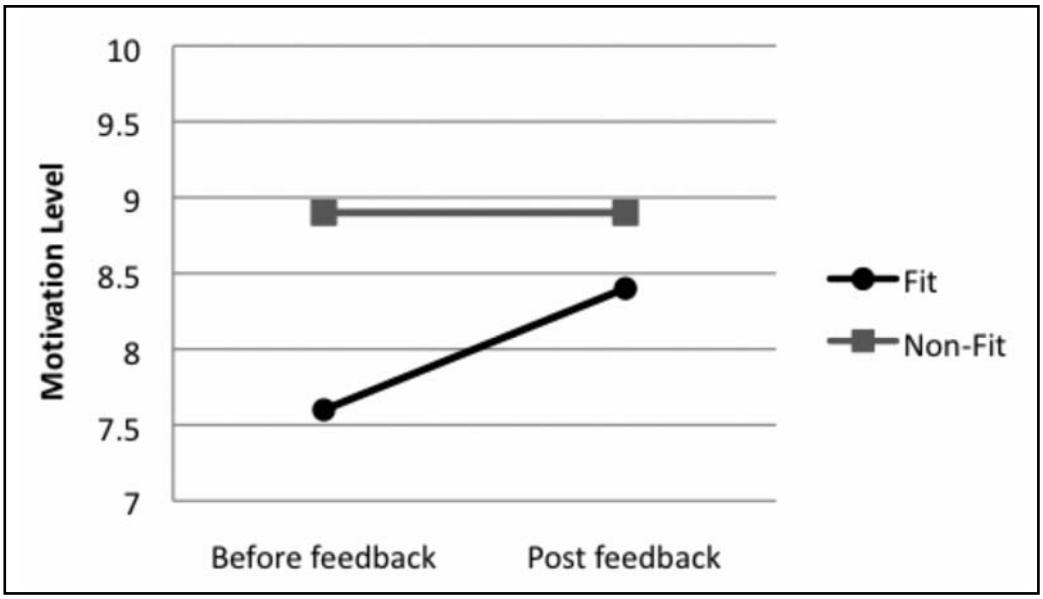

Table 2: Means and Standard Deviations for motivation scores before and after feedback according to Dispositional Focus.

Dispositional Focus	Motivation T1		Motivation T2	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Promotion (*N*=19)	8.60	1.92	8.97	1.67
Prevention (*N*=10)	7.30	2.40	7.98	2.41

There was no significant interaction between dispositional RF and time (Wilks Lambda=.97, $F(1,27)=.88$, $p=.37$, partial eta squared=.03). There was a main effect of time (Wilks Lambda=.75, $F(1,27)=9.14$, $p<.01$, partial eta squared=.25). There was no main effect of dispositional regulatory focus ($F(1,27)=2.21$, $p<.15$, partial eta squared=.08). This suggests that there was no difference in the increase in mean scores on motivation between the dispositional promotion and prevention focused groups.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the motivational effect of positive feedback, framed to either fit or non-fit an individual's induced regulatory promotion focus in a coaching context. The results supported the hypotheses that regulatory fit increases the motivational effect of feedback. As predicted, the level of motivation increased following feedback that contained promotion goals and eagerness means (fit) compared to feedback that contained prevention goals and vigilance means (non-fit). In addition, the effect of fit was unrelated to the level of mood experienced after feedback. That is, level of motivation was not higher in individuals that reported higher level of positive mood.

Regulatory fit occurs when an individual applies their preferred goal pursuit strategy and a subjective sense of 'feeling right' about the goal-directed behaviour is experienced, observed as an increase in motivation, enjoyment or commitment (Higgins, 2000, 2005). The findings of this study suggest that framing the content of a feedback message according to individuals' preferred goal pursuit strategy (eager) and preferred type of goal (achieving ideals) may increase the value of the feedback, consistent with increased motivation.

Regulatory fit within feedback sign has not previously been examined, however, the results from this study are consistent with persuasion, instruction and marketing studies (for example, Florack & Scarbis, 2006; Holler et al., 2008; Leder et al., 2010; Spiegel et al., 2004). Specifically, Freitas and Higgins' (2002) findings indicated that individuals who received instructions framed to fit their induced regulatory focus evaluated a search task as more enjoyable and were more likely to repeat the task than those who received non-fit instructions. This study provided feedback whereby the overall message of a positive performance of 90 per cent was kept constant between conditions. However, the message was framed to fit either prevention type goals and pursuit strategies or promotion goals and pursuit strategies. While the current study focused on motivation, as compared to level of enjoyment in Freitas and Higgins' study, both studies examined whether an individual would undertake the activity again as assessed by the question 'would you like to take the leadership skills test/search task again'?

It would be expected that receiving positive feedback, particularly when it describes high achievement, may increase the recipient's level of positive mood, and thus increase level of motivation. However, no positive correlation was found between

mood and motivation, That is, level of motivation was not higher in individuals who reported higher level of positive mood, regardless of whether they received fit or non-fit feedback. This supports the hypothesis that the effect on motivation was due to feedback framing and not due to the achievement of a score of 90 per cent leading to an increase of positive mood. This is consistent with previous research where effects of regulatory fit on motivation were found to be independent of mood in relation to persuasiveness of text (Cesario et al., 2004) and monetary evaluation of objects (Avnet & Higgins, 2002; Higgins et al., 2003).

Another interesting finding in this study was that a regulatory fit effect was found when level of motivation was assessed according to individuals' *induced* but not *dispositional* regulatory focus. This finding is consistent with RFT literature whereby induction methods have been used to induce a predominate focus (for example, Cesario et al., 2004; Leder et al., 2010; Lockwood et al., 2002). The finding supports the validity of the induction method and suggests that an individuals' motivational orientation is relatively easily influenced by external influences. The induction method by Freitas and Higgins (2002) was adapted in the current study by focusing on leadership goals and goal attainment strategies as opposed to general goals and strategies. A promotion focus was induced by asking participants about their aspirations and strategies to achieve these. The use of this induction method can be applied in organisational and coaching settings as it can be conducted in a relative short time period (10 minutes), is easily adapted to a particular context, and is aligned to common questions and considerations in daily work practices.

Some features of this study differ from previous studies. Firstly, previous studies on the motivational effect of feedback from a RF theory perspective have examined the effect of positive *versus* negative feedback in relation to individuals' regulatory focus (for example, Förster et al., 2001; Idson et al., 2000). This study is unique in that no previous feedback studies have examined feedback framing, that is, the motivational effect of feedback considering the concept of regulatory fit *within* type of feedback.

Secondly, previous feedback studies commonly used outcome feedback, such as a short statement of 'you succeeded' or 'you failed' (for example, Van-Dijk & Kluger, 2004). This type of outcome feedback is insufficient according to the general feedback literature (McShane & Travaglione, 2008). The present study aimed to ensure the feedback provided was specific and relevant by providing participants with their specific performance data and comments relating to their strategies used. The inclusion of comments on strategies also ensured that the regulatory framing was achieved.

Thirdly, the current study used a more encompassing measure of motivation than previous feedback studies. For example, in the study by Van-Dijk and Kluger (2004) only one item 'How motivated do you feel right now' was included to assess motivation. To be consistent with previous research this item was included in the present study, along with Freitas and Higgins' (2002) item referring to whether individuals would like to repeat the task with an additional two items. The motivation measure used had good internal consistency and correlated highly with self-determined motivation (Forest et al., 2010), which suggests the measure and current findings are valid.

Finally, compared to numerous previous studies involving RF theory, this study provided feedback on a highly relevant performance task in an authentic context. Previous studies have, for example, provided feedback on anagram performance (Förster et al., 2001, 1998; Idson & Higgins, 2000) or provided instructions for the search of foursided objects (Freitas & Higgins, 2002) in laboratory settings. It can be argued that these tasks have little relevance to the individual, and bear little resemblance to tasks in organisational settings. In contrast, the lead-

ership skills task used in this study is likely to be highly relevant as participants chose to take part in the coaching for leadership programme and had, with support of their coaches, been engaging in their own leadership development. Therefore, it is suggested that the regulatory fit findings may be relevant to coaching contexts in general and in particularly those related to coaching for leadership development.

Limitations

Findings need to be interpreted in light of a number of limitations. Firstly, the lack of an objective motivation measure may have reduced the validity of this study. While the current study comprised a valid task (leadership skills activity) on which feedback was provided, the motivational measure was based upon participants' subjective responses. Since motivation is linked to performance (Pinder, 2008), an objective measure could have involved observed performance data, for example the amount of additional leadership training undertaken by participants or whether they actually attempted the leadership skills test again. This may have illuminated the link between motivation and performance. However, it should be noted that performance is affected by many factors other than motivation (i.e. current level of knowledge or time restraints) and thus the use of a performance measure may also have confounded the primary research aim, to investigate the motivational effect of regulatory fit.

The applicability of the induction method for regulatory fit needs to be considered when generalising the findings in this study to situations where feedback may be given as part of coaching or managing performance. Due to the nature of the tightly controlled experimental design used in this study, feedback framing was worded specifically to, in the fit condition, emphasise an approach goal with eagerness strategies, and in the non-fit condition, to specifically emphasise an avoidance goal and vigilance strategies (meeting standards and carefully avoiding mistakes). Positive feedback framed in a way that emphasises vigilance and avoidance goals may in particular seem at odds with common parlance used in a coaching or managing performance setting. Therefore, it may be difficult to apply feedback framing whilst also appearing authentic in the coaching relationship. However the following section offers some implications for coaching practice that coaches may find useful when giving feedback or coaching others on the utility of feedback. We recommend that further research in applied settings could also test alternative types of framing to suit different feedback situations and organisational settings.

Similar limitations arise about the generalisability of results to applied settings outside of the CALM coaching programme utilised in this study. The coaching programme was conducted within a university community (although did not necessarily involve only students). Nevertheless, the findings of this study may not be generalisable to workplace coaching programmes, which tend to be characterised by organisational goals, rather than personal goals.

Finally, whilst this study found that fit feedback increased level of motivation compared to non-fit feedback, the lack of control group limits our ability to determine if the impact of fit feedback was above, lesser than, or equal to the impact of no feedback on motivation.

Directions for research

This study found a regulatory fit effect following positive feedback in individuals in promotion focus. It would also be interesting to explore whether this effect occurs in prevention focus, and whether it is present following negative feedback. Based upon the current findings and the general RF literature, it is expected that both positive and negative feedback framed to fit an individual's regulatory focus would lead to increased motivation compared to non-fit framed feedback. If the effect of regulatory fit in relation to feedback framing is con-

firmed, this would provide an understanding of how both negative and positive feedback may be framed to ensure optimal impact on motivation.

Implications for coaching practices

There are important implications of this study for coaching practice. Findings suggest that feedback effectiveness may be increased by framing feedback to the individuals' regulatory (promotion) focus. When providing feedback, with no change to feedback sign or actual performance score, a coach may emphasise a certain aspect of the performance goal and a certain type of goal pursuit strategy to provide a match to the individuals' present regulatory focus.

In situations where it would be difficult or impossible to frame feedback, the coach may induce a regulatory promotion focus that would match the feedback to be provided. This could be achieved by asking the participant to describe their ideal goal or type of aspirations they have and the strategies to support achievement of these ideal goals (promotion induction). Importantly, as evidenced in the study, promotion focus can be primed prior to providing eagerness strategies related to a goal, and this only need to take 10 minutes of the coachees' time.

Understanding that regulatory focus is easily induced by contextual influences may assist the coach to better understand the coachee in terms of their goal orientation. It is likely that organisational policies, procedures, leadership, communication and culture that the coachee is exposed to will induce a certain motivational focus. For example, a prominent safety culture in an aviation context and an innovative design culture in a marketing context may induce prevention and promotion focus, respectively. The organisational context may provide cues for the coach about the coachee's goal orientation and how to frame feedback to increase motivation accordingly. This may ultimately lead to increased motivation to pursue a goal, and subsequently increased effectiveness of coaching practice.

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Appendix: Responses to the promotion induction activity.

Note: P = Participant Number

P	Additional hope or aspiration	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5
1	Increase networking skills.	Make contact with key stakeholders.	Initiate meetings.	Propose possible collaborations.	Set deadlines for collaborative projects.	Identify key stakeholders.
2	Giving and receiving feedback.	Verbalising my thoughts and feelings.	Don't assume people can see/feel the 'obvious'.	Make it a habit.	Ask people about feedback immediately.	Listen. Listening helps give better feedback.
3	To earn the trust and respect of others in my new job.	Always do what I say I am going to do.	Follow up with people so that they know I have delivered on my promise.	Check whether others are satisfied with the work I have done for them.	Ask for feedback on what I could do better.	Accept all feedback positively.
4	Teach others what I have learnt.	Define issue to address.	Develop Systematic Solution notes.	Develop presentation skills.	Develop vocabulary and improve public speaking.	Add humour and attractive presentation.
5	I want to lead in a way that inspires respect, and to be a role model.	Talk about my values and how they correlate with the company's values.	Act out my values.	Be hands-on and involved.	Model the kind of behaviour I want to see in my associates.	Act with integrity.
6	To be a qualified leader.	Finish the Bachelor degree.	Joining coaching programme.	Design my own leadership training plan.	Set goals and follow the plans.	Apply for a part-time job.
7	I want to become a teacher/business owner/manager.	Research – get info on pathways.	Study – learn all I can about it.	Support – have good friend/family base of encouragement.	Rest – need to make sure not drowned by it all, but take time out to refocus.	Practice – get as much experience as possible/hands-on training.
8	Working in an inspiring organisation with interesting leadership role models to learn and be inspired.	Looking out for organisation with a strong and inspiring company climate.	Looking out for people who are passionate about their work/inspire others.	Looking out for tasks and industries which attract extraordinary people.	Reading about extraordinary organisations and people to get inspiration.	Trying out different environment and fields to find diverse inspiration.
9	Move to a management level position as the next step in my career.	Proactively look for opportunities to develop leadership areas like	Proactively look for opportunities in my current work place	Seek feedback from managers and mentors about additional skills	Proactively look for appropriate opportunities at the	Apply for appropriate job opportunities and if unsuccessful use any

P	Additional hope or aspiration	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5
		coaching, influencing and articulating a clear vision to round out my experience.	which will build my management skills and experience.	that may be required or valued in management positions.	next level of management.	feedback to refine my personal/ professional development strategy.
10	To improve upon my abilities as a public speaker.	Seek advice from a good public speaker.	Put myself into situations where I am forced to speak publicly.	Prepare better for the situations where I will have to speak in public.	Learn from my mistakes.	Practice, practice, practice.
11	To be an effective, motivational leader who leads with integrity.	Understand a problem/situation from all angles.	Group consultation for solutions to group problems.	Gain respect from the group.	Be open to other people's experiences and opinions.	Challenge current practices (when, if required).
12	Take on board the suggestions of others in the team.	Give lots of time for answers when asking a question.	Realise that everyone has a different point of view and all are to a certain respect valuable, even if I don't agree with them.	Be open to the needs of others.	Be present in the moment when talking to people, understand what they want, rather than focussing on my needs.	Ask others for their opinion.
13	To be an effective and supportive leader that others enjoy working with.	Continue to seek training opportunities in leadership or coaching in leadership.	Continue working on my second goal: Dealing with aggressive/pushy people in a workplace; to do this, I'd like to learn assertiveness skills and how to implement them appropriately.	Continue building on my first goal of building my confidence as a leader; to do this I'd continue employing questioning style, listening and observing participants responses to me and how I feel after group work.	Speak with my mentors/inspirational leaders regarding their leadership style and how they feel they exhibit good leadership.	Observe good leaders in my life and think about why I feel they are good leaders and see if I can utilise some of the techniques/skills they use.
14	Lead the team to the goal.	Motivate team members.	Focus on goal.	Lead team.	Be positive.	Co-ordinate work.
15	My aspiration is to be a well respected leader in my future position.	Understanding the needs of the project and the team to ensure objectives are met.	Provide strategic direction to ensure that the project's aim is always addressed.	Being open to suggestions and ideas by colleagues.	Listening and learning to others who are experts in the field and using this to	Ensure that I prioritise and do not become emotionally wrapped up on the small details.

P	Additional hope or aspiration	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5
					continuously improve my abilities and skills.	
16	Being able to inspire enthusiasm for any task.	Maintaining a positive attitude myself.	Providing a framework for completing a task.	Providing a rewarding environment.	Providing positive feedback.	Allowing input and ownership with how a task is completed.
17	To develop strategies to more effectively communicate when barriers are preventing an easy transfer of information.	List some strategies involving peers	Practice them when issues are not so important.	Understand how I influence the situation.	Evaluate the effectiveness after using a strategy.	Evaluate the necessity of the situation to have had a say.
18	Motivating peers.	Involving peers.	Effective communication.	Setting goals.	Discussing successes and failures.	Adapting methodology to meet challenges.
19	Be a better communicator.	Prepare for meetings.	Don't become defensive when people disagree.	Be willing to participate in discussion.	Be willing to express an unpopular opinion.	Take notes during meetings to help gather thoughts.
20	Find a career that engages me but still pays well.	Identify exactly what interests me as a person.	Find a series of jobs that match those interests.	Identify whether my current skill set translates into any of those jobs.	Identify whether following such a career would pay a satisfactory amount.	Establish the minimum wage that I need to earn in order to have the standard of living that I want.
21	I would like to feel more confident in group situations (e.g. with public speaking, etc.).	Focus on the task and not the audience.	Concentrate on delivering the information, not on how others perceive how I deliver the information.	Focus on trying to relax to reduce internal anxiety.	Try to engage the audience more to help relieve stage fright.	Smile more and worry less.
22	Be the best leader I can be.	Read more about transformational leadership styles.	Implement transformational skills more.	Acknowledge setbacks and learn from them.	Learn more about different personalities.	Practice until skills are second nature to me.

P	Additional hope or aspiration	Strategy 1	Strategy 2	Strategy 3	Strategy 4	Strategy 5
23	I would like the confidence to lead a small team in my workplace to establish cross-skilling practices and other professional development.	Begin coaching staff members to expand their work skills.	Inspire others to want to learn more.	Demonstrate how we can learn from and teach each other.	Encourage staff to discover their key skills and unique attributes.	Develop a plan for a professional development session.
24	Empowering people to develop their skill set and deliver in their work. This will entail being visionary, trusted and providing adequate support to staff.	Identify and provide opportunities for development of staff members.	Providing enough support through regular catch ups with staff to provide guidance and feedback on their progress.	Trust my intuition and knowledge to make decisions in all elements of my work.	Focussing on opportunities rather than negatives and thinking of solutions rather than being blocked.	Celebrating the success of the team for little and big things and acknowledging the bigger picture impact on what we are trying to achieve.
25	Reward achievement.	Recognise when someone has achieved something of significance to them.	Find out what type of praise people enjoy.	Communicate motivational messages to people.	Understand why people seek to be rewarded.	Give positive reinforcement.
26	Influence more on people and try to be assertive.	Approaching to new people.	Clarify when don't understand something.	Make other people awareness when they are not been polite.	Make aware of more specific issues when don't get the point.	Have a friendly attitude with new people.
27	I hope to be more professional.	Plan the session beforehand.	Take time to work out what I want to say.	Work out how long each activity will go for.	Come across as professional from initial meeting.	Never be late.
28	Pass my university degree.	Attend all tutorials and lectures.	Manage my time so I can complete my assignments to the best of my ability.	Seek help and clarification when needed.	Live in accommodation that enhances my opportunity for affective study.	Keep motivated and determined.
29	Increase social activities.	Search what social activities it was provided around.	What kinds of activities you are interested in?	What time is suitable to you?	How much it cost?	What it will be achieved from that?

The long-term independently assessed benefits of coaching: A controlled 18-month follow-up study of two methods

John Franklin & Alicia Franklin

Objectives: *An earlier study by Franklin and Doran (2009) provided the first evidence that coaching benefits objective performance as assessed by evaluators' blind to participation in coaching. This study examines the efficacy of two coaching programmes on independently evaluated academic performance 12 and 18 months after the completion of coaching.*

Design: *A double-blind controlled trial in which participants were randomly allocated to either a Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning (PAAL), or a Self-regulation co-coaching programme with blind assessment of subsequent academic performance. A third no-treatment condition was used for additional comparison and control of expectancy effects.*

Methods: *Two structurally identical seven-week co-coaching programmes were run. The Self-regulation condition focused on the development of study and coping skills, whilst the PAAL condition additionally focused on preparation for change and adaptive learning. Fifty-two volunteer first-year university students were randomly assigned to either a PAAL (N=27) or Self-regulation (N=25) co-coaching programme. Academic results 12 and 18 months after completing the brief coaching programme are compared with a control group of students (N=2183 at 12 months, 2063 at 18 months.) who did not participate in the programme.*

Results: *Relative to the no treatment control group, PAAL participants consistently performed some 10 per cent better in independently assessed academic performance at both the 12-month follow-up (71.04 per cent vs. 61.29 per cent) (p=<.001, d=.60), and the 18-month follow-up (70.97 per cent vs. 60.48 per cent) (p=<.001, d=.66). The Self-regulation coaching participants performed some two per cent better than the controls at both the 12-month follow-up (62.98 per cent vs. 61.29 per cent) (p=NS, d=.10) and the 18-month follow-up (62.11 per cent vs. 60.48 per cent) (p=NS, d=.11).*

Conclusion: *Both co-coaching conditions were associated with increases in blindly assessed academic performance, however, only those in the PAAL condition performed significantly better 12 and 18 months after the completion of the brief coaching programme. The effects of the PAAL coaching method need to be evaluated in other areas where outcomes may be objectively and blindly assessed.*

Keywords: *Coaching; maintenance; follow-up; RCT; Double Blind Randomized Control Trial; academic performance.*

The long-term effects of coaching

IN THE SPACE OF little more than a decade coaching has gained a significant foothold in many areas of change management. Numerous journals have been founded and university courses established on the basis of a growing evaluative literature. Despite this impressive growth, to date only six studies have been published which involve random assignment to one or more coaching conditions (Franklin & Doran, 2009, Greif, 2007). Regrettably, only the studies by Willms (2004), Green, Oades and Grant (2005), Spence and Grant (2005), Finn, Mason and Griffin (2006), and Franklin and Doran (2009) have incorporated non-treatment control conditions. Only the studies of Sue-Chan and Latham (2004) and Franklin and Doran (2009) have utilised independent assessors, and in only the latter study were the assessors blind to the participants being involved in coaching.

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The value of such designs cannot be overestimated as they form the bedrock of any practice seeking to demonstrate its evidence-based credentials.

In a recent review of the evidence base underpinning coaching, Grant and Cavanagh (2007) emphasised the need for longer follow-ups in order to determine the durability of its effects. This paper reports on the 12- and 18-month follow-up of two coaching programmes, which utilised different coaching methods in the hope of promoting independently assessed academic performance. The full details of the study at the six-month follow-up period were given in Franklin and Doran (2009). The study involved an evaluation of the effects of two brief seven-week co-coaching programmes titled Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning (PAAL) and Self-regulation. Both methods were found to be associated with significant increases in self-assessed self-efficacy and resilience, but only those in the PAAL condition experienced significant increases in decisional balance, hope, self-compassion and belief in the incremental theory of change. Compared with the Self-regulation condition, participants in the PAAL condition experienced significantly greater increases in six of the seven dependent variables. With respect to blindly assessed academic performance, PAAL participants performed some 10 per cent better in independently assessed academic performance (71.45 per cent vs. 61.59 per cent) (p=.0003, d=.61). The academic performance of those in the Self-regulation coaching condition was not significantly better than that of controls (63.32 per cent vs. 61.59 per cent) (p=NS, d=.11). Across the seven dependent variables the average effect size for the PAAL condition was d=.93, while the Self-regulation condition averaged d=.43.

This paper follows up the participants in the above study and reports on their academic performance 12 and 18 months after the completion of the seven-week coaching programme. Data relating to the self-report measures was not collected. Full details of the original study and evaluation can be found in Franklin and Doran (2009).

Method

Participants

Participants were 52 first-year university students (21 male and 31 female) from a metropolitan university in Sydney, Australia. Participants were recruited on a voluntarily basis though lecture announcements and pamphlets to participate in a free co-coaching programme titled 'Successology 101'. The participants were aged between 17 and 56 years (M=24.44, SD=8.90). Seventy-one per cent of the participants reported English as their first language.

All of the original 52 first-year university students (PAAL=27, Self-regulation=25) were available at the 12-month follow-up, but only 49 were enrolled and thus available for analysis at the 18-month follow-up (PAAL=25, Self-regulation=24). The control condition consisted of 2183 first-year students at 12-month time point, and 2063 second-year students at the 18-month time point. There were no differences between the experimental and control subjects in the pattern of their enrolment, their age, or gender balance.

Measures

The average mark was selected as the best measure of academic performance as it offered results on a 0 to 100 scale as opposed to reliance on less sensitive grade point averages (GPA). Each participant's academic performance was measured by calculating the sum of their total grades for each subject, and then dividing this total by the number of subjects they completed, to produce an average mark. All academic markers were blind to whether or not the students had participated in any programme designed to boost their academic performance.

In the earlier report on the study (Franklin & Doran, 2009), results were provided of a number of additional outcome and process measures. These measures of Self-Efficacy, Resilience, Hope, Self-Compas-

sion, Growth Mind Set and Decisional Balance were not collected at the 12- and 18-month follow-ups and are thus not reported here. This follow-up study was expressly designed to determine if the long-term academic performance of participants was differentially affected by inclusion in the two coaching and the no treatment control condition.

Materials

Participants in both coaching conditions were provided with co-coaching study and coping skills workbooks. This workbook set the coaching within a self-regulation framework and covered the following areas: Making the transition to university, goal setting, time management, study skills, note taking, reading and comprehension, exam preparation and managing stress and anxiety. The workbook included a wide range of quizzes and assessment devices to identify strengths and weaknesses, together with planning and self-monitoring forms. The content of the programme drew on the work of Cottrell (2003) and Paulk and Owens (2005). Participants were asked to form into pairs and meet together at least once each week for the seven weeks leading up to the exam period. Drawing upon the workbooks, participants were each encouraged to set three goals and focus on coaching each other to develop, implement and monitor the plans necessary to achieve these mastery goals within a self-regulatory coaching framework. Participants in both conditions were provided with clear instructions on how to coach each other over the seven weeks during which they meet. Co-coaching was modelled in a series of three training sessions.

Participants in the PAAL condition were provided with additional material derived from the PAAL model of change motivation and adaptive learning. The PAAL Model assisted participants to clarify their current study skill set, identify their ultimate objective, undertake a cost-benefit analysis concerning the achievement of this objective, identify and remove any barriers to change (including establishing a growth mindset and developing self-compassion), identify the skills necessary for success, and finally understand how these skills translated into goals which could be progressively developed via adaptive learning within a co-coaching self-regulatory framework. Identical training was provided on the process of co-coaching within a self-regulatory framework to participants in both coaching conditions. Only the focus differed between conditions.

Design and procedure

The initial participants (N=52) were randomly assigned to either the Self-regulation condition (N=25) or the PAAL condition (N=27). The slightly unequal numbers arose from participants not necessarily being able to attend on the day in which the other condition was run. A no treatment control condition was formed from students attending university for the first time who did not participate in either of the coaching programmes (N=2183 at 12 months, 2063 at 18 months.). Analysis of academic marks was initially conducted on the full sample of 52, with analysis being restricted to those who attended all sessions and completed all pre and post measures. Unfortunately only 49 of the original 52 were enrolled and thus available for analysis at the 18-month follow-up (PAAL=25, Self-regulation=24).

Participants were advised that there were two coaching conditions, but were blind to the condition to which they were assigned, and the differences between conditions. A questionnaire seeking demographic information and the above scales was emailed to all participants to be completed before attending the first session. The first two sessions were conducted as training workshops (total contact time equalled nine hours) and commenced in week 7 of the 13-week first semester. During weeks 9 to 13 of the semester participants were requested to meet weekly in pairs to coach each other in the development of the skills necessary to

achieve the three goals they had identified for themselves. At the conclusion of the programme, participants completed the same battery of measures completed at the commencement of the programme. The programme was approved by the University Human Ethics Committee.

Results

Analysis of the academic results of participants in the three conditions at the three time points are contained in Table 1, and presented graphically in Figure 1.

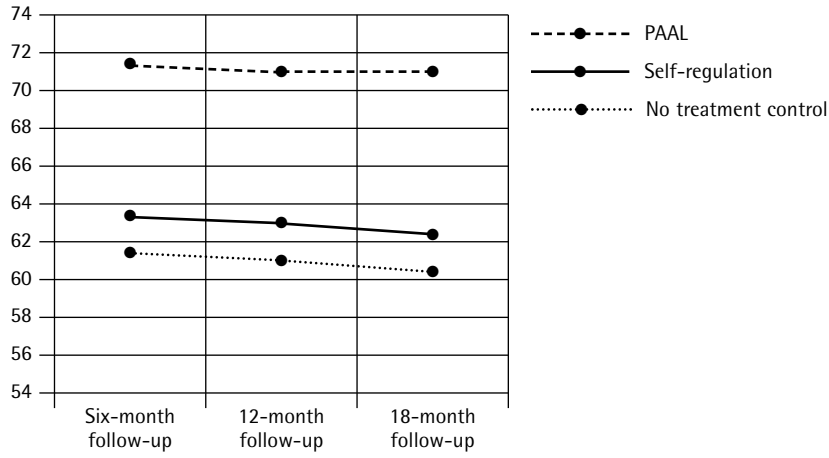
An initial two-way between subjects ANOVA with condition and time as the between subjects variables and average mark as the dependent variable was run. As expected, a significant main effect was found for condition (F[2,2232]3.808, p=.022) but no significant effect was found for time. Subsequent pairwise analysis revealed that at the 12-month follow-up, the PAAL condition achieved a significantly higher average mark than the no treatment control group (t[2208]=4.87, p<0.001, d=.60) and the Self-regulation condition (t[50]=2.73, p<0.01, d=.76). At the 18-month follow-up, participants in the PAAL condition achieved a higher average mark than participants in the control condition (t[2086]=5.04, p<0.001, d=.66) and participants in the Self-regulation condition (t[47]=3.04, p<.01, d=.81). Consistent with the previously reported results at the six-month point, participants in the Self-regulation condition did not achieve a higher average mark than those in the no treatment control group at either the 12-month follow-up point (t[2258]=0.76, p=NS, d=.10) or 18-month follow-up point (t[2085]=0.78, p=NS, d=.11).

Table 1: Changes in academic marks over time by coaching condition.

	12-month follow-up		Significance (2 tailed)	Effect size *(d)*
	Mean	SD		
CONDITION				
PAAL	71.04	10.52	(1) p<.001 (2) p<.01	(1) .60 (2) .76
Self-regulation	62.98	10.99	(3) p=.76 NS	(3) .10
No treatment control	61.29	16.34		
	18-month follow-up		Significance (2 tailed)	Effect size *(d)*
	Mean	SD		
PAAL	70.97	10.26	(1) p<.001 (2) p<.01	(1) .66 (2) .81
Self-regulation	62.11	10.14	(3) p=.78 NS	(3) .11
No treatment control	60.48	16.07		

PAAL=Preparation, Action and Adaptive Learning condition
(1) PAAL vs. No treatment control; (2) PAAL vs. Self-regulation; (3) Self-regulation vs. No treatment control
Effect sizes: Small=.2; Medium=.5; Large=.8

Figure 1: Changes in academic marks over time by coaching condition.



Discussion

This study was undertaken in response to a call by Grant and Cavanagh (2007) for more longitudinal studies of the effects of various coaching interventions. Consistent with the earlier reported findings at the six-month follow-up, participants in the PAAL coaching condition maintained their 10 mark advantage in academic performance at the 12- and 18-month follow-up points. The fact that the alternative Self-regulation condition resulted in a consistent but non-significant two mark performance advantage emphasises that not all coaching methodologies are equal, and that the content and process of coaching are worthy of closer attention. These long-term benefits are even more impressive when it is considered that the participants received no booster sessions following the cessation of the original brief seven session coaching programme. All participants were provided with a detailed coaching resource manual, but beyond their meeting on a weekly basis the precise use they made of this material is not known. As Grant and Cavanagh (2007) predicted, further long-term follow-ups utilising random allocation and blind assessment will greatly enhance the rigor and thus reputation of coaching research.

The enduring long-term results of this study have many implications for future research and practice. The results provide further evidence that a relatively simple low-cost coaching intervention can have very significant effects on the academic performance of students. This is consistent with the earlier well-controlled coaching research by Green, Oades and Grant (2005), Spence and Grant (2005), Sue-Chan and Latham (2004) and Willms (2004), and indicates the return on investment which may be derived from coaching. Encouraging as these long-term results are, it is important to recognise that this is just one study and that the numbers involved were small. Clearly these results need to be replicated in other settings, which allow for the independent assessment of behaviour and performance change. Particular attention needs to be focused on the processes and context within coaching which are predictive of lasting behaviour change. The possibility of creatively delivering coaching to larger numbers in a more cost effective manner also needs to be investigated as it would be difficult to utilise conventional methods to reach the many thousands of students who enrol in tertiary studies on an annual basis.

Notwithstanding these caveats, the strong effect size found in this study adds to a growing body of well designed studies supportive of the enduring benefits of coaching. It would appear that appropriate content delivered within a theoretically sound coaching framework is able to materially assist students by having a significant and lasting effect on their academic performance, and hopefully their life prospects. A 10 per cent point difference in performance can probably open many doors, both academically and professionally and materially enhance the life prospects of participants.

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Line management involvement in coaching: Help or hindrance? A content analysis study

Helen Ogilvy & Vicky Ellam-Dyson

Objectives: *This study investigated the involvement that line managers have when their direct reports are receiving coaching from either an internal or external coach; what line managers and coachees report hinders and facilitates line management involvement; and in what ways does line management involvement affect the outcome of coaching.*

Design: *A cross-sectional design was used to explore coachees' and line managers' perceptions of line management involvement, as well as facilitators and barriers to their involvement. Content analysis was used to code the data.*

Method: *18 coachees and 12 line managers participated in semi-structured interviews. Content analysis revealed that the involvement of line managers varied.*

Results: *Factors reported to inhibit involvement included cognitions that it was a personal process, and management involvement was not necessary. Factors reported to facilitate involvement included managers' beliefs that coaching was valuable and their understanding of how coaching worked within their organisations. Line management behaviours found to facilitate coaching comprised five clusters: supporting, collaborating, informing, management style and challenging. Behaviours found to hinder coaching comprised two clusters: restrictive and passive.*

Conclusions: *This study provides a useful insight into factors that influence line management involvement, the type of management behaviours that facilitate and hinder coaching outcomes, and the consequences for transfer of learning.*

Keywords: *Line manager involvement; coaching outcomes; learning transfer.*

THE USE OF executive and internal coaches by organisations to improve employee performance is increasing (Sherman & Freas, 2004). This increased popularity has made coaching an accessible and widely used development option (Williams & Offley, 2005). However, few studies have investigated *what* makes the coaching process effective (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Stewart et al., 2008). There are still unanswered questions about how to ensure coaching is successfully delivered and what role organisational stakeholders such as line managers should play in the coaching process.

The role of line managers in the goal setting stage of coaching

Line managers are considered to be one of the key stakeholders in the coaching process, with the support they provide suggested to be critical to the success of coaching (Joo, 2005). However, research has paid little attention to understanding exactly how line managers can or should support coaching within the workplace. A small amount of research has focused on the role of line managers in the goal setting stage of coaching. Two NHS evaluation studies by Sinclair et al. (2008) found that objectives were set by coachees with some facilitation from their coach, but that line managers had no involvement during this stage. The coaching objectives set centred on improving personal capability, which coachees believed would lead to the achievement of business benefits. The lack of accountability at an organisational level regarding the objective setting stage of the coaching programme may have resulted in personal capability taking precedence over business objectives. An Institute

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of Employment Studies (IES) evaluation of a public sector coaching programme identified similar issues with the focus of coaching goals. It found that, of the 88 coachee action plans it analysed, only 17 per cent contained objectives that were aligned to organisational outcomes. Again, line managers had little or no involvement in the objective setting stage of the coaching process (Carter, 2004). Neither this study nor the one by Sinclair et al. (2008) investigated why managers had such a low level of involvement.

Where there is a lack of evidence from academic research, coaching practice relies on developing processes based on the experiences of practitioners. It has been suggested by some practitioners that coaching is most effective when line managers are actively engaged in the process (Boanas, 2006) and that adopting a *three-way contracting* approach will ensure the organisational perspective is reflected in the coaching relationship (Poppleton, 2008). Three-way contracting involves the line manager, coach and coachee agreeing the overarching goals for the coaching before the coaching begins. The coachee's manager is expected to represent the organisation's interests. As such, they have a role to play in ensuring that the coaching focuses on improving the coachees work-related performance, and that this is aligned to organisational effectiveness and business needs. Three-way contracting has been proposed as an antecedent to effective coaching and many organisations are adopting these practices (Hay, 1995). However, initial research has suggested that even when a three-way contracting approach is adopted managers of coachees rarely play an active role (Carter & Miller, 2009). The reasons for this lack of involvement are not understood and the factors that may facilitate or inhibit line manager involvement have not been investigated.

Influence of line manager involvement on learning transfer and coaching outcomes

The coaching literature has started to look at the influence of manager support beyond the initial goal setting stage of coaching. So far manager support has been linked to higher coachee satisfaction with outcomes (Carter & Connage, 2007) and shown to positively influence coaching success (McGovern et al., 2001; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997; Wasylyshyn, 2003). In a small-scale study of public sector workers Olivero et al. (1997) identified managerial support as one of seven facets of a coaching process that had a positive impact on coaching outcomes. The overall coaching process was found to increase productivity of coachees by 88 per cent. However, the level to which line manager support contributed to this was not calculated. The study was also not able to identify which specific aspects of managerial support were important. In a much larger scale study by McGovern et al. (2001) coachees identified line manager support as enhancing the effectiveness of their coaching. Managers' endorsement of the coaching was identified as important, as was their encouragement to make time for it.

The research discussed thus far has found managerial support to positively influence coaching outcomes and transfer of learning. However, it has told us little about the type of managerial involvement that is important, nor about the behaviours that facilitate and hinder successful coaching outcomes. Stewart et al. (2008) developed and tested a model of coaching transfer to look at if and how learning from coaching was subsequently used in the workplace. Their findings replicated and extended the findings of other studies that had explored coaching outcomes (Olivero et al., 1997; McGovern et al., 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2003). They found psychosocial support from managers, coachee motivation and organisational factors to influence coaching transfer. Effective managers assisted coachees in implementing their development, integrating coaching objectives with work priorities and providing feedback on progress. The absence of the line manager posed the main barrier to transfer, and a lack of positive psychosocial support was also found to

inhibit transfer. When the model was tested a positive correlation between manager support and application of learning was found. However, a relationship was not found between this and maintenance of learning. It was suggested that once development had been implemented coachees either required no further support from their managers or managers ceased to provide support.

Learning from training research

Theoretical knowledge and research from the training field can inform coaching research (Stewart et al., 2008). The training literature has identified a number of manager behaviours that can facilitate and hinder training transfer. When managers build strong relationships with trainees before, during and after training this facilitates positive learning transfer (Brinkerhoff & Montesino, 1995). Transfer is increased by pre-course discussions between trainees and managers, being encouraged to apply learning (Huczynski & Lewis, 1980), reinforcing the value of learning (Rouiller and Goldstein, 1993) and providing positive feedback (Martocchio & Webster, 1992). Barriers to transfer include lack of reinforcement (Clarke, 2002) and negative feedback or absence of feedback (Martocchio and Webster, 1992; Clarke, 2002). Previous research has not tested whether the management behaviours identified by training research as facilitators and barriers are applicable to coaching transfer.

Learning from wider employee development research

Another area of research literature which may inform coaching research and, in particular, the search for managerial behaviours that facilitate and inhibit coaching transfer, is that of employee development. This research base has recognised the pivotal role managers play in supporting learning (Salaman, 1995) and consideration has been given to the barriers that prevent managerial support of learning. For example, barriers that have been identified include managers' perceptions that staff will gain little from engaging in developmental activities, conflict between operational and developmental duties, and cultures where mistakes are not tolerated (Hyman & Cunningham, 1998; Skruber, 1987; Storey, 1992).

Recently research attention has turned to look more specifically at the managerial behaviours that facilitate and inhibit staff development (Beattie, 2002; 2006; Hamlin, 2004; Hirsh et al., 2004; Ellinger, 1997). In a qualitative study by Beattie (2002) a critical incident technique was used to identify managerial behaviours that either inhibited or facilitated staff development. Facilitative behaviours identified included being approachable, providing constructive feedback, empowering, challenging, advising and assessing. Inhibitory behaviours included being controlling and task-orientated, unassertive, withholding information and being dogmatic. Hamlin, Ellinger and Beattie (2006) carried out a comparative analysis of research in this area and found a high degree of congruence between the behavioural categories identified by studies. Their analysis suggests that managers that have embedded coaching style behaviours into their management practices are particularly effective at supporting learning. A coaching style was said to include advising and guiding staff, creating and promoting a learning environment, providing feedback and identifying development needs. The study is one of the first cross-cultural comparisons to be done and as such its findings support the generalisability of the research in this area. Previous research has not tested whether the behaviours identified to facilitate and inhibit wider employee development are applicable to coaching transfer.

Current study

The research review demonstrates that the literature concerning the role of line managers as a stakeholder of the coaching process is limited. Much of the literature that does exist is practice-based and a-theoretical. Although the influence of line managers

forms a small part of the coaching transfer model developed by Stewart et al. (2008) no theories or models have focused specifically on the role of line managers throughout the coaching process, nor have they been developed to explain what factors influence managerial involvement.

The aim of the current study was to investigate the line manager's role in their direct reports coaching and examine the impact of this on coaching effectiveness. The experiences of line managers and coachees were explored to gain a better understanding of how line managers can support coaching, and the factors reported to hinder and facilitate their involvement. The impact of their involvement on coaching outcomes, in particular transfer of learning to the workplace was also investigated. The following research questions were explored: (1) What involvement do line managers have when their direct reports are receiving coaching from either an internal or external coach? (2) What do line managers and coachees report hinders/facilitates line management involvement in their direct report's coaching? (3) In what ways does line management involvement affect the outcome of coaching?

Design

A cross-sectional design was used to explore the nature and impact of line management involvement in coaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to investigate the involvement of line managers in the coaching of their direct reports by third party coaches. Participants had either received coaching within the last year, or had managed someone who had been coached during that time. The study was conducted in five central UK Government departments. Content analysis was used to code the data from the interview transcripts.

Participants

The sample consisted of 12 line managers (7 male, 5 female) and 18 coachees (8 male, 10 female). All 12 of the line managers interviewed had one report involved in the study. Six coachees had no line manager involvement in the study.

Procedure

The line manager and coachee interview schedules were designed to elicit information relating to two themes: the involvement that line managers had when their direct reports were receiving coaching from either an internal or external coach, and the effect the line manager's involvement had on coaching outcomes.

Conventional content analysis, also described as inductive content analysis (Mayring, 2000), was used to analyse the interview transcripts. This approach was chosen because the existing theory and current research literature regarding line manager involvement in coaching is limited (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The length of coding units varied between a single word and a paragraph in length. Each coding unit contained a single piece of information or one idea (Tesch, 1990). Codes were added as new insights emerged and some codes revised because they did not work for the text. When new categories emerged they were given a formal definition when they contained between six and 12 data fragments (Locke, 2002). These categories were reviewed in detail to ensure that they were mutually exclusive, exhaustive and an appropriate level of measurement to fit the data (Neuendorf, 2002). Inter-rater reliability was assessed by checking agreement with a second researcher. Reliability was found to be 85 per cent, again this is considered an appropriate level of agreement (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researchers discussed anomalies arising out of the test for inter-rater reliability with overlapping categories or cases of doubt and resolved any differences.

Results

Type of involvement by line managers

Line managers were involved in their direct reports coaching in a number of ways. The

majority of line managers reported discussing the coaching with their direct report (*N*=10). Fifty-five per cent of coachees (*N*=10) reported that their line managers were involved in their *decision to have coaching*, as did 58 percent of line managers (*N*=7). Managers who had recommended coaching had done so because they thought coaching would be beneficial. All the managers in question had either been coached or worked as internal coaches and this experience had positively influenced their beliefs about coaching and its value.

When line managers were involved in goal setting this involvement took two forms; direct and indirect. A third of line managers (*N*=4) and just over a tenth of coachees (*N*=2) reported that line managers had a *direct involvement*. This involved an explicit discussion about areas for development and what the coaching should focus on. These discussions took place prior to coaching and not as part of a three-way contracting process. When asked how the formal coaching process had involved the line manager none of the participants identified manager involvement in contracting. *Indirect involvement* was more common (*N*=10). This occurred when the line manager discussed with the coachee areas for general development and/or gave them feedback on their performance. This information was used by the coachee to inform their coaching goals. An example is given below:

> *'I picked my goals for the coaching myself. But like I said, it was a longer term development want that I've got, so we'd actually discussed developing those sorts of skills before.'* (Coachee 21, lines 79–81)

Table 1 outlines the frequencies of different types of line manager involvement. Participants were not directly asked about line management involvement in the *decision to end coaching* or in its *evaluation*. It is notable that these two aspects of the coaching process were hardly mentioned during the interviews. This suggests that they were aspects of coaching that were given little consideration by participants.

Barriers to line management involvement

A number of factors were reported to hinder line management involvement in coaching as shown in Table 2. Cognitions and behaviours of both coachees and line managers played a key role. Inhibitory cognitions appear particularly influential. The majority of line managers (*N*=11) felt that coaching is a *personal process*, something between the coach and coachee. They considered that line managers should not intrude in the relationship, and their doing so could be detrimental. A number of coachees (*N*=9) said that given the personal nature of their coaching they would have found it unhelpful if their line manager had insisted on being involved. Although this confirms some line managers' fears about intruding, half of coachees did not identify coaching as a personal process, indicating that perhaps line managers were more concerned with this than they needed to be.

> *'It's not something I would have felt comfortable discussing with her (line manager) at that sort of personal level. We have a good working relationship, but for me, coaching is going down to a quite introspective level.'* (Coachee 4, lines 33–35)

The findings showed that line management involvement in the process as a whole was considered *unnecessary* by the majority of coachees (*N*=16) and by just under half of line managers (*N*=5). Coachees cited a number of reasons for this. Some felt their line managers were set in their ways and would not be open to the things they were working on in coaching. Others enjoyed having the autonomy to work with the coach by themselves and felt nothing would be gained from involving their manager, as the following extract illustrates:

> *'I found the coaching enough… I found the coach supportive and there when I needed them, just what I needed. Yes, if it had been, then I also have to talk to my line manager, I also have to do all this other stuff, it would have been like, for God's sake, when am I actually going to get my job done.' (Coachee 8, lines 107–111)*

Table 1: Type and frequency of line management involvement in coaching.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Type of involvement			
No involvement	32	2 (16.6)	7 (38.8)
Decision to have coaching			
Involved	31	7 (58.3)	10 (55.6)
Not involved	36	5 (41.6)	8 (44.4)
Recommended a coach	10	3 (25)	2 (11.1)
In goal setting			
Involved	31	8 (66.6)	8 (44.4)
Direct	14	4 (33.3)	2 (11.1)
Indirect	17	4 (33.3)	6 (33.3)
Not involved	27	4 (33.3)	10 (55.5)
Discussion			
Informal discussion	52	10 (83.3)	8 (44.4)
Formal discussion	46	9 (75)	10 (55.5)
Decision to end coaching			
Involved	2	2 (16.6)	0 (0)
Not involved	2	0 (0)	2 (11.1)
Evaluation of the coaching			
Involved	1	1 (8.3)	0 (0)
Not involved	2	2 (16.6)	0 (0)

A smaller number of coachees (*N*=3) and line managers (*N*=3) cited their poor relationship with the other *(coachee/line manager relationship)* as a barrier to the managers involvement. All three coachees sought coaching because of this poor relationship, either to work on improving the relationship or to identify ways they could be effective despite their poor relationship.

Of the inhibitory behaviours identified the two that were most influential were *did not seek involvement* and *brought coaching up for information only*. Over two-thirds of participants (*N*=21) identified both the coachee and line manager not seeking the involvement of the line manager in the coaching as an important inhibitory behaviour. In addition to this inhibitory behaviour, often when coaching was raised by coachees it was brought up for information purposes only (*N*=10). Both behaviours were closely linked to cognitions about the personal nature of coaching and the involvement of line managers being unnecessary.

Facilitators of line management involvement

Less than half of participants referred to cognitions that facilitated line management involvement in coaching (Table 3). Of the cognitions identified, line manager's *understanding of how coaching worked* (*N*=5) within their organisation and *valuing it as a development tool* (*N*=8) were reported to be factors that facilitated their involvement. Understanding how the coaching system worked

Table 2: Barriers to line management involvement in coaching.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Barriers to line management involvement			
Cognitions – inhibitory			
Personal process	72	11 (91.6)	9 (50)
Involvement not useful or necessary	36	5 (41.6)	16 (88.8)
Unsure how manager should be involved	18	7 (58.3)	6 (33.3)
Willing to help if asked	7	4 (33.3)	0 (0)
Coachee/Line manager relationship	12	3 (25)	3 (16.6)
Behaviours – inhibitory			
Did not seek involvement	49	9 (75)	12 (66.6)
Task-orientated	5	0 (0)	1 (5.5)
Brought coaching up for information only	22	2 (16.6)	8 (44.4)
Inhibitors – other			
Lack of time	14	4 (33.3)	5 (27.7)
Logistics	5	3 (25)	0 (0)
Manager for only part of the coaching	17	3 (25)	4 (22.2)
Coaching process	1	1 (8.3)	0 (0)

enabled managers to suggest coaching as a developmental tool and to identify people who could coach their direct report. Managers who understood the coaching process and valued it as a development tool often had previous coaching experience, either working as internal coaches or having been coached themselves.

A key behaviour reported to facilitate line management involvement was that of *initiating conversations about the coaching* (*N*=17). Sometimes coaching came up naturally in conversation when line managers and coachees were discussing day-to-day work activities. On other occasions it was specifically raised by participants. When raised by coachees this was often because they wanted their managers to know how it was going, how the coaching process felt for them, that they were working on addressing particular development needs in coaching. When raised by line managers this was often done informally to check how the coaching was going, how the coachee felt about it, were they finding it useful.

> *'Between my coaching sessions there was no point at which he (line manager) and I were kind of meeting up and saying, 'How's it going?' Informally he was just sort of checking, 'Is it going ok? Are you finding it useful?'* (Coachee 6, lines 81–83)

When coachees and line managers *discussed general development* (*N*=13) this facilitated line management involvement. For example, participants talked about raising coaching as a topic for discussion in formal one-to-one and appraisal meetings.

Table 3: Facilitators of line management involvement in coaching.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Facilitators of line management involvement			
Cognitions – facilitative			
Wanted to involve manager	9	2 (16.6)	5 (27.7)
Understand how coaching system works	8	4 (33.3)	1 (5.5)
Value coaching as development tool	13	5 (41.6)	3 (16.6)
Coachee/Line manager relationship	9	4 (33.3)	2 (11.1)
Behaviours – facilitative			
Initiated conversations about the coaching	30	7 (58.3)	10 (55.5)
Discussed coaching when raised by the other party	5	4 (33.3)	0 (0)
Supportive of coaching	20	6 (50)	7 (38.8)
Discussed general development	18	8 (66.6)	5 (27.7)

These behaviours were often linked to the facilitative cognitions. For example, coachees *wanted to involve their manager* (cognition) so *initiated conversations about the coaching* (behaviour). Line managers valued coaching as a development tool (cognition) so were *supportive of their direct reports coaching* (behaviour).

Line manager impact on coaching goals

Fifty coaching goals were identified during the interviews (Table 4). Of the 50 goals, it is notable that none were directly aligned to organisational outcomes, such as improving organisational efficiency. Forty-eight were *indirectly related to business needs* (*N*=29) and two were *personal goals* (*N*=2). Goals were classified as indirect when an implicit assumption that they would lead to improved performance against business objectives could be made. These goals included improving time management, building confidence, developing better working relationships with colleagues and stakeholders.

Line management involvement in goal setting varied. No matter what level of involvement managers had, the majority of goals set were indirectly related to business needs. Line managers direct involvement in goal setting did not result in goals that were directly aligned to organisational objectives.

Direct and indirect management involvement provided coachees with valuable performance information which helped shape their goals. However, these goals were focused on personal effectiveness and career progression, not business objectives.

Table 4: Line management involvement in setting coaching goals.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Type of goals set			
Business goals indirect	48	12 (100)	17 (94.4)
Career development	14	5 (41.6)	8 (44.4)
Personal effectiveness	34	7 (58.3)	14 (77.7)
Personal goals	2	0 (0)	2 (11.1)

Management behaviours that facilitated coaching

A number of management behaviours were identified by participants as facilitating their coaching. These behaviours will be discussed, along with the affects highlighted by participants.

Facilitative behaviours comprised five clusters: supporting, collaborating, informing, management style and challenging. *Supporting* was the most frequently cited cluster (Table 5). Over three-quarters of participants (*N*=24) talked about *encouragement* from line managers positively influencing the coachee's decision to have coaching and to continue to use it for as long as they needed. The following example illustrates this:

> *'When he (line manager) spoke about it, and he was so enthusiastic about it, and explained it to me, what it would involve, and I kind of thought well maybe it can help me.'* (Coachee 20, lines 144–146)

Other supportive behaviours identified included being *approachable* (*N*=5), providing *reassurance* (*N*=9), and actively *listening* (*N*=8) to coachees. Being approachable meant coachees felt able to discuss their coaching with their managers. Providing reassurance helped encourage coachees lacking in confidence to put into practice the new skills they were learning.

Informing was another cluster of behaviours identified by many participants as important. *Providing feedback* (*N*=15) was the most frequently cited behaviour in this cluster. This behaviour provided coachees with valuable information which they used to inform their coaching. As previously mentioned feedback on performance was used by coachees when setting their coaching goals. It was also used during the coaching process as a source of confirmation that the coaching was working and as a way of refining its focus.

Three behaviours fell under the cluster *management style: coaching* (*N*=9), *giving the coachee space* (*N*=5) and *being open* (*N*=5). Adopting a coaching style provided coachees with a second source of coaching. This reinforced the coaching and helped coachees to think through and identify solutions to issues arising during learning transfer. For some coachees it was important they were given space by their managers to work through their coaching alone. For others it was important that their line managers were open to new ideas and let them try new ways of working. They identified this openness as supporting their learning transfer.

The final behaviour identified was providing challenge (*N*=7). This involved challenging coachees' limiting beliefs, encouraging them to experiment and take risks and applying gentle pressure to motivate coachees to stretch themselves. This behaviour also helped coachees to transfer their learning.

Table 5: Management behaviours that facilitated coaching.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Management behaviours that facilitated coaching			
Supporting			
Allowing time to have the coaching	31	7 (58.3)	12 (66.6)
Encouragement	73	11 (91.6)	13 (72.2)
Approachable	7	4 (33.3)	1 (5.5)
Reassuring	15	3 (25)	6 (33.3)
Listening	13	5 (41.6)	3 (16.6)
Collaborating			
Talking through things together	32	9 (75)	4 (22.2)
Informing			
Providing feedback	33	7 (58.3)	8 (44.4)
Providing guidance	17	6 (50)	4 (22.2)
Modelling	7	2 (16.6)	1 (5.5)
Management Style			
Coaching	18	5 (41.6)	4 (22.2)
Giving the coachee space	11	1 (8.3)	4 (22.2)
Open	10	3 (25)	2 (11.1)
Challenging			
Providing challenge	25	4 (33.3)	3 (16.6)

Management behaviours that hindered coaching

Two clusters of behaviours, *restrictive* and *passive*, were identified as barriers to effective coaching outcomes (Table 6). Restrictive behaviours included managers *not using a coaching management style* (*N*=2), being *critical* (*N*=3) or unwilling to accept new ideas and in one case *not allowing time* (*N*=1) for the coachee to undertake coaching actions. These behaviours stopped coachees discussing their coaching with managers, which in turn hindered or slowed learning transfer. Although these behaviours did not make the coaching less effective, coachees had to be more resilient or resourceful to achieve positive coaching outcomes. No line managers identified these behaviours as barriers.

The passive cluster of behaviours involved line managers not taking an active interest in coaching, not giving regular or effective feedback, and/or taking an unstructured approach to the coaching. The majority of line managers (*N*=10) identified taking an unstructured approach, for example, not agreeing a time commitment, nor outlining what the line managers role should be, as a barrier to effective coaching outcomes.

Just under a quarter of coachees (*N*=4) talked about their line managers *disinterest* in their coaching. This perceived disinterest resulted in the coachee not discussing their coaching and being less diligent when it came to transferring their learning. The following example illustrates this:

Table 6: Management behaviours that hindered coaching.

Category/code	Total frequency of code	Frequency of line manager interviews containing code (%)	Frequency of coachee interviews containing code (%)
Management behaviours that hindered coaching			
Restrictive			
Critical/closed	12	0 (0)	3 (16.6)
Non-coaching style	5	0 (0)	2 (11.1)
Time not allowed	1	0 (0)	1 (5.5)
Passive			
Laissez-faire	3	1 (8.3)	0 (0)
Disinterested	10	0 (0)	4 (22.2)
Did not formalise coaching/unstructured	19	10 (83.3)	3 (16.6)
Inadequate feedback	4	0 (0)	3 (16.6)

> *'I don't feel, as I said, that she's interested in the overall development, ongoing development throughout the year, so, therefore, I don't feel I should or need to update her… If she had shown a more active interest then I would have done, and we could have talked about the issues that I'd discussed with my coach and how they feed back into work… I haven't transferred as much as I could have done from the coaching to the real world, as it were.'* (Coachee 10, lines 64–72)

Four coachees perceived their managers to be disinterested. Of this group, three of their managers were also interviewed. All three managers reported being interested in the coaching and willing to help the coachee if they wanted this (a cognition identified as inhibitory under factors affecting involvement). They all hoped the coachee would know they could ask for help, but did not offer it because they did not want to intrude on something that may be personal. It is therefore interesting to note that on occasions where a manager has been respecting a coachee's privacy, this has sometimes been perceived by the coachee as disinterest and has negatively impacted learning transfer.

Discussion

Factors influencing line management involvement in coaching

Previous research has investigated factors that prevent managerial support of learning but has not specifically focused on coaching. To the researcher's (HO) knowledge this is the first study that identified factors that influence line management involvement in coaching. Some of the inhibitory factors identified by this study correspond to the findings obtained by research investigating support of learning (Salaman, 1995; Hyman & Cunningham, 1998; Skruker, 1987). Chiefly, these were identified as: (1) conflict between operational and developmental duties/lack of time/logistics; and (2) managers perceptions that staff would gain little from engaging in developmental activities/task-orientated management behaviour. The factors applicable to both general learning and coaching were not factors with the greatest influence on managerial involvement in coaching.

Barriers to involvement fell predominantly into two categories; cognitions and behaviour. Three key inhibitory cognitions

identified were: (1) coaching is a personal process; (2) manager involvement is not necessary; (3) uncertainty about how managers should be involved. The data indicate that these cognitions heavily influenced the inhibitory behaviours. For example, the behaviours of 'not seeking involvement' and 'bringing coaching up for information only' were both linked to cognitions that coaching was a personal process and involvement from line managers was not necessary. The cognition 'willing to help if asked' was also closely related to cognitions about coaching being a personal process. A third of managers were happy to support the coaching, but, because they perceived it to be personal, did not want to offer support for fear of encroaching on the coachee's personal space.

Recommendation 1: To reduce or remove the personal process barrier, it is recommended that coaches encourage line managers and coachees to discuss and agree a coaching psychological contract before the coaching begins. This contract should set out how the line manager will be involved and what support they will provide.

Being unsure of the role that managers should play in the coaching process was a barrier to line management involvement, resulting in both coachees and managers not seeking managerial involvement. The uncertainty about the role of the manager was often due to the lack of knowledge and practical coaching experience of the coachees and/or line managers.

Recommendation 2: To reduce or remove this lack of understanding it is recommended that coaches either provide line managers and coachees with guidance which explains the role line managers can play to support coaching or discuss this with them before the coaching starts.

In addition to identifying a number of inhibitors this is the first research to examine factors facilitating line management involvement. The initiation of conversations about the coaching, by either the coachee and / or the line manager, was a behaviour central to the involvement of line managers. Understanding how the coaching system worked, valuing coaching as a development tool and wanting management involvement were all cognitions that supported the initiation of coaching related conversations. For example, understanding the coaching system enabled line managers to initiate conversations about its use as a development tool and to recommend a coach to their direct report. Valuing coaching as a development tool enabled line managers to initiate conversations where they encouraged and supported coachees with their coaching.

Recommendation 3: When possible internal coaches are recommended to meet with the line manager and coachee before the coaching begins to outline the benefits of management involvement and to explain how coaching is managed within the organisation. It is recommended that external coaches meet with the coachee and line manager at the start of coaching to explain how the coaching process works and the benefits of line managers being involved.

The impact of line managers on the goal setting stage of coaching

Past research has indicated that issues exist at the goal setting stage of coaching. For example, line managers have been found to have little or no involvement in goal setting and the percentage of business objectives set in these studies was very low (Sinclair et al., 2008; Carter, 2004). The current study found that even when line managers were directly involved in goal setting this did not result in business objectives being set. One of the five organisations that took part in the study advocate a three-way contracting process is adopted. This approach appears to have had no impact on the involvement of managers in the goal setting stage of coaching or the type of goals set. However, it would be wrong to assume that there are no benefits to line management involvement at the goal setting

stage of coaching. Where line managers can and do add value is in providing coachees with performance feedback which they can then use to set appropriate coaching goals.

Recommendation 4: It is recommended that coaches advise coachees to seek feedback on their performance and areas for development from their manager before their first coaching session.

The impact of line managers on coaching outcomes

The type of line management involvement to facilitate and hinder successful coaching outcomes was investigated. The findings echo those of other studies that have found managerial support to positively influence coaching transfer (Olivero et al., 1997; McGovern et al., 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2003; Stewart et al., 2008). Line management behaviours found to facilitate coaching comprised five clusters: supporting, collaborating, informing, management style and challenging. Behaviours found to hinder coaching comprised two clusters: restrictive and passive.

Many of the managerial behaviours found to support coaching have been identified in past employee development research. Encouragement from line managers was key when coachees were deciding whether to have coaching and in continuing with their coaching once started. This behaviour is similar to the management endorsement of coaching identified as important by McGovern et al. (2001) and managers needing to be explicit about what coaching is and its value, identified by Wasylyshyn (2003). Here there is also a cross-over between coaching and training, where research has found managers who reinforce the value and importance of learning have a positive impact on training outcomes (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993).

Providing feedback was another facilitative behaviour identified. The current study found coachees used management feedback to monitor their progress during coaching and refine the focus of future coaching sessions. The need for managers to provide feedback on progress has been identified by other coaching research (Stewart et al., 2008; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Creating an environment where coachees are able to put into practice the skills they are developing is important. A number of behaviours were identified by this study as playing a role here. Being approachable, listening and reassuring were all behaviours that helped coachees to implement their development. Talking things through together, providing coachees with challenge and being open to new ways of working were also important. Similar behaviours have been identified by other coaching studies. For example, Stewart et al. (2008) found managers who assisted coachees to implement their development had a positive impact on coaching transfer.

There is crossover between many of the behaviours identified by this study to support coaching transfer and the behaviours identified as facilitating wider employee development (Beattie, 2002; Hamlin et al., 2006). Chiefly these behaviours are: (1) being approachable; (2) providing challenge; (3) coaching and (4) advising. This suggests that managers who are good at supporting wider employee development should also be good at supporting employees having coaching.

Recommendation 5: It is recommended that if coaches are able to meet with managers before the coaching starts they explain that management engagement in the process can facilitate positive coaching outcomes. In particular explaining that managers can help coachees to make time for their coaching; continue to provide feedback to coachees after they have started their coaching; and provide coachees with opportunities to put the new skills they are learning into practice, where possible allowing coachees to practice new ways of working. If coaches cannot meet with the manager it is recommended that they encourage the coachee to involve their manager where appropriate.

One behaviour identified as unique to this study is that of giving the coachee space. For some coachees it was important they were able to work through their coaching alone, with no management involvement. Again this highlights the importance of agreeing a coaching psychological contract.

In addition to facilitative management behaviours this study also identified a number of management behaviours that inhibited coaching transfer. To the researcher's knowledge only one previous study has investigated the negative impact line managers can have on coaching outcomes. Stewart et al. (2008) found that the absence of line managers was a barrier to transfer. Ineffective managers did not provide opportunities for coachees to practice the skills they were developing and blocked development plans. The restrictive and passive behaviours identified by the current research are comparable to those found by Stewart et al. (2008). Here ineffective managers were seen to be critical of new ideas or ways of doing things; did not allow coachees the time to work on coaching actions; did not have a coaching management style. These behaviours made it harder for coachees to achieve successful coaching outcomes.

Inadequate feedback and managers not formalising coaching are behaviours comparable to the lack of psychosocial support, which included a lack of partnership for development action between managers and coachees and lack of feedback, identified by Stewart et al. (2008). The disinterest identified by the current study is comparable to the lack of development champion identified by Stewart et al. (2008). However, this lack of development champion appears to be due to actual disinterest in the coaching, whereas the current research found that in some cases what coachees perceived to be disinterest was instead linked to the personal process and 'willing to help if asked' barriers to involvement, with line managers not wanting to intrude on something that they perceived could be personal.

Recommendation 6: If the coach is able to meet with the line manager before coaching begins it is recommended that they explain the kind of manager behaviours that can have a negative impact on coaching outcomes.

Strengths and limitations

This research study had some methodological limitations. It was based on a convenience sample. This type of sample is more likely to suffer sampling bias than a random sample (Loewenthal, 2001). It is possible that the less involvement a line manager had in their direct reports coaching the less likely they were to respond to the request for participants, perhaps feeling they would have little to contribute to the study. This possible response bias may have distorted the results, making line management involvement appear greater than it actually was.

Multiple sources of data, line manager and coachee's perspectives, were collected and participants came from different functional areas, organisational levels and five UK Government departments. Whilst these factors will increase the transferability of the findings, it should be noted that the majority of participants were White/British and all worked in central Government. Although there are differences in the organisational cultures of the five Government departments, these differences are unlikely to be as wide as those between Government departments and voluntary and private sector organisations. As a result the findings are limited in generalisability.

Recommendations for future research

This study highlights a number of interesting areas for future research. First, this research should be replicated in different sectors and industries to test the transferability of the findings. Second, further research is needed to uncover why line management involvement in coaching was considered unnecessary. Was it linked to the personal nature of goals or were there other reasons for this? Third, the reasons coachees engaged with coaching should

be investigated. This may highlight motivations of a higher order than goals, informing our understanding of manager involvement and the lack of an overt relationship between goals and business outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study extended coaching research by providing a valuable new insight into the factors that facilitate and hinder line management involvement in coaching. It also provided robust evidence to support prior studies that have identified managers as a factor to influence coaching transfer and highlighted alternative variables of interest to be explored by future research.

The study has implications for organisational practice and coaching research. In particular it highlights the need for guidance for managers and coachees about the role of managers in the coaching process and the management behaviours that can facilitate and hinder successful coaching outcomes.

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Moderating factors of the Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM)

Johan Bouwer & Jacoba van Egmond

Objectives: *Identifying those (moderating) factors that are instrumental in the successful completion of a coaching trajectory that is based on the Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM).*
Design: *Qualitative.*
Methods: *Data were collected by means of three questionnaires: a semi-structured questionnaire for the clients; a semi-structured questionnaire for the clients' managers; and a regular evaluation form for the coach. The authors of this paper analysed the data manually, first independently from each other and then again, in a joint session.*
Results: *The most important moderating factors of the VECM appeared to be the client's readiness to change (will), the client-coach relationship, the manager's role and the coach's expertise.*
Conclusions: *Most of the outcomes of this study were (structurally) congruous to those of earlier studies. Remarkably, 'relationship' and 'will' were valued higher in this study, and managers assumed their own roles in the success of coaching to be more significant than was perceived by clients. Follow-up studies, particularly into the role of managers, the precise nature and role of the will of clients, the assessment of the client-coach relationship in various contexts, the effects and role of the coach's gender and the extent to which familiarity with the theoretical building blocks of the VECM has an influence on interpreting the coaching effects are recommended.*
Keywords: *Moderating factors; Evidence-based coaching; Triangle model; Relationship; Will.*

COACHING can increasingly be considered a profession because of its social recognition, registration systems and professional associations prescribing professional and ethical codes for their members. However, there are signs that coaches increasingly feel the need to build their practice in a solid theoretical basis and empirically validated models (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Apparently, the demands of organisations regarding the trustworthiness of coaches and their services force them to expand the boundaries of their professionalism. Consequently, coaching has entered a post-professional phase, according to Drake (2008).

Whereas in the professional phase the focus was placed predominantly on researching the role and identity of coaching, the (application of) coaching interventions, the underlying theories of these interventions and the conditions for – and development of – self-steering, in the post-professional phase the focus is placed on questions such as 'What works when and how well for whom?' and 'How and why does it work?' and 'Is there any room for improvement?' (Drake, 2008). Coaches are challenged to start working evidence based. The unclearness about the different roles coaches could play in actual practice and the related urge to specialise have increasingly prompted coaches to provide all stakeholders with 'proof' of the effectiveness of their interventions and to account for the choices they have made with regard to their interventions. In addition, coaches apparently need not only to reflect about their work (focusing on theory and practice of their profession), but also to reflectively ask themselves 'Why do I do what I do?', 'What could I do more effectively?' and 'How do theory and practice affect me?'

These reflections require coaches to be prepared to account for the foundation of their professionalism and, consequently, to take steps that go beyond the available know-how, which is based on what is termed 'pop psychology' regarding personal devel-

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opment (Grant & Stober, 2006, p.5). Know-how based on empirical studies (e.g. the effectiveness of their coaching interventions) and the coach's scientific 'mindedness' will have to further broaden the professional expertise, explore the principles of coaching as a discipline, mark the boundaries with related disciplines, such as counselling, mentoring and supervision, and reinforce and increase their credibility for managers.

In order to meet these challenges, empirical and scientific studies in the field of coaching have boomed over the past years. In this context, the focal points were first and foremost internal coaching by managers, external coaching by professionals, coaching as an instrument for determining psychological mechanisms and processes of change in individuals and organisations, and the results, and/or effects and outcomes, of coaching, particularly with an eye to determining return on investment (ROI) (see articles by Evers & Brouwers (2006), Greif (2007), Gyllensten & Palmer (2007), Mackie (2007) and Paige (2002), for example). Following that, it becomes necessary to focus on the moderating factors of coaching (or a specific coaching model) to complement and broaden the (stakeholders' and professional) demands pertaining to effectiveness and outcomes of coaching.

To make a contribution – within the Dutch-speaking region – to the development of a theory on evidence-based work in coaching, a study was conducted by Bouwer and Van Egmond (2009) with regard to the assessment of various aspects of the Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM). This study primarily aimed to identify the instrumental factors for realising a successful coaching trajectory. The VECM has been developed by Van Egmond (self-employed coach) and has been used (to the appreciation of clients) in coaching trajectories between 2004 and 2009. This paper will first provide a brief introduction to the VECM. Subsequently, it will discuss the set-up, results (limited to the effects and moderating factors of the model), major subjects of discussion and conclusions of this study.

The Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM)

This section discusses the theoretical building blocks and methodology of the VECM.

Theoretical building blocks

View on coaching. In the VECM, coaching is viewed as a learning process that comprises the 'whole' individual (his/her values, standards and convictions). The overall purpose of coaching is to facilitate people in becoming active which, in turn, leads them to change in such a way that they become more effective in solving their problems. The substantive purpose of coaching is that: (a) the client's goals are achieved; and (b) the client functions in a happier and more effective way, both as a person and as an employee. In this context, the client is responsible for his own learning process, while the coach performs the role of partner in dialogue, assists in identifying appropriate goals and suitable solutions, bolsters confidence and promotes personal development.

View on learning. Learning is understood to mean a process with more or less permanent results and, subsequently, creating new – or changing old – behavioural patterns in the client (Van Parreren, 1971). Learning, therefore, means learning new behaviour and unlearning old behaviour.

Dilts' psychological levels. According to Dilts (1990), six levels serve as a structuring principle for learning, (personal) change, communication and solving problems. These are: environment; behaviour; ability; conviction; identity; and spirituality (see also O'Connor & Seymour, 1993). The VCEM focuses predominantly on the first four levels because of its focus on improvement and change. Major questions in this context include: What plan provides the most effective support? How can actual results be

achieved? What are the obstructing or facilitating convictions that stand in the way of positive results?

Transactional Analysis (TA). TA is based on the philosophy that people determine their own fate by taking decisions that can be changed again (Stewart & Joines, 1987). Working with contracts and open communication (transparency) are major principles in this approach. The TA learning process takes place within a triangle contract, in which the coach, client and manager participate. Each triangle contract has three layers, i.e. the procedural layer (frequency, duration of sessions, investment, payment and meeting place), the professional layer (agreements on goals, results, and roles of the three participants) and the psychological layer (underlying dynamics in the contract between the three parties on the basis of which the hidden agendas can be made explicit). Within the VECM, the managers' roles are not limited to the contracting phase, but expanded to two or three evaluation moments during the trajectory. The objective is to make explicit the implicit expectations of the three parties and to harmonise them with eachother. The success of a coaching trajectory is tested first and foremost against the progress and development of set objectives and results.

The GROW model. In each session, the working method of the VECM is determined on the basis of four basic principles of GROW (Goal, Reality, Options and Wrapping up; Whitmore, 2002). In addition, goals are formulated as the desired result in behavioural terms.

Maslow's learning cycle. Maslow introduced four phases in his learning model, i.e. unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence and unconscious competence (Maslow, 1954). The VECM aims to increase the client's consciousness by, for example, identifying obstructing convictions or letting the client collect his own feedback on his own performance. Key elements are 'becoming conscious' (of survival mechanisms) and 'unlearning and learning' (of old and new behaviour). The phenomenon of 'reflection' also deserves attention. This is understood to mean reflecting on one's actions and steps to be taken as well as on one's own presuppositions, expectations and intentions. The related reflection reports enable the client to observe, steer and understand (obtaining insight). It is essential that the client makes a link between understanding and taking action.

Mobilising the will. The will is one of the most crucial factors for a coaching trajectory to be successful. This understanding is derived from the range of thoughts of psychosynthesis, founded by Roberto Assagioli (Ferruci, 1991). Mobilising the will stimulates the client's own responsibility and self-steering. During the entire coaching trajectory, the VECM checks and mobilises the client's will by repeatedly determining – in consultation with the client – what the next step will be, explaining the method to be used and always letting the client make choices with regard to intended actions.

Methodology

The methodical structure of the VECM is as follows.

The client: (a) Intake; (b) recurring elements in each session include determining goals, becoming conscious and translating these goals into reality, which results in proposed decisions with regard to new behaviour; and (c) evaluation. The evaluation, in its turn, consists of three elements:

- Intake and the client's related individual plan;
- Reflection and action report (on lessons learned and proposed decisions on new behaviour);
- Evaluation of coaching results (checking the development process and achievement of goals), the process (the coach's

contribution and other factors, such as duration and number of sessions) and the need for further development.

The client's manager: (a) Intake; (b) interim evaluation; and (c) evaluation after completion of the coaching trajectory.

The coach: After each session, the coach writes evaluation reports and sends these to the clients for reasons of comparison and stimulation of their learning process.

A coaching session lasts two hours on average. A coaching trajectory takes six sessions on average, with an intervening period of at least one month. This period is usually required to put lessons learned into practice.

Study design

We describe the study design by reviewing objectives and questions, the nature of the method, respondents, instruments, procedure and analysis.

Objectives and questions

The study *objective* was to identify the moderating factors of the VECM. The related *questions* and subquestions were as follows.

Main question: What factors contribute to a successful completion of a coaching trajectory which is based on the VECM?

Subquestions: What are the theoretical building blocks of the VECM? According to which method does the VECM work? How do clients, managers (i.e. the client's supervisors) and coach assess the coaching trajectory? Which aspects of the model can be considered moderating factors?

Method

Our study was conducted by sending semi-structured questionnaires to respondents and their managers after completion of a coaching trajectory. The trajectories were monitored in the period from September 2008 to October 2009.

Respondents

We asked four clients and their managers to complete the questionnaires. One duo worked for the municipality of a medium-sized town, one with an international accountancy firm, and the other two for a regional training centre (ROC) in the Netherlands.

The clients were two men and two women. Their average age was 43.25 years. The managers were also two men and two women.

Instruments

As stated above, the data were collected by means of three questionnaires: a semi-structured questionnaire for the clients; a semi-structured questionnaire for the clients' managers; and a regular evaluation form for the coach.

The developed questionnaires for clients and supervisors were based on the regular evaluations of the VECM, the interview list used by Gyllensten and Palmer (2007, p.177) in their study of client-coaching relationship, and Mackie's (2007, p.317) evaluation methodology of the coaching process.

Questionnaires characteristics

Client's questionnaire: This questionnaire consisted of 94 items, 14 of which were assessments on the Lickert-type scale and the remainder of which were open questions. The questionnaire was divided into the following main categories: biographical information, reason to participate in a coaching trajectory, client, coach, manager, characteristics of coaching, coaching process, coaching method, results, overall evaluation and assessment of the coaching trajectory and major factors that led to the achievement of the formulated goals.

Manager's questionnaire: This questionnaire consisted of 14 items with the following main categories: evaluation of the coaching process, coach, reason to participate in a coaching trajectory and factors that led to a successful completion of the coaching trajec-

tory. Two questions were assessments on the Lickert-type scale and the remainder were open questions.

Coach's evaluation form: The questionnaire used by the coach to evaluate the trajectories consisted of 16 questions with the following main categories: general information, result of the coaching trajectory, coaching process and the client's further personal development.

Procedure

After completion of the coaching trajectories (i.e. during the coach's end evaluation, in which it became apparent that the coaching trajectories were completed with a high level of appreciation, so we can speak of successful trajectories), clients and their supervisors were asked whether they were prepared to participate in this study. Upon receiving agreement from the clients and their supervisors, we sent the questionnaires to the respondents by email, one week after completion of the coaching trajectory. The completed lists were returned by email as well.

Analysis

The authors of this paper analysed the data manually, first independently from each other and then again, in a joint session. Answers to open ended questions – especially with regard to the perceived moderating factors – were analysed on the basis of the ranking (in importance) allocated to them by the respondents.

Results

As stated above, the results portrayed here, are limited to assessments of the perceived *positive effects* of the coaching trajectory and the related moderating factors. Only scores and ratings with an 80 per cent+ value are represented below. The views of each of the three parties in the VECM (client, manager and coach) will be discussed next.

The client

From the data, we abstracted the following information on the effects and moderating factors of the coaching trajectory.

Effects of the coaching trajectory

(a) The respondents gave themselves an 83 per cent chance that they will not revert to their old, unlearned, behaviour. They indicated they could better deal with problems, had more self-confidence and a greater understanding of their behavioural patterns. Feedback from the (working) environment confirmed changes in various areas (e.g. improved communication, more efficient behaviour, more assertive in contacts and setting limits).
(b) 100 per cent felt they had grown as a person (autonomy).
(c) 100 per cent felt their stress levels had decreased. Some experienced physical changes (fewer headaches). Others experienced less stress and were much more relaxed and at ease than before. This was also the case in their home environment.
(d) 100 per cent perceived that set goals had been achieved.
(e) Negative effects were not given. One respondent, however, stated there was a risk of dependency on the coach.

Moderating factors

According to the clients, the most important (generic) moderating factors were as follows (average valuation in brackets).

(a) The client's personal commitment (working hard) (91 per cent)*.
(b) The client-coach relationship (90 per cent).
(c) The readiness to change (will) (88 per cent)*.
(d) The coach's skills (85 per cent).

*One could argue that the readiness to change (c) forms an integral part of the client's personal commitment (a). In other words, the will is the motivation to work hard

so as to achieve set goals. When combining the two, the client-coach relationship would be considered the most important moderating factor and personal commitment would follow in second place, with only a very small difference (0.5 per cent).

On a *methodical level*, the clients stated several factors as important interventions for achieving their goals. These were as follows.

- The direct way in which the problem is confronted.
- Learning to formulate questions and solutions independently.
- Taking time to recognise one's own instruments and lessons to be learned.
- Practical exercises (interventions) used by the coach when discussing the effects of the interventions.

The clients' manager

Effects of the coaching trajectory

According to the managers, the coaching trajectory had the following effects.

(a) The client is more relaxed as a person, has more control over his own emotions, is more at ease and more cheerful.
(b) With regard to work, the client shows more initiative, has more self-confidence, has more problem-solving abilities and is more conscious when dealing with the 'warm' side of others.

In addition, the managers estimate the chance that clients would not revert to their old and ineffective behaviour 73 per cent.

Moderating factors

According to the managers, the major moderating factors are as follows.

(a) The client's readiness to change.
(b) A supporting supervisor.
(c) The client-coach relationship*.
(d) An expert coach*.

In this context, it should be noted that the managers valued the impact of their own involvement and/or role in a successful coaching trajectory of their employees with an 82 per cent score. The clients, however, valued the impact of their managers' role with a 60 per cent score.

*Please note in this context that one of the major tasks of an (expert) coach is to build up a good relationship with clients. If these two aspects (c) and (d) were combined, the relationship may have ranked second place.

The coach

Effects of the coaching trajectory

A high degree of congruity to the study data can be seen when comparing the evaluation forms the clients completed at the coach's request after completion of the coaching trajectory. This applies particularly to the effects on a personal and functional level, the importance of personal commitment and the perception that the coaching trajectory meets the learning needs.

Moderating factors

The coach finds the following factors essential for an effective or successful coaching trajectory.

(a) The client's readiness (will) to change.
(b) The relationship.
(c) The coach's own expertise and professionalism.
(d) Linked to (c), monitoring the process. Target-oriented working is essential in this context.

Discussion

A striking element in this study is that each of the three parties considered the major success factors for achieving the set goals to be the client's readiness (will) to change and his full commitment, the client-coach relationship and the coach's expertise. The clients' managers added a fourth factor (and valued it very highly), i.e. their own role in a successful coaching trajectory.

The manager's role. This aspect has never before been explicitly included in a study in the Netherlands. However, due to the extent to which the clients themselves valued this factor, it cannot be ranked in the top five of

moderating factors of coaching trajectories. In studies conducted in English-speaking countries, however, this aspect has been identified as a major item with regard to evaluating professional development. Guskey (1991) has stated that 'organisational support' is an essential element of professional development (see also Paige, 2002, p.66). The reason for the low valuation of their supervisions' roles in the success of clients' professional development may be the specific authority structures in Dutch organisations (egalitarian), the labour laws of this country (high level of employee protection) and its culture of individualism (autonomy and responsibility). At any rate, contrary to Guskey's (1991) study, Dutch clients do not indicate that they do not feel supported by their organisations or supervisors. They apparently experience support, but the valuation of their managers' specific roles is rationalised.

The will. This aspect is congruous to, for example, Greif's analysis (2007, p.243). He regards clients' 'change readiness' and 'persistence' as two important factors for achieving their goals. This will have to be discussed explicitly in future studies for many studies on coaching results aim predominantly to generate information on overall outcomes such as the extent to which set goals have been achieved. Some studies, however, also focus on measuring changes in affect, subjective well-being and happiness with life. In addition, researchers also focus on specific outcomes such as understanding and self-reflection, individual, social and functional characteristics, and the valuation of effects on an individual level (Greif, 2007, pp.224–226). So far, however, they have somewhat neglected the conative aspect (the will). The present study into the VECM correlates with Greif's analysis and shows that the clients' will and readiness to change are regarded as essential by all respondents.

On all sides, the *relationship* is regarded as an essential moderating factor in any coaching trajectory. In this context, trust and transparency are considered key coordinates (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007, p.174). In the area of psychotherapy, the relationship in coaching situations has been studied to a large extent. One of the findings was that the therapist's qualities, facilitating conditions (e.g. empathy) and the relationship are major factors that influence the outcomes of therapies (O'Brion & Palmer, 2006). Mackie is of the opinion that the study of psychotherapy outcomes cannot be applied to coaching uncritically. He refers particularly to the methodology used to determine the outcomes (randomised, controlled trials versus case studies) (2007, pp.316–317). Coaching will have to build up its own body of knowledge. However, the few studies that have been conducted within the domain of coaching still show that an open, supporting, and healthy coach relationship is a major success factor (Schmidt, 2003). This has also been confirmed in the present study, the relationship being linked mostly to trusting the coach and having a 'click' with the coach.

The coach. In the literature, the personal and professional characteristics of an effective coach are mostly linked to the skill of establishing a strong connection between client and coach, the coach's professionalism and the use of an unambiguous method (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Greif adds to this that the coach's professional credibility and the coach's ability to make the client's goals and expectations explicit are key aspects for an eventual coaching success (2007, p.243). In the present study, the coach was praised particularly for her empathy and genuine interest, ability to listen, methodical approach (having clients do exercises), good timing and professionalism. Seventy-five per cent felt that gender also played an important part in the success of coaching. With regard to the coach's role as a moderating factor, earlier studies are, therefore, congruous to the present study.

Conclusions and recommendations

Due to the size of the cohort of respondents, the results cannot be generalised. However, attempts to optimise reliability were made by first conducting two analyses independently from each other, followed by a joint analysis. Various aspects of the analyses are consistent with earlier studies. For example, the client's readiness to change, the client-coach relationship and the coach's professionalism as important moderating factors of coaching. A striking aspect of the current study is that readiness to change is valued higher than in any other study. Another striking aspect is the way in which managers rank their own role in a successful coaching trajectory. This is not congruous to earlier studies. At any rate, it is not entirely clear what exactly they wish to communicate by that.

We recommend conducting further studies into the following.

(a) A substantiation of the perceived role of managers (c.q. supervisors) as a moderating factor of the VECM.
(b) The precise nature and role of the will of clients with regard to achieving set goals in a coaching trajectory.
(c) The causes and effects of the fact that the client-coach relationship as a success factor was valued higher in this study than in, for example, the Wasylyshyn study (90 per cent and 83 per cent, respectively).
(d) The effects and role of the coach's gender in successful coaching trajectories.
(e) The fact that each of the three parties drew virtually the same conclusions with regard to the nature of coaching, the coach's characteristics and methodology. There is a strikingly high level of consistency between these conclusions and the theoretical building blocks of the VECM (which in itself may be interpreted positively, but it may also be an indication that desirable answers were given).

To conclude

Against a background of increasing pressure on coaches to work evidence based, this paper discussed results of a study that was conducted into identifying the moderating factors of the Van Egmond Coaching Model (VECM). Coaches are increasingly prompted to provide managers with proof of the effects of their coaching model. First, the paper explained the seven building blocks and methodology of the VECM. The building blocks comprise views on coaching and learning, the ranges of thoughts of Dilts, Stewart and Joines, Whitmore, Maslow, and Assagioli. The methodology shows a clearly demarcated structure in which the standard is to work with reflection and evaluation reports. Subsequently, the design of the study (objectives and questions, method, respondents, procedure, results of analysis and conclusions) was discussed. As stated above, this study aimed to identify the most important moderating factors of the VECM. For this purpose, the three parties of this model (client, manager and coach) completed semi-structured questionnaires after completion of four coaching trajectories. The most important moderating factors of the VECM were the client's readiness to change (the will), the client-coach relationship, the manager's role and the coach's expertise. When discussing the results, we established that most of the outcomes were (structurally) congruous to those of earlier studies. The will as a key factor was particularly evident in this study, more so than in any other study. We recommend conducting follow-up studies, particularly into the role of managers, the precise nature and role of the will of clients, the assessment of the client-coach relationship in various contexts, the effects and role of the coach's gender and the extent to which familiarity with the theoretical building blocks of the VECM has an influence on interpreting the coaching effects.

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The Managerial Gap and how coaching can help

Christine Porter & W. David Rees

This article considers two models that could potentially be useful to coaching psychologists as they seek to help clients identify their organisational roles and their willingness and ability to carry out such roles. The first model considered is that of the Managerial Escalator which seeks to help individual employees identify and cope with their likely accumulation of managerial responsibilities, particularly dealing with any Managerial Gap. The second, and linked, model is that of Role Set Analysis. This is a particularly effective technique to help clients identify their evolving role and priorities.

Keywords: *Managerial Gap; Coaching; Supervisory; Managerial Escalator; Hybrid managers; Leadership; Role models; Role Set Analysis; Evaluation.*

FOR MUCH of the past decade or more there has been an emphasis on leadership development which has sometimes led to the neglect of the key area of management training and development (Rees & Porter, 2008b). The development of managerial expertise is a crucial area that enables managers to cope with evolving critical managerial responsibilities. Often they accumulate such responsibilities with little or no preparation. Such acquisition is normally because of their specialist rather than managerial expertise (Rees & Porter, 2005). This article explains two models related to managerial activity in organisations: that of the Managerial Escalator, and the related one of Role Set Analysis. The models of the Managerial Escalator and the technique of Role Set Analysis are potentially useful tools to bring to the attention of both coaching psychologists and their clients wishing to analyse routes into management and effective behaviour in managerial roles. The implications of these concepts for those involved in management and coaching are also discussed. Both frameworks are potentially useful in helping the individual and the coaching psychologist identify the skills and capabilities that are within the would-be manager, enabling them to use their managerial skills more effectively. By this means, both organisational and individual effectiveness are increased, as well as hopefully the ability of clients to cope with their managerial responsibilities. A range of core management skills is also identified in this article.

Routes into management

With the current emphasis on leadership development, the key area of managerial training can be given insufficient attention in organisations or even ignored, unless it is subsumed under the title leadership development. Neglect of the need to develop managerial expertise can be particularly unfortunate given the likelihood of there being a significant Managerial Gap in organisations. The Managerial Gap is the difference between the amount of time that those with managerial responsibilities should be spending on appropriate managerial activities and time actually spent which is often considerably less than is needed, resulting in neglect and organisational ineffectiveness. Even when the gap is recognised it may not be dealt with effectively. The existence of this gap may be partly due to the way most people with managerial responsibility acquire such responsibility. Managers are likely to have started off as specialists and then to have proceeded in an escalator type progression up the organisation hierarchy. This may mean that managers move away from their, often cherished, specialisation into less congenial but often more important managerial work. Most management work is

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likely to be undertaken by 'hybrids' who necessarily have to combine specialist and managerial work. Ironically staff may even rise to very senior positions with little or no effective management training and development.

The reason that the area of management development activity requires continued attention is that most people who have managerial responsibility are likely to have worked as specialists first. Their entry into management is likely to have been gradual and most may not have had any prior management training. The need for training and development in this area may not even be recognised, especially for 'hybrid managers' who may already have had many years of specialist training. Staff may first acquire supervisory responsibility over other specialists and then the overlapping designation as 'manager'. Coaching, both informal and formal, may be an important way in which the management training and development needs created by this type of progression can be effectively met.

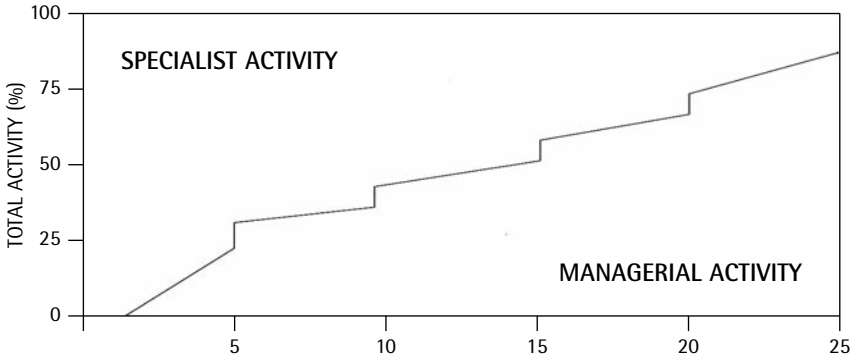
Because of the way in which individuals become managers, those with managerial responsibility may need to improve their skills in this area. Even those in very senior positions may lack some key managerial skills. However, it can be particularly important that those who are given managerial responsibilities not only have the aptitude but are also prepared to undertake such a role as opposed to expecting the benefits of promotion whilst clinging on to most of their previous job. The technique of Role Set Analysis can be a very effective way of showing disparities between what those with managerial responsibilities actually are doing and what they should be doing.

The Managerial Escalator

In a survey conducted in 2004 (Rees & Porter, 2005), it was found that most people with managerial responsibility have acquired it as a result of their specialist expertise, which they may well have developed over a number of years. This will have enabled them to assume managerial or supervisory responsibility in their specialist area. It is usually impractical for people without the relevant specialist experience to assume such responsibility. The concept of the Managerial Escalator was developed by Rees in the 1970s (Rees, 1984) initially in the context of nurse training for the Royal College of Nursing. Sadly, surprisingly little attention has been given to this phenomenon subsequently, despite the fact that it affects most organisations. Subsequent to the Salmon Report (Report of the committee on Senior Nursing Staff Structures, 1966) drastic changes were made to nursing career structures. Previously nurses had clinical career structures but, as a result of Salmon, job descriptions were issued giving nurses above a certain grade almost exclusively managerial responsibilities. Nurses are typical therefore of the hybrid nature of most managers' backgrounds. They usually go into their specialist training with a vocation for clinical activities. They then find that in order to progress up the hierarchy they need to largely relinquish these responsibilities and concentrate on managing others. However the switch from carrying out clinical tasks themselves to ensuring that others carry out these tasks can be difficult to accept from an emotional perspective. A coaching psychologist may be able to help staff to identify the new demands that are made of them and adapt to these in order that they can carry out their managerial tasks effectively.

Although the initial circumstances in which this model was developed occurred many years ago, this phenomenon of employees being promoted untrained and inexperienced into management on the basis of their specialist expertise has continued. The findings of research carried out by Rees and Porter (2005) showed 47 out of 50 people with management or supervisory responsibility surveyed had previously been specialists. Their involvement in management is likely to have been gradual – people do not normally go straight into a full-time management job but have an escalator-type progression as shown in Figure 1 (Rees & Porter, 2008a, p.5).

Figure 1: The Managerial Escalator – the relationship between managerial and specialist activity over time (Rees, 1984).



The exact way in which people acquire managerial responsibilities will vary from person to person. Figure 1 should not, therefore, be seen as a rigid template but as a simplified illustration of the progression into management that most people are likely to have had. The amount of time spent on managerial activity is shown on the vertical scale on the left-hand side of the diagram. The balance of activity, likely to be mainly specialist activity, is calculated by subtracting the managerial activity from 100 per cent. The Managerial Gap is calculated by comparing the amount of time that should be spent on managerial activity with the amount of time that is actually spent. In most cases it is found that not enough time is being spent on managerial activities, though sometimes it can be the other way around because of 'over-management' (Rees & Porter, 2005). Individuals and/or those responsible for succession planning may also find it useful to speculate where they or others are likely to be on the escalator in future years, and the preparation needed to be effective in those new positions.

Many of those on the escalator will never become full-time managers but will stay, and want to remain, as hybrid managers combining specialist and managerial work. Even with hybrid managers there may a reluctance to get involved in management and a desire, as one IT specialist put it, to remain as 'thoroughbreds'. However, the needs of the organisation are likely to be as explained below:

> Everyone is crying out for project managers, desktop service managers – to keep the system up and running and to talk through problems – and call centre managers… They are looking for the hybrid manager: someone who has more than just technical skills, but knows how to create a customer-orientated culture within an organisation. (Coles, 1997)

The organisational dilemma is usually that competent specialists are needed to manage other specialists. The reward structure is usually such that those with the responsibility for managing other specialists receive a better reward package. Therefore, if employees want promotion they need to move away from their area of expertise and their 'comfort-zone' into, for them, the relatively uncharted areas of management. Given this it is not surprising that many specialists with managerial responsibility are reluctant managers and do more specialist work than is necessary and do not spend enough time doing managerial work.

The need for management training and development

This escalator process demonstrates how a key management training and development need arises. Most people with management responsibility may have had little prior formal management training and that which has been received may not have been very effective (only 12 out of 50 in the survey, Rees & Porter 2005). Despite the passage of time this unfortunately fits with the following observation:

> Management after all, was held by the British to be akin to parenting, a role of great importance, for which no training, preparation or qualification was required: the implication being that experience is the only possible teacher and character the only possible qualification. (Handy, 1991, p.122)

There are a number of ways in which management training and development can occur – which are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It is acknowledged that those without prior formal management training may have acquired management expertise by means such as on the job coaching. An important method can be by coaching by the immediate boss. Another can be by coaching by a person, if necessary from outside the organisation, and a trained coaching psychologist could obviously have an important and useful role to play here.

The role of coaching in management training and development

Management coaching is, we believe, a more specific activity than leadership development where so much can depend on what is meant by the term 'leadership'. In any case much leadership development may need to involve a considerable amount of management development, (Rees & Porter, 2008b). Key factors which will affect whether or not coaching can be effective and how it may be undertaken include organisation and national culture, career pathways and the extent to which existing managers can act both as suitable role models and coaches.

The identification of who needs coaching and how it is to be undertaken may not be straightforward. There may, for example, be little point in management coaching if the organisational climate is hostile, or if the person who ostensibly needs coaching is not motivated to take it seriously or can significantly benefit from it. A related issue is who is to provide the coaching: the boss, another internal provider, an external provider or a combination of these? This also needs also to be integrated with other developmental strategies. The coaching psychologist could have a particular role to play here in that they will have the skills to help the manager to confront the tensions that he or she is experiencing in their role. This would be particularly the case where the manager feels reluctant to relinquish some of their specialist expertise or where they feel ill-prepared for the role they have taken on.

Likely substantive managerial training needs

Once there has been an appropriate matching of coach (or coaches) and the person to be coached, a key need is likely to be the identification of the managerial content of the job a person needs to be doing. An advantage of coaching is that development can be tailored to fit individual needs. A problem with previous training and development can be that it has not been targeted and if only for that reason may not have been very useful. Whilst needs will vary from individual to individual, the activities that those with managerial responsibility are likely to be involved in include the following:

- Role identification;
- Prioritisation;
- Delegation;
- Motivation of employees;
- Communication;
- Staff selection;
- Counselling;
- Disciplinary handling;
- Negotiation;
- Chairing meetings;
- Budgeting;
- Client-customer relations.

Individuals may not need coaching in all of the above, be it because they are competent in the area, the issue is not a high priority, or it is not practical in current circumstances. However, the fact that staff may have senior managerial positions is by no means a guarantee that they are proficient in key management skills. This can easily arise if a person has been promoted just because of their specialist expertise, without their managerial aptitude and potential being taken into account. The potential gain on investment is likely to be higher, the more senior the manager is because of their likely increased impact on organisational performance. With some senior people, one-to-one coaching may be the only practical way of remedying managerial deficiencies, particularly because it can be handled with discretion and in confidence. Some of the skills may need developing in group situations but evaluation of performance may be possible though by the coach being an observer in live situations and/or by post-event evaluation. The range of skills that need developing may be such that more than one coach needs to be used. Coaches need though to have an aptitude for coaching, the inclination to do it and expertise in the area or areas that need developing. There is not much point in being given a coach who does not have relevant substantive knowledge.

Role Set Analysis

The second technique to be considered is that of Role Set Analysis. The concept of a role set was established by Merton in 1957 (Merton, 1957) and the idea that a manager is part of a social network that constrains his or her behaviour was discussed at least 10 years prior to this (Newcomb, 1943). Unlike an organisation chart, a role set will reflect external stakeholders with whom the role holder has to interact. Such interactions may be more crucial to managerial effectiveness than interactions with internal constituencies. Tsui (1984) utilised the concept of Role Set Analysis to explore managerial effectiveness from the point of view of managerial reputation. She proposed that managers gain the reputation of being effective by meeting the self-interested expectations of role set members. Reputationally effective managers were found to be more successful in their careers than the least reputationally effective managers.

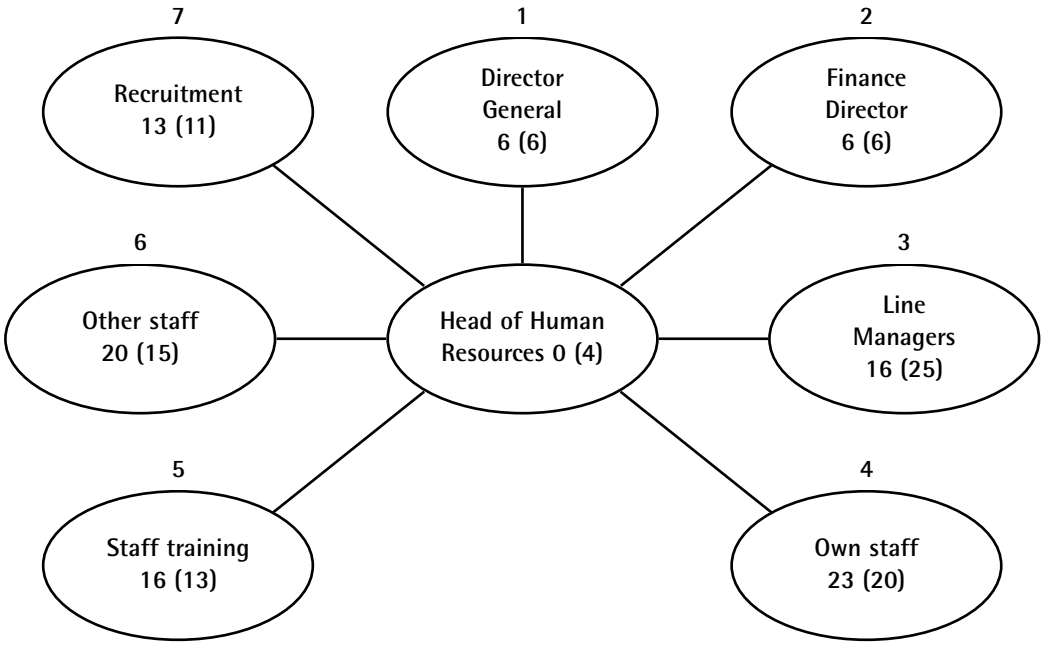
It can be particularly important for those with managerial responsibility to identify their role and priorities correctly. It can also be important for those involved in their recruitment and selection to identify these issues accurately. There is a particular danger in organisations with a strong specialist culture (for example, in banking) that the need for managerial expertise is ignored at the managerial appointment stage. Role Set Analysis – which can be undertaken on an individual or group basis – is a potentially useful technique for prioritising work for those who already have management responsibility. However, this can be a particularly sensitive area for discussion because of the inner conflicts a person may have about what they do and what needs doing.

A relatively straightforward example of a Role Set Analysis is shown in Figure 2 for ease of explanation. In practice it is likely that the role set will be more complicated with bigger differences between what work is done and what needs to be done.

The key activities and groups or individuals with whom the job holder has to interact are identified. In this case the analysis has been carried out by the job holder himself but there is an argument for the job holder seeking out the views of the other people featuring in the role set to see what their expectations (realistic or otherwise) are of them.

The Role Set Analysis in Figure 2 is drawn showing actual percentage times spent with each significant activity or individual or individuals, with the figures in brackets being the model time allocations to be aimed for. In this case the total time actually spent adds up to 100 per cent. However, the actual job holder in the case study to which this relates realised that he needed to have some thinking time for himself and planned to allo-

Figure 2: Role Set Analysis: Head of Human Resources of a professional organisation (Rees, 1996).



cate four per cent of his time for that in the future after carrying out the Role Set Analysis exercise. The other model times that he set for the future were primarily to spend more time with the line managers in the organisation (25 per cent instead of 16 per cent) with compensating reductions elsewhere.

Role Set Analysis can be a very effective way of thinking strategically about a job. The concept of Role Set Analysis can be of particular use in helping a person with managerial responsibilities consciously think about their priorities. That is why in Figure 2 the members of the role set are also identified numerically – according to their priority order. Further emphasis can be given in a diagram by having the length of the line between the job holder shorter or longer according to the role set member's importance. Importance can be crudely defined as how much damage can be done to the job holder if the needs of an activity or individual are neglected. This way a conscious prioritisation can be achieved rather than, for example, a random one. Managers are likely to be asked to do significantly more than there is time for, especially in an era of value for money, budget cuts and increasing competition. It is better to ensure that where economies have to be made they are in low priority rather than high priority areas. However, it is also important to recognise that priorities can change, both long term and in emergency situations. Consequently a person's role set time allocations may need to be regularly reviewed. It may be particularly useful when a person starts a new job. A further application is to check on the strategic allocation of resources within a unit or the whole of an organisation. An example of this is the resources allocated to health cure compared with health care within a health service. Another example is the allocation of resources in a police service to crime prevention compared with crime detection.

On the job coaching

Opportunities may arise quite naturally on the job for coaching to be given in a relatively informal way.

> An example is that of a supervisor who brought a potential but, on the face of it, relatively minor disciplinary situation to the attention of their manager. The manager needed to avoid the temptation of taking responsibility for handling the issue himself but instead coach the supervisor in how to handle the situation for themselves. This may have been all the help that the supervisor wanted anyway.

The recommended approach in the above example avoids the twin traps of reducing the supervisor's responsibility and encouraging them to take such issues to the manager for resolution in the future. The same logic applies when senior managers have issues brought to their attention by managers who report to them.

Another set of circumstances in which coaching may be given on the job may be when the job incumbent may be occupying such a crucial role that they cannot be released from the job – even for relatively short periods of time.

The Director of Education in a London Borough was parachuted into his job at a particularly crucial time and had relatively little managerial experience. The solution to this problem was to have an external coach shadow him and discuss managerial issues soon after ' live' situations. In practice this also involved an element of mentoring. Coaching and mentoring may be conceptually different but in practice the distinction may be and may need to be sometimes blurred. (Rees, 1992, Local Government Management.)

Coaching evaluation

The final stage in the management coaching process will normally need to be evaluation. This could be undertaken by the individual, with or without the coach, or with the subject's boss. Ideally this will be accompanied by a follow-up process to see if any change in behaviour has lasted, or if significant new needs have emerged. This also gives an opportunity to review how effective the coaching arrangements have been. Ideally this will include a cost-benefit analysis, even if the data cannot easily be quantified. Comparison may also be necessary of alternative ways of meeting such needs in the future and whether the role of coaching should be amended, reduced or expanded.

Conclusions

Lack of managerial expertise and/or inclination to do such work even if it is part of one's job can easily cause both individuals and organisations to seriously under-perform. Even very senior managers may be deficient in key skills. The way in which managers tend to gradually acquire their responsibilities is likely to be an important factor causing under-investment in this area and the emergence of a major Managerial Gap. For specialist jobs the career entry is likely to be much more clearly defined and understood. It may come as a great surprise to many specialists that after having acquired specialist skills, often after years of study, they are increasingly absorbed in managerial activities, for which they may have had little or no effective training and development. They may also have little aptitude or appetite for such work, however crucial it may be. The notion of the Managerial Escalator seeks to encapsulate this phenomenon.

Management coaching is one way of reducing the scale of the above problem. However, it is unlikely to be effective if people are given managerial responsibilities that they are unwilling or unable to undertake. Where coaching is appropriate some may need to be undertaken by the bosses of those with managerial responsibility and much may be undertaken informally as the need arises. Advantages of this are likely to be effective targeting of needs and low cost. Ideally, organisations should have a culture where this is the norm and not the exception. The skills that need developing are

often not sophisticated but can nevertheless be crucial. A key skill is often effective prioritisation so managers do what is needed, as opposed to what is easiest or most enjoyable. Role Set Analysis can be a way of achieving this. Some coaching may best be done informally but there will be occasions when coaching is best done 'off' the job by an internal or external provider or providers. This can be particularly appropriate with senior managers, where not only may the 'pay-off' be greatest but where confidence and discretion are essential. The coaching psychologist will have an important role to play in helping managers to reflect on the problems they are facing using the Managerial Escalator and Role Set Analysis tools as frameworks.

Possession of even a senior managerial job is no guarantee that the incumbent possesses key managerial skills – especially if they have been appointed primarily or even totally because of their professional reputation. This may increase the need (and potential pay-off) for individual coaching. As with any other training initiative there needs to be an evaluation of how effective the process has been. It is unlikely, for example, that those with managerial responsibility will benefit from coaching if they have little aptitude or desire for managerial work. The techniques explained here could be useful however in helping coaching psychologists and their clients to work out how managers can optimise their effectiveness in the organisational situation should they so desire.

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Debate

Editorial: Coaching Psychology Coming of Age

Alison Whybrow, Anthony M. Grant, Stephen Palmer & Travis Kemp

THE STUDY AND APPLICATION of complexity as a theoretical and practical construct that may assist in developing our understanding of our world, our context and our practice is an established area of enquiry. There are many theoretical and philosophical underpinnings to coaching psychology practice that can be easily mapped across to concepts and debates within complexity science. For example, existentialist approaches, approaches and ideas rooted in personal construct psychology, solution focused approaches, systems theory to name a few. Coaching psychologists have actively used these approaches in their practice for a number of years (e.g. Palmer & Whybrow, 2006; Palmer, O'Riordan & Whybrow, 2011).

The zeitgeist of complexity theory continues to manifest as the world as a living system is evident at macro and micro levels, old concepts of power and control are dissipating in areas where they seemed solid and reassuring only a few months ago. The need to understand how to work with what is emerging for the client, the coach and as our practise develops is clear. To the experienced coaching psychology and coaching practitioner this has always been the case.

The broad aim in putting this issue together was to enable and encourage a critical debate, exploring many diverse perspectives and views concerning complexity theory and its' application to coaching psychology that would make a contribution to the underpinning, expanding knowledge base and which also offered insight to coaching and coaching psychology practice.

Surprisingly, complexity theories and models of complexity have received scant attention in the Coaching Psychology literature, despite a wealth of practice-based approaches that are conceptually aligned, at least in part. The lead article, by Michael Cavanagh and David Lane, suggests there is hope that Coaching Psychology will emerge as a new discipline that can embrace rigour and the chaotic. The paper draws on the work of Stacey and particularly an adaptation of his Certainty/Agreement Matrix (Stacey, 1999). This application of Stacey's model rather paradoxically suggests the possibility of a rational construction of complexity. One of the core suggestions in the article, that we don't live in a simple, rational, predictable and controllable world in the way that these terms often imply, is likely to be met with agreement from the coaching and coaching psychology community. Cavanagh and Lane argue strongly that coaching psychology is well positioned to embrace concepts of complexity, albeit, still behind other fields of enquiry and research.

It would be curious to explore how Coaching Psychology theory and practise has already extended into the space of grappling with complexity, embracing new forms of evidence and integrating learning across disciplines. In their paper, Cavanagh and Lane encourage Coaching Psychology to look at developments in other fields for insight into non linear and emergent models of practice, this creative approach is likely to bring fresh perspectives. Taking these two ideas together, we have invited comment on this lead article from experts in the field of com-

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plexity and experts from within the field of Coaching Psychology with the express intention of developing the theoretical underpinnings and pragmatic learning that we might take forward.

Professor Ralph Stacey is an eminent figure in the field of complexity, well known for his work exploring how the complexity sciences might provide a new way of understanding stability and change in organisations. In his paper he takes the reader straight to local interaction as the point at which things happen, removing any notion of omnipotence on the part of the coach. He articulates the need for the coach to have developed to a level that they are reflecting in action, that is, reflecting on how they are thinking and how they are thinking together with their client. Stacey no longer uses the Certainty/Agreement Matrix to avoid its application as a rational tool. Stacey presents the concept of self organisation as a process that exists independently of any external notion of control. From his perspective, the co-created, emergent nature of all human interaction is evident. Stacey's analysis and conceptual insight deepens the understanding of this field of debate. Critical of the lead paper at a conceptual level, Stacey affirms that the task of the coach is to hold multiple possibilities in mind and take action that maximises the ability to respond flexibly as outcomes emerge.

Each subsequent paper amplifies a particular area of the debate, together offering a rich volume. Dr Tatiana Bachkirova points to the body of underpinning evidence that personalised coaching designed to elicit a profound reflection on personal values and behaviours works for individual clients, teams and organisations. She reinforces the importance of the tailored one-to-one intervention. Bachkirova urges Cavanagh and Lane to be clearer in the position that they are alluding to and make strident points in relation to the development of the profession of coaching psychology. Her perspective goes beyond the suggestions in the lead paper pushing for the view that allows a potential learning space as a whole profession rather than an inherent assumption that actually the professional framework itself is 'complete' and 'OK'.

Paul Atkins teases apart the 'lumping together' of rationality and linearity, arguing for their different purposes in this debate – whilst we may agree things are not linear, we may strongly argue against the idea that reason and sound judgement are not in evidence. This paper asks us to consider some of the implicit assumptions upon which our thinking (and, therefore, practice) is based. Atkins argues against the value of elemental realism, and instead for pragmatic contextualism as a very rational (not linear) way of working as a coach that is a shift in emphasis recognised by the experienced practitioner. A pragmatic and philosophical challenge is presented.

David Drake introduces the term post-professional to the debate, and brings a fresh critique that argues for a clearer definition of story and reminds the reader of the wealth of narrative coaching literatures, and the work on the structure and function thereof. Further, Drake reminds us of the seminal work by Winnecott (1971) and the nature of the 'holding environment' that the coach might provide. A thoughtful challenge is presented in the form of how a coaching psychology/coaching practitioner might draw from the debate housed in Cavanagh and Lane's paper in their practise.

Professor Bob Hodge, with a strong profile covering a wide interdisciplinary range of fields including cultural theory, and chaos theory brings fresh perspective and concepts from the world of complexity and chaos that might be usefully considered, for example, that of fractals. Hodge notes that one of the benefits of the style of Cavanagh and Lane's article is to introduce some complex concepts in a way that is more accessible to those unfamiliar with them. As a newcomer to the field of Coaching Psychology, Professor Hodge notes that the rapid emergence of Coaching Psychology as a subfield may be chaos theory in action.

Describing herself as 'always interested in the human condition', Lesley Kuhn offers a philosophically rich and enticing paper. From a practice perspective, Dr Kuhn suggests that there are some habits to learn that can help us develop complexity thinking rather than linear thinking. This paper offers five critical insights in to the paper by Cavanagh and Lane that resonate in part with those presented in Stacey's work. Kuhn reminds of a quote from Ball (1995), where theory itself functions as a catalytic agent of change.

Julie Allan picks up on the concepts of professionalism, empiricism and appropriate from the lead article. Professionalism it is argued, goes beyond idea of protected knowledge, to issues of judgement and praxis, linking with the article offered by Atkins. Questioning the idea that psychology has only been informed by linear models, Allan refers to her enquiry into wisdom as an emergent property of a complex system. Introducing the work of Clarkson (1995) and connecting with our full ways of knowing, there is a resonance shared with the lead article on what constitutes evidence based practice.

The last paper in this Special Issue is authored by Gordon Spence, which builds on the themes of interdisciplinary working. Spence invites us to consider both the benefits and embedded challenges in working in a multidisciplinary environment. The paper brings to mind how we construe success. Working and learning from an interdisciplinary perspective is likely to bring fresh insight and influence the future development of the coaching and coaching psychology field.

The authors of the lead article are given an additional 1500 words if they wish to respond to the discussants, given the richness of the debate sparked, this invitation has been taken up by Cavanagh and Lane and their response is included in this issue.

In closing, we would like to thank the Editorial Board for supporting this particular Special Issue, and each of the authors for their valuable contribution. Taken together, the articles open up important questions and numerous possibilities. We hope readers find this issue does indeed approach the topic of complexity from a range of original perspectives, and offers new insight and learning. We would welcome comments and feedback.

Alison Whybrow, Anthony M. Grant, Stephen Palmer & Travis Kemp

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Debate

Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: The challenges we face in the messy world of complexity

Michael Cavanagh & David Lane

Coaching is a rapidly emerging discipline in a world in constant change. Many of the issues facing coaches and their clients fit within the rational linear models that have served psychology well in the past. However, coaches and clients are also called upon to deal with novel complex and even chaotic challenges for which linear frameworks offer little value. Between the linear and the chaotic, the space on the edge of chaos creates possibilities for emergent creativity. Each of these spaces, the simple, complex and chaotic, has implications for us as practitioners, researchers and as a profession. This paper explores each of these. If coaching psychology is to come of age we need to find a way to create a discipline that can build on our foundations yet work comfortably with cross disciplinary ideas and colleagues. It may be that coaching psychology will emerge as a new kind of discipline one that can embraces rigour and the chaotic in the service of its clients, science and the profession.

Keywords: *Complexity, Coaching Psychology, Chaos, Profession, Research, Creativity.*

This paper is based on a keynote delivered at the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology, London, December 2010.

WE LIVE in a complex and complicated world. We are continually reminded of the increasingly rapid rate of change. We experience the growing demand to do more with less. Electronic media means that many of us are on call or 'at work' for a much greater percentage of our waking hours than was the case 10 or 20 years ago. We are buffeted with information overload, just in time delivery, market demands, and what appears to be the increasing bureaucratisation of our public and organisational interactions. The people we coach make decisions, act, and react in the face of multiple competing agendas, rapidly changing circumstances, and the emergence of new and unpredictable problems and issues. It is indeed and complex and complicated world – and if we add issues such as global climate change, peak oil, the war on terror or the Global Financial Crisis – it starts to look positively chaotic!

So how do we as coaching psychologists manage in this increasingly messy and unpredictable world of complexity – and more to the point, how do we help our clients to manage in this world? What does coming of age, or 'growing up' in this world look like for us as practitioners, researchers and as a profession?

In order to answer these questions, it is first helpful to define some of our key terms – in particular, the difference between three types of systems: *simple, complex and chaotic systems.* In complexity theories these terms have particular meanings that differ somewhat from their common meaning.

A ***simple system*** is a system that is knowable or understandable. A hot air balloon, for example, is a simple system involving a balloon, basket and heat source and associated ropes and weights. Their functions and interrelationships are understandable and predicable – i.e. heat the air in the balloon

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and it rises, cool it and it descends. *Simple systems* can be very complicated (this is different from being complex). For example, a jet aircraft is a *complicated* system. However, the functions of each of the aircrafts components and their inter-relationships are knowable and predictable. For most practical purposes, both simple and complicated systems can be thought of as governed by linear causation.

A ***complex system***, on the other hand, may have few parts or subsystems, or it may have many. Regardless of how complicated it is, complex systems do not function in the same way simple systems function. In simple systems each part has its function (or set of functions) and they operate in standard and predictable ways. Complex systems are recursive, not linear. Responses and outcomes are not fixed, but change depending on what has gone before. This is most easily seen in ***complex adaptive systems***. Complex adaptive systems are systems in which the system members are agents in their own right, thus allowing them to adapt to system inputs in unpredictable and novel ways. For example, while a jet aircraft is a complicated system – it operates in knowable and predictable ways – the flight crew of that plane form a complex adaptive system. Each crew member is able to adapt their behaviour according to their own goals, desires, personal characteristics, and predispositions stemming from their personal histories, DNA and the functioning of their own biological subsystems.

This capacity to adapt means the causal structure of complex adaptive systems is non-linear. Responses are not simply mechanically repeated, but chosen, altered and adapted based on what has gone before and what is expected to happen in the future. In other words, they are governed by recursive feedback and feedforward loops. This makes behaviour in complex systems iterative rather than repetitive. Unlike the workings of a machine, a complex adaptive system may respond to a given set of circumstances in one way at one time, and very differently to those same circumstances at another time. For example, a co-pilot might challenge a decision made by the captain on one flight, but not do so in similar circumstances on another flight. A flight crew may chose to believe the accuracy of the cockpit instruments on one day, and ignore or disbelieve them on another. Importantly, these responses are not completely predictable nor the conditions that govern them fully knowable. The difference that makes the difference in these choices may only be guessed at (and then often only in hindsight). Attempts to deal with this through training (Cockpit Resource Management) has a long history (Weiner, Kanko & Helmreich, 1993). Most air accidents have more than one contributing factor. As a Bureau of Air Safety Investigation (BASI) study has shown while over 70 per cent of the accidents involved pilot factors they frequently have their origins in systemic or organisational failings (Bureau of Air Safety Investigation, 1996). We similarly see this complexity in a range of disasters (Taylor & Lane, 1991).

Chaotic systems are a type of complex system – or rather, chaos is a phase that complex systems often go through. Contrary to the common understanding of the term chaos, *chaotic systems* are not without order. Rather, they are systems in which change appears to be so unpredictable and unstable as to be almost random. Examples of such systems include the weather, the turbulence of rivers, economies, and markets. While these systems do show ordered patterns of behaviour when viewed from a distance (e.g. the regularity of the seasons, general movements in bull markets and bear markets) the level of stability and predictability of these systems is low when viewed in a fine grained way. For example, while we might be reasonably guess that midsummer's day is likely to be warmer than midwinter's day, we cannot accurately predict what the temperature, wind or cloud cover will be like on those days next year. (Neither can we predict the occurrence of extreme weather events, like storms, floods or snow in summer. In fact, with all our records and supercomputers, we cannot

accurately predict weather more than a few days in advance!)

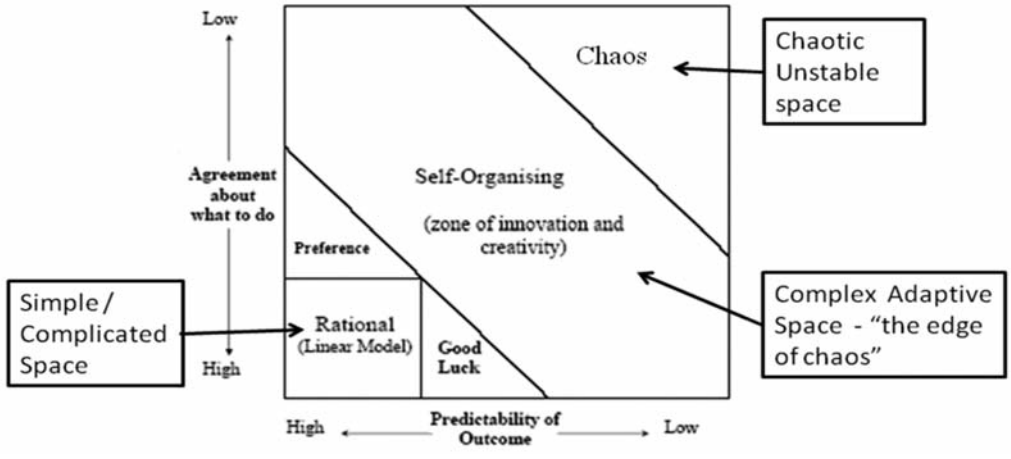
Ralph Stacey (1999) presented a matrix that can help us understand the different phases, or space a complex system and its subsystems may occupy, using the dimensions of *certainty of prediction* and level of agreement (see Figure 1). The matrix identifies a range of spaces delineated by the level of agreement about what should or could be done, and the degree of predictability of outcome should that course of action be followed. A system can be said to be chaotic when there is little or no agreement about how to act, and little or no predictability about what might happen should that action be taken. However, under conditions where there is high agreement and high predictability, then management using rational decision making, or decision making based on linear models of cause and effect, is most appropriate.

Between the rational and chaotic spaces is a complex adaptive space – sometimes called the *edge of chaos* – where the system requires self-organisation and adaptation in order to meet the challenges of organisational life. Human systems, and indeed most natural systems tend to function within this space, and are characterised by self-organisation and emergence (to which we will return shortly).

In recent years Stacey and colleagues have revised their support for the certainty-agreement matrix, eschewing the language of complex adaptive systems. Stacey and colleagues hold that conceiving organisations and people as systems that can be characterised as simple, complex or chaotic is ultimately unhelpful in that it reifies a dynamic ongoing process. Instead they hold that human organisations and the creation of knowledge are best thought of as complex responsive processes – a ongoing conversation that is best thought of, not as a thing, but as an ever unfolding process of responsiveness to an ever-changing context (Stacey 2001, 2007).

While we agree with the thrust of Stacey's argument, we nevertheless see some value in using an adapted version of Stacey's earlier matrix as a way highlighting certain features of the dynamic nature of organisational contexts – namely self organisation and emergence – and their implications for coaching.

Figure 1: Simple, complex and chaotic spaces: An adaptation of the Stacey Certainty/Agreement Matrix.



Emergence, self-organisation, diversity and anxiety

Systems are not the sum of their parts, nor are their characteristics merely a reflection of the characteristics of the system member. ***Emergence*** is a term used to denote the process by which the characteristics of a system emerge from the interaction of the system parts, and not from those parts themselves. A useful analogy here is water. The constituent elements of water are hydrogen and oxygen. Both are explosive gases. However, when combined together in the right way, they form water – a substance which does not burn, and may be used to quell fires. The properties of water emerge from the *interaction* of hydrogen and oxygen atoms (and the subsequent interaction of the water molecules formed by them – not from the features of those atoms or molecules themselves).

The same is true of human systems. The properties of a human system are not simply due to the characteristics of its members – a champion team is more than a team of champions! Rather, they emerge as a result of the interaction of the parts of the system. This is an important point that is rarely recognised or incorporated into leadership and change theories. Most theories of leadership and change focus on the members of the group as individuals. Systemic approaches are less interested in the individuals and more in the pattern of interaction between them.

Emergence is itself a process characterised by increasing connectivity, networking and feedback (e.g. Stacey et al., 2000). As Morrison (2006, p.3) eloquently explains:

> Connectedness requires a *distributed knowledge* system; knowledge is not centrally located in a command and control centre (e.g. a principal's office or a central government department). Rather it circulates throughout the system, and communication and collaboration are key elements of complexity theory (Cilliers, 1998). Self-organisation emerges and is internally generated … rather than being the product of external control. Order is not imposed; it emerges spontaneously, of itself, whether we like it or not; it is control that is imposed.

We experience emergence all the time. For example, we have all been involved in groups that seem to bring the best out in us, and others that seem to bring the worst out in us. We have been involved in groups that have high energy and where creativity abounds, and others in which even the simplest tasks seem impossible and creativity is but a distant memory. The difference is not simply down to the characteristics of the members. Rather it is a function of all the forces shaping behaviour, both within the group and outside the group.

In human systems, an enormous range of properties emerge from the interaction within the system. These include:

- Behaviour;
- Roles;
- Processes;
- Outcomes (both intended and unintended, physical and emotional).

Self-organisation refers to the way in which system members co-ordinate their behaviour without overt control or management by central leadership. Examples of self-organisation abound in our world. They include the way markets respond to events, or workers respond to novel circumstances, or the way traffic responds to the changing conditions.

In contexts marked by unpredictable change, self-organisation is a critical component of adaptation to the environment. Even in a relatively stable environment, self organisation is the grease which keeps the organisation moving. Workers must continually adapt to the vagaries of the working environment in order to meet organisational goals. A failure to adapt quickly disables an organisation. This is vividly seen in industrial disputes where workers deliberately stop taking initiative and 'work to rule'. Complex systems require ongoing adaptation.

The features of complex adaptive systems

There are few, if any, genuinely simple, or even simply complicated, organisations in our world. For example, once we add the human element to a jet aircraft (a complicated but simple system), the whole system now becomes a complex one. At the level of the whole system, human systems are always complex adaptive systems. This is easy to see if we consider the adaptive behaviour of a flight crew maintaining normal flight across a range of weather conditions, or when responding to emergencies for which their training and experience has equipped them. At particular points in time, human systems may enter into chaotic phases marked by instability, confusion or even breakdown (e.g. a flight crew when required to respond to multiple overwhelming emergencies or situations outside the scope of their training or experience.) However, it should be noted that at these times, the process of adaptation or responsiveness continues, albeit with highly unpredictable outcomes. At still other times, the system as a whole may appear to operate as a very stable, linear simple system (e.g. flight while on autopilot). Even here the whole system remains a complex adaptive system, because at any time circumstances may arise that require adaptive responses.

While all human systems are complex adaptive systems, it is nevertheless sometimes useful to distinguish between systems that are functioning in straight forward, predictable ways, displaying complex self organising patterns, or occupy a more chaotic space.

Understanding human systems in this way poses three difficulties for us as practitioners, researchers and professionals. Firstly, most of the models of leadership and change we use as practitioners are built on the assumption that our clients and the contexts in which they work, can be treated as if they are linear systems – governed by simple (or complicated) linear chains of cause and effect – and hence are only really useful in systems that are functioning in straight forward, predictable ways. Secondly, most of the methods we employ as researchers, (including our statistical approaches) require us to assume the objects of our research behave in ways that are stable predictable and linear – and that they live in a stable predictable linear world. Finally, a foundational assumption of all professions, including psychology, is that the members of a profession have privileged access to knowledge which enables prediction and practice, and which can be developed and controlled within the profession. In a world governed by complexity, these assumptions do not always hold true.

We would like to suggest that, rather than living in a simple, rational, predictable and controllable world, we live and work in a world characterised by a dynamic mix of simple, complex, and chaotic spaces. Some aspects of our world are amenable to simple rational understanding and intervention. Others require a view and process that enables emergence and self-organisation. Still other aspects of our world require us to work with chaotic and radically unpredictable dynamics. The non-linear nature of the systems in which we work has implications for how we should think about what we do, and how we should go about doing what we do. Each of these spaces require different models and skills. As the rate of change increases, our ability to recognise and respond appropriately to the system dynamics at play will become ever more critical to our success and the success of our clients.

Implications for coaching practice

Understanding the world as a complex adaptive system has far reaching implications for the practice of coaching psychology. We do not have space here to list them all, and will focus on the implications for the application of theory and our relationship to evidence.

Theories and models typically seek to describe and explain some aspect of the world. Our theories and models are stories we hold about the world and the way it

works. They are maps that guide action and shape expectations and understanding. Like all stories, they open us to some possibilities and close down others. (Corrie & Lane, 2010) For example, the language of linear rationality promotes a focus on clarity, certainty and control, while at the same time tacitly (or explicitly) invalidating other approaches as woolly, irrational and uncertain.

Seeing the world as a complex dynamic matrix of different spaces also has implications for our approach to evidence in coaching practice. Coaching psychology has led the charge for evidence based practice in coaching. However, as currently conceived, evidence based practice refers to empirically tested models of practice, and is most at home in the linear rational space.

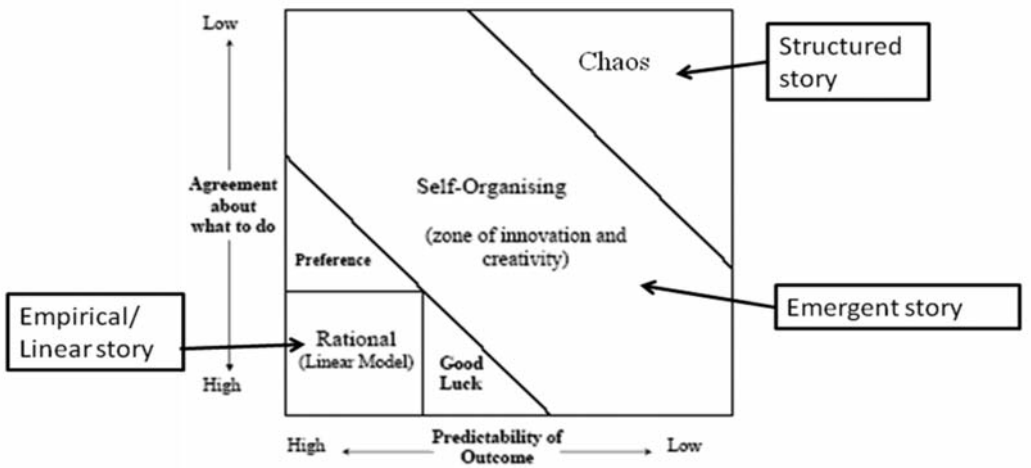
Coaching in rational space – evidence-based coaching

Evidence-based practice seeks to build up a reliable and common stock of stories (i.e. theories and models) that can be used (at least at a functional level) as exemplars of the individual and unique client stories we encounter in the real world. Their function is to guide prediction and action. For example, Trevor approaches a coach complaining of anxiety over presenting to members of the board of his company. The cognitive behavioural approach has a model of social anxiety that can be used to explain and make sense of Trevor's experience. This understanding, in turn, guides both the coach and Trevor in selecting some actions or interventions and rejecting others.

The intervention selected is evidence based to the extent that the exemplar story, and the indicated treatment, have been subject to validation via empirical testing with many other clients who also demonstrate presentation anxiety. To the extent that an individual client's story conforms to this empirically validated story, it is useful. To the extent that the client story is not captured by this common or stock exemplar, it can be misleading, or even unhelpful.

A fundamental unstated assumption in the above approach to practice, and in most psychological theories is assumptions that there is a chain of cause and effect that is relatively stable, can be known and can be used to predict and control outcomes. Such an approach fits most closely with the rational, linear space indicated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Coaching practice in simple, complex and chaotic spaces.



In those aspects of our world where stable, identifiable and testable relationships generally hold true, this rational empirical approach is functional and indeed may be enormously useful. Great advances in the treatment of mental health conditions, methodologies for education and training, goal setting and performance enhancement have been made precisely using the rational empirical approach and these are of great utility in coaching (Cavanagh, 2005). Done well, it is a valid and rigourous approach to practice, and should not be lightly disregarded.

However, when we are faced with new and unique situations, or where chains of cause and effect are ambiguous, unknowable, or unstable, then evidence-based practice becomes problematic or even impossible to maintain.

Coaching practice on the edge of chaos

When faced with complex, non-linear dynamics we need models that enable us to function in the space on the edge of chaos. This space is characterised by ambiguity and anxiety due to the lack of predictability and agreement. It is a space in which behaviour tends toward self-organisation (unless otherwise constrained) and where the ongoing, self-organised interaction between actors leads to the emergence of new and often unexpected outcomes.

In such spaces we need models or stories that take seriously the notions of non-linear causation and radical unpredictability, and the 'ground up' nature of emergent processes. Such emergent models enable us to engage with the diversity present in the system. In the linear empirical approach, multiple irresolvable pathways of causation are unwanted. Linear models seek to reduce these sources of 'noise' – they seek what is common, not what is different. However, on the edge of chaos, it is precisely the tension created by the diverse responses in the system that stimulates emergence of creative, innovative responses.

Emergent models of practice see the issues and challenges faced on the edge of chaos as unique and irreducible. They do not seek to reduce or resolve difference and ambiguity. Rather, emergent models seek to engage diversity in order to create multiple, new and unique solutions commensurate with the irreducible uniqueness of the issue being faced. In coaching, the solutions-focused approach and strength-based and mindfulness-based approaches have developed in an attempt to partially meet this need (see Cavanagh & Grant, 2010; Grant & Cavanagh, 2011; Spence, Cavanagh & Grant, 2008).

Nevertheless, psychology is not replete with such emergent models. Our theories tend toward empirical reductionism. At their heart, they seek prediction and control, rather than engagement with ongoing, unpredictable emergent processes. Where prediction and control are possible, this is appropriate and useful. However, in the ambiguous space on the edge of chaos, attempts to constrain possible solutions to only those underpinned by linear empirical stories are likely to lead to inferior and unsatisfactory outcomes. In practice this is recognised by competent practitioners, who attempt to adapt their behaviour and models to the unique circumstances of the moment. However, these adaptations vary in their effectiveness and always sit uneasily with the certainty seeking of the empirical linear approach. The preference in psychology towards propositional rather than implicational knowledge (Teasdale, 1996) or as Bruner (2002) defines it, the paradigmatic rather than the narrative is part of this uneasy relationship. (See also Corrie & Lane, 2010.)

Non-linear and emergent models of practice are being developed in other fields such as diverse as chemistry (Prigogine, 1997), management (Stacey, 2007), systemics (Watson, 2005), and education (Davis, Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 2008). Techniques and processes such as Theory U (Scharmer, 2009) World Café (Brown &

Isaacs, 2005) and dialogue (Kahane, 2007) are being developed and used outside of the field of psychology to address the complex problems and issues faced by individuals and groups in today's world. A range of decision making aides and processes for complex problems are also available These include scenario planning, (Sunter, 1992), robustness analysis (Rosenhead, 1989b), group decision support systems (GDSS) (Huxham 1996), and a range of problem structuring methods (Rosenhead 1989a, 1996).

Techniques such as these, and many others can be used to promote the climate or conditions for emergence-through-self-organisation. They do this by fostering dialogue, creativity, ensuring openness to diversity, the development of connectivity and feedback, and by recognising that adaptive order can emerge in the absence of centralised control. Adaptive order emerges via ongoing, iterative, bottom-up development.

While ahead of other areas of psychological practice in taking up such models, coaching psychology remains well behind other fields in addressing the difficulties of practice posed by complexity.

Coaching practice in the chaotic space – developing structured stories that enable emergence

The chaotic space is characterised by extremes of unpredictability and little or no agreement about what might be done. Unlike the stable zone of rational linearity, which tends to resist disturbance and return to normal functioning quickly, even small disturbances in the chaotic space can lead to movement away from the normal function, and this movement can in turn generate further unpredictable divergence. Hence, this space is often characterised by confusion, overwhelming anxiety, and/or a lack of trust in other agents within this space.

What is the task of the coaching psychologist in this space? We would suggest that the primary task of the coach here is to help create the conditions in which the system can move toward more adaptive self-organising functioning. In order to do this, effective meaning must be created amidst confusion. Overwhelming anxiety must be contained, and brought back to manageable levels, and a platform of trust built to support the dialogue and connectivity needed for self-organising activity.

By the creation of effective meaning amidst confusion, we mean that the client must find meaning that is capable of helping them to structure their experience in ways that open up pathways to adaptive change. In other words, they must be assisted in developing structured stories that enable the process of collaborative understanding and decision making to occur.

Amidst the anxiety and confusion of chaotic spaces, there is a tendency to grasp at any story that holds potential to ameliorate the discomfort and pain being experienced. This is true for the client and the coach. Clients are vulnerable to suggestion in such places – witness the myriad of quack cures for cancer that attract otherwise sensible people. Amidst the confusion of not knowing, it is also easy for coaches to seek to retreat to the comfort of what is known, and offer, or impose understandings drawn from their own stock of standard stories. In the rush to resolution of ambiguity, important features of the client's situation may go unnoticed, or ignored.

The process of creating structured stories in the chaotic space requires mindful, reflective responsiveness rather than reactivity. The task here is for the coach and client to notice and reflect on the qualitative themes present in the client's situation, and to think through together the possible trajectories of outcome that any action might precipitate. This is not to suggest that the coach or client should seek to predict with any degree of certainty, what might unfold. Rather, the task is to hold those multiple possibilities in mind and design actions that maximise the ability to respond flexibly as outcomes emerge.

Under conditions of ambiguity and confusion, inflexible responding or unreflective adherence to a single understanding or course

of action, can lead to disaster. For example, in 2001, the flight crew of Air Transat Flight 236, enroute from Toronto to Lisbon, noticed an imbalance in fuel loads between the starboard and port wings. Following a well-rehearsed protocol for such events, they attempted to remedy this by transferring fuel between tanks. They continued this course of action despite instrument readings that showed fuel loss, which they interpreted as due to faulty instrumentation. Unknown to the crew, a fuel line to the starboard engine was leaking, and the transferred fuel was in fact being vented outside. The crew's failure to adequately consider alternative scenarios eventually led to complete loss of fuel in the mid-Atlantic, and required the crew to glide for 120 kms, crash landing in the Azores. Sixteen people on board were injured, two seriously (Ladkin, 2004).

The challenge for coaching psychology in the chaotic space is to continue to develop models of practice that assist clients to make sense of unpredictable and ambiguous challenges without seeking to oversimplify, or control via the imposition of past solutions and standardised models that assume the dynamics and trajectory of the present will be the same as those of past challenges.

In this endeavour psychologists should recognise that they are not alone. Openness to, and application of, cross-disciplinary knowledge is critical to solving the complex problems that beset our clients. Self organisation within systems requires collaborative connectivity. Innovation emerges from the tension created by diverse and distributed perspectives and knowledge. Hence, part of the challenge facing us as practitioners is to remain open to, and genuinely engage with, other perspectives – particularly those that seem furthest from our own. Innovation occurs in the synthesis of this dialectic, and not in the repetition of past understandings. This is a fundamental challenge for a new area such as coaching psychology as it tries to build its place within psychology. To be at its most useful to clients, coaching must reach out beyond psychology rather than codify its practice solely within traditional features of the discipline.

Implications for research

Research in the rational space

As might be guessed from the preceding discussion, acceptance of complexity has a range of implications for research. We would like to start by strongly asserting that linear, reductive research, such as used by most quantitative psychological research methods, is an important source of knowledge and evidence and should be continued (see Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). Much of our world is stable, with patterns of causation and prediction quite possible. The statistical methods used in quantitative research both assume and reflect this linear stability. Standard empirical research remains a key foundation stone of the psychological enterprise and provides coaches with a critically important evidence base for dealing with those aspects of client experience that demonstrate stability of cause and effect.

Even at the edge of chaos, and in chaotic spaces, order is to be found. Unpredictability does not mean utter randomness. Instability is not absolute. Complexity theory recognises this through the concept of bounded instability. Events my play out in a range of unpredictable ways, but these trajectories are not entirely random. They tend to fall within a bounded set of possible trajectories, which may be wider or narrower depending on how far from equilibrium the system is, and how extreme the adjustments of the system members. Hence, while outcomes may be unpredictable, they are nevertheless likely to fall within a range of possible outcomes, and hence probabilistic models of research have a place here also.

Difficulties arise when we start to think that the only valid form of evidence is that gained from linear quantitative method. When we limit the definition of evidence based practice to practice which is supported by randomised controlled trials, we drastically reduce our ability to engage with the complex problems faced by our clients.

When we are dealing with the edge of chaos, the utility of statistics becomes the tyranny of the *p*-value!

Rather than linear reductive models of research, researching phenomena that plays out on the edge of chaos requires an approach to research that is emergent and integrative (see Figure 3). In other words, it requires an approach which is able to adapt to the emergent outcomes and follow these over time. It also requires methodologies that are capable of integrating multiple outcomes and perspective.

There is a paucity of research methodologies in psychology able to deal with non-linear systems. Outside of psychology, methods for analysing systems have been used and developed for some decades. These include social network analysis (Freeman, 2006), with its strange metrics such as *Betweenness*, *Centrality*, *Cohesion* and *Reach*. Other forms of analysis used in systems research include Soft Systems Methodology (SSM; Checkland, 2001).

Qualitative methods are also useful in developing an evidence base for coaching in the non-linear space. However, this would require us as researchers and practitioners to think of evidence in ways which incorporates analogy and anecdote, rather than excludes them. Similarly, practice-based evidence is important in dealing with non-linear phenomena. However, this would require the development of models of practice-based research, and practitioner training in them, in order to ensure appropriate rigour of interpretation.

There is also a paucity of models in psychology for investigating chaotic phenomena. The research methods available to us seek to reduce sources of variance, so as to discover the underlying causal structure of a phenomena. They assume that 'any variation about predicted values results from as yet unexplained causal factors, and as we understand more about what is going on the residual random element will be progressively reduced (Rosenbaum, 1998). However, in chaotic spaces, and on the edge of chaos, it is the complex of tiny differences that makes the difference, most of which are unknowable in advance. Probablistic, cross sectional models of research are unable to capture this. Rather, what is needed are models of research based on ongoing and iterative engagement in reflective and exploratory analysis (see Figure 3). In this way we are engaged in a process of double loop learning. Indeed we learn to learn from chaos.

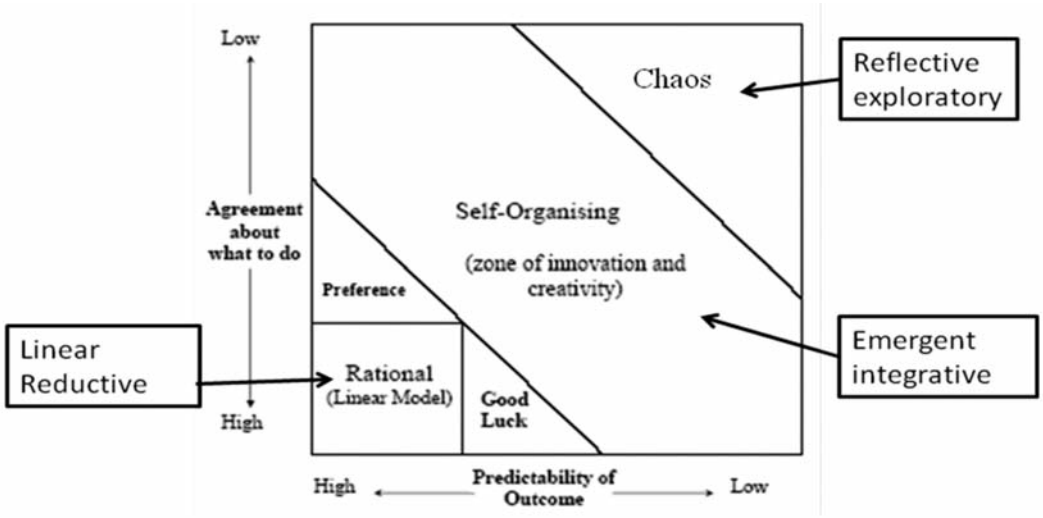
As traditional models of research and knowledge transmission are found wanting for understanding the complex and chaotic problems, other models of learning and supervision have emerged. For example, communities of practice are one way in which groups of stakeholders engage with each other in order to understand their own context, and to maintain rigour of understanding and practice. Cross-disciplinary dialogues also appears to be growing. Practice Research Networks (Goldfried & Eubanks-Carter, 2004) and other methods for 'learning for tomorrow' (Lane & Corrie, 2006) are possibilities. These are welcome developments as they help us to engage with complexity in ongoing dialogical ways.

The foregoing brief discussion of research and practice in complex settings highlights the importance of our notions of what constitutes valid evidence upon which to build theory and practice. Our models of evidence will enable some forms of practice and research, and disable others. We believe that reflecting on the models of evidence we use in the light of understandings about complex systems is important for the development of the field of coaching psychology. Although difficult, such a discussion may lead to a broader understanding of evidence-based practice, and open up new and useful avenues to help our clients.

Implications for coaching psychology as profession

Traditionally, professions are seen as designated carriers of rational knowledge in their field. They are the keepers (and owners of)

Figure 3: Matching research models to context.



a common knowledge base in their field and the reliable source of knowledge creation in that field. The other markers of traditional professions include the requirement for members to have formal academic qualifications; adherence to an enforceable, self regulated, code of ethics; practice licensed only to qualified members (and achieved through hours served and accreditation); compliance with applicable state-sanctioned regulation; (Spence, 2007, p.261). In the helping professions, service to client, narrowly defined as the individual receiving services, constitutes the primary professional relationship of interest. (This section is also discussed in Lane, 2011.)

While the traditional model of professions in society is long established, it is now under increasing challenge. A number of factors are seen as undermining this traditional position. The challenge to the idea that professionals in training need to complete a certain number of hours to be accredited has been under assault from the move to competence models. If someone can show that they are competent why should they have to serve an artificial number of hours in an apprenticeship model? The speed of change of knowledge has directed professions to consider the implications of the position that once qualified you can be seen as forever competent – hence the need for a serious evaluated approach to CPD (rather than merely a log of hours completed) and renewal of licence to practice through reaccreditation every five years as suggested in some fields such as medicine and psychology at the European level. The demand for consumer voice and client autonomy has changed the basis for commissioning of services. The state and insurers are demanding a say in standards and service model rather than this being a matter of professional control. The move of professionals from partnerships and self-employment to employee relationships (e.g. in-house lawyers), has also altered the factors influencing professional service standards and the definition of the client relationship. (Corrie & Lane, 2010)

This is affecting many professions. A recent review of 50 professions (Lane et al., 2010) across several countries found that many seeking to renew their license to practice based on:

- Position of client;
- Autonomy of client;
- Profession as social contributor.

So what has happened to professions to cause this? Increasingly the challenges we face require rapid, cross-disciplinary responses. The concept of the profession has itself become fragile. Professionals have been losing their monopoly of knowledge. Knowledge has become something that evolves in specific communities of practice. Knowledge is no longer a list of facts that is stable, but it is contextualised and relational. The body of knowledge is growing and knowledge is democratised by being accessible through channels open to everybody, mainly through the internet. In that sense there is no profession that has exclusive ownership over the knowledge base in specific areas of expertise. So the professions of the future may look very different from those of the past.

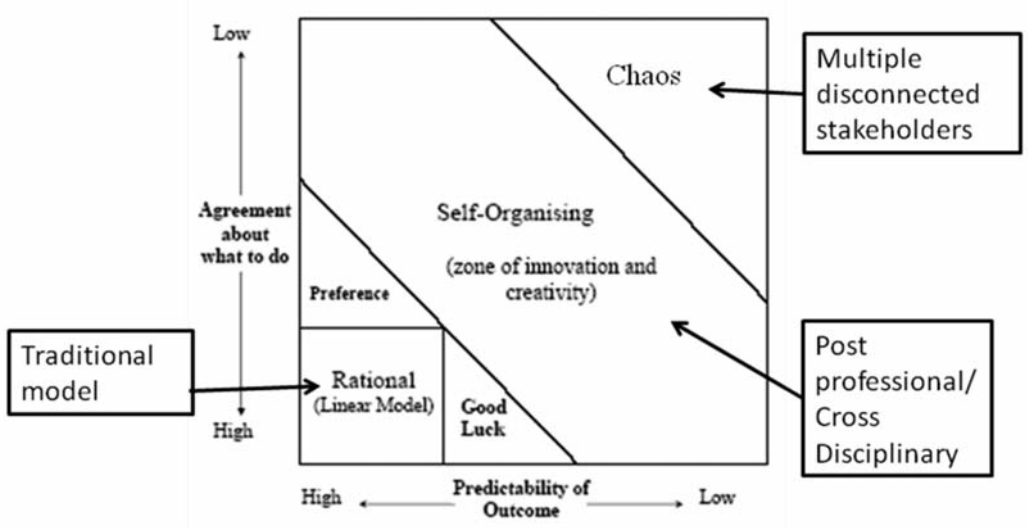
What does this mean for coaching psychology?

Recently Cavanagh and Lane (2010) have argued that different models of professional practice are likely to emerge in response to the challenges of an increasingly complex world. Drawing on Stacey's work on complexity (1996) they present three possible stories for professional practice (see Figure 4).

Professions in the rational space: the Traditional Profession

In a world in which there are high levels or agreement about what to do and high predictability that we can achieve defined outcomes, we can, perhaps, work within the traditional rational models of the professions. It assumes we can agree its basis and conform to our own professional body or state regulated codes. It assumes a clear relationship with the client that works for the clients benefit. Sanctions for breeches for that client relationship can be defined in terms of a prescribed code because practice can be codified accordingly to rational criteria that are stable and predictable. Our identity as professionals is generated by membership of a defined body. We are, for example, psychologists because the British Psychological Society or the Health Professions Council says so. This is also the framework that has informed much of the debate about the role of supervision in developing future practitioners – the expert/apprentice model. Hence, to supervise psychology students in training you must be registered as a qualified practitioner by the HPC if your student is to be eligible for registration once

Figure 4: Matching professional stance to context.



they qualify. It is all codified, predictable and rational and proceeds through a linear process. In coaching, the ICF adopt a similar position – students need to be supervised by an ICF recognised practitioner in order to attain ICF accreditation.

Professions in the emergent space: Post-professional and cross-disciplinary

In our current complex world, we often face issues that, due to their uniqueness and complexity, require cross-disciplinary knowledge or an unusual synthesis of ideas and approaches. We are often unable to rely on codified knowledge from within one professional sphere alone and are confronted with limited levels of agreement about what to do, and limited predictability of outcome. Professionals faced with these complex problems are increasingly required to enter into iterative, responsive dialogue *with* multiple stakeholders, co-creating new interventions that may depart from the traditional approach of their profession. In complex worlds we are required to surf the edge of chaos.

Our traditional orthodoxies struggle to meet the challenges of such fluid spaces. Our traditional body of knowledge often does not tell us what to do, nor does the research base help us predict with any degree of certainty what outcomes might emerge from our new interventions. This leaves us looking more and more toward diverse communities of practice to explore both standards and quality and to generate creative and practical solutions.

Our relationship to the client and to ourselves as professionals also changes in this space. We are faced with multiple complex patterns of client relationships. We might indeed be negotiating the relationship client by client (Lo, 2006) rather than relying on the traditionally defined professional client relationship. Our own identity is likely to become more diffuse and fluid – an 'identity generated in practice' (Lo, 2006) rather than an identity generated by membership of a professional group. This more emergent framework has been called post-professional (Drake, 2010) and is marked by its cross disciplinary nature.

Professions in a chaotic space: Multiple disconnected stakeholders

What about the chaotic space – this is where pathways to effective agreement about how to respond to challenges appear lost, and predictability of outcome is equally low. Such a space may be populated by diverse and disconnected stakeholders each operating for their own ends, often highly anxious and without trust in the predictability of other stakeholder's responses. In such a world it is difficult to proscribe any frameworks – all is contestable and dialogue has broken down.

In some ways this is reminiscent of the world of professional coaching from which we are slowly starting to emerge. There were (and remain) many organisations contesting the space – seeking power to define coaching and the profession (sometimes imposing their definition on the whole profession, and sometimes seeking only to define themselves). This space has been marked by overwhelming diversity of practice, a lack of dialogue, anxiety and distrust.

What might a professional stance look like in the context of a chaotic space, and how might a professional identity emerge from amidst the chaos? At the very least, professional practice requires us to engage in dialogue in a way that helps hold (not control) anxiety about practice in order to work with diversity and move to a self-organising stance. Dialogue enables stakeholders to use this diversity to map and discuss the boundaries of emerging frameworks of practice so as to enable the process of ongoing responsive action. Attempts to solidify practice into traditional models of practice (or to create new 'traditions') are likely to lead to poor outcomes in a rapidly changing and complex world.

Conclusions

We have argued that in a rapidly changing world coaching psychology needs to be able to deal with the complexities that face our clients. This requires us to go beyond the traditional linear models which have informed our discipline so far. It is not our position that these models have no value. It is in the nature of the world in which we operate that periods of chaos and periods of order interplay creating space in which it is both possible and valuable to work with our clients to explore short term cause and effect relationships so that effective programmes of change can be designed. However, these represent moments in a fluid environment that is in dynamic interaction. Hence, we must be alert to the ambiguity and sense of unknowing that can prevail. This means developing ways of working with clients that deal with the rational linear space, the chaotic space and the intriguing space known as the edge of chaos where creativity and innovation can flourish.

This has implications for our practice and the research we undertake. As a profession this creates an interesting paradox. Coaching psychology is increasingly seeking to find its place within the discipline of psychology. We do this through seeking recognition. Yet that comes at the price of trying to codify the competencies and knowledge base we use. We have to show that this is indeed psychology yet different enough from our sister psychologies to represent a field in its own right. Many have passed that way before – for example, counselling, health, organisational and forensic psychology. However, to operate successfully with our clients we need to both draw upon our foundation within the discipline *and* look to others who are operating in similarly complex space for inspiration and methodologies. Hence, we may need to be a new type of psychologist, one who embraces cross discipliniarity and who is prepared to collaborate outside of traditional boundaries. This creates as somewhat paradoxical reality in which we seek the comfort of our place within psychology yet experience the ambiguity of being without it. This is likely to lead to some interesting times for us! Nevertheless we believe we are, as coaching psychologists, on a journey worth making.

So if coaching psychology is to come of age some interesting questions emerge for us as practitioners, researchers and as a profession. We leave you with some these:

- Is coaching psychology to be a new sort of psychology that embraces cross disciplinary engagement?
- How far are we prepared to go to develop approaches to research that have rigour but that fall outside of the linear hypothesis testing frame in which we trained as psychologists?
- How should coaching psychologists be trained and developed to be comfortable and competent working within the ambiguity and unknowing of complex systems?
- Can we manage to organise as a profession in a way which honours the complex and chaotic contexts within which we work, rather than seek to codify the knowledge base so that it conforms to a traditional linear structure?

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Debate

Comment on debate article: Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: The challenges we face in the messy world of complexity

Ralph Stacey

The authors of the paper, 'Coaching Psychology Coming of Age', conduct their analysis in terms of a diagram which I included in the second edition of my textbook, Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics, published in 1996. This presented a number of contexts within which decisions have to be made and control exerted: conditions close to certainty and agreement produce the stability which makes it possible to uses technically rational decision-making techniques and control forms; conditions very far from certainty and agreement make people anxious and they either ignore what is going on or engage in anarchic activity producing instability; the border between stability and instability has the properties of 'the edge of chaos' found in complex systems and here people have no choice but to rely on unprogrammed decision-making and political activity. My comment sets out my reasons for no longer using this diagram and why I think it is highly limiting to try to do so. It leads to conclusions about managers and coaches being able to decide in advance what context they are operating in and so choose appropriate methods. This misses a central point about complex systems, namely, the property of escalating small differences to unpredictable, novel outcomes. This makes it extremely difficult if not impossible to decide in advance what the context is because we can never know which small differences might escalate. Furthermore, it is striking how people, their conversations and power plays, their ideologies and choices, totally disappear from the theorising following from the diagram. A central aspect of the role of coaching is to explore how coach and client are together thinking about how they are thinking. In other words, I would argue for a reflexive exploration as the most useful way that a coach can work to sustain and develop the capacity for practical judgment which is the hallmark of the expert practitioner.

Keywords: *Complexity; certainty; agreement; decision-making; control; self-organisation; emergence.*

THIS PAPER sets out to explore how executive coaches help their clients in situations in which the usual rational linear models offer little value. The authors conduct their analysis within a framework adapted from a diagram that was included in the second edition of my textbook, *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics,* which was published in 1996. This diagram had a horizontal axis which ranked types of organisational change, or contexts within which managers have to make decisions and exercise control, in terms of how close or how far away those contexts were from certainty. The vertical axis ranked the same contexts according to how close or how far away they were from agreement between the agents involved in decision-making and control.

The purpose of the diagram was to visually display and classify the range of decision-making and control techniques presented in the literature on organisations and their management. Some of this literature presents technically rational methods of decision-making and monitoring forms of control. Since these methods are based on the assumption that it is possible to predict the outcomes of decisions these methods can only work in contexts close to certainty and agreement. Other literature presents polit-

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ical forms of decision-making and control taking the form of power. Political forms of decision-making are required when agents find that they are some way away from agreement with each other, although the outcomes of decisions once they have been politically chosen may still be close to certainty. Other literature describes forms of decision-making which involve the exercise of judgment, rather than rational analysis, because the situation is too far away from certainty to make technical rationality feasible. This is accompanied by ideological forms of control. These forms were, therefore, placed in a space in the diagram some way away from certainty but still close to agreement. All of the above decision-making techniques are only possible, in contexts of considerable *stability*. When the context is very far from both agreement and certainty, behaviour is likely to be characterised by anarchy and mass avoidance, a dynamic of great *instability*.

However, there was another possibility suggested by the complexity sciences, namely, a border area between stability and instability which is called *'the edge of chaos'*. In this border area, the dynamic, that is, the pattern of movement over time, is *paradoxically stable and unstable at the same time*. It is in this dynamic that nonlinear models produce unpredictable, emergent novelty. I made a jump from this dynamic in the natural science modelling to present in the diagram a border area between stability and instability and I then classified a number of decision-making techniques and control forms in the literature as fitting into this area. These techniques were: garbage can decision making; brainstorming; intuition; muddling through; unprogrammed decision-making; search for error; and agenda building.

I argued that the nature of the changes that managers have to deal with is very rarely anarchic instability but does range from those close to certainty and agreement, stability, to those far from certainty and agreement in the border area of stable-instability. I also argued that this spectrum is present in every time frame, although the balance shifts according to whether it is the short or the long term that is being considered. This means that managers will find that they are deploying the whole range of decision-making and control techniques in every time frame. I argued that it was only possible to use technically rational procedures in relation to aspects of the situations which were close to certainty and agreement but in relation to other aspects they would find that they had no option other than to deploy the other decision-making and control procedures and that it is quite common for them not to acknowledge this and continue talking as if they were using only technically rational procedures.

Although I did not make it clear enough at the time, managers will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to choose in advance which techniques to apply in contexts that are both close to and far from certainty at the same time. Consequently, I was not presenting the diagram as a kind of tool of contingency theory which could be used by managers to identify in advance what change context they are in and then select the appropriate techniques. Instead, I was presenting the diagram as a device for classifying different decision-making and control procedures presented in the literature on the basis of the assumptions about context that they implied and in so doing placing them into some kind of relationship to each other. The purpose was to understand more clearly the nature of different prescriptions researchers had made. I was not suggesting it as a depiction of contingency theory which managers could use to rationally identify the context and then choose the most appropriate procedure. Furthermore, I specifically stressed the paradoxical nature of management which calls for the use of planning modes and the opposite of planning modes at the same time leading to tension and conflict. Later it also became clear how contexts which were paradoxically close to and far from uncertainty made the rational identification of contexts and the rational choice of methods highly problematic.

I often used this diagram in my presentations to workshops, seminars and conferences and it was usually well received by most audiences in the various countries that I worked in. However, it was almost always understood in a way I did not intend and for some time found quite confusing. It was immediately used as a contingency framework in the belief that managers could identify in advance what kind of context they would be dealing with and then rationally choose the most appropriate decision-making and control procedures. Those I was addressing usually found the diagram a relief because they usually concluded that they mostly operated in the safe zone close to certainty and agreement, although it would unfortunately be necessary, only very occasionally, to venture forth into the unsafe border zone where modes of decision-making and control are rather messy, uncertain and anxiety provoking. This response continued no matter how much I contested it. My colleague and co-author, Doug Griffin, used to listen to me presenting this diagram and he noticed the response it evoked. He was highly critical of the diagram and pointed out how people immediately took it up in an unhelpful way which ignored the paradox that it was trying so unsuccessfully to get at and in so doing blocked further thought. It took a while but I did eventually come to agree with him, which is why the diagram has only ever featured in the second, edition of *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics* published in 1996.

The reason for dropping the diagram is clear: it is taken up as a rational tool for identifying when contexts are close to certainty and when contexts are far from certainty which is completely inconsistent with a key property of non-linear relationships, namely, that they escalate tiny differences into unpredictable emergent patterns. It is impossible for any human to identify all the tiny differences that may be escalated and this means that we are incapable of identifying just how near or how far we are from certainty in advance of acting. We only find out with the benefit of hindsight and even hindsight is open to many interpretations. We see this all around us. Financiers claimed that they were making financial markets more stable with sophisticated financial products that provide a hedge against risk. Only later, in 2008, did we all realise that in fact they were making the financial markets more and more unstable. Only a few months ago, I imagine the rulers of Arab states were pretty confident that they had control of situations close to certainty and agreement until a tiny event, the self-immolation of one harassed, poor market trader, escalated across the Arab world toppling governments as it escalated. Although less visibly, the same feature applies to organisational life.

However, the diagram took on a life of its own and has been used quite frequently in an adapted form as a 'map' of change contexts and appropriate techniques which managers can rationally identify and choose in advance. This, of course, defeats the whole point that I am trying to get at and this is why I dropped it. In its adapted forms the diagram represents, for me, a highly problematic way of thinking. It is a spatial metaphor which distracts from our seeing the responsive processes of actual bodily human interaction. It reflects systems thinking with its extremely abstract notions of the nature of an organisation which render invisible actual human persons and what they do together. Such thinking rapidly loses the 'as if' nature of the systems hypothesis and both reifies and anthropomorphises what are unreflectively taken to be real systems.

Returning to the paper on 'Coaching Psychology Coming of Age', I would argue that its reliance on the diagram discussed above renders its analysis and conclusions rather dubious. The author's claim that the use of this diagram highlights self-organisation and emergence is difficult to sustain. They talk about emergence 'as a term used to denote the process by which the characteristics of a system emerge from the interaction of the system parts' (p.78) but they do not mention

that the key element of the definition of emergence is that it is the arising of global pattern in the complete absence of a programme, blueprint or plan and that the pattern emerging is thus unpredictable. They then talk about self-organisation as emerging internally and it is not at all clear what they mean by self-organisation, although they seem to be linking it to the spontaneous emergence of order which is not imposed. They also talk about a system requiring self-organisation. This is rather puzzling since, in the models of the natural sciences, the system emerges in processes of self-organisation; this is not a requirement but simply the process being what it is. Then, the authors define self-organisation as 'the way in which system members co-ordinate their behaviour without overt control or management by central leadership' (p.78). This presents a dualism with central control at one pole and self-organisation at the other. However, if one clearly understands that the term self-organisation simply means local interaction then there is no dichotomy because any attempt to exert central control only has an effect if it is taken up in local interaction. Self-organisation is referred to as the 'grease which keeps the organisation moving' (p.78). Later the authors identify the need for 'a view and process that enables emergence and self-organisation' (p.79) in contexts where simple rationality cannot work. This amounts to claiming that there are special processes of self-organisation and emergence, as opposed to rational decision-making and central control, which it is possible for managers and coaches to enable when they choose to. However, if we understand that self-organisation is simply local interaction then it is always going on whether anyone is trying to enable it or not – it is simply what human bodies do.

Furthermore, emergence is not some mysterious process that is present sometimes and absent at others – patterns in human interaction are always emerging whether anyone thinks they are enabling them or not. This whole discussion somewhat mystifies self-organisation when what it actually means, in complex adaptive system terms anyway, is simply local interactions in which global order emerges without plan, programme or blueprint. In human terms, forms of control imposed by the powerful arise in local interactions and those forms of control also emerge. The effect they then have depends on the responses to them in many local interactions.

The paper then comes to the implications for coaching practice. Sharp distinctions are made between appropriate practices in the different spaces of the adapted diagram. In the rational space, existing practices based on evidence are not seen as at all problematic because of the device of splitting one 'space' from another rather than trying to understand the dynamic process in which there can be no such splits. If there are no splits then the concept of evidence is questionable in the dynamic as a whole not just at the 'edge of chaos'. Coaching at 'the edge of chaos' has to do with behaviour which tends to be self-organising unless otherwise constrained. However, self-organisation as local interaction is always constrained in the sense that agents impose constraints on each other and self-organisation does not always lead to the emergence of the new but also to stuckness and destruction. They list a number of existing techniques which they claim 'can be used to promote the climate or conditions for emergence-through-self-organisation' (p.82). This implies some outside observer 'controlling' self-organisation and emergence. This is said to be a bottom up process but in fact the patterns in human activity emerge from both bottom up and top down development. The primary task of the coach is to 'help create the conditions in which the system can move forward toward more adaptive self-organising functioning' (p.82). There is something quite omnipotent about this kind of view and it is striking how people, their conversations and power plays, their ideologies and choices, have totally disappeared from the theorising.

I think I have written enough to indicate how much I disagree with the analysis presented in this paper and how unhelpful I find it – particularly because in placing human persons behind the scenes very little is actually said about psychology. However, strangely enough, the authors do reach one conclusion with which I agree once references to 'spaces' and 'structures' are dropped:

> *The process of creating structured [I would cut out creating structured and simply say exploring] stories in the chaotic space [I would drop this chaotic space reference and replace it with 'in all situations'] requires mindful, reflective responsiveness rather than reactivity. The task here is for the coach and the client to notice and reflect on the qualitative themes present in the client's situation, and to think through together the possible trajectories of outcome that any action might precipitate. This is not to suggest that the coach or client should seek to predict with any degree of certainty, what might unfold. Rather, the tasks is to hold those multiple possibilities in mind and design [I would drop design and say take] action that maximises the ability to respond flexibly as outcomes emerge* (p.82).

To this I would add that I think it is a central aspect of the role of coach to explore how coach and client are together thinking about how they are thinking. In other words, I would argue for a reflexive exploration as the most useful way that a coach can work to sustain and develop the capacity for practical judgment which is the hallmark of the expert practitioner. I would also add that I do not think that this approach is appropriate for some 'spaces' and not others. Organisations are patterns of interaction between human bodies engaged in local interaction from which population-wide patterns emerge in the interplay of the intentions, plans, dreams and desires of all involved. Local interaction takes the form of conversation, patterning of power relations, ideologies and constrained choices and it is in the interplay of all these responsive human processes, not at all apparent in this paper, that patterns of life emerge. All of this cannot be split into bits but we do know how to engage in what we are together creating. If this is the case then a conversational, reflexive narrative inquiry is appropriate for all forms of coaching as an alternative to restrictive rules and procedures.

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Debate

Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: The challenges we face in the messy world of complexity: A collection of commentaries on Cavanagh and Lane

Tatiana Bachkirova, Paul W.B. Atkins, David B Drake, Bob Hodge, Lesley Kuhn, Julie Allan & Gordon B. Spence

Keywords: *Complexity; Coaching Psychology; Chaos; Profession; Research; Creativity.*

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Let us not throw out the individual baby with the non-systemic bath water

Tatiana Bachkirova

THE AUTHORS of the article suggest that complexity theories are better suited for describing the world in which we serve our clients as coaching psychologists. If we agree with them they invite us to consider a number of implications in the area of professional practice, research and regulation of the profession. Although I fully support the main intention of the paper and see the process that it stimulates as progressive, a small word of caution is necessary. I believe that we should not lose sight of the focus on the individual in our practice and the first person perspectives in understanding and researching coaching.

Complexity and systems theories are not new, but are recently becoming more prominent in various disciplines. In relation to coaching and coaching psychology the authors made an excellent job in giving a clear and balanced exposition of this tradition. The theories themselves represent a moderate and inclusive stance without aggravating old tensions between the natural sciences and the humanities as well as between 'orderly' modernist social science and 'disorderly' postmodern social science. The authors are also careful not to dismiss traditional values of the knowledge base in coaching psychology. At the same time a message that is coming through is about the need to look beyond our dominant traditions and to embrace a different picture of the world. This picture does not describe new forms of human behaviour. It does, however, describe 'a different way of understanding how people have always behaved' (Stacey, 2003, p.278).

The paper is clearly addressed to practitioners and deals with complex ideas in a consistent, well structured way with good examples to illustrate the authors' logic. At the same time, this is probably the reason why they have chosen to *describe* their position rather than to argue for it in comparison to others. For example, in relation to the modernist stance it appears from further description that they assume the empirical 'cause and effect' story to be a sub-model of their more inclusive model of the world. However, in relation to the postmodernist stance, I believe that their position is weaker. Although they recognise, as in all complexity theories, the role of interaction within the system and the emerging properties of system as the result of this, these systems and properties are still treated 'as given'. This model of the world is presented from the third person perspective without explicit attention to the subjective and intersubjective nature of the phenomena that we engage with in coaching. In this sense, although seemingly most inclusive, these theories are still a subtle form of reductionism.

The authors do not see this as a problem for the discussion they initiate. They wish to draw our attention to the implications of seeing our professional world and the world of our clients as more complex than some simple linear models imply. They certainly succeed in this. However, noticing a growing acceptance and interest in systems theories amongst coaches I wish at the same time to express a concern. As this is clearly a third person perspective on the world, one potential implication could be marginalising the focus on the individual and their world as personally and socially constructed. For example, it seems counterintuitive for coaching that systemic approaches 'are less interested in the individuals and more in the

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patterns of interaction between them' (p.6). However important these patterns are we now have a great deal of evidence that personalised coaching designed to elicit a profound reflection on personal values and behaviours works not only for individual clients but consequently – for teams and organisations. I have also noticed that with the growing enthusiasm in team coaching and systems theories as recent trends, they are sometimes contrasted to the individual-centred traditions of one-to-one coaching (Hawkins, 2011). Without minimising the values of these new developments I believe that contrasting in this case is not justified. An extensive range of coaching approaches tailor-made for individual needs are clearly one of the strengths of coaching that would be foolish of us to undermine. I have to say that the authors of this paper, while advocating systems approaches, are careful in their propositions and certainly do not commit this 'crime' of cutting the branch on which the whole field of coaching is sitting. However, less careful system oriented movements might do just that.

In defending individual approaches in coaching, I also believe that it is possible to rise to the challenge of complexity theories even in our individual-focused work. I agree with the authors that there should be 'models of practice that assist clients to make sense of unpredictable and ambiguous challenges without seeking to oversimplify, or control via imposition of past solutions and standardised models' (p.14). Moreover, these models should also help coaches and their clients to make sense of the unique and emerging contributions that the clients themselves bring into their complex situations. These contributions are made possible because of the uniqueness of their organisms as wholes and the way they make sense of their world. It is also important not to underestimate that all perceptions of coaches and clients are at the same time perspectives that are embedded in bodies and in cultures and not just in economic and social systems (Wilber, 2006).

In fact, a theory of developmental coaching and a framework for practice that I recently developed is an attempt to address all of the above without oversimplifying individual coaching (Bachkirova, 2011a, 2012). In terms of the theoretical platform it is based on cross-disciplinary knowledge and suggests a potential way to integrate many different theories of working with individuals on the basis of the three conceptualisations of the self. In terms of the framework for practice, it invites the coach 'to notice and reflect on the qualitative themes present in the client's situation' (p.13) with some degree of predictability of what might unfold. This predictability is based on the individual developmental trajectory and also on discourses of the systems to which the client belongs to and shapes.

The strength of the paper under review is in the attention that the authors draw to potential implications of taking a stance of complexity theories on the many aspects of coaching as a developing field. Good questions are asked in relation to coaching practice, research and quality assurance. It would be good, however, to see what the authors themselves believe to be examples of extant theories, research and practice resonant with this stance *in coaching* rather than in other fields and most importantly – why? For example, the authors suggest that 'a solution-focused approach and strength-based and mindfulness-based approaches have developed in an attempt to partially meet this need' (p.11) which seem to be contrasted to other unnamed theories that 'tend towards empirical reductionism' and 'seek prediction and control'. It is not clear though what these other models are and how the authors came to this conclusion.

I strongly agree with the authors about their inclusive stance for research methodologies. Particularly important is the need to address the challenge of integrating multiple outcomes and perspectives when experimenting with more bold methods and designs. I wished, however, at times that the authors were less tentative in relation to some

other issues. For example, their strong message about the changing nature of professions could lead to more radical suggestions in terms of training and accreditations. It could be acknowledged that accreditations as a method of ensuring the quality of our professional work is static, past-oriented and inevitably oversimplifies the complexity of coaching practice (Bachkirova, 2011b, Bachkirova, Jackson & Clutterbuck, 2011). It could be substituted by a more dynamic and responsive system of professional supervision which is live, continuous and truly interactive.

On the whole, I am glad to see this paper being a focus of an open review process which should stimulate an interesting and useful discussion about many important questions for coaching and coaching psychology. The authors are obviously modelling the message that they wish the coaching community to hear and engage with. I am looking forward to the dialogue.

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Elemental realism and pragmatism in coaching psychology: Making our assumptions clear

Paul W.B. Atkins

THERE ARE many ways in which I agree with the target article: The world is complex, approaches to coaching based on simplistic ideas of cause and effect are inadequate, we need to learn to be comfortable with uncertainty in the face of complexity, and be open to the unpredictability of unfolding dialogue and multiple perspectives. Complexity science and its associated metaphors such as feedback loops have contributed to changing the way we view both natural and human systems. For example, the idea that small changes can have big, reinforcing effects and big changes can have small, dampening effects has prompted useful questioning of assumptions in areas as diverse as business (Pascale, 1999), climate change (Sterman, 2008), family dynamics (Pincus, 2001) and social policy (Tenner, 1996).

But while I am in broad agreement with the thrust of the article, I was left wondering whether applying metaphors from complexity science to coaching psychology will ever change what coaches actually *do*. My aim in this commentary is to try to clarify assumptions that might be impeding the application of complexity science to psychological research and practice. I begin by distinguishing between rationality and linearity, before exploring the implicit epistemology of the target article and pointing to a stance that I think might be rational, non-linear, and helpful for improving coaching practice.

Rationality and linearity are different

In building upon Stacey's early work (e.g. Stacey, 1999), the target article repeatedly discusses 'rational linear models' and 'linear rationality'. I wish to differentiate between these terms: In my view, coaching psychology needs to retain rationality while questioning linearity. To be rational is to 'have or exercise reason, sound judgment or good sense' (rational, n.d.). To be irrational is to act without reason. To reason is 'to think or argue in a logical manner', 'to form conclusions, judgments or inferences from facts or premises' and 'to urge reasons which should determine belief or action' (reason, n.d.). Science is built on rationality and reasoning. By lumping together rationality with linearity in the target article, and by contrasting the 'rational space' with the 'self-organising space', the target article obscures the nature of the changes needed in epistemology. We need to examine and change the core assumptions of what we do in psychological research, as I discuss below, but the problem isn't rationality, it is the purposes towards which rationality is directed.

This might seem like a small terminological issue but, like a reinforcing feedback loop, it can have a big effect. To implicitly disparage rationality as the old, or simplistic, way of doing things is to create an unnecessary schism with all the other disciplines built upon rationality. This in turn is likely to impair the very inter-disciplinarity for which the article is arguing. Rationality is an important part of the scientific process of public agreement regarding observations. We need to be very careful we don't throw the baby out with the bathwater because it increases the likelihood that new ways of understanding the world will be rejected.

While it is difficult to imagine a version of science that is irrational or even a-rational,

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it is easy to imagine one that is not linear in the sense used in this article. Although no single definition is offered in the article, the article appears to equate the linear view with a particular model of causation, where systems are 'governed by simple (or complicated) linear chains of cause and effect'. By contrast with linear systems, non-linear systems involve feedback loops which make them more difficult or impossible to predict (Atkins, Wood & Rutgers, 2002; Target article, p.3). It is now abundantly clear that attempts to theorise about the world based on linear assumptions are limited in addressing most of the issues that we need to address in our modern world (e.g. Sterman & Sweeney, 2002). We *do* need to develop alternatives, and the target article does a good job of exploring ways in which we might relate to clients holding our stories about the world more lightly and living with uncertainty.

In the next section I explore the question of how *useful* it is to think about coaching psychology in terms of complexity science. Essentially I argue that complexity science can be useful for coaching psychology research and practice, but that it will be more useful if it is understood through the lens of a *pragmatic* rather than *realist* epistemology.

Coaching psychology through a pragmatic rather than a realist lens

Articles applying complexity science to psychology have been around for at least four decades (e.g. Simon, 1973) and have proliferated in recent years (e.g. Uhl-Bien, Marion & McKelvey, 2007). Yet it is difficult to identify *any* psychological or management practices that have directly evolved from this way of thinking. Why does the metaphor of 'social life as a complex system' seem to have had so little impact on actual practice? I believe it is because we are stuck in assumptions about the purpose of science that are sometimes unhelpful.

Pepper (1942) distinguished between alternate worldviews that can helpfully be applied to understanding the assumptions and aims underpinning different approaches to science. For brevity, I will focus on just two of these worldviews: elemental realism (Hayes, Strosahl & Wilson, 2011)[1] and contextualism. The elemental realist worldview is based on the 'root metaphor' (Pepper, 1942) of the world as a machine with isolable parts that cause behavior. The truth criterion for the elemental realist is *correspondence*, such that the purpose of science is to attain closer and closer correspondence between the predictions of science and actual events unfolding in the world. Theories are true to the degree that they successfully predict what is actually observed in the world. Much of natural science is built upon elemental realist assumptions, and much of psychology has tacitly or explicitly imported these assumptions. All psychological theories that postulate causal linkages between hypothetical mental constructs, frequently illustrated using 'box and arrow' diagrams, are elemental realist in the sense that they emphasise causal relations between hypothesised *parts* and are directed towards obtaining greater and greater correspondence with what is 'real'.

The root metaphor for contextualism is, by contrast, the action of the whole organism in context (Pepper, 1942). To understand the act, we must understand the context, including the historical and current systemic influences upon the organism. From a contextualist standpoint, the world is understood to be an undifferentiated process, and the divisions and dichotomies that we impose upon the flow of experience are purely functional; we divide up the world in ways that help us to achieve our ends. The truth criterion for contextualists isn't correspondence between model predictions and actual outcomes, but effective action – does

[1] Pepper (1942) called this worldview 'mechanism' but along with Hayes et al. (2011) I have used the term elemental realism as it is more descriptive of the reductive, realist stance of this worldview.

this particular way of viewing the world help us to achieve our ends (Gifford & Hayes, 1999)[2]? Consider, for example, how we might theorise about an effective coaching session. We might say the success of the coaching was caused by the capabilities or motivation of the coach, or of the client, or perhaps it was caused by the organisation's efforts to bring about change, the congeniality of the room in which the coaching occurred, the trust built between the coach and client, a shared language or purpose, or a culture of coaching within the organisation, the economic system that supports coaching, and on and on. Our choice of explanatory mechanism is fundamentally guided by our goals in conducting the analysis. From a functional contextualist stance, explanations that help us to improve coaching are more 'true' than explanations that have little impact.

It is important to realise that elemental realist and contextualistic assumptions are just that, they are pre-analytic assumptions that we bring to understanding the world. Elemental realism pre-analytically assumes that if we just keep working away, we will eventually get closer and closer to the truth, a complete ontological model of the world. Contextualism assumes that it would be more helpful to direct attention to what can be shown to improve workability. In this sense, contextualism is a-ontological and fundamentally pragmatic. Such pragmatism is of course not new. In 1878, Charles Pierce argued that 'only practical distinctions have a meaning' (Pierce, 1982) in psychology. William James argued that ideas 'become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience… This is the 'instrumental' view of truth… the view that truth in our ideas means their power to 'work'' (1983, pp.164–165). But neither elemental realism nor contextualism can be ultimately justified, they are a set of assumptions about knowing that are chosen according to our values.

Why is this important for the target article? Complexity science can be understood either in an elemental realist way (as a model of the way the world really is, where the aim is correspondence); or in a pragmatic, contextualist way (as a call for multiple perspectives where the aim is impact, what works?) The target article goes some way towards this latter perspective but, in my view, is insufficiently clear about its epistemological and ontological assumptions and this reduces its impact.

As an illustrative example, we might say that dialogue is a prime example of feedback loops in action. A small decision to listen instead of defend oneself in the midst of an argument might lead to a positive feedback loop of increased listening and, ultimately, more effective outcomes. The metaphor of the 'causal loop' certainly seems plausible here. But what then do we *do* with this insight? We have an elemental realist explanation that feels coherent and plausible but doesn't really inform practice. An alternative way of arriving at a solution of listening more would be to ask something like 'given this context, what behaviors in the past have moved us towards what we value?' Such a question entirely sidesteps debates aimed at discovering the particular qualities of the people involved or the situation (e.g. 'rational linear', self-organising or chaotic) and instead goes right to the heart of what works for what we want to achieve. In my view, coaching psychology research and practice will be better served by pragmatism in the sense outlined by Charles Pierce (1982) and William James (1983).

The sort of shift in emphasis I am arguing for is subtle but profound; and any experienced coach will have a feel for what I mean. We have all had the experience of a client

[2] There are actually at least two varieties of contextualism. Descriptive contextualism is content with exhaustive descriptions of experience, as in some branches of history. Here I am concerned with functional contextualism that is inherently pragmatic in nature.

fruitlessly trying to determine the 'reality' of a situation by asking questions such as 'am I competent enough', 'does my boss like me' or 'is this the optimal course of action that someone at my level could take in this situation?' And we have all also witnessed the power of the simplest question to cut through such 'elemental realist' deliberations: 'What do you really *want* for this situation and what might you *do* to move towards that?' The solutions-focused approach (Grant, 2006; Jackson & McKergow, 2002) evaluates possible action plans not by whether they are *right* in some absolute sense but by whether they are likely to be workable in context.

Interpreted from a realist perspective, complexity science can distract coaching psychologists from doing work that matters, into fruitless debates about whether a situation is linear-rational, self-organising or chaotic. But complexity science can also be interpreted as a useful pointer to the importance of the whole act in context, with an emphasis on purpose and workability. Although the solutions-focused approach to coaching is an example of the contextualist approach in action, coaching psychology researchers do not appear to have explored its epistemological or ontological assumptions. In this regard, coaching psychology can learn from such approaches as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, which makes its roots in pragmatic contextualism very clear (Gifford & Hayes, 1999; Hayes et al., 2011). The contextualist theory underpinning Acceptance and Commitment Therapy has now been applied to areas as diverse as human suffering (Hayes et al., 2011), education (Strand, Barnes-Holmes & Barnes-Holmes, 2003), spirituality (Hayes, 1984), compassion (Atkins & Parker, in press) and, more recently, coaching (Blonna, 2011). Pragmatic contextualism is entirely rational, but it is rationality directed towards a different purpose.

I am suggesting that the solution to the problems of linearity lies not just in thinking about the world as more complex, but in a deep re-examination of the usefulness of elemental realism. For all the reasons outlined in the target article, social systems that involve multiple perspectives and varied ways of constructing reality do not just require more complex models of the way the world really is, they also require a shift in focus towards the functions of behavior in context. I am not arguing that a pragmatic, contextualist epistemology is *truer* than a realist one, I am arguing that it is likely to be more *useful* in the context of coaching psychology. If, as James (1983) argued, 'ideas become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience,' then there is a challenge to those advocating the worth of complexity science to coaching to show how their ideas might actually influence practice.

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Anxiety and complexity in a postprofessional era: The challenge of practising what we preach

David B. Drake

THE TITLE for this paper brings to mind Donald Schön's observation that, 'Problems are abstractions extracted from messes by analysis… Managers do not solve problems; they manage messes' (pp.15–16). However, the title ends up being a bit misleading in that the generic form of the word 'complexity' is used by the authors, obscuring some of the important distinctions made in the paper itself. Even so, I commend the authors for bringing this body of work to bear on deliberations on the future of coaching as a potential profession. As one who developed the term 'postprofessional' (Drake, 2008a) as a frame for coaching and its evolution and who has advocated for an artisan's view of evidence and mastery (see Drake, 2011), I welcome this contribution to the conversation about the future of coaching psychology. I would offer four primary reflections on the paper.

At the conclusion of a useful introduction to some of the key terms, the authors note that Stacey and his colleagues have moved beyond their original construct to talk about organisations as 'Complex Responsive Processes'. However, there is no explanation as to why this new terminology was dropped by the authors in favour of returning to a modified version of the original 'Complex Adaptive Systems' language. I would have liked to see a fuller discussion of this distinction, the process by which the decision was reached and the rationale for it, and the implications of the choice for coaching, i.e. the relative emphasis on individuals versus environments. I am also curious about the role of 'agency' in both models given the emphasis in coaching on developing greater accountability, new meaning-making and more productive actions. Karl Weick's (1995) work on leadership and decision-making in complex environments would have been useful here.

A second issue relates to the role of anxiety in complex and chaotic environments. I was concerned when I read in the abstract, 'In chaotic space we seek to hold our clients anxiety to enable them to act.' Given the work of Donald Winnicott (1971) on creating 'holding environments' and the nature of coaching as a 'decentered' engagement, it seems precarious to place this responsibility on coaches. Instead, I see the role of coaches as noticing or fostering real-time experiences – within a strong 'container' or 'eco-system' – in which both parties can notice the points of heightened anxiety and begin to use them to increase what attachment theorists describe as their 'windows of tolerance' and to create more adaptive responses. Ultimately it is about increasing clients' capacity to self-regulate, self-express and self-author such that they can harness their anxiety in service of their relations and aspirations.

The authors provide some additional and useful insights on what is missing in how coaching is often conceived and delivered in self-organising and chaotic contexts. In many ways, it appears the authors have taken their own 'narrative turn'. However, I see three significant gaps in what has been outlined. One, there is frequent mention of various types of stories without any real reference to the narrative coaching literatures (see Drake, 2008b) and its work on the structure and function of narratives, the typologies of stories, and the critical issues of

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discourse and power which shape both people and systems. As such, the paper ends up using the term 'stories' without any real definitions or distinctions. It also misses a wonderful opportunity to show how narrative frames would help coaches to make better sense of what is happening with their clients as agents in larger systems.

Two, the authors struggle to model the very approaches that are being advocated. Instead, many of the propositions are quite linear and rational in nature. The authors would have been well served in this regard to draw on the works of people like Patricia Shaw (2002) who has written in an almost ethnographic fashion what it is like to apply CAS principles in practice as well as the narrative coaching community who have written about the importance of the contextual field in conversations (see Stelter, 2007). In doing so, the authors could have written about how coaches can think and conceptualise differently in chaotic and complex spaces. Otherwise, as the authors point out, both clients and coaches will continue to apply mechanistic frames to coaching and 'grasp at any story that holds potential to ameliorate the discomfort and pain being experienced.'

Three, I would have liked to see more practical insights on what all this means for coaches when they are sitting in front of a client. For example, how would one apply the following in coaching, 'Complex adaptive systems are driven by three control parameters: the rate of information flow through the systems, the richness of connectivity between agents in the system, and the level of diversity within and between the schemas of the agents' (Barger & Kirby, 1995, p.99)? In addition, what are some of the corollaries within the theories that support coaching that would enable coaches to access this work in their practice? I am also curious about what a CAS approach has to say about research given the observation that, 'Complex adaptation is characterised not only by a high degree of interaction among component parts but also by the way that the particular nature of this interaction … generates outcomes not linearly related to initial conditions' (Mihata, 1997, p.31). What are the implications for coaches' conceptualisations and applications of evidence?

I appreciated the use of Cavanagh and Lane's (2010) typology of professional practice and Lo's (2006) work on professions in looking at how coaching could evolve as a profession capable of working across all three types of systems. It would have been great to offer a concurrent set of reflections on how chaos and complexity are unfolding in clients' and coaches' environments – and how this impacts the issues clients face and the approaches coaches take. As it is, the paper is coach-centric and, therefore, more limited in its applicability. However, the insights about professions are used well by the authors as a springboard for a robust set of conclusions and an invitation for coaching psychologists (and coaches more broadly) to engage in new yet profound conversations about their future. In particular, I appreciate that the authors wrestled with the question of identity for coaching psychology as it seeks to evolve in a postprofessional world.

The application of the three primary frames (types of spaces, types of stories, and types of research) to the same model across the article provided helpful signposts for following the line of thinking and surfacing some important issues. I thought that the conclusion – often a weak point in coaching papers – was excellent and provided good food for thought for both those who coach and those who seek to influence the trajectory of the broader enterprise. At the same time, I would have liked to see a greater utilisation of the relevant literature, more linkages across the three uses of the model, more modelling of the approaches being championed, and more space devoted to the practical implications for coaches and those who help them develop. In doing so, coaching professionals would learn more about how to "manage" the messes and the types of systems in which they work.

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Coaching for a complex world

Bob Hodge

I WAS DELIGHTED to be asked to write a response to this article. First I need to make some disclaimers. I am biased about the topic. I have spent 18 years thinking about these theories and trying to apply them to problems in the social sciences, so I applaud the attempt in this case. I am also largely ignorant about coaching psychology, so I cannot judge whether this article demonstrates the case in a way that will be useful to coaching psychology professionals.

I began in a state of ignorance about this field. I have now read enough to be excited by it. I also see many lines of connection with ideas in chaos and complexity. For instance, chaos theorist Ilya Prigogine has the concept of autocatalytic feedback loops. This takes the cybernetic idea of positive feedback loops as catalysts which enhance tendencies. Negative feedback loops damp them down. They are anti-catalysts. Prigogine (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984) identified many basic biological processes which use the output of one positive loop as input into another positive loop. Together they form an 'autocatalytic' ('self-catalytic') loop. Biologists previously emphasised homeostatic loops, which maintain equilibrium. Prigogine pointed out that life processes are made possible by positive feedback. These may be regulated through negative loops, but even these loops may be driven by positive chains.

I use this idea to explain why I do not want to 'criticise' this article, as many academics, myself included, are trained to do. Criticism tends to be negative feedback. It restores the status quo. This is true even of so-called 'radical' criticism, which often achieves disappointingly less change than its proponents expected. Negative feedback loops have a place, but only as part of a system. I feel my position, derived from chaos and complexity theories, has affinities with strengths coaching according to Linley and Harrington. They capture two orientations in coaching: fixing problems versus harnessing strengths (2006, p.39). From chaos and complexity theories I come to a similar conclusion. It is often better to affirm and channel strengths rather than impose directions on a supposedly defective system.

The authors' opening sentence has been said so often that it needs to be rescued from the weight of that repetition: 'We live in a complex and complicated world'. If this article only made this cliché live again and inspired coaching psychology practice it would have done a worthwhile job. It touches especially on the world of the new kind of client that feeds the new practice: not anguished dysfunctional patients needing treatment, but highly functional but still struggling citizens.

Such citizens are highly aware of the authors' statement as a key fact of their landscape. In a recent IBM survey of executives (2010), the increasing complexity of the world was the top-rated concern. Yet almost exactly half these high-achievers did not believe they personally could manage the challenge of this complexity. High complexity is very relevant to many clients who want coaching. Theories of chaos and complexity arguably should be part of the basic toolkit in the field, as comprehensively argued by Peter Webb, under the evocative title 'inspirational chaos' (2005).

I admire the authors' unobtrusively complex and ambitious question: 'What does coming of age, or 'growing up' in this world look like for us as practitioners, researchers and as a profession?' (p.75). It is complex because the authors see the division within the therapist's self as practitioner and researcher, and set this complex object in a layered structure with at least three tiers: the

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personal world of individual clients, the world of the therapist, and the profession itself, the sub-field of coaching set in the larger field of psychology. The authors explore all these levels, applying ideas of complexity to them all.

The authors do not use the terms 'multi-scalar' or 'fractal' to frame this analysis, but I recommend them to them. 'Fractals', a term coined by Mandelbrot (1993), has deservedly become an icon of chaos theory because it grabs imaginations and has such heuristic value. The word 'heuristic' captures what chaos and complexity research does best: not proving universal laws or predicting future behaviours, but leading flexible empirical enquiries of the kind that professional do best.

The concept of fractals, irregular self-similar but not identical patterns found across different scales, encourages analysts to ask whether any pattern they see at any one level may not have similar but not identical versions at level after level, in a potentially infinite series. The authors achieve this movement by using a metaphor, 'coming of age'. Metaphors are productive aids to thought, in similar ways to fractal theory. Fractal analysis has the merit that it is more systematic, and can move carefully and much further in both directions, up and down, continually asking whether there is a similarity or not and why. Fractal theory as heuristic method is like metaphors on speed.

The authors' key complexity theorist is Ralph Stacey. Stacey has been influential in management circles, which is useful for this article given the management contexts from which many clients come. The authors use Stacey's ideas creatively, using the same model three times for three different contents, contexts and levels. This makes it a kind of fractal theory without the label, able to generate complexity in a simple framework.

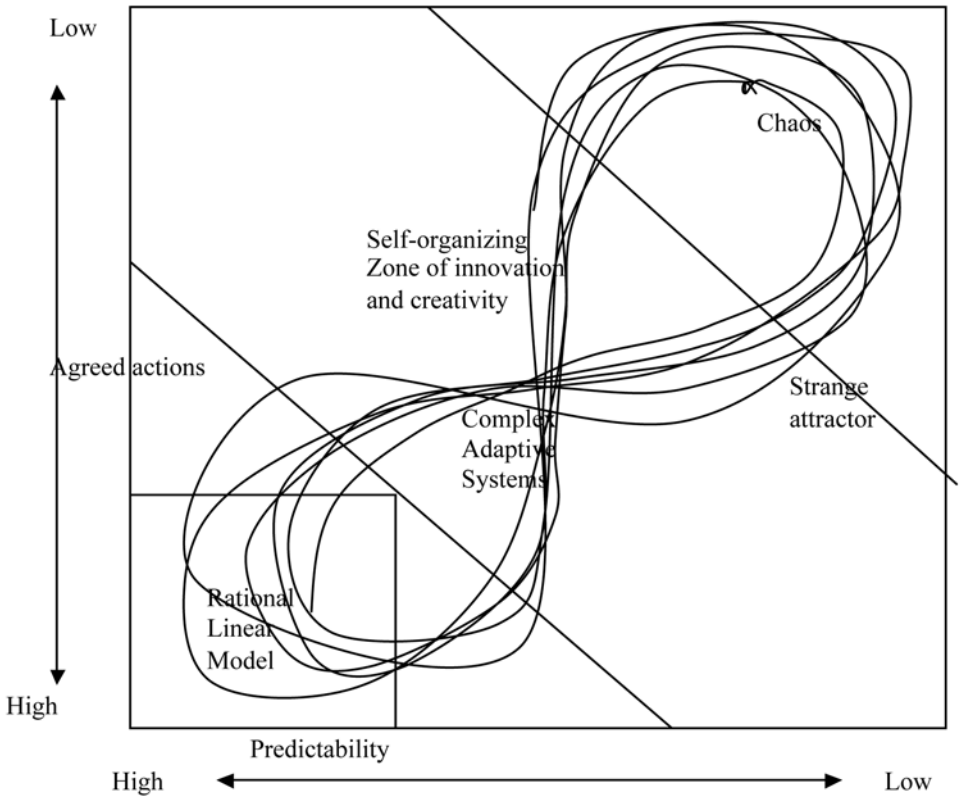
The authors' use of Stacey may seem problematic according to some common ideas of what complexity theory should be. Stacey's diagram offered a simplified, static map of core ideas developed by Prigogine (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). As the authors point out, even Stacey later proposed a more dynamic process. So the authors, it seems, have simplified Prigogine back to an earlier, simpler Stacey.

However, this move back from complexity to greater simplicity is justified in practical terms for someone seeking to communicate these ideas to those unfamiliar with them. It is also a move in a dialectic between simplicity and complexity that is characteristic of good complexity thinkers. Chaos theorists like Lorenz (1993) and Mandelbrot (1993) propose minimal determinate systems which still generate complexity.

The crucial point is that the authors use this model to think with, to understand matters Stacey did not specifically have in mind. I am continuing the process, using this grid as a static map on which to trace the complex dynamic movement of the multiple positions taken up in empirical practice. I show these (see Figure 1) as a form of what Lorenz called a 'strange attractor' (1993). In linear science, a 'point attractor' is the single point systems always and predictably converge on. A 'strange attractor' is the signature of the irreducible unpredictability of chaos. The trajectories form a pattern, yet they never settle down at a single point.

The authors use Stacey's map to make several points. The authors most important point is that these three states all exist in a single framework of reality, yet they have distinct properties. The rational, linear model remains true of the processes and laws that describe it, often seen as equivalent to science. Yet it is important to insist, as Prigogine influentially has done, that what happens in the space of self-organisation also exists as science, obeying laws that only apply in this space. Complex Adaptive Systems, for instance, characterise biological and social life, yet cannot be deduced from linear science. They do not cancel the laws of linearity. They coexist with them. By abandoning the aims of certainty and predictability they greatly expand the scope of what science can explain.

Figure 1: Lacey's model plus Lorenz's 'strange attractor'.



Complex Adaptive Systems also have intrinsic connections with chaos. Chaos is what they adapt to, as well as they can. They do so by recognising and harnessing kinds of order in chaos. I note parenthetically here that some complexologists imply that this intermediate territory *always* produces positive adaptations. It must be emphasised that this is a zone of unpredictability, where some adaptations to their chaotic environment may be dysfunctional from other points of view. Complex environments always contain a potentially infinite number of competing agents, combinations and outcomes.

I want to suggest how productive this simple model, in the authors' version and in my modified version, is in thinking about the two main problems the authors address. The first is the problem for practice, of the apparent lack of fit for these theories and a dominant motif in practice, the role of 'evidence-based counselling'. The other is the problem of the ambiguous foundations of the new sub-discipline. I admire the authors' honesty in dealing with these so directly, since both might seem to go against their case for complexity thinking. In this part of my commentary I suggest a way of clarifying these two problems within a complexity framework.

The authors associate evidence-based coaching with linear thinking. On the one hand they insists that this approach is not just legitimate, but good: 'Done well, it is a valid and rigorous approach to practice, and should not be lightly disregarded' (p.81). They contain the problem by assigning it a space in their adaptation of Stacey's map, but that is only containing it.

They explore its dimensions by looking at the case of 'Trevor', who has anxiety over

presenting to the board of his company. From this description I guess that Trevor is the boss of this ('his') company, so the anxiety sounds as though it might have different sources and effects than if it came from a more lowly ranked person. I am supposing that the point of this story is that this might be the tip of a different iceberg, suggesting a different analysis and recommendation, more unique to Trevor and more enabling across a whole range of his behaviours. The problem, as the authors diagnose it, is the tendency in this form of coaching to assimilate individual stories to a single, well-supported exemplar story.

However, one way of resolving this opposition would be to use the whole Stacey space as a map for empirical instances, which would be assigned a place across the three types of process, with the same individual possibly occupying more than one place. Trevor's presentation anxiety may indeed be a linear effect of a simple cause, but it may also be embedded in a complex adaptive system that needs adjusting for him to be a more effective boss and happier person. His case file might include 'strange attractor' trajectories, all evidence based, that illuminate his own case and make his coach more flexible and effective. On this interpretation the apparent opposition between these theories and 'evidence-based coaching' is an artefact of the current dominance of linear models in psychology.

The authors also confront problems of this emerging sub-field. In the conclusion they note 'an interesting paradox' (p.88): the tension between increasing attempts to find a place within psychology, '*and* look to others who are operating in similarly complex space for inspiration and methodologies' (p.88). This is the same tension as underlies the debate about evidence based coaching. The fact that they use the Stacey model to explore both at their different levels shows the potential explanatory power of a fractal model, even when it is implicit.

The authors do not discuss the extraordinary success story of coaching psychology, but it is relevant to this issue. Stephen Palmer and Alison Whybrow (2006) report the remarkably rapid emergence of this sub-field, from initial negotiations in 2002 to an explosion of memberships, from 1600 in March 2005 to nearly 2000 by December 2005. Exponential growth like that is a sign of the positive feedback loops of chaos, yet the result is a stable complex adaptive system. Whatever theories or practices it espouses, it is a product of chaos which continually connects with the body of largely linear practices of the British Psychological Society.

This can be mapped using the Stacey grid, modified to include a strange attractor, integrating the three modes, linearity, complexity and chaos. Using this model as a heuristic device, I am led to ask whether the next fractal level up, the British Psychological Society, may not also be structured across the three domains. For instance, I was intrigued by Stephen Joseph's discussion, in the inaugural issue of the journal (2006), of two models in psychology, the medical and person-centred. He sees the medical model as dominant, but the person-centred tradition which he tracks back to Carl Rogers still flourishes, a main premise in coaching psychology. Joseph's summary of Rogers 'actualising tendency' (2006; p.48) is remarkably close to the authors' complexity-oriented coach, whose primary task is 'to help create the conditions in which the system can move toward more adaptive self-organising function' (p.81).

The authors lament that 'psychology is not replete with such emergent models' (p.81). Given the example of Rogers from the 1960s, I wonder how far this is the case. To me Rogers seems a complexity theorist before the name existed, and I suspect there may be many more, underground currents waiting for a catalytic event which reveals them to each other, as a once hidden force in psychology. The spectacular success of coaching psychology suggests to me that there may be some underlying scenario like this. If so, a coaching psychology organised around a soft version of complexity theory

might be something psychology itself really needs, on behalf of the many clients whose lives will become better because they have this option.

For me the merit of the authors' exposition is that they doe not introduce a new Grand Theory designed to replace all previous theories, or provoke ideological battles that have proved so divisive on other occasions. They are respectful and inclusive, creating a space where linearity, complexity and chaos can co-exist and interact till they form a stable complex adaptive system. The immediate outcome is tension, contradiction and uncertainty, but those are signs of complexity at work.

At this point in the life of coaching psychology I feel the authors' version of complexity is an optimal framework, encouraging multiple connections, creative diversity and flexible coherence. It does not settle relationships and boundaries once and for all with linearity or chaos, but inaugurates an ongoing interaction, from which psychology and coaching psychology alike should benefit. Practitioners of coaching psychology will judge whether he has persuaded them. I am happy to record that they convinced me that if I was a psychologist I would like to be a coaching psychologist in a complexity framework.

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Epistemological reflections on the complexity sciences and how they may inform coaching psychology

Lesley Kuhn

ARGUABLY, the major contribution of the complexity sciences is that they provide a different set of organising principles to those offered by the classical scientific paradigm (Kuhn 2007). Over the past century, mechanistic and linear thinking, with roots in classical science – rationalism and empiricism – has dominated sense making across many discipline areas including those associated with study of all matters relating to humans and human society (psychology, philosophy, sociology, biology, etc., Bateson, 1979; Jung, 1995; Tarnas, 2007). However, it is important to note that simultaneously, various philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have challenged the efficacy and appropriateness of linear and mechanistic thinking for study of humans and human society (Eenwyk, 1997; Flaherty & Fine, 2001; Heidegger, 1956; Jung, 1995; Letiche, 2000;). The organising principles identified by the complexity sciences resonate well with the impetus of these challenges and may be proposed as going further in enabling a 'complexification of our very mode of perceiving/conceiving the phenomenal world' (Morin, 1992, p.379). Interestingly, Jung's conception of human consciousness, though predating the development of the complexity sciences, embodies such a complexification of perceiving/conceiving. This is indicated, for example, when he states:

> *Our psyche is set up in accord with the structure of the universe, and what happens in the macrocosm, likewise happens in the infinitesimal and most subjective reaches of the psyche.* (Jung, 1995, p.368)

It is exciting then to see in 'Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: The challenges we face in the messy world of complexity' that a complexity approach is explored in relation to how it may contribute to the development of the research and practice of coaching psychology. The paper sets out a particular interpretation of a complexity approach to making sense of the social world and argues that 'if coaching psychology is to come of age' it needs to go beyond being informed by traditional linear models to incorporating complex styles of thinking and modelling. While I am enthusiastic about how a complexity approach could inform coaching psychology, from my perspective, some of the discussion of complexity and the implications of taking a complexity perspective to coaching psychology as discussed in the paper are misleading.

Over the past 14 years I have been thinking and writing about implications and applications of complexity science for understanding social and cultural life and I continue to find explanatory value in complexity as an interpretive framework. So, while I am not a coaching psychologist, I am interested in the ways by which the authors engage complexity concepts.

In this response, in the spirit of continuing the process of setting a foundation for critical reflection on utilising complexity in coaching psychology, I begin by offering a brief conceptual introduction to complexity that elaborates upon that given in 'Coaching Psychology Coming of Age'. The appropriateness of a complexity approach for coaching psychology and some implications of taking a complexity perspective to

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coaching psychology are then discussed. Following this I raise my concerns about some of the ways that complexity is brought to coaching psychology in the paper. I conclude my response with a brief discussion of issues to consider in utilising complexity in coaching psychology.

Complexity

Developed principally in the fields of physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics and computing, the complexity sciences function as an intellectual successor of other previously favoured theories for explaining how novelty, order and evolution are present in the world (Kuhn, 2007, 2009; Mason, 2008). Complexity takes a radical relational view (Dillon, 2000) of the nature and organisation of organic phenomena (or the natural world), seeing 'things' as thoroughly relationally organised, as 'contingent assemblages that are a function of a mode of relating' (Dillon, 2000, p.9). Complexity thus construes 'relationships as a constitutive part of the phenomena we want to understand' (Montuori & Purser, 1997, p.9). From a complexity perspective, it is through local connections or relationships that macro behaviour emerges. In describing something of the nature of these of relationships, the ontological explanation of complexity is that 'reality' (organic phenomena) is self-organising, dynamic and emergent (Lewin, 1999; Morin, 2008; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984).

To take a complexity perspective then, is to conceive of individuals, organisations, populations and environments as interrelating, self-organising, dynamic and emergent, as not reducible to component parts and forever influencing and being influenced. This perspective has important implications for how human sense making is understood. Epistemologically, complexity can be understood as construing sense making as likewise being self-organising, dynamic and emergent.

Thus a complexity perspective, in considering the world and human sense making as self-organising, dynamic and emergent, signals an epistemologically ambiguous orientation.

In response to such ambiguity, Morin (2008) and others (Alhadeff-Jones, 2008; Kuhn, 2007), advocate thinking in a complex way where we remain aware of the biological, physical and anthropological foundations of our sense making. This view resonates well with a number of philosophical, psychological and sociological orientations (Heidegger, 1965; Jung, 1976; Maturana, 1998) which similarly argue for recognising the interpretive, ambiguous and uncertain character of human sense making. I am reminded of the wisdom of Von Bertalanffy:

> *Each interpretation of reality is an audacious adventure of reason, to use Kant's expression. There is only the alternative: Either we renounce any interpretation of the 'essence' of things – which is the well-founded opinion of science – or, if we venture upon such an interpretation which is only possible if patterned after ourselves, we must remain conscious of its merely metaphorical character. For we have not the faintest proof that the 'real' world is of the same nature as the minute corner given to us in our own internal experience. Such an interpretation, therefore, can have no other value than that of analogy, an As-If …* (Bertalanffy, 1975, pp. 70-71)

Coaching psychology and complexity

A link may be made between coaching psychology and complexity because, in the language of complexity, human cultural settings are always self-organising, dynamic and emergent. The evolutionary trajectory of coaching psychology as a sub-discipline of psychology attests to this. Coaching psychology did not develop as a planned and constrained research programme that has progressed in a linear manner. Rather, it depicts a trajectory of self-organisation (for example, as individuals and groups decide educational priorities or focus), dynamism (for example, in relation to contestation of discourse) and emergence (coaching psychology at one time did not exist). Further, coaching psychology continues to dynami-

cally emerge as those engaged in the field continue to interact, to critically evaluate the various philosophical, psychological and theoretical traditions that have so far informed the field, to critically reflect upon practice and to suggest new theoretical orientations and practices.

The practice of coaching psychology explicitly implicates relationships, be these between a coach and a person or persons being coached, or between a person being coached, the coach and an organisation. Coaching psychology deals with self-organisation, dynamism and emergence of not only the person being coached, but also of the coach and the organisation. The working definition of coaching psychology offered by Grant (2011, p.89) gives some indications of this in stating that:

> *Coaching psychology is concerned with the systematic application of the behavioural science of psychology to the enhancement of life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations. Coaching psychology focuses on facilitating goal attainment, and on enhancing the personal and professional growth and development of clients in personal life and in work domains.*

Concerns

While recognising the need for humility in relation to our knowledge claims, including those for complexity, I believe we still must be careful in how we engage with the organising principles and explanatory concepts (such as the edge of chaos) as identified by the complexity sciences.

In this regard I have some concerns with the perspective taken in the paper. Firstly, as a complexity approach describes the normal functioning of the world as complex, messy and unpredictable, I cannot agree with the authors' view that the world is now becoming 'increasingly messy and unpredictable'.

Secondly, I am confused about the author's depiction and delineation of 'simple, complex and chaotic spaces' (as shown in their Figure 1 and discussed in the introductory section of the paper). In the 1980s Chris Langdon and Norman Packard (Kuhn, 2009) each separately discovered that complex adaptive systems naturally move towards a region between fixed behaviour and chaotic behaviour. The term, 'the edge of chaos' has since caught on as the descriptor of this far-from-equilibrium zone that exists between order and disorder. That all organic unities, including people, are characterised in complexity by the organising principles of self-organisation, dynamism and emergence, would suggest that a complexity perspective would not place people into a 'Simple/complicated space', because according to complexity, people are inherently complex (i.e. not reducible to component parts and forever in a process of influencing and being influenced). So even if people were placed into a 'simple/complicated space' (this could only be a mechanically organised space of some kind) they would remain complex – self-organising, dynamic and emergent.

Further I do not understand the authors' point that 'under conditions where there is high agreement and high predictability, then management using rational decision making, or decision making based on linear models of cause and effect, is most appropriate'. I cannot see what the link is that the authors make between situations (conditions) characterised as having 'high agreement and high predictability' and management utilising 'rational' or 'linear models of cause and effect'. According to complexity, living entities are characterised by non-linearity, so are the author's referring to engaging with mechanical phenomena? The link between 'high agreement' and 'high predictability' I find similarly curious. A group of complexity theorists may well be in agreement about the non-predictability of certain dynamics.

Thirdly, I am not convinced of the point the author's make about their concerns with adopting evidence based coaching practices in 'complex and chaotic spaces'. They argue that the adoption of evidence-based practice is predicated on the 'assumption that there

is a chain of cause and effect that is relatively stable, and can be known and can be used to predict and control outcomes'. There are at least two issues within their discussion that I wish to separate out. The first is that in my view, there are many possible ways to generate the 'evidence' for evidence-based practice (including qualitative complexity based methods, such as vortical postmodern ethnography (Kuhn & Woog, 2005)), albeit that, as they argue, psychology has historically favoured 'empirical reductionism'. Secondly, they appear to assume that use of evidence-based practice would lock practitioners into a situation where they were unable to draw on their own experience or critical thinking, or to relate to the uniqueness of the individual. However, I would expect practitioners to thoughtfully and critically engage with 'evidence' and not to feel they must deny either their own uniqueness or the uniqueness of their client. This second issue then relates more generally to attitudes brought to use of theory within certain practice domains and not to the use or otherwise of a complexity approach.

Critical issues to consider in utilising complexity in coaching psychology

In utilising complexity in social and cultural settings there is a range of applications that may be made. In broad terms, these range from philosophical (concerning the reason of things) through to mathematical applications. Clearly my own experience has been in utilising complexity in a philosophical sense. Having said that, it can be anticipated that those who subscribe to the other end of the spectrum will find such use of complexity irritatingly inadequate.

For me, utilising complexity or any other framework must be done thoughtfully. To this end I offer here five critical issues to consider when utilising complexity in coaching psychology.

1. Do not substitute complexity for thoughtfulness

Complexity presents preferred ways of construing the organisation of the world while simultaneously demonstrating that we cannot actually ever 'know' with certainty. This epistemological ambiguity means that rather than offer 'recipes', complexity functions as a catalyst to creative thoughtfulness by requiring us to generate our own carefully considered approaches.

2. Develop complexity habits of thought

Rather than merely familiarise oneself with the principles and metaphors of complexity, there is a need to work at developing complexity habits of thought. This is necessary because, as pointed out in the debate paper, most of us have been immersed in linear styles of thinking and as in any new learning, old habits can be difficult to replace as they can be so taken for granted and invisible.

3. Be careful of confusion between 'is' and 'ought'

In describing a set of organising principles, complexity is in essence, descriptive rather than prescriptive. It purports to describe 'how things are' rather than 'how they ought to be'. Often there is a tendency to transpose complexity's description into an injunction, as for example, when it is suggested that we can 'enable self-organisation'.

4. Recognise that complexity and coaching psychology are differently disposed

As a human activity, coaching is imbued with values and ethical considerations. Further, whereas complexity is descriptive, coaching is goal oriented.

5. Value humility

Throughout history we see time and again where the certainties of one generation have become displaced by another. As C.S. Lewis so insightfully reminds us, a theory or model represents 'a serious attempt to get in all the phenomena known at a given period' while also reflecting 'the prevalent psychology of an age almost as much as it reflects the state of that age's knowledge' (Lewis, 1964, p.222). It is through critical consideration of how complexity (or any other theory) may inform coaching psychology that those involved contribute to the ongoing evolution of the field.

Concluding comments

While it is clear that more scholarly discussion and exploration is needed, the authors are to be congratulated for their discussion of complexity theorising in the field of coaching psychology. As Ball (1995, p.266) reminds us, theory itself functions as a catalytic agent of change:

> *Theory is a vehicle for 'thinking otherwise'; it is a platform for 'outrageous hypotheses' and for 'unleashing criticism'… It offers a language for challenge and modes of thought, other than those articulated for us by dominant others … The purpose of such theory is to defamiliarise present practices and categories, to make them seem less self evident and necessary, and to open up spaces for invention of new forms of experience.*

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Wisdom needed – reward offered

Julie Allan

PROFESSIONALISM, empiricism and the notion of 'appropriate' have caught my attention. They are certainly linked with each other and they link with complexity, as their presence together in the target article indicates. I'm also interested by the links with wisdom, which is a focus for my own enquiry and practice. I'll elaborate on the connections I'm making between them.

Professionalism first. It is indeed a pursuit through which a variety of paradoxes come to the fore. I should declare responsibility for some involvement here, through the British Psychological Society's SGCP and Ethics Committees, as coaching psychology emerges as a profession within and/or alongside the profession of psychology in general. The Professional Associations Research Network currently holds that there are three pillars of a profession. These are: entry standards; complaints and discipline processes; and CPD, including positive supports for ethical competence. It's good to see that third one, which includes ethics in a way that relates it to, and differentiates it from, matters of fact or law. That said, the demonstration of 'ethical competence' and how it can be developed is not a simple matter. A profession goes beyond the protected knowledge to which the article alludes to encompass behaviour, so while it's good to have knowledge *about* this area, it is also an issue of judgment and praxis. What will be the differentiators of the profession of coaching psychology? The conclusion to the target article forwards a view that we need to go beyond the traditional linear models which have informed our profession so far and I agree in that I've long favoured multidisciplinary approaches, or at least explorations into overlaps and edge-places. Plus, I think it's hard to remove the psychology from any endeavour that involves human beings, no matter which discipline is hosting the viewing lens. So, while I'm not disagreeing that a multiplicity of ways of working is useful and probably necessary, I'm just not sure that the profession of psychology has only been informed by linear models, or if it has, that such linear models would be traditional. Tradition can seem quite modern when it only 'officially' goes back to 1870 or so.

Possibly all of which serves to support the identity paradox highlighted in this article. To build on their Stacey referencing, the world could be held to contain (at least) the three areas mentioned (simple, complicated, complex), so we have a choice to attend to those characteristics. Or not. To whom will it matter if coaching psychologists do or don't attend to them, or claim they can or can't, and the grounds on which they take their position? I'll choose to pass on this one. And yet psychology is coursing through everything that has a human face or involvement, and the 'quacks' alluded to in the article will keep annoying professionals and lay folk alike by ducking whatever systems we've decided to set up. Furthermore, there will be non-professional (or other-professioned) non-quacks available.

To link this back in with complexity, and with an involvement in years gone past with the complexity programme at the London School of Economics, I like the move from CAS to CES (adaptive to evolving) and even more CCES (e.g. Mitleton-Kelly 2003), complex co-evolving systems. This attempts to acknowledge in the use of the language that particularly where the interacting components in a complex system are people, they all have the ability to reflect and learn, and so co-evolve in a social ecosystem. Of course, many coachees will appear before coaching psychologists certain in the knowledge that

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some of their colleagues have no ability to reflect or learn, which may or may not be another story. How will coaching psychologists and coaching and psychology co-evolve usefully?

Which brings me to wisdom, including empiricism and appropriateness. When I spoke in London and Stockholm as part of the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology I found my fellow professionals really had considerable energy to engage with these areas. I view wisdom as an emergent property of a complex system and I also view it as coachable. In the psychological literature on wisdom (and many many other literatures on wisdom are available, all of which I'm slowly but gladly embracing), consideration has been given to what produces wisdom and what it is for. The well-established Berlin Paradigm (e.g. Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005, other models are available) holds that five areas need to be present for wisdom to be judged as there, these being two basic knowledge ones (of content and of process) and three further ones concerning understanding of life stages/contexts/relationships, knowledge about the presence of different values and priorities, and acknowledgement of life having many uncertainties (i.e. tolerance of ambiguity). This paradigm links with complexity, in my view anyway, in that its authors highlight wisdom as being what's needed where matters are 'important but uncertain'. The dynamics of this particular framework, being empirically based through research, I have seen induce several quick steps backwards in people as they have reacted to juxtaposing 'wisdom' with 'empirical'. These folks have my sympathy and I don't disagree.

Yet I think evidence-based practice is a good thing. I agree that where we can show that A causes B, then it's useful to use that knowledge every time we want B as an outcome (other things being equal). My difficulties – possibly shared with the article author if I've understood correctly – are about what counts as evidence. Our empirical methods, quantitative and qualitative, are often used in ways that privilege certain types of knowledge over others. We make choices about this and sometimes the choices have been hidden or perhaps have been unconsciously made. For the most part, and some would argue for an entirety, we can't take an objective lens on the world. So what to do with this? Well, for example, Clarkson's seven discourses (e.g. Clarkson 1995) is a framework that isn't factually demonstrated, but if you're a psychologist you'll be able to spot where some consistently observed psychological phenomena fit. It articulates, and when applied it asks for consideration of, seven ways of speaking about our experience. To be taken as multistranded rather than hierarchical, the seven discourses are: physiological; emotional; nominative, i.e. labeling/language; normative, for example, constructions of in- and out-group; factual; theoretical; transpersonal. Whatever you think of this set of areas, it seems reasonable to say that where we privilege certain types of knowing over others, there will be consequences. If we do this unreflexively then some of the surprises may not be pleasant. What do coaching psychologists allow through the door in research and in practice? Physiology, for example – does it only count if you measured it with a bit of kit? Emotion – is it only in if used intelligently in accordance with the metrics? Transpersonal – well, what's the meaning of this, I hear you cry?

What empirical research often does afford us is some element of discipline in defining what we're referring to, as the relationship between our understanding of the world and the language we use to describe it can be profound – as psychologists (linguistics or otherwise) have helped to illuminate and as Clarkson's discourses refer to. But, or is it And, we also need to go a bit 'meta' where, to draw on gestalt psychology (for example) the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We need some flexibility in our unit of analysis. Psychology of a gestalt variety has most certainly, I would say, embraced complexity. Complexity is already in the discipline.

So, to turn to another challenge of our times, also highlighted in the article, on appropriateness. My working proposition on wisdom is that it concerns how we re-incorporate our full ways of knowing, individually and collectively, in service of what is needed. (Allan, 2010). This comes from my slightly greater interest in the 'why bother?' question than in the 'exactly what is it?' question. Psychologists have explored many of the components that are associated with wisdom, such as the different sorts of intelligence, judgment and decision making, altruism and moral reasoning, and protocols for this exploration have been wide ranging and have extended to the currently on-trend neuroscience. It is also the case that the meme of wisdom has been around for thousands of years and, depending on the language you choose (in Egypt around 4000 years that can be traced) has included a notion of 'good'.

The article includes an assertion:

> *'under conditions where there is high agreement and high predictability, then management using rational decision making, or decision making based on linear laws of cause and effect, is most appropriate.'*

I can have sympathy with where this comes from. But, given the times we live in, I'm inclined to wonder about it. Agreed and predictable it may be; appropriate is another question. How do we decide on what is appropriate? What is the role of the coaching psychologist in working with the economic, social, even ecological challenges of our time? Somebody or other once said that if all you have is a hammer then every problem starts to look like a nail. As coaching psychology continues to be professionalised, a few things will get nailed down but will they be as compelling in a changing world as the things that don't?

I find the notion of appropriateness is a great one to consider in the light of complexity, professionalism, evidence-based practice, ethics and wisdom. Even if we have no shadow of doubt that A leads to B, whether to take such a route is appropriate is more than a question of knowing the most certain, predicatable, effective way of enabling it. I like to turn to a quote attributed to an American who was many things including a 'founding psychologist' of the late 1800s, William James: 'Behave as if what you do matters,' he said, as a result of his psychological and philosophical enquiry. 'It does.'

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Coaching and cross disciplinary collaboration: More complexity and chaos?

Gordon B. Spence

IN THE TARGET ARTICLE, the authors argue that coaching psychologists (in general) are not well equipped for working amid chaos and complexity because our theories have tended to be grounded in linear empiricism and focused on 'prediction and control, rather than engagement with ongoing, unpredictable emergent processes' (p.81). Part of the remedy, they suggest, is the development of emergent models of practice that can help practitioners to make sense of ambiguity and unpredictability. For this to be accomplished, we are urged to embrace 'cross discipliniarity' and open ourselves up to learning about the messy world of complexity via an array of different perspectives.

These observations are welcomed. The assertion that psychological science has contributed valuable but incomplete models of human experience is an important acknowledgement for coaching psychology. If nothing else it is a humbling reminder that the perspectives provided by our psychological training can both enable us and constrain us. In simple terms, we may be constrained by simply not knowing what to do next because our client's story does not 'fit' with the mental model(s) we use to try and make sense of it. In situations like this the presence of alternative perspectives can be enormously helpful, making the quest for such perspectives (beyond the boundaries of psychology) a worthwhile pursuit.

The author(s) also make the valid point that quantitative psychological research methods remain an important empirical approach for coaching psychology because 'much of our world is stable, with patterns of causation and prediction quite possible' (p.83). Evidence of this is not hard to find. For example, Gersick (1991) has observed that numerous change theories across diverse literatures (e.g. history of science, adult and group development) reflect a view that change is a process characterised by periods of stability and transition.

Learning from fossils

One discipline that has heavily influenced the adoption of such views is evolutionary biology and the empirical work of natural historians like Nils Eldredge and Stephen Gould, whose analysis of fossil records led to the *Punctuated Equilibrium* (PE) model of evolutionary change (Eldredge & Gould, 1972). According to this paradigm, natural systems change through cycles of relative stability (equilibrium) and rapid change (punctuations), rather than the gradualism proposed by traditional Darwinian accounts (Morris, 2001).

In a coaching context, understanding change through a PE lens has important implications, primarily because it sits in opposition to the (widely accepted) organisational view that change is constant, gradual and best pursued via the pursuit of 'continuous improvement' (CI; Bolton & Heap, 2002). Rather, PE proposes that periods of equilibrium are associated with limited change because the system's 'deep structure' (i.e. the configuration of factors that help a system function) remains relatively static (Gersick, 1991). In essence, this means that organisations in equilibrium are largely inert and unlikely to respond to any change initiatives direct towards it.

Although the issue of precisely identifying when an organisation is in equilibrium or punctuation is practically difficult, the adoption of the PE viewpoint may lead a coach to

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counsel their client away from change efforts, if they assess the organisation as being in a period of equilibrium (by whatever assessment criteria they might select, e.g. stability of share price, continuity of leadership, etc.). In so doing, a coach may help the organisation to avoid the pitfalls of 'initiative fatigue' (Bolton & Heap, 2002) that can flow from CI initiatives and, instead, advocate for the consolidation of past initiatives ('lock in') that may both save money and preserve employee engagement (Bolton & Heap, 2002).

Simple cross-disciplinarity?

When coaching practice is informed by perspectives such as this (obtained beyond the traditional boundaries of psychology), the question can be asked 'to what extent is it reflective of cross-disciplinarity?' In the simple example cited above, it could be argued that the coach was employing a cross-disciplinary approach (at the local level) insofar as s/he used a related discipline – evolutionary biology – to guide thinking and action. Indeed, this may be how most coaches currently engage in cross-disciplinarity, should they not be participants in formal research projects or large scale organisational coaching assignments that bring diverse groups of professionals together. Yet, the target article seems to be advocating for something far more substantial than coaches simply becoming the educated consumers of research that various professional practice models promote (e.g. Local Clinical Science model; Stricker, 2002).

So, what exactly is meant by 'cross-disciplinarity'? How should this term be understood in the context of coaching amid complexity? If coaching psychology is indeed to become more cross-disciplinary, it will be important for some shared understanding to be developed about precisely what this means. Whilst a comprehensive review of cross-discipliniarity and its related terms is well beyond the scope of this response, the following sections will be devoted to briefly defining some important terms, identifying some of its potential benefits and discussing (with reference to empirical findings) some of its inherent challenges.

Cross-disciplinarity: How is it to be understood?

Calls for the translation of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries are ubiquitous across diverse literatures (e.g. Choi & Pak, 2006; Collin, 2009; Oborn & Dawson, 2010). Indeed, it has long been acknowledged that 'the real problems of society do not come in discipline-shaped boxes' (Kann, in Klein, 1990, p.35) and assumed that service provision within human systems can be enhanced by efforts that bring diverse people, concepts, theories and practices together for the purpose of addressing a common problem(s) (Oborn & Dawson, 2010).

Various forms of cross disciplinarity

The three forms of between-discipline collaboration mentioned most often in the literature are multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transdiscipliniarity (Choi & Pak, 2006). Despite their increasing use, these terms appear to mean different things to different people and are often used interchangeably. For the sake of brevity, this paper will adopt the definitions that emerged from Choi and Pak's (2006) literature review of these terms (see Table 1).

In an attempt to simplify the distinction between these terms, Choi and Pak (2006) use food examples to clarify their meanings. For example, *multdisciplinary* collaboration is described as being additive (i.e. serving or tending to increase) and likened to a salad bowl, in which the ingredients remain intact (unchanged) and can be clearly seen. In contrast, *interdisciplinary* collaboration is interactive and involves a blurring of boundaries between disciplines (in pursuit of new common methodologies, perspectives and/or knowledge), which is likened to the partial (but not complete) merging of ingredients that occurs in a cooking pot. Finally, it is proposed that *transdisciplinary* collaboration is more holistic in nature and, like the production of a cake from its ingredients,

Table 1: Proposed definitions for cross disciplinary collaboration.

Term	*Definition*	*Simple descriptor*	*Food example*
Multidisciplinarity	Draws on knowledge from different disciplines but stays within the boundaries of those fields	Additive	Salad bowl
Interdisciplinarity	Analyses, synthesises and harmonises links between disciplines into a co-ordinated and coherent whole	Interactive	Cooking pot
Transdiscipliniarity	Integrates the natural, social and health sciences in a humanities context, and in so doing transcends each of their traditional boundaries	Holistic	Cake

Source: Choi & Pak (2006).

the final outcome has a reality that is other and greater than the sum of its parts. Importantly, Choi and Pak (2006) recommend that these terms be 'used to describe multiple disciplinary approaches to varying degrees on the same continuum' (p.359), with no approach being better than another – just different – and more or less suitable in different contexts.

Using the disciplinary continuum

When considered alongside Stacey's (1999) Certainty/Agreement Matrix, understanding cross disciplinarity along a continuum may help coaching psychologists to determine what degree is required in different contexts. For instance, within 'rational spaces', where an environment is relatively stable and predictable (or in 'equilibrium'), the degree of interaction across disciplines may not be critical because the level of certainty and prediction is sufficient to allow each discipline to contribute effectively using established theories and models. In these situations, multidisciplinary collaboration may be suitable simply because the environment does not require greater interaction to produce acceptable outcomes or solve problems.

For example, a community-based organisation might wish to improve the health of a known community by improving lifestyle factors and social interaction in public spaces (using a multidisciplinary approach). Conditions that might reflect relative stability...government that has confirmed its funding for three years, along with low levels of unemployment and crime within the target community. In this instance, one can imagine that the efforts of a cross-disciplinary team (which might include nutritionists, biostatisticians, exercise physiologists, community psychologists, general practitioners, horticulturists, demographers, town planners and others) could produce desirable results without its members needing to deviate greatly from theories, beliefs and practices that characterise their respective disciplines. In other words, the contributors are able to work towards a shared goal (improved community health) but do so relatively independently.

However, in situations where less certainty and/or prediction exist (i.e. the complex adaptive or chaotic spaces, or during periods of 'punctuation'), simple forms of cross-disciplinary collaboration are likely to be insufficient and require related disciplines to interact more for the attainment of desirable outcomes (i.e. work in a more *inter* or *transdisciplinary* way). However, as it will soon be shown, it is a difficult enough job to bring together sub-disciplines within the same discipline, let alone bring people together across vastly different disciplines.

The benefits and challenges of cross-disciplinary collaboration

Several authors have written about the experience of working along the cross-disciplinary continuum (e.g. Choi & Pak, 2007; Collin, 2009) and some of its benefits and challenges are worthy of mention.

Benefits of cross-disciplinary collaboration

According to Collin (2009), the benefits associated with interacting across disciplines include intellectual stimulation and creativity, the ability to address complex problems that transcend disciplinary knowledge, the opportunity to solve pressing problems that are valued in academia, industry and professional practice, and the chance to learn and apply new research technologies and methodologies. In addition, such collaborations can also help with the development important career-related skills, increase networking opportunities and potentially expand the funding sources (as many funding bodies favour cross-disciplinary work).

Challenges of cross-disciplinary collaboration

A considerable amount has been written on the challenges and pitfalls of cross-disciplinary collaboration (for a detailed discussion of barriers, see Choi & Pak, 2007) and will only briefly be covered here. According to Collin (2009), these challenges include the need for collaborators to address basic differences between themselves in terms of concepts, their research questions and the perspectives they take on them, their epistemology and related methods, etc. It is also important that they agree on project objectives and protocols, and communicate in a way that is clear, relatively free of jargon and via communication systems that are mutually suitable. Not surprisingly, the choice of a project leader, allocation of team roles and constant attention to relationships are other critical elements (Choi & Pak, 2007; Collin, 2009).

A recent case study reported by Oborn and Dawson (2010) provides a useful insight into the intricacies of working across disciplines and sub-disciplines. Using observational methods and semi-structured interviews, the workings of a cross-disciplinary team (MDT) within a health context were investigated (including surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, nurses, and pathologists amongst others). One of the key findings from this study was that the presence of a formal, structured MDT did not prevent privileged knowledge from becoming embedded in the practices of the group. More specifically, it was observed that the group seemed to privilege the knowledge of the surgeons far more than other disciplines, resulting in non-representative participation across the group. Paradoxically, rather than producing an inclusive and open approach, the MDT appeared to simply strengthen an existing medical hierarchy, with the surgeons possessing far more power than the other disciplines (particularly nurses). Although some learning did appear to occur within the MDT, it was concluded that 'the social context of interpersonal relations, socialised professional roles and asserted privilege of certain knowledge enables some ways of knowing about a patient to be promoted with little transformation resulting from multidisciplinary activity' (Oborn & Dawson, 2010, p. 1854).

Cross-disciplinarity: More complexity and chaos

From the preceding discussion it seems clear that cross disciplinary teams carry all the hallmarks of being highly complex, and potentially, chaotic environments themselves (due to the presence of different conceptual models, language, methodologies, and social pressures). This is somewhat ironic given that such teams are usually assembled as a way to allow professional people from diverse (but ultimately related) disciplines to work more effectively within highly complex, and often, chaotic environments.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has responded to the ideas contained in the target article by exploring what 'cross-disciplinarity' actually means and drawing on Choi and Pak's

(2006) continuum that differentiates three differing degrees of cross-disciplinary collaboration. It is hoped this will help readers better understand their own (past and present) collaborative efforts, whilst helping to clarify the degree of cross-disciplinary collaboration that might be desirable within future environments where working across disciplines is important.

Moving beyond a simple monolithic understanding of this term should also be helpful for assisting dialogue between collaborators and for identifying what challenges and struggles might lie in wait for individuals and groups working along all points on this continuum. For example, there is an element of 'letting go' that is needed in transdisciplinary collaboration, which is akin to a detachment from the perspectives, beliefs, methods, etc., that constitute one's professional identity. This is no easy matter. Indeed, working in this way would require one to be highly mindful and engage the process with acute awareness of one's ongoing reactions and an open, receptivity to wherever the process might lead (Cavanagh & Spence, in press).

Given the presentation of multidisciplinary collaboration as a relatively simple form of cross-disciplinarity, it seems safe to assume that many coaching psychologists are already engaging in cross-disciplinary work of some forms (and have done for some time). As such, the first question posed at the end of the target article might be better restated as follows: 'How will coaching psychology embrace greater degrees of cross-disciplinary engagement such that it emerges as a new sort of psychology?'

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Debate

Coaching Psychology Coming of Age: A response to our discussants

Michael Cavanagh & David Lane

FIRST we would like to thank our discussants for the thoughtfulness and detail with which they have both addressed the issues we have raised, and the issues we had left unexplored or underexplored, with 1500 words available we have been able to respond to no more than a few of the points they raised. In this response we will concentrate on the key issues raised relating to professionalism, evidence, and models of practice.

We start by briefly reminding readers of what we set out to accomplish. We were not arguing for the superiority of one approach (complexity theory) over another. Rather our purpose was to open a debate on how our increasingly complex and messy world challenges professional practice, research and the notion of a professional itself. Yes, as Lesley Kuhn points out, the world has always been complex – but we maintain the impact of this complexity on professional practice is becoming more profound due to challenges that did not exist a generation ago – the rapid growth and dissemination of knowledge, new modes of communication, and growing environmental and social system overwhelm. All this leads to significantly greater and more rapid impact of local interactions on wider systems.

We choose to use ideas from complexity to generate stories to inform this debate – in particular, Stacey's Certainty/Agreement Matrix. In doing so, the aim was not to create a contingency tool that implied you could choose in advance (a predict and control model) the approach to take. We recognise Stacey's concerns that his model has been used in this way and would concur that it is inappropriate to do so. In our paper we acknowledged that he has moved on from this model but our experience of using it suggests it does enable colleagues to engage in thoughtful exploration of the issues they face in practice. Rather than a contingency tool, our intention was that it be used to enable a wider range of conversations.

It is on this later point we would take issue with Stacy's view that you cannot influence local interactions and, therefore, there are no self-organising models that can be applied. We believe agents can act in ways that encourage (but not ensure) conversations that include divergent views and multiple solutions. Furthermore, ongoing iterative engagement in such conversations is more likely to lead to (but again not determine) creative outcomes. Our models and theories guide action and shape expectations and understanding. They, like all stories, open us to some possibilities and close down others. Systems dynamics provides a rationale for non-linear dialogical approaches, Deterministic models tend to lead to reliance on experts, debate and singular solutions. Both have their place.

We turn to the comments by David Drake who asks a fundamental question about our responsibility as coaches to hold the clients' anxiety in the chaotic space. He sees the aim ultimately to increase the client's capacity to self-regulate and that the concept of 'holding' places a precarious responsibility on the coach. We believe the coach, by virtue of the power they hold in the relationship, has a particular responsibility in noticing and shaping the capacity of the coaching relationship to act the 'strong container or ecosystem' that enables the client to 'harness their anxiety in service of their relations and

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aspirations' (Drake, this issue). This responsibility is commensurate with the expert, referent and positional power attributed to, and/or inherent in, the coach's role. Nevertheless, the role of coach with a client in chaotic space remains an important debate – just as exploring the discourses on power is key in the debate about professionalism (see Corrie & Lane, 2010).

Turning to the contribution by Julie Allan, she agrees with our view that coaching psychology needs to encompass multiple ways of working. She argues that psychology is not just linear, and we agree with her. Our contention is that traditionally psychology has favoured linear approaches to evidence and this has marginalised other approaches – as dominant discourses are wont to do. (This argument also applies to Kuhn's response.) Furthermore, pragmatically the concept of evidence-based practice has often led to situations in which practitioners are unable to draw upon their own experience or the uniqueness of the individual client. Psychologists working in evidence based services are required to operate within a manual which sets out what is and is not part of the process. (An example might include, 'Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies' in the UK.)

Allan also raises the important question of appropriateness of practice. Day-by-day we have to make decisions. We cannot know the outcome of those decisions in advance even when the situation appears predictable and agreed. Given the multiple pathways through which interactions may unfold we cannot be sure that our choices are always appropriate or wise. We can however choose to act ethically – even if at times the outcome indicates we made the wrong choices.

We come to Paul Atkins paper. He takes issue with our linkage of rational and linear. His point is well made and in an attempt to be brief we have not properly explored this. We commend this fuller exposition and wish we had made more of this point ourselves.

Bob Hodge takes the way we use the Stacey model and adapts it using the concept of fractals. He recommends to us that this would have aided us in our aim. We agree it adds elegance and fluidity to the approach we adopted. We do believe that the variety of models and techniques that psychology has developed bring value. Our practice deals with real issues impacting on peoples' lives. We as coaches join with our clients in developing actions that will make a difference. We cannot just describe (or await the results of) local interactions. Sometimes we do encourage our clients to come to a prescriptive position and work to achieve agreed outcomes.

Had we adopted the position of Hodge some of the issues raised by Lesley Kuhn would have been addressed. Kuhn argues that, because humans are complex, the systems in which they are involved are necessarily complex. In other words simple/complicated system spaces do not apply in human systems. Perhaps our point would have been clearer saying that within the boundaries of a given complex human system, some of the issues facing people have features that are simple, some complicated, some complex and some chaotic. For example, car ownership engages one in a complex system. However, within this complex system, fueling the car is usually simple, fixing it is usually complicated, driving it is always complex and being caught up in someone's road rage may be chaotic. The pragmatic pathway of response to each of these issues needs to be different, even if the outcome remains theoretically unpredictable.

Contrary to Kuhn, we take the view that professional practice is increasingly messy and unpredictable for the reasons stated earlier. Professional practice has always been complex, however the context in which it is practiced is pushing professional systems further from equilibrium due to increased connectivity, diversity and information flow (see Drake's comment on the control parameters of systems). Nevertheless we find her exploration a helpful reminder that all paradigms are both built on previous learnings and dis-

continuous with them. Both need to be appropriately valued. This chimes with Tatiana Bachkirova's appeal to maintain attention on the subjective and intersubjective in coaching practice. We would certainly not wish our view to be seen as one proposing the superiority of complexity theory over individualised accounts. Both are critically important. Indeed when we teach this we specifically include a framework that looks at individual, interpersonal and systems based perspectives on change. We also agree with her that past approaches to accreditation oversimplify the complexity of coaching practice. This is part of the rationale for our call for the field to engage with the possibility of other routes to generating professional practice. Currently much of the debate in the field looks to mimic traditional forms.

So finally to Gordon Spence who has chosen to engage with our conversation about the value of cross-disciplinary approaches. He engages with this through an exploration of variety of forms this can take. This exposition adds much to the dialogue and we certainly would want to see this broader perspective incorporated in the conversations. He also points to the real challenges of incorporating cross-disciplinary work in teams and can point to many examples where this has proved problematic. This issue has been around for some considerable time. Where differentials of pay, power and conditions of service or theoretical orientations separate professions it is difficult to cross the divide. The Global Convention on Coaching to which many coaching psychologists contributed is an example (2008) of collaboration.

So we welcome this Special Issue and thank all contributors for their willingness to engage in this dialogue and the thoughtful manner in which they have done so, it bodes well for the emerging profession.

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Reports

1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology – Sweden

Liv Hök & Jonas Mosskin

*1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology – an update by **Liv Hök**, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Organisational Analyst and Executive Committee Member of Coachande Psykologer (Coaching Psychologists, Sweden) and **Jonas Mosskin**, Psychologist and Journalist.*

THE Coaching Psychologists network in Sweden in collaboration with the Swedish Psychological Association had the honour of hosting the first conference of 'Coaching Psychology' on 16 September 2011 as part of the 1st International Congress of Coaching Psychology. Hundreds of attendees filled Polhems Hall of the City Conference Centre, Stockholm on a beautifully sunny early autumn day. Coaching Psychologists' P.O. Eriksson and the Swedish Psychological Association's Lars Ahlin launched the days' events by stressing the importance of taking an offensive stance for psychology's place in world.

Stephen Palmer PhD, Honorary Professor of Psychology, City University London and Director of the Coaching Psychology Unit and Co-Convenor of the International Steering Committee for international congresses of psychology coaching events gave his presentation, 'The Developing Field of Coaching Psychology in Europe and Internationally'. He proceeded to describe how coaching psychology has developed over the past ten years to the point of being an ever more acceptable subject of study at universities the world over. Palmer's and Zarris's vision of a world congress for coaching psychology is being realised through many small congresses all around the world. This Swedish conference served as further confirmation of this coaching psychologist community taking shape. Palmer stressed the importance of psychologists contributing understanding and expertise regarding science and theory.

Liv Hök

Jonas Mosskin

Jens-Boris Larsen, Copenhagen-based psychologist and Chair of the Society of Evidence-based Practice in Denmark, introduced hope as a factor in a coach's work with a client. Our environment is very complex, and it requires that we see a client in his/her context.

Magnus Larsson PhD, Psychologist and Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Organization Copenhagen Business School, then expanded upon this complexity in his presentation titled 'Playing Outside the Playbook: Advanced Strategies to Accentuate Hope in Simple and Complex Coaching Conversations'. Larsson spoke of a system's psychodynamic perspective where no client is isolated but always part of a system or an organisation. This theme strongly resonated with the audience. He gave a brief introduction to role analysis based upon psychoanalysis and system theory. A coach's primary task according to Larsson is to examine one's 'inner picture' of an organisation. As a coach, one works with the clients 'organisation-in-the-mind' and how one relates to this inner picture. The desired outcome is higher organisational competence and know-how; clarity and self-awareness; and increased ability to structurally reflect on one's own behaviour in role.

After a lunch break, **Julie Allan**, psychologist, organisational consultant and coach, introduced us to her subject 'Important but Uncertain Matters: Towards Coaching for Wisdom'. Allan is currently researching corporate wisdom, and her presentation was about identifying the different qualities of 'wisdom' which she in turn considers the most sought after skills for top managers and executives. According to Allan, wisdom is 'expertise in the important but uncertain matters of life'. It is through our experiences and reflection upon them that our ability to make wise decisions emerges. By integrating thoughts, feelings, motivations and relationships, the client can achieve greater insight. A lack of reflection prevents people from having such experiencesand we all recognised this from our own experiences of working within both coaching and therapy.

Reinhard Stelter, Professor of Sport and Coaching Psychology at the University of Copenhagen spoke about 'Narrative Coaching Towards Human and Social Meaning-making and Collaborative Practice'. The dialogue between coach and client is central according to Stelter. He also spoke fondly about coaching in groups where clients can share experiences amongst themselves and an opportunity exists for a peer-to-peer coaching process to take place. In Stelter's view, coaching is a reflective practice, and in his work with clients he focus on values, meaning-making and transforming implicit knowledge to active experiences. Narrative is a way of organising episodes, actions and accounts of actions leading the client to find personal meaning.

Paul O. Olson specialises in support and leadership for international and strategic change and problem solving. Olson described different leadership models and how they relate to coaching. He stated that the key focus is sometimes on individual productivity, but it is always about balancing and leveraging resources in typically complex systems and projects.

In the concluding panel discussion regarding challenges facing coaching psychology, Palmer expressed hope that interest from the academic community will lead to new advances. Larson pointed out that it is important not to lose the connection between coaching and organisational theory. He saw a danger in coaching just becoming part of leadership research. Allan was concerned that the ICF (International Coaching Federation) is more concerned with certifying coaches who have business experience consequently overlooking the value of a coach being a psychologist. Olson argued that psychologists must relinquish therapy. Palmer responded to this by stressing that coaching is not therapy. Larson referred to the organisation psychoanalyst David Armstrong, who calls on the coaching psychologist to always remain open to examining the coaching process, whether it is about a client or an entire organisation. Larsson under-

scored once again the importance of context and meaning. Finally, Reinhard Stelter made the argument that psychologists need to learn how to sell themselves. This final conclusion brought us back full circle to Lars Ahlin's introductory words about psychology being more aggressive in its self-promotion. In short, we need to become coaching psychology entrepreneurs.

This congress gave a good overview of coaching psychology today. It ran on a tight schedule, so tight that we would have preferred to have had a little less one-way communication and more room for reflection and discussion. We would have also liked a better balance between male and female speakers. The overall message received is that there still exists confusion over what coaching psychology is as well as what theories and frameworks are adequate. This is not necessarily a bad thing as it indicates a wide variety of possible approaches to choose from. We would have liked more discussion on individual coaching, purpose, meaning and value. What do we psychologists want to accomplish in the role of coach and why? There is much focus on methods and theoretical frameworks today, but less on the importance of common approaches and objectives. This, we fear, can lead to unnecessary divisions. We believe it is important to consider that coaching psychology finds itself in an organisational and business context, and this defines its framework and mission.

Overall, the 1st Swedish Congress of Coaching Psychology was a success and also served as proof of a growing network of coaching psychologists in Sweden. We both got the impression that it will continue to be a vibrantly growing area for psychologists in the years to come.

PANORAMA OF STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN.

Reports

Special Group in Coaching Psychology News

Mary Watts

Letter from the new Chair of the SGCP

A FEW DAYS AGO I learnt that I am the new Chair of the British Psychological Society's Special Group in Coaching Psychology. I anticipate a challenging, exciting and interesting year ahead as I look forward to working with colleagues in the SGCP and beyond. I'm not new to the SGCP. I chaired the first Conference Committee, hosted a couple of conference round table discussions and have remained a member of the Conference Scientific Affairs Board. However, I have watched with admiration and gratitude the huge amount of good work done by members of the SGCP, in particular the Committee members and members of the various working groups.

The SGCP, like the Australian Psychological Society Interest Group in Coaching Psychology, is still in its infancy, yet these two groups, both together and separately, have created a clear home for coaching psychology. What is great, however, is that this home, whilst supportive and encouraging, has provided a platform from which members can move out and practice in a vast array of settings that make a real difference to the lives of individuals, families and organisations. The development of coaching psychology theory, research and practice has gathered momentum and has impact as demonstrated by this and other related publications; the conferences, workshops and seminars being held and well subscribed to; the increasing numbers in the respective professional groups; and the increasing range of settings in which coaching psychologists are employed.

At the 2011 European Coaching Psychology Conference held at City University London in December, I sensed a very positive feeling of purpose and direction and I feel very lucky and privileged to be Chair of the SGCP at this time. It is very good news that the new Society's post-qualification register for SGCP members who are chartered psychologists has now been launched but we must continue to remember and address the needs of those psychologists who practice coaching but are not eligible to join this register.

To many of you I am still a stranger so I'll use this opportunity to say a few words about myself. I'm a recently retired Professor Emeritus of City University having formerly been in the roles of Professor of Psychology, Pro-Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching and Dean of the Health School. I'm currently an independent executive coach, coaching psychologist, supervisor and consultant. My grandchildren and my two young

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labradoodles are my relaxation and I'm currently devising a coaching and leadership approach to dog training – with an encouraging degree of success!

I guess that many demands will be made upon the SGCP Committee and its chair during the year and I hope that my various life experiences and associated learning will stand me in good stead and assist me in working constructively and effectively with colleagues.

It is some time since I was chair of a Society committee – formerly I was chair of the Division of Counselling Psychology and the Psychotherapy Implementation Group. I still hold the work of these groups dear to my heart, but my work during the last 12 years has moved me firmly into coaching psychology and without the way of thinking that goes with this I believe that I could not have been effective in my work. I believe passionately that coaching psychology can make a real difference to the well-being of individuals and society – a belief that I feel sure is shared by all of us involved with and committed to the development of coaching psychology.

I look forward to working closely with all of you and to identifying with you the priorities for the year ahead and working together towards their implementation.

Mary Watts

Reports

Interest Group in Coaching Psychology News

David Heap

IN 2012 the Coaching Psychology Interest Group will be dominated by our hosting of the Second International Congress of Coaching Psychology. This will also be our biannual Coaching Psychology Symposium.

After the very successful Congress events in London in 2010, South Africa and Spain in 2011, we have taken on the challenge to meet and hopefully exceed the high standards set at these events.

The theme of our Congress event will be 'The contribution of psychology to coaching'. Our intent is to highlight the central role that psychology and psychologists play in the intellectual foundations and practice of coaching. We aim to emphasise the leadership role psychologists play in coaching in terms of ethics, research and evidence-based practice.

The Congress will comprise a mixture of keynote presentations and practical workshops. The keynotes will be from international thought leaders in coaching such as Dr Lew Stern and Professor Stephen Palmer on their interpretation of the contribution of psychology to coaching.

These will be complemented by short practical workshops focused on developing skills and expertise in areas of coaching practice such as leadership, coaching in organisations, health and well being, sports and performance, education and life coaching.

We are hoping to attract a diverse range of delegates including not only coaching psychologists but also organisational, sports and performance, counselling, clinical, health and developmental psychologists as well as non-psychologist coaches, HR managers and even coaching clients. Anyone with an interest in the science and practice of coaching should be able to find something of value and interest.

There are more details on workshop topics and presenters, online registration and accommodation options at: www.groups.psychology.org.au/events/CPIGconference2012

We are greatly looking forward to welcoming delegates from all around the world as well as our own members.

As well as hosting the Congress in the first half of 2012, we will also be launching the outcome of our work late last year on the marketing of coaching psychologists. We will be publishing a *Marketing Strategy Workbook for Coaching Psychologists* which will include identification of ideal customer profiles, seven core marketing messages, building brand awareness and generating leads. We will be holding a webinar to help train members in developing their own marketing strategy and this will also be the subject of a workshop at the Congress.

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In the second half of 2012 we will refocus our attention on accreditation for coaching psychologists. The British Psychological Society Special Group in Coaching Psychology has recently introduced a post-qualification register for its members. The International Society for Coaching Psychology has offered accreditation for its members as a central value offer for some years. Our hope is that in liaison with these and other coaching psychology associations from around the world, we are able to develop consistent international standards for accrediting coaching psychologists.

We in the National Committee of the APS Coaching Psychology Interest Group look forward to meeting many new colleagues and friends in May and to working closely with our members over the rest of the year.

Best regards.

David Heap
Convenor
APS – Interest Group on
Coaching Psychology.

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The APS Coaching Psychology Interest Group is delighted to announce 3 days exploring

"The contribution of psychology to coaching"

Helping us explore the Congress theme will be keynotes from global thought leaders in coaching psychology, together with practical, skill building workshops.

10 to 12 May 2012
Manly Beach
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Prof David Clutterbuck
Dr David Drake
Dr Tony Grant
Dr Suzi Green
Prof Stephen Palmer
Dr David Peterson
Dr Lew Stern
Dr Patrick Williams

The workshops will be streamed into themes of:

- Leadership
- Coaching in organisations
- Health and well-being
- Sports and performance
- Education and
- Life coaching.

For all the latest information on the Congress and to register got to:
www.groups.psychology.org.au/events/CPIGconference2012

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Coaching Psychology. The science of achieving your goals.

Special Group in Coaching Psychology

The British Psychological Society

SGCP Annual Coaching Psychology Conference

Winter 2012

Putting coaching psychology into practice: an evidence based approach

The SGCP will be hosting its Annual Coaching Psychology Conference to enable sharing and learning from and within coaching psychology.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite you to submit abstracts for papers and posters to present at the conference for the opportunity to discuss your work and research with peers.

We welcome evidence based papers from

Academic Research & Practitioner Experience in all areas of coaching psychology

(e.g. business, professional, executive, sports, health, personal, educational)

Deadline for submissions is Monday 11th June 2012

For the submission forms and guidelines visit the SGCP website:

www.sgcp.org.uk

All abstracts will be subject to review by the Scientific Board and are not guaranteed to be accepted.

Notes

Society CPD events

For a full list of Society CPD events, see www.bps.org.uk/findcpd

EVENT	DATE
Experiential introduction to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (DCoP)	2 March
Creative approaches to clinical supervision (DCoP)	8 March
Media Training: Introduction to working with the media	12 March
Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in Research: What, Why, When and How (DHP)	16 March
Coaching Through Life Transitions: A Particular Opportunity for Developing Coaching? (SGCP)	16 March
Introduction to Ethics and Professional Practice: Ethical Decision Making Workshop (DFP)	28 March
Victim Impact Assessment – Promoting Mental Health Recovery While Tackling Crime (DFP)	29 March
Using Hypnosis to enhance personal or group confidence (DSEP)	17 April
Use and abuse of IQ (DFP)	25 April
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Advancing Practice: Neuropsychological assessment of people who have intellectual disabilities (DCP)	2 May
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4. Online submission process

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Stephen Palmer (UK): dr.palmer@btinternet.com
Michael Cavanagh (Australia): michaelc@psych.usyd.edu.au

(2) The submission must include the following as separate files:

- Title page consisting of manuscript title, authors' full names and affiliations, name and address for corresponding author.
- Abstract.
- Full manuscript omitting authors' names and affiliations. Figures and tables can be attached separately if necessary.

5. Manuscript requirements

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  Billington, T. (2000). *Separating, losing and excluding children: Narratives of difference*. London: Routledge/Falmer.
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  Palmer, S. & Whybrow, A. (2006). The coaching psychology movement and its development within the British Psychological Society. *International Coaching Psychology Review 1*(1), 5–11.
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- Full article text (double-spaced with numbered pages and anonymised).
- References (see above). Authors are responsible for bibliographic accuracy and must check every reference in the manuscript and proofread again in the page proofs.
- Tables, figures, captions placed at the end of the article or attached as separate files.

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