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A narrative inquiry into the construction, composition and performance of coaching identities

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Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

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Abstract

This thesis inquires into how successful, independent coaches construct, compose and perform their professional identities. It focuses on the narratives employed and the performances given in pursuit of this. In reflecting on these performances it suggests an alternative discourse to that which is dominant in the coaching literature and on coach training programmes. Rather than "off-the-peg" coaching identities being arrived at through the prospective coach giving allegiance to specific, pre-existing coaching approaches, genres and markets, it suggests that in practice a more individualistic and idiosyncratic process occurs that proceeds from the multi-faceted personality and biographical history of the individual coach.

It employs a constructivist, integrative methodology that blends a dialogical/performance approach to narrative research with a worlds-based approach to the critical evaluation of theatre performances. Eight established and successful coaches were interviewed, and accounts of these encounters have been written up and presented here in a case study format. In analysing the interviews a typology of three narratives were identified that existed across all the interviews. These were characterised as assumption, foundation and encounter narratives. The coaches' performances appeared to function through aligning and making transparent a number of initially disparate and opaque realms or worlds. This research suggests that the capacity to construct substantive individualistic coach identities and give improvised and perspicacious performances is central to effective coaching and supersedes such elements as employing evidence-based approaches, drawing from lists of competencies, and co-modification of the self in order to meet market expectations.

This study contributes to an alternative discourse of coaching that suggests there should be greater emphasis on personal development and identity working for aspiring coaches along with a move towards greater emphasis on relational depth, pluralistic practice and a developmental focus in their work with coachees. It concludes by suggesting that a culture of fragmentation and ambiguity within the terrain of coaching, sometimes characterized as the Wild West of coaching, has positive aspects that are beneficial to the character of coaching.

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Finally I want to acknowledge the spirit of my parents. Your pride would have known no bounds. Jean and Richard this one is for you.

Table of contents

Appendices

Diagrams and tables

Photos

Introduction

Introduction to chapter

In this chapter I explain the origin of my research question and the gap in knowledge it addresses. I explain how my understanding of the research shifted, leading to greater transparency and personal investment in the writing. I share relevant narratives regarding my own relationship to multiple identities. I then describe the structure of the thesis.

The research question

The initial research question, *"how do coaches construct their professional identities?"* emerged into my awareness in an "aha" moment of seemingly spontaneous illumination as I walked through the campus of York St John one autumn morning. My initial reaction was that it was too bland and general to form the basis of a PhD project. However, it stuck with me, nagged at me and slowly became fixed as the focus for this research. I found I genuinely wanted to know how coach identities worked when they were successful. On one level I was encouraged by the possibility that researching it had the potential to gift me access to top level coaches who could help me develop my own coaching identity. On another, as I read around the subject, I discovered that this question appears to represent a genuine gap in knowledge.

Initial reading revealed to me that the identity of the coach is a contested area. Garvey (2011) has observed that different disciplines and philosophies are in competition for the ownership of coaching. He argues that it becomes subject to different reconstructions in different settings to suit various purposes. Gray (2011) has noted that coaching has not successfully achieved the status of a profession and suggests that attempts to do so are likely to be hampered or derailed by competition for ownership of coaching. Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2014) contend that coaching lacks theory that is distinctly its own. It can be argued that all of these factors contribute to a lack of clarity in conceptualising coaching identities. This is possibly further complicated by individuals from diverse professional backgrounds competing to establish themselves within the field (Gray, Garvey and Lane 2016). Given this perceived lack of a substantive identity associated with the occupation of coaching, Ruane (2013) has concluded that individual coaches are required to work hard to

establish simultaneously both the credibility of coaching generally, as well as their own individual coach identities. Identity working by coaches appears to be a field that is largely unexplored.

Various commentators have noted the relevance of the area but have so far appear to have failed to generate substantial knowledge. Butcher (2012) has observed that perspectives of identity theory have yet to be applied meaningfully to coaching. However her own research foregrounds the identities of coachees, with the coach's identity being conceptualised as a *"blank screen"* or a "*low key projection"* (p.126). Similarly Cox's theorising almost airbrushes the coach out of the picture stating, *"coaching is not a two-way communication"* and that client narratives *"have the nature of a soliloquy"* (2013 p.41). Bolton (2016) stresses the importance of identity in coaching from an existential point of view but then also focuses solely on that of the coachee. Brockbank and McGill (2012) move towards formulations of coaching identities by creating a categorisation of coaching perspectives and types. However they fail to arrive at an understanding of coaching identities beyond generalised orientations (e.g. a "functionalist approach") and so the specifics of coaching identities remain indistinct. Drake (2007) asserts the mutually co-constructed nature of identities in coaching but does not go into detail regarding the coach. Likewise, du Toit (2014) theorises a narrative-constructivist model of mutual identity formation in coaching but does not elaborate on how this might appear in practice. Through greater understanding of the processes of coach identity construction, composition and performance that this research attempts, aspiring coaches might gain a clearer understanding of potential pathways to establishing themselves within the field of coaching, complete with effective and marketable identities of their own. Similarly, a greater understanding of these processes has the potential to suggest possible enhancements to existing training programmes as well as to the content and character of the literature of coaching.

Ruane (2013) has made a substantial attempt to address the area and produced a doctoral dissertation on "identity working" based on field work with independent North American coaches. She notes the difficulties of establishing coaching identities that her participants experienced given the lack of a

generally acknowledged skill set that would be associated with a professional designation such as "surgeon". Whilst different coaching professional organisations produce lists of competencies as part of accreditation schemes it can be argued that there is no highly specialised, core activity such as performing a surgical procedure or making a legal argument in a courtroom that is associated with coaching. Ruane (2013) points out that as a result of this dilemma *"coaches may be regarded as walking marketing material for their own services…their own lives may be construed as case studies"* (p.43). Whilst some of the dilemmas for coaches she observed in her research are applicable generally (e.g. ongoing changes to the world of work since the millennium, the importance of identity branding for coaches), the conclusions she comes to are set in the specific context of North America during the financial crisis of 2008, the ensuing austerity and focuses on coaches still struggling to establish their coaching identities rather than successful coaches. Rettinger (2011) also acknowledges the lack of an identifiable skill set hampering identity formation for coaches. Using conversation analysis she attempts to understand coaching identities. However rather than uncovering consolidated identities, the *"situated identities"* (p.434) she describes appear to be tasks central to coaching rebranded as identities e.g. "the listener", "the interviewer" etc. Western (2012) has articulated four discourses of coaching which may be understood as the foundations for coaches' identities. These discourses are characterised *as "soul guide", Psy expert", "managerial"* and *"network"*. These are extensive and appear to comprehensively cover the areas of the terrain of coaching that coaches build their identities from. However, Western (2012) focuses on the discourses that are drawn on to build identities rather than the constructed, embodied and performative identities themselves. So, for example, in outlining the Psy expert discourse he explains that such coaches have a background in psychology, psychotherapy or a related field, he characterises them as *"technicians of the psyche"* (p.159), he argues it is a modernist discourse and then lists some of the approaches they might employ. There is no detail regarding effective and ineffective identities, or the processes experienced in becoming a Psy expert coach. Evans and Lines (2014) apply Goffman's (1969) notion of identity working to coaches. However they studied coaches struggling to establish themselves who are torn between competing narratives of identity.

The framework they produce foregrounds the struggles of aspiring coaches who are juggling their aspirations of gaining *"ideal work"* (p.764) with their personal self-identity and their struggles to present a credible coaching identity to prospective clients. As such it problematizes the situation of novice coaches attempting to establish themselves rather than understanding the pathways of those who have constructed successful coaching identities. It therefore appears that the question of how successful coaches construct and perform their identities is one that remains open at this time.

Journal excerpt June 2017

Multiple identities

"As I write this I am sitting in the Graduate Centre at York St John University. The majority of other people sitting in the room know me only as a fellow doctoral student who shares the space with them. The research student sitting across from me, who until last June was my student, knows me as her once-tutor; a familiar presence she has been taught by for five years, but we are now fellow students (we commenced our research degrees on the same day). Robbie, who I passed walking here, who sits every day at the end of Goodramgate begging, knows me as Andy the street performer, who he has known twenty-six years but *"does something at the college now"*. The woman I counselled for a year, who then unexpectedly turned up one day at York St John, (working in the office next to mine), knows me as Andy the therapist who concealed his life as an academic. All people holding different versions of me. All those versions created through the medium of professional roles. All valid. The contents and the qualities of my encounters with them differing according to the identities that we co-create together."

Sharing my narratives

At the start of the project I expected that my agenda of consolidating my own developing coach identity would remain largely invisible through the process. I imagined the interviews being conducted with academic detachment and the methods of analysis applied with something approaching objectivity. Reading Reissman's examples of dialogical/performance narrative analysis it soon became apparent that to be effective, researchers using that approach need to position themselves and be a visible presence, within the resulting case studies.

What I was unprepared for was that by doing this a meta-narrative of my own journey across the interviews would emerge along with the need to examine my own relationship to my professional identity in relation to the research question. In doing so it felt that greater levels of authenticity and transparency entered the field of the research in which my own narratives began to sit alongside those of the participants. Whilst I was initially hesitant regarding this, I found that many sources on qualitative research encouraged the researcher to be visible in this respect. Flick (2007) for example cites accounts of research by Glaser and Strauss (1965) along with Hochschild (1983) to demonstrate that the use of autobiographical narrative by researchers to develop a research theme has an established and valid history within qualitative research. Bold (2012) also recommends the use of autobiography to clarify an area for research enquiry and as a tool for deepening reflection. She further suggests that developing an autobiographical understanding is essential for good quality qualitative research and writing. Given this I have chosen to make myself a visible presence through the thesis. The result is that as well as exploring the narrative means by which coaches construct their identities this thesis also details my own relationship to the field of research and my own developing coaching identity.

Originally the case studies were going to provide the material to be analysed and reflected on and so would have been placed as appendices. However, it became apparent that, following a substantial process of immersion prior to drafting them (see methods chapter), the case studies themselves became the analysis and together they formed the metanarrative of this thesis. As such they are in themselves central to this thesis and necessary reading in order to engage with the findings and discussion. Therefore, they have been relocated within the body of the text.

My shifting identities

Like many people of my age (I was born in 1959) I was heavily influenced by what has been termed alternative culture or the counterculture (Roszak, 1969). However because this was post-punk, and the counterculture now incorporated elements of that movement, it contained an edginess characterized by what Alexis Sayle termed the *"hard hippies"* (Sayle, 2010, p.269); flowing locks and

tie-dye were being replaced by mohawks and army fatigues. Moving to London when I was 18 led to me rubbing shoulders with some of the individuals who were organising the illegal free festivals of that era and some of the bands that were central to those events. From this I started to believe that it was possible for people to have a sense of personal agency and creativity in how they constructed themselves and their lifestyles. Later, in London Transport, as a trade union organiser in the Transport Salaried Staff Association and staff-side chairman for the local consultative committee I became aware of the possibility of devolving power downwards and again it seemed possible for individuals to have meaningful influence on how they lived and worked. Performing at Edinburgh Fringe festival in 1983 as a cast member in a collectively produced and directed play also located me amongst creative people who were living independent and highly individual lifestyles. At this time the alternative cabaret scene was gaining wide popularity on the basis of what had been happening at The Comedy Store in London and the performers appearing in the BBC television show The Young Ones. The close proximity of these people at Edinburgh issued an unspoken challenge to me to leave my dead-end job, risk losing possession of my social housing and finally pursue a life-long ambition to be a professional performer. So, in 1984 I arrived at Dartington College of Arts to begin my four-year degree course in Theatre, modifying my sense of self once again.

The Dartington Hall estate is a fourteenth century country estate that was purchased in 1925 by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst with the intention of making it a utopian sanctuary for the radical arts (Young, 1982). As a student, the juxtaposition of ancient architecture, an idyllic rural setting and avant-garde performance was powerful and evocative. At the back of the fourteenth century Barn Theatre was the theatre department's extensive wardrobe department. I sometimes wandered through the racks of costumes imagining them as characters waiting to be bought to life. I wondered about the alchemy that created a role onstage: did the costume transform the performer, or the performer transform the costume?

I studied a number of theorists who had differing approaches to constructing a character. Stanislavski wrote extensively on how actors should draw on their creative imagination, emotional memory and physical embodiment to emphasize a quality of truth and authenticity to the role they portrayed (Stanislavski, 1937; Whyman, 2013). Brecht worked to create a style of performance where the spectator is able to simultaneously discern both the actor and the character (Mumford, 2009). The Polish director Grotowski envisioned a "poor theatre" where all unnecessary artifacts including pretense by the actor were stripped back to create a profound encounter with the spectator which *was "an extreme confrontation, sincere, disciplined, precise and total…involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state."* (Grotowski, 2002, p.57).

Other concepts that were encountered in this setting, that are of clear tangential relevance to both coaching and identity formation, is that of liminality and the liminoid. These concepts were developed by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1967) building on the work of van Gennep (1960). Turner observed the quality of liminality present in rituals such as rites of passage. Liminality is a quality or atmosphere where things become fluid and is a period when *"a person is "betwixt-and-between" social categories and personal identities"* (Schechner, 2002, p.66). Although originally conceptualized as the mid-way point of a religious rite of passage Turner also coined the term "liminoid" to refer to secular, contemporary contexts where the same betwixt-and-between qualities are prevailing. Schechner (2002) has equated such liminoid qualities with the performance space in live theatre. The spectators of performance are inhabiting a point midway between the imaginary world of the drama and the flow of their everyday lives. The audience has stepped outside the ordinary unfolding of events in order to occupy a physical and psychological transitional space where it is possible to engage in productive reflexive inquiry. It seems possible to align the liminal qualities theorized by Turner and Schechner with coaching sessions; the sessions occur outside the normal flow of events in the coachees life, and they provide a reflexive space where it is possible for identities to be in transition and open to re-definition.

A number of years after Dartington I discovered the earning power and the autonomous lifestyles of the top street performers. I chose to leave the world of the university where I was a fulltime lecturer in Theatre Studies and reinvent myself in this very different area of performance by adopting a new stage name and learning to combine fire-juggling, escapology and crowd building. I had to experience the painful process of deconstructing everything I had learnt in my theatre training and start learning a new craft. Up until this point I had no real idea of the extent that the creation of identity played in my new professional world.

It soon became apparent that all the experienced street performers had highly developed personas that they employed both on and off "stage". The first thing I was aware of was that many of the performers were known by their (often idiosyncratic) stage names socially as well as professionally. An essential component of the identities created seemed to be resilience: a mingling of talent, skills, toughness and street smarts. I began to understand that the identity constructed in this way facilitated them across a number of sites: in developing positive relationships with local traders and officials, helping them engage with challenging situations involving groups of street drinkers or teenagers whilst also building a "don't mess" reputation amongst the other performers. It seemed that the image they built was the person they became. The building of an identity that would work for me in these ways was one of the first tasks of learning this new craft which I had to undertake. The necessity of doing this effectively was bought home to me sharply by the suicide of one of the Covent Garden performers ("Wulfie") in the early 1990's. I had kept my distance from him. His performances regularly failed to build a crowd and I had been told by the other performers that "his face doesn't fit" "he hasn't got a show" and "he doesn't belong here". Whilst it would be naive to speculate that his failure to develop an effective identity within his chosen professional world was the principal reason for his death it is hard not to consider it a contributory factor. Effective performance of identity seemed to really be a matter of life or death.

A few years later I knew that I had progressed in this world when as well as my audience size and my income increasing, one day my wife unselfconsciously called me by my performer's name. I reflected that maybe a good street performer is closer to Grotowski's version of the actor than the other theories I had come across. That the encounter with others is "*sincere, disciplined, precise and total*". Time has moved on and circumstances have changed. A part of the rationale for this research is to initiate a process in order to embed elements that can be identified as "coach" and "academic" into the structure of my own identity.

The inclusion of this biographical narratives is done to chart the development of raw experience into a defined focus for PhD research. That focus is *"the construction, composition and performance of coaches' identities"*. I set out to inquire as to what is the equivalent of the street performer's identity for coaches. My sense was that most street performers started from the outside and worked inwards. They would learn how to do the feats of skills and dexterity, how to build a crowd, how to negotiate with other performers and how to deal with the threats and dilemmas that come from performing in public spaces. As these elements became ingrained in their personality through daily practice the performer would slowly morph into the person that they had self-consciously constructed.

I imagined that coaches would be the same.

My starting point

October 2016.

York St John. Three of us are sitting around my principal supervisor's office. It is located at the top of a narrow winding stairway and has a sense of being hidden away from the rest of the campus. These early supervision sessions have more of a sense of three people hanging out than the focused, goal-oriented appointments they will later become. On my supervisor's bookshelf is a statuette of the Marvel Comic's character the Silver Surfer. On the desk in front of me is one of the several Batman moleskin notebooks that I will fill during the course of this project. I have been describing how my lifelong love of American

comic books kickstarted my fascination with the concept of identity. In their pages a fluid secret identity meant that the drabbest of lives could become transformed into an exciting, heroic saga peopled with exotic, god-like characters.

Fresh from my MSc in coaching psychology I am looking to my supervisors for learning tasks, assessment criteria and examples of good practice; none of which are forthcoming. In their place I am given the simple mantra *"original, critical, publishable"*. My principal supervisor turns to me and asks:

"So what are you going to do to start the PhD?"
"I thought I would do some reading to try and arrive at a definition of identity."
"Great idea."
I leave the office. The next seven years of my life commences.

Structure of the thesis

In attempting to formularise what I had initially assumed was a self-evident concept (identity) I quickly discovered that the nature of identity is disputed. I therefore give space within a relatively brief literature review chapter to review these differing essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives before arriving at an integrative framework which informs this thesis. An important element of this framework is the external discourses drawn from in order to construct and validate an identity. In this case those are the dominant discourses existing across the terrain of professional coaching. In order to understand those discourses in a second, more substantial, literature review I consider a number of different ways that the terrain of coaching has been characterized: maps, approaches, genres, professionalization and regulation.

In the methodology section I establish the pluralistic-constructivist perspective that informs this research and link it to the dialogical/performance narrative approach (Reissman 2008) that I employ. I further develop this approach by integrating Reissman's approach with a theatre criticism framework (Quigley 1985) in order to focus specifically on the performance element of the research. The case studies are presented in the chronological order that they were conducted to convey, alongside the narratives of the coaches interviewed, a

sense of my own journey across the encounters. In the findings chapter I arrive at a narrative typology (Frank, 2010) that groups the stories shared with me into three distinctive narrative categories that seemed to be utilised by all the participants interviewed in constructing their coach identities. I also reflect on the interviews in terms of the four theatrical realms borrowed from Quigley (1985). In the discussion I argue that the findings of this research run counter to much of the literature in terms of how coach identities are constructed and the desirability (or not) of the professionalization of coaching. I offer some suggestions for how coach training and coaches' personal development can be enhanced in response to those findings. I then conclude by acknowledging the limitations of this research and offering suggestions for further research.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have articulated my relationship to the research question and how the development of it into a PhD project has led to greater transparency and authenticity in my writing. I have argued for a gap in existing knowledge that the research addresses. Through explaining the structure of the thesis I have demonstrated how I attempt to address this.

Literature review: identity

Introduction

In this chapter I attempt to achieve an understanding of the term "identity" that will serve this research. I note that there has been an increased focus on this topic in contemporary times and that identity is a concept that is contested. Beginning with the etymology of the term I briefly survey a number of perspectives on the concept (analytical philosophy, essentialist, non-essentialist and constructivist) before arguing that none of these perspectives offers an entirely satisfactory framework for understanding the concept. I conclude by offering a heuristic of identity that draws from constructivism and incorporates elements of both essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives.

Identity: relevance and contested nature of the topic

A number of commentators (e.g. Hall, 2000; Alvesson et al, 2008; Lawler, 2014) have argued that we are existing in a time where there is a greatly increased focus on, and debate around, the notion of identity. Giddens (1991) perceived it to be a modern project emerging in response to the decline of class politics. Alvesen et al referred to *"the turn to identity"* (2008, p.6) and described the resulting discourse as *"a commotion"* (p.5). A number of explanations have been offered to account for this phenomenon. These include a general move away from rigid assigned identities (Howard, 2000), the emergence of twentieth century movements such as feminism, Marxism and psychoanalysis problematizing identity (Hall, 1992) and greater social fluidity creating insecurity around the concept (Bauman, 2004). The emerging discussions on its nature have attempted to ground identity in a number of contexts such as kinship (Carsten, 2004), power relations (Foucault, 1979) and social class (Skeggs, 2004). Jenkins (2014) has disputed the accuracy of assertions that this interest is specifically contemporary. He cites Locke's philosophical writings on identity published in 1704, Harré's commentary on the importance of identity to historical Indian philosophers (Harré, 2000) and Shakespeare's lines in As You Like It (Shakespeare, 2006) that assert one man plays many parts during the course of their life to evidence this focus as an historical one, although he does concede that it has been revitalised in contemporary times.

A survey of the literature relating to identity reveals that it is a contested term. This results from competing philosophical perspectives attempting to subsume the concept into their conflicting worldviews. The purpose of this section is to attempt to achieve an understanding of the term "identity" that may provide a foundation for this study. To achieve such clarity Hart (1998) argues the necessity of examining the ways in which other commentators have used relevant terms to arrive at a point where boundaries of meaning can be placed around them. I will therefore look briefly at the etymology of identity as encapsulating both essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives. The early discourses on it within analytical philosophy, I align with essentialism. The philosophical work of Goffman (1969), Butler (e.g. Butler, 1990) and the constructivists I align with non-essentialism.

Etymology and definitions

The Online etymology dictionary (2018) records "identity" entering the English language in the sixteenth century and meaning *"sameness"*. In the Oxford English dictionary online (2007) the entry for identity contains three definitions of interest to this study. The first states that identity *is "The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness."* This definition suggests associations with the types of classification systems used in the natural sciences. It is of interest because it suggests that identical things share an essential nature. The second definition shifts emphasis from the classification of things towards the continuity of persons; *"The sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual; the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality."* However, identity here is seen as rigid and constant. There is no acknowledgement of the social context within which an identity exists. The sub-definition that follows it expands the focus further; *"Who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others; a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others."* Here there is a sense that an identity is perceived and completed by others. This usage of the term with its more contextual foundation is traced back to 1737 and suggests that there is a

historical tension in the use of the term between an entity that is complete unto itself and possesses an essential nature, or something that is formed and made distinct through performance to, and a relationship with, its wider context. After proposing a heuristic of identity incorporating these apparently contrasting perspectives, in the later sections of this thesis I argue that in forming substantive identities coaches hold a tension between their own essential self, the external discourses active in the terrain of coaching and in-the-moment performances they co-construct with the coachees.

Analytical philosophy

Within analytical philosophy identity was initially assumed to be knowable through a person's body (Shoemaker and Swinburne, 1984). A single body journeying through space and time created a continuity that suggested a coherence of identity. Descartes later argued our essential essence transcends physical existence, and is located within our souls (Cardinal, Hayward and Jones, 2011). Locke challenged both these perspectives; he argued that our identity resides in our memories (Nimbalker, 2011). Reid refuted Locke's contention (Copenhaver, 2014) contending identity cannot be accounted for in terms other than its own: claiming that identity is "simple and unanalysable". The dispute between these perspectives that is initiated by Locke (identity is complex and psychological) and Reid (simple and unknowable) has continued into contemporary times (Gasser and Stefan, 2012). However, these disputes between philosophers seem to rest on where to locate the identity or whether it is possible to find a location. The individual appears to have no agency in the structure or character of their identity. The arguments are therefore about what is essential to our nature. An essentialist stance on identity would align with approaches to coaching such as person-centred coaching (Joseph and Bryant-Jeffries, 2007; Joseph, 2014) where the purpose of the coaching is to facilitate the coachee in actualising an authentic inner self (i.e. the organismic self – Merry and Tudor, 2002) and listening to the *"inner voice"* (Joseph 2018, p.69). It would suggest that to understand the individual coach's identity we would need to understand their inner nature as their identity would simply be a reflection of this. Peltier (2010) asserts that the influence of this approach in coaching is often underestimated.

14

Essentialism

According to Plato, Socrates believed in an individual, immortal soul, and also subscribed to the Delphic motto "know thyself" (Tarnas, 1996). Plato himself claimed that this world is an imperfect copy of a realm of ideal forms (Silverman, 2014). This belief finds echoes in those coaches and self-help texts that exhort us *"to be the best version of you, you can possibly be"* (e.g. James, 2016). Aristotle spoke of entities having an essence so that a thing's true nature is inherent to the thing itself (Cohen, 2016). Wilkins (2013) argues that the essentialist outlook remains dominant in the sciences. This is evidenced by diverse uses of the approach across a number of areas. Similarly Ellis (2002) has asserted that there is a new essentialist tendency within both science and philosophy. Superficially the concept is unhelpful to this study because it potentially diminishes any sense of the individual coach as the agentic architect of their identity. It is however a concept that retains its contemporary relevance and one that facilitates understanding the different perspectives on identity.

Non-essentialist approaches

A non-essentialist approach would suggest that the identities of coaches are to greater or lesser degree artificial constructions. Debate exists on whether such constructions are done with agency (e.g. Kelly, 1955) or through imposed discourses of power (e.g. Rose, 1999). This debate is pertinent in that it questions the degree that coaches have individual authorship of their identities, or whether they are responding with little individual agency to external elements such as market forces and professional discourses.

Goffman is generally perceived to be one of the primary non-essentialist theorists on identity (e.g. Elliot, 2014; Lawler, 2014). Of particular relevance to this project is his application of the performance-based dramaturgic metaphor to everyday interactions (Goffman, 1969). Within this framework social interactions between individuals are understood as theatrical performances occurring in a front or on-stage area. There is also an informal backstage area where individuals can set aside, or informally prepare, their roles. In examining this concept it is possible to find indications of how coaches might operationalise their professional identities. Jenkins (2014) has noted a number of criticisms of

Goffman's work. These include a lack of a systematic body of theory and his "actors" being presented as merely hollow shells. While these are controversial assertions, they can to some extent be evidenced by the variety of different approaches that have tried to claim him as their own. These include symbolic interactionism (Helle, 1998), functionalism (Misztal, 2001), structuralism (Sharron, 2000) and postmodernism (Battershill, 1990). Goffman himself said "*I don't think the individual himself or herself does much of the constructing… I am therefore on the side closer to the structural functionalists*" (Goffman in Verhoeven, 1993, p.324). So whilst Goffman's work presents an exemplar for conceptualising the coach as a performer, because his own theoretical underpinnings contain an aversion to the individual having substantial agency it is problematic to uncritically accept this perspective in an investigation into how individual coaches construct their identities.

Butler is similarly perceived as a major theorist on non-essentialist formulations of identity (e.g. Frosh and Baraitser, 2009; Woodward, 2002). She is of interest because she suggests that identities are simply responses to external discourses of power. Within such a perspective, coaches' identities would simply be generic configurations composed through a process of commodification in response to such forces as capitalism and corporatism (Moran, 2015). Through her understanding of the concept of performativity (Butler, 1990) presents a gender-based model of this strand of identity theory. For Butler the formation of our gendered identity happens against a background of *"compulsory heterosexuality"* (Butler, 1990, p.24). Neither sex nor gender is perceived as being inherent or fixed. She argues that from the moment a baby's sex is declared the ensuing mandatory performative acts congeal onto the person through a process of rehearsal and repetition so that they come to be taken as authentic representations of their nature. More controversially she contends that there is no subject behind the performance and contests the notion of a subject (Butler, 1994). To argue her anti-essentialist stance she builds on Nietzsche's assertion that *"there is no "being" behind doing, acting, becoming; the "doer" is merely a fiction on the doing- the doing itself is everything"* (Nietzsche, 1887, p. 29). It is reformulated as *"There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively*

constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p.34).

During the course of this research a polemical and polarized debate around the topic of gendered identity has become foregrounded in the media with conservative commentators and gender-critical feminists taking an essentialist position in opposition to the non-essentialist position of queer theorists and trans activists (Brooks, 2020; Morgan, 2020). Whilst much of the content of this debate can be characterised as strident and unhelpful (e.g. *"Just because you lop your dick off and wear a dress doesn't make you a fucking woman"* Greer, 2015) of interest to this research are the earlier criticisms of Butler's work that come from within the transsexual community, which have implications for how identity may be conceived of in the design of this study. Namaste (1996) has argued that through the emphasis on textual analysis the transsexual subject starts to disappear from Butler's theorising. Prosser (1998) argued that in the figure of the transsexual, Butler's contention that gender and sex are inextricably linked through discourse and social construction falls apart. He contends that the transsexual does not necessarily look different but feels (in an essential way) different from their birth-assigned gender. Rather than giving credence to surface appearances, their arguments ask for some recognition of the validity of this internal experiencing; *"the difference between gender identity and sex that serves as the logic of transsexuality."* (p.43). In this sense the transsexual figure suggests that in the face of social coercion and social construction that there might be elements of an internal essential self.

The relevance of Butler to this study is that she helpfully states a considered anti-essentialist perspective whilst simultaneously provoking a declamation of alternative transgendered discourses. These discourses in turn warn against a complete dismissal of models of identity that incorporate some element of essentialism. Given the variety of identity formulations that appear within coaches' online marketing materials it is difficult not to conclude that there is some degree of individual agency involved that cuts across both essentialist and non-essentialist conceptualisations of identity. The generic, non-essential discourses of the terrain of coaching are drawn from, whilst coaches also seek to establish their individual, signature credibility.

Constructivism

Danziger (1997), noting the discrepancies in the literature on social constructionism, has conceptualised two distinct strands: dark and light. Burr (2015) has developed the detail of these approaches and retitled them "macro" and "micro". The former approach focuses on the Foucauldian power of authoritative discourses at the expense of the subject. The latter affords us some personal agency. It focuses on the ability of the person to negotiate subject positions within interactions. As such it is of more interest to this project and has relevance to the interactions between coach and coachee along with the coach and the marketplace. However this strand of social constructionism is to a large part comprised of discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017). This has an anti-essentialist bias and rejects any connection between the content of utterances made by individuals and inner psychological states. As such it does not reject the existence or reality of internal experiencing but brackets it off and declines to engage with it. Burr acknowledges that the relational self as a central concept remains unexplained. Social constructionism effectively problematizes the individual and then omits it from its theorising (Burr 2015). Therefore micro social constructionism contributes positively in outlining a relationship of identity to external discourses but also fails to explain internal experiencing.

A superficial survey of the neighbouring area of constructivism can lead to the conclusion that a radically opposing view has been taken regarding selfhood and agency. Von Glaserfield (1984), developing this theme, asserts that *"we have no one but ourselves to thank for the world in which we appear to be living"* (p.17). Raskin (2006) summarises the approach as being based on the notion that human beings, both individually and in relationship with others, construct mental frameworks for understanding the world. The two major

strands of the approach (personal constructivism and radical constructivism) theorise us as individually organising our understanding through an ongoing process of building constructs to represent a world we never succeed in having actual contact with. Whilst this is useful in terms of the organisation of identity it resurfaces a familiar dilemma; it does not tell us who is doing the constructing.

Epting and Amerikaner (1980) presented selfhood itself as a construction and so leave us with a circular model in which it is difficult to locate either a starting point or an architect. Constructivism can be seen as shedding light on some of the internal processes of identity formation but failing to locate the agency involved.

A working heuristic for identity

Jenkins (2014) has noted that there are two poles in identity theory. On one hand there is the agentic, existential individual and on the other, there is the *"plastic self"* (p.53) moulded by external forces. He noted that both have valid qualities but that both are inadequate on their own. He stated that an essential self is problematic because its existence cannot be incontrovertibly demonstrated. However he described it as a *"simplifying assumption"* (p.56) to theorise as if a self exists. He cites the central place of reflexivity in our experience of thinking to evidence the reasonableness of doing so.

A framework of identity that can provide a foundation for this study can then be taken as consisting of an assumed and individualised self that moves constantly and dialectically between personal constructions arrived at with agency and external discourses encountered in, and imposed by, the wider context that then synthesises as a persona to be used strategically in given settings. Interestingly Burr (2015) states that narrative inquiry can be seen as occupying a midway point between constructivism and social constructionism whilst Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou wrote about some narrative researchers adopting a position of *"strategic essentialism"* (2013, p.8). This research takes a broadly constructivist perspective whilst drawing on this strategic essentialism in assuming individual agency of the coaches in their professional identity construction.

Assumed Essential Self

Essentialist

Constant Dialectic Movement Between

Internal Personal Constructs

(Ongoing Process)

Constructivism

External Discourses

(Introjecting, Persuading, Coercing)

Social Constructionism

Finding Synthesis In

Manufactured Persona

Non-essentialist

Strategically Employed Across

Diverse External Sites

Figure 1: Conceptualisation of identity

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have sought to establish an understanding of the concept of identity as a foundation for this research. I have noted that it is a contested term that can be broadly understood as representing a conflict between essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives. I have argued that neither perspective offers a wholly satisfactory framework and offered my own integrative heuristic as a foundation for this research.

Literature review: the terrain of coaching

Introduction to chapter

In this chapter I start from the assumption that the discourses active within the terrain of coaching may be aligned with the external discourses conceptualised in the previous chapter's heuristic of identity when considering coach identity construction. I begin by explaining the process of writing the chapter and the choice of the discourses from within the literature of coaching that are focused on. I argue that the literature contains ambiguities and anomalies in how it attempts to map the terrain of coaching, elevates the notion of positivist, evidence-based approaches and describes the genres of coaching. In considering the discourse around the professionalization of coaching I question the apparent benefits these discourses appear to offer the coaching industry. In doing this I argue that the external discourses that are available for novice coaches constructing their identities are potentially uncertain and misleading territories to navigate.

Process and discourses focused on

This study focuses on the construction, composition and performance of successful coaching identities. The identity heuristic advanced in the previous section argues that to achieve this, coaches, in part, draw from the pre-existing, external discourses active within the terrain of coaching. This section presents a critical literature review (Grant and Booth, 2009) of a number of those discourses that are active and significant within the terrain.

It has been written in two stages. Following the conceptualisation of the identity heuristic and the upgrade process (but prior to the fieldwork) an original draft was prepared that was a general survey of how the terrain of coaching is mapped. The accessing of literature for this was not systematically conducted but was influenced by my pre-existing knowledge of coaching literature gained during studies towards an MSc in coaching psychology. It employed an iterative process whereby articles or books signposted me towards further relevant texts. This was supplemented by searches conducted on the PsychINFO and Emerald databases using the terms *coaching* and *identity*. The general rule for engaging or discarding texts accessed through the databases was if they commented reflexively on the field of coaching, I would engage with them. If

they took the nature of coaching as a given (such as a return-on-investment study) then they would be discarded. Alongside this, a number of texts accessed in conducting the meta-ethnographic review (see Methods chapter) were also understood to have relevance for this section. Following the fieldwork and drafting of case studies this chapter was returned to and revised after the themes and gaps in the literature that emerged, as a result of the data analysis, became apparent. At this point further relevant literature was accessed in a targeted fashion (e.g. coaching professionalization, integrative therapeutic working etc.). Consequently accessing literature has been an ongoing process across the lifetime of the project.

The discourses which have been focused on in this chapter, that are seen to be relevant to coach identity construction, are:

- Mapping of the terrain of coaching
- Approaches to coaching (i.e. those coaching approaches that emerge from the Psy expert discourse)
- Genres of coaching (approaches such as developmental coaching, performance coaching, sports coaching and life coaching)
- The professionalization and regulation of coaching

These areas are seen as relevant because they represent both the form and the content of the pre-existing, external discourses active on the terrain that is available to coaches in constructing their identity. In surveying them, I note that many elements of the discourses prevalent within the terrain of coaching convey a potential for a right and wrong way to do things, potentially leading towards a culture of standardization. Within such texts there is a tacit suggestion of off-the-peg coaching identities being available to those who practice specific approaches to coaching, complete training courses, adhere to professional competencies and achieve accreditation. It appears that there is a mismatch between the impression conveyed by the literature of coaching and the narratives of successful, practicing coaches detailed in later chapters. The former encourages compliance with existing psychological schools, courses of study and professional organisations while the latter recounts highly individualistic personal development journeys of a type that appear to be absent

from the literature of coaching. While the discourses within the literature of coaching are significant because they supplement and support these journeys, they are effectively secondary to those journeys.

Mapping of the terrain

An element of the identity heuristic proposed in the previous chapter is the adoption or imposition of external discourses. Such discourses pre-exist the identity that they are being incorporated into and are widely operant within the context that the individual is aspiring to perform within. The degrees to which such discourses are purposefully adopted (Gergen, 2015) or coercively imposed through social pressures (Foucault, 1979) is debateable. One way it is possible to think of the terrain of coaching is as a platform that provides the aspiring coach with raw materials amongst which they may forage, gather and then craft a functioning identity which they then market. In theatre design a platform is a raised, flat walking surface for the actor to perform on. It is used to elevate them within the dramatised world (Parker, Wolf & Block 2003). In video game design the term "platform" refers to the technology that allows the virtual world that the player inhabits to be generated (Rogers 2014). The Online Etymology dictionary (2018) traces origins of the word to the policies that politicians used as a basis for their campaigning, derived from the literal platform on which they stood to declaim their manifesto. There is a theme throughout all these meanings of pre-existing materials within a culture being utilised to serve the elevation and presentation of a constructed self (i.e. dramatised character, avatar or political personae) within a specific sphere of activity.

The terrain of coaching is mapped in disparate ways (see below) with no generally agreed way for understanding or consolidating those maps. Whilst Martin (2002) focuses on mapping organisational culture she helpfully outlines *integration* and *differentiation* perspectives that can be adopted in reaching an understanding of how the terrain of coaching is charted. Integration perspectives understand cultures as characterised by shared values and consistency. Conversely, a differentiation approach chooses to focus on cultural manifestations that are characterised by their inconsistent nature. Within this

latter perspective, consensus only emerges within subcultures that subscribe to particular discourses and approaches. Texts that attempt to offer integration perspectives in coaching portray coaching as an area of practice characterised by positivity and homogeneity. Qualities promoted in this way are that coaching is dialogic (de Haan, 2008; Cox, 2013; van Nieuwerburgh, 2014; Association for Coaching 2018;), is focused on a tension between the coachee's potential and performance (Downey, 2003; Whitmore, 2009; Rogers, 2012), is about learning and development (Parsloe, 1999; de Haan, 2008; Cox, 2013; van Nieuwerburgh, 2014;), is facilitative rather than didactic (Downey 2003; Whitmore, 2009; Wilson & Bresser, 2010; Rogers, 2012; Association for Coaching 2018) and depict the coach as possessing special skills and knowledge (Parsloe 1999; Downey 2003; Bachkirova, Cox & Clutterbuck 2018).

Garvey (2017) has contrasted what he characterises as the *"espoused discourse"* of coaching with the actual discourse or the "*lived experience*" (p.683) of its professional organisations. The espoused discourse can be aligned with the qualities listed above and emphasises humanistic, person-centered values which are characterised by positivity, inclusivity and openness to innovative thinking. Similarly Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2009) promote what they term *"the coaching and mentoring way"* (p.2). They characterise its qualities as:

- Mutual respect and valuing differences of viewpoints
- Acknowledgment of influences
- Listening and sharing

These qualities would seem to be in keeping with the integration perspective detailed above. Ruane (2013) has demonstrated that as well as marketing their individual coaching identity and services it is necessary for coaches to promote the value of coaching itself. It would therefore seem, that it is necessary for coaches to embody and perform these qualities in their coaching identity as a foundation for their professional personae.

However, this apparent homogeneity evaporates once the detail of the coaching literature mapping the terrain is examined more closely. There appears to be a culture portrayed within it more in keeping with a differentiation perspective,

where coachees constructing their identities are tacitly invited to form alliances with specific pre-existing approaches, genres, markets and organisations. The terrain of coaching has been conceptualised and mapped in various formations or structures by differing commentators. These formations include quadrants (Gibb and Hill, 2006; Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2018), typologies (Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, 2009; Western, 2012), continuums (Witherspoon and White, 1996; Berman and Brandt, 2006; Hawkins and Smith, 2013; Jackson and Cox, 2018), binaries (Silsbee, 2008), matrices (Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2018) and timelines (Drake, 2008; Stelter, 2012; Western, 2012). These forms are then populated in terms of approach (e.g. cognitive behavioural coaching, positive psychology coaching etc.) and/or genre (e.g. the type of coachee, the objective of the coaching or the tribal-like allegiance of the coach).

This literature inherently suggests that successful coach identities are constructed from a series of specialisms and competencies that the aspiring coach gains expertise in through training and study. Whilst there is diversity and competition between the purveyors of these maps there is an implicit invitation to the prospective coach to make a number of choices in which they effectively join a club (choose a tribe), decide on a type of coachee (enter a specific area of the marketplace) and adopt a particular orientation (choose an approach). Such a framework potentially diminishes the uniqueness of the individual coach and suggests that a successful coaching identity is composed of elements external to the coach which are absorbed and then faithfully reproduced within their practice.

Approaches to coaching

Whilst plentiful texts exist that focus on coaching skills irrespective of the approach (e.g. Rogers, 2016; van Nieuerburgh, 2020; Sternad, 2021) there is a clear emphasis in the literature of coaching, and the maps of the terrain of coaching, on coaches adopting a specific approach. This is evidenced by the chapters in coaching handbooks (e.g. Whybrow and Palmer, 2019; Passmore, 2021) and specialist texts (e.g. Drake, 2018; Neenan and Dryden, 2020; Bluckert, 2021) that detail and promote such specialist approaches.

Psychotherapy is recognised in the literature as the primary source of such coaching approaches, (e.g. Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2009; Wildflower, 2013). It has also been noted that Gallwey's seminal text, The Inner Game of Tennis (1986), seen as the antecedent of contemporary coaching (Brock, 2014), had *"resonances with various approaches to therapy"* (Garvey, 2011, p.14). Coaching has, in the past, been referred to by sympathetic therapists as a "*counselling cousin*" (Feltham, 1995) or "*the new kid on the block*", (Carroll, 2003). Stober (2006) suggested that the whole of coaching comes out of the humanistic psychology paradigm. This alliance of coaching and psychotherapy is taken even further by Berglass (2002) who argued that only trained therapists should be able to coach. A more moderate perspective has been offered by Lee (2003) who simply argued that coaches should possess psychological mindedness.

This preponderance of psychotherapeutic approaches to coaching has led Garvey and Stokes (2022) to maintain that out of Western's four discourses of coaching (Western, 2012) in reality, the Psy expert discourse is the dominant one. The particular approaches that Garvey and Stokes identify as distinctive "brands" are:

- Solution-focused
- Cognitive-behavioural
- Gestalt
- Narrative
- Positive psychology

It is noticeable that psychodynamic coaching is absent from this listing. Given the number of texts citing it as a distinctive approach (e.g. Peltier 2010, Sandler 2011, Beck 2012) along with the research base for the approach (e.g. Cilliers 2005, Ward 2008, West-Leuer & John 2013) it would seem to achieve the author's criteria for inclusion.

Examining the detail of the texts included in their edited volume Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2018) produced quantitative data regarding the frequency that both approaches and genres were referred to throughout the authored chapters. While this may be an idiosyncratic method to map the

coaching landscape, it is significant because it gives an indication of the prevalence of approaches and genres within the narratives generated by those detailing the landscape of coaching.

The cognitive behavioural approach was the clearly favoured approach within this exercise. The emphasis on the approach appears to mirror its dominance within counselling (Herbert and Forman 2011) where its apparent capacity to address specific issues in a time-limited fashion is valued by the funders of talking therapies (Clarke 2008; Sanders and Hill 2014). An emphasis on cognitive based coaching was also found in a survey conducted by Palmer and Whybrow (2006) where it featured as the second most popular approach amongst members of the BPS Coaching Psychology Forum.

Overviews in coaching textbooks of the evidence-base for cognitive-behavioural therapy give a wholly positive and uncritical account of its efficacy (e.g. Neenan 2010; Palmer & Williams 2013). However, these overviews of the evidence base for the approach ignore a vigorous controversy regarding its true efficacy. Woodfolk and Richardson (2008) argue that the cognitive-behavioural approach has an increasingly outdated and simplistic worldview. Bados, Balaguer and Saldana (2007) found evidence that CBT has a higher dropout rate than other therapeutic approaches. McLeod (2013) has observed that the cognitive-behavioural approach has many more people researching it than any other therapeutic approach and argues that inevitably more evidence is generated for its effectiveness. Bohart and House (2008) also argued that the randomized control trials used to validate cognitive interventions are questionable. The atypical character of research participants and trial conditions, the focus on single issues (in reality clients normally present with multiple issues) and the lack of acknowledgement of the power of self-healing and placebo effects are listed as issues regarding the veracity of claims made for the approach. Watts (2018) argues that the apparently scientifically based argument for CBT is in fact a social construction and Guilfoyle (2018) develops this by demonstrating how it provides a convenient hegemonic discourse for powerful interests (e.g. government, medical institutions, funding bodies etc.) that emerged following the release of The Depression Report in 2006 (CEPMHPG 2006).

Adherence to a cognitive behavioural approach as a central element of a coaching identity is a curious choice given that its principal focus is on psychological problems and blocks (Neenan & Dryden 2014). It effectively delineates "right" and "wrong" ways of thinking for both clients and coaches alike. This appears to be at odds with the positive, humanistic, upbeat image of coaching that values original, innovative thinking which is often portrayed in the *"espoused discourses of coaching"* (Garvey, 2017, p.683). A possible explanation for the apparent popularity of the approach amongst commentators on coaching is that a grounding in the approach carries with it an implied psychological knowledge base. This in turn gives coaches access to the Psy expert discourse (Western, 2012) on which to build their identity.

The Psy expert discourse is also claimed enthusiastically by those who advocate for evidence-based coaching or "coaching psychology" (in contrast to "coaching") approaches. Law, for example, presents himself as a pioneer scientist-psychologist who as well as *"advocating a vigorous scientific approach"* in coaching (Law, 2013a, p. xiii) is also an activist seeking *"to ensure that the growing coaching and mentoring practice remains aligned with sound psychological principles"* (Law, 2013a, p.21). An element of this discourse is the differentiation between evidence-based coaching and a supposedly inferior *"belief-based coaching"* (Rushall 2003). However, any explanation of the differences between coaching and coaching psychology, or between evidence-based and belief-based coaching are short on detail. Palmer and Whybrow's assertion that *"non-psychologists are more likely to use the GROW model … without having any underpinning psychology taught to them on their training programme"* (2007, p.4) does not appear to be based on any evidence and seems at odds with the lived experience of students on coaching programmes. An attempt to define coaching psychology (Palmer & Whybrow 2006) emphasises *"models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches"* (p.8.). However, Garvey (2017) has pointed out that there is no unambiguous coherence between these approaches as the different psychological approaches are based on distinctive discourses which do not easily align with one another.

Advocates of evidence-based coaching have often argued that the integrity of coaching is under threat from unlicensed, untrained and unethical maverick practitioners. They contend that the answer to this is to professionalize the industry through mandatory regulation. Professional coaching organisations seek to expand their power bases through claiming that they should be the agencies to oversee this (Garvey 2014). Amongst others asserting that the psychology profession should have a lead role in this enterprise are Grant and Cavanagh (2004) who have argued for a move (led by psychologists) to a *"scientist-practitioner model of coach training and practice"* (p.7) along with Spence (2007) who argued for professionalization and regulation of the coaching industry to be led by psychologists. Therefore, rather than simply being evangelical about positivism in coaching, another agenda at work in the adoption of the coaching psychologist identity and promotion of evidence-based approaches appears to be one of expanding the influence and power within the coaching industry of its advocates.

Garvey (2011) has argued that the different types of coaching approaches that come out of therapy are "*branded products*" (p.79). The adapting of specific schools of therapy (all with their own professional bodies, textbook "treatments" and distinctive philosophical allegiances) adds to the sense that there is a right and a wrong way to do coaching. This is evidenced by the fact that the cognitive behavioural approach along with the humanistic and psychodynamic approaches all now have extensive competency frameworks (Roth and Pilling, 2007; Lemma, Roth and Pilling, 2008; Roth, Hill and Pilling 2009) which are recognised by the UK government and NHS, and which clearly communicate that employing these approaches requires conformity to predetermined norms. This type of allegiance to a brand and the resulting dismissal of competing approaches is known in the literature of therapy as *"schoolism"* (Cooper and McLeod, 2011, p.16). The impact of schoolism on the development of counselling and psychotherapy has been generally perceived to be negative (Hollanders, 2000). It has been referred to as a *"battle of the brands"*, (Duncan, Miller and Sparks, 2004, p.31) and an *"ideological cold war"*, (Norcross, 2005, p.3). It has also been characterised as *"the result of passionately held convictions being right whatever the facts"* (Clarkson, 2000, p.309).

Kilburg (2004) has argued that such a situation in coaching is self-defeating: *"practitioners of executive coaching have become more or less permanent residents of the empirical realms of Dodoville ...because it appears that the studies done to date demonstrate positive, nonspecific effects regardless of the conceptual foundations espoused by practitioners"* (p.207).

Counter voices to schoolism have been raised within the literature of coaching. De Haan, (2008) called for a move from "sectarian" to integrative coaching in order to address schoolism. Similarly Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2018) recommended coaches develop a pluralistic perspective rather than adhering to a single approach and reject "*absolutist claims for the exclusivity of any of them"* (p.xxxiv). Pendle (2015), in a qualitative study, found little enthusiasm for schoolism amongst practicing coaches alongside a willingness to engage with pluralistic practice. Garvey (2011) suggests an approach to coaching based on *"alethic pluralism"* (p.16) that is characterised by a *"repertoire approach"* (p.88) to coach and mentor development. He proposes a situation where coaches and mentors are able to draw from more than one discourse, (e.g. sports coaching, philosophy, sociology). Whilst these voices encourage a move away from schoolism, and its associated standardization, the literature of coaching appears to lack guidance for coaches on how to develop their own, individualistic integrative approach, (unlike that of counselling, e.g. Lapworth and Sills, 2010) and very little on how to practically approach working pluralistically (Utry et al, 2019).

Genres of coaching

Whilst the approaches comprise a substantial element of the terrain of coaching, they do not constitute the entire landscape. Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2018) have sought to characterise these additional areas by labelling them as the "*genres and contexts*" of coaching. They argued that a genre has the purpose of the coaching in the title (e.g. performance coaching) while contexts focus on the settings or the subject matter of the coaching (e.g. life coaching). It can be seen that in practice coaching approaches are quite distinct from genres and contexts in that an approach to coaching could potentially move across different genres or contexts and be applied in

numerous different settings. However, Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck's differentiation between genres and contexts fails to achieve complete clarity when applied in practice (e.g. within this frame of reference life coaching could equally be categorised as a genre) and does not incorporate other significant elements such as the philosophical discourses coaches draw from (Western, 2012) or the tribal allegiances they may be drawn to (Gibb and Hill, 2006). Therefore within this thesis *genres* will be used as a broader term that incorporates specialised markets, generic orientations and foundational influences.

The significance of these generic factors in the construction of a coaching identity becomes apparent in texts aimed at aspiring coaches and has been conceptualised in the literature as the coach finding their niche within a pre-existing market (e.g. Brown, 2017). This has been presented as a conscious decision-making process that is deliberately undertaken prior to entering the marketplace. Rogers (2006) admonished aspiring coaches to be quite specific in the determination of their target market. She wrote *"This is the essence of positioning: deciding which market you are in and who your target client is."* (p.23). Wilson (interviewed in Brown, 2017) advised that, within their chosen niche market, coaches need to identify and promote their *"USP".* Newton (2013) has argued that such positioning is far more significant than coaching training and qualification which, he asserts, is typically taken as a given; inherently suggesting that adhering to market categories has more importance than the quality of the coaching delivered. Whilst such guidance is clearly well intentioned, it results in presenting the construction of a coaching identity as a pre-planned formularised, cognitive process, based in marketing strategy, that effectively commodifies the aspirant coach.

Sports coaching

Accounts of the development of contemporary coaching often cite Gallwey's Inner Game as a highly significant starting point of the industry (e.g. Brock, 2014). The approach, emerging out of Gallwey's practice as a tennis coach (Gallwey, 1986), is a part of the lineage of the ubiquitous GROW model that has

been perpetuated by (amongst many others) Whitmore (2009). This history has seemingly established sports coaching as a significant landmark on the terrain of coaching. Garvey and Stokes (2022), while noting its often-instructional nature, list sports coaching as one of the main approaches to coaching. Stelter (2012) identifies sports coaching as a significant first-generation, goal-focused approach to coaching within his temporal mapping of the terrain. Gibb and Hill (2006), in delineating the tribes of coaching, listed the "Skills-Sports and Performance" tribe as the first of the tribes and characterised it as adopting the narrative of sports success and applying it to the corporate setting. However, claiming sports coaching as a distinctive approach to coaching brings difficulties which in turn make it a questionable basis for effective coach identities. The problematic nature of this is twofold and resides in questions as to the veracity of aligning achievement in sports with achievement in business, alongside the questionable links made between sports coaching and Gallwey's Inner Game approach (Gallwey, 1986).

Gibb and Hill (2006) in looking for areas of convergence between sports coaching and business assert that a sports coaching approach focuses on drive, discipline, determination, focus and being motivated by a "dream". There is an emphasis on performance and the immediacy of results. Peltier (2010) has surveyed the literature of athletics coaching and compiled a list of eight themes (e.g. single-mindedness, visualization, learning from defeat) that have been developed in sports coaching and now feature in wider coaching practices. However, this attempt to transfer sporting analogies and metaphors to other coaching approaches is perceived by Western (2012) to be *"problematic"* (p.54) as the single-minded, driven individual portrayed in these sources may well be at odds with what is actually required in contemporary organisational settings. Gibb and Hill (2006) also list several disjunctures between sport performance and management practice (e.g. sports approaches fail to incorporate the complexities and uncertainties of corporate life) demonstrating substantial divergence in practice between the two areas.

The Inner Game of Tennis (Gallwey, 1986) is perceived to be a seminal volume in the development of coaching and precedes the widely employed GROW model (Whitmore, 2009). Gibb and Hill (2006) cite Gallwey (1986) as the prime

example of an approach to coaching based on sports. Indeed, beyond the Inner Game there are few, if any, approaches to coaching based on sports. However there is also an inherent contradiction in promoting the Inner Game as the prime example of sports coaching, as the types of qualities and characteristics associated with sports coaching (such as such as determination to succeed, attachment to outcomes and a focus on results) are characteristic of the very qualities that Gallwey identified as problematic and exhorted his coachees to reject or bracket. The argument made by Whitmore (2009) that the Inner Game approach is directly transplanted from sports coaching into other genres of contemporary coaching (e.g. Gallwey 2000) is questioned by Western (2012) who alludes to sources in the human potential movement and humanistic psychology that Gallwey appears to draw from but does not attribute. Gallwey himself has said that the context of sports coaching is incidental:

"Though I discovered it while teaching tennis players…the principles and methods that worked for developing skills on the tennis courts apply to making changes in any activity" (Gallwey 2000, p.23).

While some individuals may move from a sporting career to coaching in a corporate setting, this appears to be based on individual charisma and a reciprocal affinity for sporting imagery existing within corporate culture, rather than any particular coaching approach they adopt (Jacobs, 2016). In this sense it can be argued that while sports coaching has been named as influential on the terrain of coaching (e.g. Whitmore 2009; Garvey and Stokes 2022) such claims may lack substance in practice. It is therefore a genre that is unlikely to function as a solid basis for either coaching practice or identity working for novice coaches, beyond those individuals who have previously gained wider renown within professional sport and are trading on that reputation in order to credential their move into coaching.

<div align="center">Developmental and performance coaching</div>

Contemporary handbook-style coaching volumes (e.g. Palmer and Whybrow, 2019) convey an impression of numerous, quite distinctive genres of coaching thriving in the industry. In the quantitative exercise referred to above Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck (2018) found that, within the texts they focused on,

developmental coaching was the most frequently referenced coaching genre. Bachkirova (2011) has also noted the frequency with which the generic term is used but has also commented on the diversity of meanings attached to it. Such lack of clarity is exacerbated when it becomes apparent how different genres of coaching, in practice, become subsumed or combined with one another by different commentators. So, for example, Laske (1999) and Berman and Brandt (2006) located developmental coaching as a sub-genre of executive coaching, Coughlin (2015) assimilated developmental coaching with leadership coaching while Stokes and Jolly (2018) conflated executive coaching with leadership coaching. So whilst, on the face of it, there appears to be a multitude of coaching genres for an aspiring coach to select from and build their identity around, to some degree this abundance may be illusory as the various genres become subsumed within one another.

What developmental coaching in particular specifically consists of also becomes unclear when the detail of some of the commentaries are studied. Berman and Brandt (2006) for example claim that developmental coaching is for "*competent jerks*" (p.250). Coachees receiving developmental coaching are described by them as being individuals with substantial difficulties in their management style, lacking in emotional intelligence and potentially exhibiting provocative, passive-aggressive or narcissistic characteristics. Therefore they appear to argue that in practice developmental coaching has a remedial, rather than a developmental, character. Witherspoon and White (1996) claimed that developmental coaching is specifically focused on future occupational positions that the coachee has yet to occupy. They refer to the *"long-term development of star performers"* (p.130) and describe preparing the coachee for promotion through coaching them in leadership skills.

These idiosyncratic and quite specific descriptions of developmental coaching are in contrast to Bennett (2003) who has asserted that developmental coaching is not in fact a particular genre of coaching but any type of coaching that is not remedial in its character. Jackson and Cox (2018) also assert that developmental coaching can consist of any type of coaching, but they stipulate it must result in change occurring in the coachee that then becomes absorbed

into their pre-reflective experience (i.e. has become out of their conscious awareness) to qualify as developmental coaching. This is at odds with Silsbee (2008) who describes developmental coaching as coaching that is focused on expanding the coachee's awareness and understanding through a combination of reflexiveness, mindfulness and somatic work. Hawkins and Smith (2013) are short on detail of what developmental coaching consists of but assert that it is based in reflexive double-loop learning (Argyris 1999). They contrast it with their theoretical hybrid "transformational coaching" which they claim brings about cathartic, in-the-room transformation in the coachee. Bachkirova (2011) has questioned their claims and argued transformational coaching is simply another form of developmental coaching. Other developmental approaches have a constructivist philosophical basis and a specific focus on life transitions (Coughlin, 2015; Panchai, O'Riordan and Palmer, 2019). Still others draw on spiritual discourses (Silsbee, 2008; Bachkirova, 2022). Garvey and Stokes (2022) have aligned developmental coaching to Western's network discourse (Western, 2012) and linked it to multiple learning relationships within an organisational setting. In terms of the content of these learning relationships they note a move away from a compliance mind-set to one of personal and professional development of the individual (e.g. a focus on creativity, communication skills and problem-solving).

While an examination of the literature on developmental coaching seems to suggest that there is no coherent and commonly shared definition of the term, the ubiquitous and repeated use of the term does seem to point towards a dichotomous and shared understanding of some of the terrain of coaching. Silsbee (2008) has conceptualised the entire terrain of coaching as a binary tension between developmental and performance coaching. In contrast to developmental coaching, performance coaching (according to Silsbee) is a utilitarian genre where people are coached to perform more effectively in their work roles. He argues that this is the preferred coaching focus for many businesses because it is likely to bring more immediate returns on the company's investment in coaching. Laske (2004) contrasted developmental coaching (a focus on the person of the coachee) with behavioural coaching (what a person does). He has also used the metaphor of houses (Laske, 1999)

to explain this dual focus of coaching. These are *"the professional house"* (the personal and professional development of the individual) and *"the company house"* (the issues of the workplace). McLeod (2003) argued that coaching generally and performance coaching are indistinguishable, and that they focus on working towards *"a defined work-based target"* (p.9). Wilson (2020) also argued that performance coaching is hard to distinguish from other categories of coaching but is clear that it has an emphasis on improved functioning in the workplace. Tschannen-Moran (2018) has aligned performance coaching with skills coaching claiming it is the most common form of coaching, which is focused on *"assisting someone to learn how to do a task or do something better"* (p.202). However, Hawkins and Smith (2013) differentiate between skills and performance coaching, claiming skills coaching focuses on a single skill while performance coaching engages with groups of skills. Garvey and Stokes (2022) (citing Megginson and Boydell, 1979) demonstrate that a focus on performance and problem-solving has long been a principal focus in coaching literature. Tulpa (2021) conceptualises a tension (that the coach needs to hold) between the priorities of the employing organisation and those of the individual coachee. However, she then delineates a framework that clearly prioritises the agenda of the organisation and maximising its business performance (Tulpa and Hennessy, 2021).

A common thread appears to be that, beyond the disputed definitions of coaching's genres, there is an area of the coaching terrain (whether it is termed performance, behavioural or compliance) which, rather than focusing on the person of the coachee, seems to concentrate on their capacity regarding tasks, efficiency and the employer's agenda. There also appears to be an area of the terrain, that exists in a dichotomous relationship with this pragmatic approach. This area (whether it is termed developmental or transformational) focuses on multiple aspects of the individual coachee and prioritises the potential of their individual development over the expectations of their employing organisation. Such a focus is characterised as a *"holistic"* or *"whole life"* approach by Garvey and Stokes (2022, p.57). The tension that exists between these two (sometimes conflicting) sets of priorities seems to be a material one that the aspiring coach needs to individually negotiate in both their coaching practice and their identity

working. A focus on working in a holistic or developmental fashion might potentially lead coaches' identity working away from the formulaic processes described above of deciding the target market, positioning and deciding on a USP.

Silsbee (2008) has linked effective developmental coaching to the development of "presence" by the coach that can potentially facilitate change in the person of the coachee. He argued that this quality of presence is achieved through coaches' commitment to personal and professional development through *"mind, body and heart"* (p.6). Abravanel and Gavin (2021) note that some commentators align such presence with single qualities such as mindfulness (e.g. Kabat-Zinn, 2018). However, a survey by them of various commentaries suggest that it is more generally conceived of as a multi-faceted quality. For example, Senge et al. (2005) contended that it consists of being fully conscious and aware in the present moment, engaging in *"deep listening"* (p.13) and having an openness to possibilities that transcends habitual preconceptions. A number of these qualities (e.g. a commitment to personal development, capacity for reflective thinking, not being bound by particular approaches or interventions) also appear to be subsumed within Clutterbuck and Megginson's notion of coaching maturity (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011). This framework conceptualises coaching maturity being reached through a recognizable and sequential journey through proceeding stages of maturity.

Abravanel and Gavin (2021) have produced a quadrant framework that contains six qualities of presence: mindful awareness, authentic connection, conscious attunement, embodied way, holding outcomes and structural alignment. However, such texts on presence effectively reduce presence in coaching to a list of qualities, so that presence (along with coaching maturity) takes on the character of a competency. There appears to be little focus on the individualistic ways that the coach's quality of presence may be embodied, performed and experienced by the coachee.

Life Coaching

Life coaching is a genre that uses a holistic or developmental focus on the individual coachee's potential but removes it from the work context. For aspiring

coaches who lack a corporate or business background such a genre may appear an appealing one on which to base their coaching identity. Western's (2012) description of life coaching is of an approach that *"breaks out of the confines of therapy but works in the therapeutic domain"* (p.56) in that it works with individuals outside of the occupational context to address existential concerns around discovering the *"authentic self"*, performing better in life and revealing their *"untapped potential"* (p.57). In doing this he is effectively equating the aims of life coaching with the human potential movement and humanistic psychology. In relation to this he cites Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2009) who aligned life coaching with the person-centred approach. However, Western's perception of life coaching is of a genre that draws from a far more eclectic range of sources, and he gives examples of life-coaching brands based on (amongst others) hypnotherapy, yoga, NLP and positive psychology. This sense of *"wild eclecticism"* (Hollanders, 2000, p.38) is developed further when he gives examples of pseudo-scientific gadgets being sold at a life-coaching event he attended along with the appropriation of scientific language by life coaches, that is then employed in a cavalier and ungrounded fashion.

Grant and Cavanagh (2018) refer to such life coaching as something that is "*faddish, theoretically incoherent, new age and more of a network marketing opportunity*" (p.329). However, they argue that contemporary life coaching is moving towards becoming a more consolidated, evidence-based field thanks to the increasing involvement of psychologists and the coaching divisions of psychologists' professional organisations (e.g. the special group in coaching psychology of the BPS). This is a familiar argument about coaching generally (see above) and appears to be put forward by interested parties who are involved in those same organisations. Their case is weakened by their conflation of life coaching with motivational interviewing carried out in medical settings and focused on outcomes such as smoking cessation and reduction in body mass index which would appear to be distinctly different from the individual, existential lifegoals associated with life coaching. Their narrative about life coaching appears to attempt to re-locate the genre into a medicalised setting that is more easily aligned with clinical psychology. Their assertion that

life coaching is moving from a focus on personal development into broader health enhancement programmes is unsubstantiated and their partisan contention that this is a *"most welcome development"* (p.330) is not explained. Garvey, Stokes and Megginson (2018) also argue that the evidence base for life coaching is lacking. This view is shared by Western who rather than focusing on the negatives of this, comes close to almost celebrating it, by concluding that *"it is better to allow freedom of practice than to try and over-regulate"* (p.58). Indeed a brief survey of relatively contemporary papers on life coaching (e.g. Jarosz, 2016; Pagis, 2016; Jarosz 2017; Kaneh-Shalit, 2017; Robinson, Morrow & Miller, 2018), whilst confirming a lack of research on the topic, do not evidence either a general shift of the genre into a medical setting or a move away from personal development.

Pagis (2016) has asserted that life coaching's remit is individualised identity working but questions the effectiveness of such a process that is segregated from the coachee's other social relationships. Jarosz (2016) has attempted to delineate characteristics of life coaching with the aim of establishing it as a profession in its own right. However, the qualities that are listed (e.g. improved sense of self, behaviour change, improvement in quality of life) are indistinguishable from the potential benefits of developmental coaching. Rogers (2006) has drawn attention to the prevalence of numerous dubious training schemes marketed in life coaching that appear based on pyramid selling. Grant and Cavanagh's attempt to appropriate life coaching and relocate it into a medicalised setting seems to lack credibility yet the underlying assertion that the genre currently lacks coherent theoretical grounding appears legitimate (Grant and Cavanagh, 2018). Whilst none of these factors wholly discredits the field of life coaching, the lack of theoretical foundations, questionable training schemes and its lack of a substantive reputation within the coaching industry suggest strongly that life coaching is an uncertain area of the terrain of coaching for a novice coach to inhabit in order to build a credible and marketable professional identity.

Professionalization and regulation of coaching

There are differing views within the coaching community as to whether coaching should be conceptualised as a "profession" or an "industry" (Fillery-Travis and Collins, 2017). The further debate as to whether coaching should seek professional status is an energised and ongoing one. For an aspiring coach, seeking to construct and establish a professional identity, the discourse of professionalization is potentially an alluring one. Aligning themselves with it appears to address the twin issues, documented by Ruane (2013), aspiring coaches face when marketing themselves; professionalization establishes the credibility of coaching generally, whilst potentially substantiating the professional identity of individual coaches. Garvey (2011) has argued that the professionalization agenda and the positioning of the professional coaching organisations in favour of it, is driven by what has been termed the Wild West of coaching discourse. Garvey traces the phrase back to an expression of disquiet about unlicensed coaches practicing expressed by the academic Warren Bennis, quoted in Morris and Tarpley (2000). The phrase was picked up by Sherman and Freas (2004) who painted a picture of a *"chaotic"* landscape *"fraught with risk"* and claimed that *"many executive coaches know little about business, and some know little about coaching"* (p.84). Therefore, by aligning themselves to the professionalization agenda aspiring coaches tacitly assert to potential clients that they do not occupy this wild, risky and chaotic part of the coaching terrain. In the same year Grant and Cavanagh also argued for a move in the direction of professionalization but cautioned that it would involve difficult, unpleasant decisions and *"a need to submit to some form of regulation, normally at government level"* (Grant and Cavanagh, 2004, p.4).

The potential benefits of moving in that direction might seem apparent. Gray, Garvey and Lane (2016) noted that, whilst acquiring professional status would probably be an arduous process for the individual coach, the credentialed coach identity would, in all likelihood generate higher fees, higher status and greater trust from clients. Garvey and Stokes (2022) argue that amongst the advantages of professionalization for coaching generally, is that it distinguishes committed professionals from lesser peers, it prevents partisan groups from hi-jacking the field and gives the profession some power over poor performers and

unethical practitioners. The Dublin Declaration on Coaching (Global Coaching Community,2008) produced by the Global Convention on Coaching is regarded widely as a significant step in the direction of professionalization. It asserted that coaching is an *"emerging profession"* (p.5) and looked towards forming shared ethics, standards of practice and educational guidelines in pursuit of establishing this profession. Many of coaching's professional organisations subsequently formed the UK Coaching Roundtable in pursuit of these goals. They subsequently drafted and agreed a statement of shared professional values. Bennett (2006) however, has listed a number of conditions that would need to be met in order for coaching to achieve a professional status, which coaching is still a long way from. These include a required standard of training, government classification of coaching as a profession and a code of ethics that can be enforced by a governing body. Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron (2018) cite DBVC (2007) to acknowledge the legalistic dimension of professionalization. Although one of the perceived advantages of professionalization is the capacity of the profession for self-regulation (Gray, Garvey and Lane, 2016) for this to come about there would need to be some sort of government recognition and statutory regulation that effectively grants the gate-keeping body the authority needed to determine training standards, enforce compliance with ethical codes and determine requirements for admittance to the profession. Passmore (2021) has recently stated that it is a sad state of affairs that coaching continues to be unregulated.

Whilst advantages of professionalization may, in the first place, seem self-evident, on closer examination a number of difficulties present themselves. Gray, Garvey and Lane (2016) along with Pennington (2009) have noted that for many coaches, coaching is not their sole occupation and that the professional identities of coaches are often *"multiple and complex"* (Gray, Garvey and Lane, 2016, p.259). This reality seems at odds with common assumptions about professionals having a dedicated focus on a sole occupation. The routes that people take into coaching and the occupational backgrounds they come from are diverse. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) have noted that entry routes to the established professions (e.g. law, medicine accountancy etc.) and to coaching do not align and are unlikely to align in the

foreseeable future. This complicates any efforts by coaching to emulate the models of established professions. The professions have a foundation of required university entry qualifications while coaching has more varied, individual routes and emphasises competencies. The directive nature of such competencies appears at odds with what Garvey (2011) has argued is the type of mindset necessary for coaching, *"thinking new thoughts, reframing and no predetermined answers"* (p.63). The issue of new and original thought by coaches and coachees is a central one within this debate. Lane and Corrie (2006) have argued that established professions sustain their existence through their relationships with the marketplace and the State, with the result that certain types of knowledge inevitably become favoured over others. Gray, Garvey and Lane (2016) reported that the proposed creation of a Chartered Institute of Coaching created heated controversy, with those against it concerned it would stamp out creativity and originality. Garvey and Stokes (2022) suggest that such issues regarding professionalization raise the possibility of a *"dominant, totalizing discourse"* (p.318) coming into being that leads to standardization within the profession and militates against diversity of coaching practice. So while, in the short-term, professionalization appears to potentially enhance coach identity construction (because the coach is able to evidence the quality of the service they are providing) such a discourse is likely to lead to standardization of practice. In the long-term, this has the potential to hamper coaches in creating the distinctive and individualistic coaching identities that could help them thrive in the marketplace.

Conclusion

The identity heuristic arrived at in the previous chapter suggests that an identity, such as that of a professional coach, to a greater or lesser extent will draw on active, pre-existing discourses external to the individual. Superficially the literature of coaching suggests that a well-constructed coach identity consists of a positive, facilitative personae draw from a homogenous field of coaching knowledge and experience. It intimates that there is a right and wrong way to do coaching and that off-the-peg identities are available. However, a more in-depth survey suggests that the literature of coaching does not in reality consist of such a coherent, unified body of knowledge and practice. The maps of the terrain of

coaching are conceptualised in various eclectic forms and populated with diverse approaches, genres and discourses. It can be assumed that this lack of clarity and coherence within the literature has the potential to create uncertainty and insecurity in novice coaches because (despite the tacit suggestion of off-the-peg coaching identities being available) the nature of the terrain and the reality of negotiating it appears far from clear.

The approaches adopted for coaching appear to a great extent to be drawn from various counselling and psychotherapy schools. On this basis a section of the coaching community attempt to claim some sort of authority within the field of coaching on the basis of the professed superiority of approaches that are lauded as "evidence-based", and the claim that they, as psychologists, have enhanced capacity to deliver such approaches. However, Hurlow (2022) has noted that many coaches only have *"superficial or simplistic"* (p.122) understanding of the theories they promote. In practice it seems there is a lack of scrutiny and criticality with regard to the evidence-bases that supporters of the scientist-practitioner discourse frequently allude to. They neglect to acknowledge that the evidence-bases referred to are often from research done in non-coaching settings (so the approaches application in the context of coaching actually lack the type of robust evidence being claimed). This Psy expert discourse (Western, 2012) also omits that training in psychology alone is distinct from training in psychotherapy, counselling or counselling-psychology and as such does not of itself equip coaching-psychologists to apply the very approaches they are claiming expertise in. Therefore, the approaches themselves, the narratives around psychology and the oft-cited figure, in coaching literature, of the scientist-practitioner (e.g. Drake, 2007; Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron, 2018) all become questionable. It appears possible there is an element of emperor's new clothes at work in this discourse. In contrast to these schoolist approaches some voices have been raised in favour of integrative or pluralistic approaches being used in coaching, but there is little guidance currently available to coaches on how to work in this way.

In addition to signing up to a particular school or approach one of the pathways suggested for creating a coaching identity is to select a genre or genres of coaching for the aspirant coach to attach themselves to and try to establish

themselves in. Yet the maps themselves are flawed. There are terms commonly invoked to describe genres of practice, yet the detail of those areas of practice appear to differ radically from one commentator to another. Clear areas of practice emerge yet definitive terms to describe those areas have not been agreed and those areas have not been clearly mapped. Two areas of coaching practice that consistently emerge are ones that focus on the holistic development of the individual coachee and ones that focus on the performance of the coachee (in pursuit of managerial goals). The emphasis on performance appears to potentially lead away from "the coaching and mentoring way" and the espoused discourse of coaching. As a result the maps that exist for the terrain of coaching are incomplete, contradictory and have not achieved consensus.

Confusion about the professional identity of coaching as a whole, runs though the terrain with conflicting narratives about the future of coaching being generated. This has led some commentators who have initially been supportive of full professional status to begin to ease away from the prospect (e.g. Cavanagh and Lane, 2012). All this suggests that the narrative of the Wild West of coaching may not be as obsolete or inappropriate as it might first appear because the coaching terrain has not yet been properly mapped or a shared language agreed, which in turn suggests there is still territory to be charted, fought over and settled. It is interesting that Garvey (2017) notes that in considering the metaphor of the Wild West little consideration is given to its potentially positive aspects: a pioneering and creative energy, a desire to do things differently and a willingness to engage in different forms of conversation that may make a positive difference.

Given that the external discourses available via the literature for aspirant coaches to draw from offer confused guidance and incomplete mapping of the terrain the question as to how successful coaches construct and perform their professional identities is left unanswered. Although an inquiry into this question is unlikely to turn up a definitive answer, possibly the most effective way to gain an insight into these issues is to hear the stories and witness the performances that emerge from those identities. In doing so, as well as answering the principal question, I also sought to address these subsidiary questions.

- What can be learned from the stories and performed identities about the processes and experiences of becoming a successful coach?
- How aligned is the literature that maps the terrain of coaching to narratives of coaching as performed by the participants?
- Do coaches experience the type of insecurity and uncertainty suggested by this chapter? If so, how is this resolved?
- Is this lack of clarity and coherence in the literature and the field a bad thing?
- What are the potential implications of this moving forward in terms of how coaching is conceptualised in the literature and how aspiring coaches are signposted into the profession?

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have examined a number of the pre-existing, external discourses that are available to coaches, through the literature, in constructing their professional identities. I have noted the ambiguity and confusion that appears to exist within the mapping, approaches, genres and discourses of professionalization of coaching that may be problematic to novice coaches attempting to construct their professional identities. I have offered challenges to the narratives around the "scientist-practitioner" and the elevation of psychologists within the field of coaching. I have concluded by offering a number of relevant questions that supplement the initial research question. These questions will be addressed in the Discussion chapter.

Methodology

Introduction to chapter

In this section I seek to establish my philosophical position as a constructivist one. I make a link between this stance and the narrative methodological approach adopted. In situating myself and attending to the notion of researcher's voice I conceptualise four perspectives or voices that are present within this research. I conclude by framing narrative research interviews as theatrical encounters and introduce a framework for theatre criticism as a way of interpreting them.

Towards plural versions of reality: the construction of a worldview

I have always struggled to position myself philosophically. I cannot find the hard, certain ground that some of my friends, family and colleagues seem to stand resolutely on. Instead it feels more as if I occupy a patch of sand on an exposed shore and have to shift and morph in a fluid response to the pulls and currents of the winds and tides. For much of my life I have seemed to occupy two broad versions of reality that sharply contradict one another. Because one version worked under one set of circumstances and the other worked under an alternative set of circumstances it appeared impossible to resolve them. Not only that, there was no reason why I should. In fact, resolving them seemed an impossibility (as they were diametrically opposed to one another). It was rather the case that if I wanted to progress this state of affairs, I would need to choose one or the other. However, making such a choice would mean denying a part of my belief system and leave a range of my experiences impossible to explain or articulate. So, I lived with the tension of two realms of experience and dual belief-systems. Moving between them as-and-when was convenient.

In the first of these the motor car, the washing machine, the importance stressed at school on maths and advances in the positivist sciences were unwelcome but convincing evidence that in the final analysis I existed in a materialist world that was a part of a larger clockwork, Newtonian universe. This seemed to align with elements of my upbringing in Plymouth. As someone with little interest in the sciences it made the world a disappointing place in which at the very best (as a non-scientist with no interest in sports, woodwork or

technical drawing) I would be a second-class citizen. This seemed to be in keeping with the expectations perpetuated in my secondary modern school that I would spend my working life engaged in meaningless, alienating and uncreative activity. This appeared to be a disappointing and unexciting version of the world but one it was necessary to engage and negotiate with.

However the texts I had been drawn to (e.g. Wilson,1979; Castenada,1970) along with later experimentation with so-called "mind altering" drugs (psilocybin and LSD) had led me being drawn to the notion that there are different versions of reality and that all of these might have some validity: that it might be possible to move between these realities like some modern-day shaman. This was the world of vivid archetypal dreams, poetry and literature, moments of intuitive and profound insight, and coincidences that appeared (at the time) meaningfully serendipitous. This world was a lot more inviting and felt too substantial to be simply dismissed. This second perspective I loosely aligned to, that of the visionary outsider described in Wilson's volume The Outsider (1956) which is based on a semi-mystical, existential worldview. With hindsight it might also have been possible to align them with Bruner's two modes of thinking: logico-scientific and narrative (Bruner, 1986). However, at that point there was no need for me to define this further.

Shortly after my arrival at Dartington Hall I began to understand that the creative work of my tutors was defined by different approaches to theatre that were in turn defined by different philosophical and aesthetic perspectives. One of the tutors worked from a Jungian perspective and created exciting large-scale outdoor pieces of "ritual theatre" involving giant puppets, masks, drumming and fire sculptures where archetypal figures and mythological narratives would be invoked and bought to life. Another tutor worked from a Marxist philosophy and would produce studio-based Brechtian epic theatre with a focus on historical materialism. One tutor (who was a Christian) specialised in image-based, physical theatre that drew from an embodied sense of character and imagery formed from the actors' voices and bodies. Our dance tutor was a postmodernist who believed that the universe was a chaotic place, that there was no single style of dance to be adhered to and worked with pedestrian choreography (Brown, 1987) **.** Different styles, philosophies and aesthetics that

were totally irreconcilable and yet somehow together they integrated into an amalgam that gave the students a coherent and exhilarating educational experience. The postmodern dance tutor also taught us that we could draw from eclectic theatrical sources and combine them into novel and exciting combinations that had the potential to create new aesthetics. In such a creative atmosphere it seemed unnecessarily restrictive to pledge my allegiance to one artistic school, philosophy or brand.

When I trained to be a counsellor I was introduced to the different therapeutic approaches: person-centered, cognitive-behavioural, psychodynamic, existential, transactional analysis. Each approach bought with it a different model of how the human personality worked and how it could facilitate peoples' growth or cure. I loved the different theories of personality (with the exception of the cognitive model which returned me unceremoniously to the grey Newtonian universe). Each class I would be sold on yet another model of the personality and yet another cluster of therapeutic interventions. Along with my tutors and peers I would try to ignore the discrepancies between these different models which theoretically made them irreconcilable. They all had a research base and all seemed to work, yet they could not all be true as their theories contradicted one another. I hid from this anomaly behind the fact I was on an integrative course and that my integrative approach was a work in progress. A few months after my graduation my counselling supervisor (a person-centered devotee) challenged me about not having a formulated counselling approach aligned to specific therapeutic schools and said I needed to make a choice based on what I thought caused people's psychological problems (an apparent one-size-fits-all perspective). I tried to explain to her about my dance teacher at Dartington and postmodernism. While I spoke, she gazed at me silently, disapprovingly and unconvinced.

In 2013 I read a book on taking a pluralistic approach to counselling (Cooper & McLeod, 2011). The authors align a postmodern philosophical stance with a humanistic-existential ethical perspective and argued that different therapeutic approaches worked for different people irrespective of whether their ontological assumptions clashed. Therefore, they argued, we should not seek out a single unifying theory of the human psyche but instead accept that we live in a messy

universe that incorporates multiple, sometimes contradictory, worldviews (Slater, 2011). As I read these words, I felt a sense of homecoming.

Overview of methodological approach

This study is a dialogical/performance narrative study (Reissman, 2008) that draws on a broadly constructivist philosophy that incorporates elements of the concept of the dialogical self (Bakhtin, 1981) and is supported by relevant theatre theory (Quigley, 1985) to structure a working philosophical and methodological framework.

A constructivist approach conceives of identities as meaningful structures built in active relationship to a locally constructed worldview that draws on localised discourses. A narrative approach enables an examination of both the structure and the contents of such assemblages, by having the potential to reveal both the shape and the constituent elements embedded within the stories that produce them. A dialogical/performance approach provides the means to focus on the active embodiment and performance of these identities. Such performances are localised events necessitating the presence and active participation of at least two participants (the research participant/performer and the researcher/audience) in a mutual co-construction of identities. Such a relationship has meant that a high degree of reflexivity by the researcher has entered the field of the research both as a participant in the interviews and as my own identity configurations have morphed and developed across the process of the research and produced a meta-narrative. As such this study incorporates autoethnographic elements whilst still maintaining allegiance to the narrative banner.

An understanding of constructivism

Constructivism in qualitative research can be perceived as a broad church. For example, in outlining a constructivist methodological position, Howell (2013) incorporates individual constructivism or personal construction (Butt, 2008), symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), social constructivism (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) and social constructionism (Schwandt, 2000) in order to *"determine the point where self and other congregate to define, determine and construct reality"* (Howell 2013, pp 89-90). The constructivist perspective I take

in this thesis is more specifically located within the meeting point between micro social constructionist and constructivist paradigms. This perspective can be aligned with the heuristic of identity outlined earlier where the interaction between an assumed essential self, internal personal constructs and external discourses are used to construct a functioning identity.

Burr (2015) developed the notion of micro and macro social constructionism as extensions of the concepts of light and dark social constructionism (Danziger, 1997). Dark or macro social constructionism embeds the discourses that construct our social reality in power relationships that are associated with Foucault's assertions about the conjunction of knowledge and power (Foucault, 1979). Human subjects are seen as having little personal agency and their bodies as being inscribed with the discourses of power. The emphasis of micro social constructionism is more emancipatory. The human subject is understood as having access to a range of discourses. Discourses function as the building blocks through which we build our worlds and identities. The greater the number of discourses that can be accessed the greater our potential freedom to choose and meaningfully construct our phenomenological worlds. The body is seen as the site of embodiment of our *"discursively constructed personal identity"* (Danziger 1997, p.410). Therefore, it can be assumed that such socially constructed discourses carry the potential for human improvement and development. Because of a more localised and individualised emphasis light social constructionism has a focus on conversations occurring between individuals at the micro-social level.

Constructivism is often perceived as a neighbouring but distinct perspective to social constructionism. Gergen (2015) locates the difference between constructivism and constructionism as being distinguished by assumptions regarding whether the construction of reality and identity occurs within the mind of the individual (constructivism) or within shared social process: does the social context create the individual or do individuals create the social context? As with social constructionism there are varieties of constructivism with the more radical variations (von Glaserfield, 1984) placing the construction of reality wholly within the individual. However, Gergen argues that such radical perspectives are difficult to sustain as they are unable to account for shared understandings or

practices. Constructivism is more usually associated with the work of Kelly (1955) and personal construct psychology. It places an emphasis on the idiosyncratic processes of the individual person without a complete dismissal of societal influence. Burr (2015) has observed that within micro social constructionism there is a developing perception of people as active agents consciously drawing from available discourses and strategically taking up positions in relation to them. Harré, for example, has moved from declaring that selfhood is simply a function of language (set within its localised social context) (Harré,1999) to a position of claiming we experience psychological phenomena because we are *"active agents, drawing on bodies of knowledge to accomplish intentions and projects"* (Harré and Dedaic 2012, p.45 cited in Burr 2015). This effectively means that these softer versions of micro social constructionism have become markedly aligned with the type of constructivism associated with Kelly.

In keeping with the perspective outlined above I take it as a given that people have a significant degree of agency and that this has the potential to be cultivated through the medium of coaching relationships. I also proceed from the position that coaches have the capacity to individually construct and perform meaningful professional coaching identities and that a number of the available discourses to support this can be found within the varied landscape of coaching. Burr (2015) has noted that the term "identity" is popular amongst social constructionists because it allows a focus on the self or the individual without having to accept the existence of an essential self. Whilst not completely rejecting the possibility of some essentialist component or inner nature being possessed by the individual subject, I am clear that constructed identities are of far more significance, accessibility and interest.

Selecting a Narrative Approach

In considering the methodological approach for this research I was aware that Burr (2015) locates the principal research paradigm of micro social constructionism within discursive psychology. Willig (2013), alongside Wiggins and Potter (2017), is clear that a discursive psychology perspective is aligned with the qualitative methodology of discourse analysis. Willig (2013), citing Potter

and Wetherell (1995) conceptualises discourse analysis as having two distinctive strands: discursive analysis (a focus on localised, interpersonal discourses) and Foucauldian discourse analysis (a focus on wider power relationships embedded in discourse). Given my position (outlined above), of the two approaches discursive analysis might have been a possible choice. In 1998 Wetherell also argued for a move to a more integrated approach (Wetherell, 1998) that would allow a dual focus on both the interpersonal world of the individual participant and the wider social and institutional structures to which the discourse alludes. Such an integration also had attractions for this inquiry as it could potentially encompass both the wider coaching discourses that were drawn on and the individualised constructions of identity. However further reading caused significant reservations. Writers such as Taylor (2013) are clear that a piece of discourse analysis research will move away from the research participant who provided the original text towards the social structures that form the participant's wider context. Contemporary texts such as Arribas-Ayllan and Walkerdine (2017), Waitt (2016) and Moore and Seu (2010) demonstrate that rather than adopting a more integrative approach, discourse-based research is being produced that still employs specifically Foucauldian-based analysis. Therefore, such a methodology carries the potential of moving the current research back towards a more macro constructionist orientation. This is echoed by Willig (2013) who notes that rather than asking what participants are telling us about their attitudes, beliefs and thoughts it is questioning *"what is this discourse doing?"* (p.119). Through divorcing the discourse from the person, and then privileging the discourse, it is inevitable that the agency of the person will begin to fade from the picture.

A suggestion made during a conversation with Professor Patrick Doherty led me to consider adopting a narrative approach. Burr (2015) has noted that an affinity exists between constructionist perspectives and narrative approaches to both research and psychology. She acknowledges the tension that is present in social constructionism between the view of the self as a fragmented and inconsistent entity, as opposed to the subjective experience of individual personal coherence experienced by most people. This tension resonated with me because it echoed my own questions around selfhood outlined in my

understanding of identity and that are central to my constructivist position outlined above. A narrative approach is attractive within a constructivist frame because it permits a focus on the self that does not require an essentialist perspective and but can locate the individual self within a social domain thus holding this tension. Gergen (2015) also notes a significant synergy exists between a constructionist viewpoint and narrative research. The work of narrative psychologists such as Sarbin (1986) and Crossley (2002) evidences that there has been reciprocal influence between constructivism and narrative perspectives. Burr (2015) cites Reissman as a constructivist leaning narrative commentator in this respect. Reissman (1993) argues that narrative is the fundamental means by which we construct our worlds and identities. However, these narratives are not perceived to be short-lived and random acts of emplotment but rather the means by which our worldviews and identities gain a coherent and ongoing character through the repeated occupation of particular stories and subject positions. Therefore, from this perspective, it can be argued that the narratives and identities of individuals consolidate and take on a sufficiently substantive character to be worthy of becoming the focus of inquiry.

Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013) note that there are philosophical fault lines that cross the terrain of narrative research. They argue that these originate in the dual antecedents of narrative research. On the one hand there is the humanist influences within sociology and psychology which became significant during the post-war period. On the other there are the development of structuralist, poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives that gain influence from the 1970's on. They note that the former tends towards a holistic, person-centred and individualistic emphasis while the latter focused on *"multiple, disunified subjectivities"* (p.3). Thus, the degree of individual agency and coherence has become a significant area of variance within the field. Denzin (2014) has argued that research should not focus on whether such coherence exists or not but rather how the narratives of self-autobiography consolidate such a sense of coherence. Focusing on performance-based narrative in particular Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou (2013) note that researchers often adopt a position of *"strategic essentialism"* which *is "the assumption of agentive subjects where politically expedient"* (p.8). Due to the apparent agency coaches exercise

in the construction of their professional identities, whilst also drawing from the socially constructed discourses operant within the terrain of coaching, this research takes its cue from Denzin and adopts such a position of strategic essentialism. This is in-keeping with the character of the heuristic of identity outlined above.

Ontology

Ontology can be understood as a perspective on, or theory of, being: the nature of existence and the structure of reality (Crotty 1998). A constructivist ontology takes as a given that reality is locally constructed. It assumes that multiple realities exist. These realities are participatory in that they are constructed, or co-constructed, through a combination of shared experience and available discourses which are informed by interactions between mind and world (Howell, 2013). Through focusing on the narratives of individual coaches whilst simultaneously acknowledging the shared professional terrain, which their narratives both draw from and contribute towards, the ontology of this project is both individualistic and pluralistic. In this respect, it occupies the area where individual constructivism and micro social constructionism meet.

Epistemology

Epistemology can be understood as an understanding of what types of knowledge are possible and legitimate (Crotty,1998). A constructivist epistemology perceives the researcher and the research participants to be linked. The knowledge that is generated through such research is co-constructed between them. Within a constructivist perspective, a clear distinction between ontology and epistemology breaks down as one is created by the other i.e. the world is created through the knowledge that is constructed (Howell, 2013).

Coaches occupy professional positions as steadfast companions, confidantes and confessors (Western, 2012). The successful sustaining of such a position will inevitably require that an impression is conveyed of professional competence and a positive quality of presence (Senge et al, 2005; Silsbee, 2008). The significance or detail of such qualities has not typically been foregrounded in coaching texts, that tend to focus on coaching approaches and frameworks. Therefore, there is an epistemological assumption made in this research that

54

individual coaches have the potential to produce knowledge, that is intrinsic to effective coaching, which currently has little availability to a wider audience. Such knowledge may be derived from such elements as individualised narrative, characteristic qualities of presence and personal histories. It is likely to be performed and embodied across sites where the coaching identity is privileged. The use of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews has the capacity to generate sites where such embodied performances can flourish.

Situating the researcher

When I began this project, I imagined the top coaches as a group of highly accomplished stage magicians. They had been able to create personas that filled those spending time with them with energy, motivation, vision and feelings of unlimited potential. Like the street performers I had idolised in the past I imagined they could give a polished performance that would leave their audience euphoric, breathless and wanting more. After reading some of the critical work of my supervisors regarding coaching I wrote to them that I felt as if I was a wide-eyed child wanting to penetrate the mysteries of the backstage world to find out how the coaches did it; driven by a naive wish to emulate. I characterised my supervisors and their critical writings as the cynical youths standing at the front of the stage shouting "it's all tricks!" This was my position at the start of the project: an uncritical coaching neophyte wanting to get backstage, hang out and soak up some of the magic.

In this research I take it as a given that it is not possible or desirable to separate the researcher from the research and the subsequent knowledge that this activity generates (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Reissman, 2015). These elements are seen as inextricably linked. Reissman has written, *"investigators carry their identities like tortoise shells into the research setting"* (2008, p.139). Therefore, factors such as reflexivity, voice and position of the researcher become significant areas of focus as the researcher emerges as an active partner in the generation of knowledge. Reflexivity can be understood as the author or researcher making explicit their internal dialogue regarding what they understand and how they have come to understand it (Hertz, 1997). In doing so the reader can gain insight into the researcher's location of self and evaluate their part as a "situated actor"

(Hertz, 1997, p.viii) who is an active participant in the process of meaning creation within the field of the research. Etherington (2004) acknowledges the collaborative nature of meaning-making and emphasises the requirement for reflexive researchers to explore their own construction of identity in relation to their participants. Finlay (2002; 2003) has categorized five approaches to reflexivity that can be adopted by researchers. Of those categories, this research draws on introspective reflexivity. Such an approach focuses on insights emerging from the researcher's personal introspection during the research process, to bring greater understanding regarding the field of research. The challenge of such an approach is to successfully enhance informed self-awareness *"while eschewing navel-gazing"* (Finlay, 2002, p.215). Doanne (2003) has observed that some researchers use reflexivity as the means to psychologically withdraw from their participants through a reflexive process of acknowledging, evaluating and then mediating the impact their participants have had on them. She posits an alternative approach where reflexivity is the means of turning towards participants and seeking greater connection with them. In keeping with the position of wide-eyed neophyte trying to get backstage and hang out I have attempted to take the latter approach.

The researcher's voice is an element that is encompassed by reflexivity (Hertz, 1997). Oakley (1993) cited by Clough and Nutbrown (2012) develops the concept as the vehicle by which the researcher and participants come to know one another, i.e. the researcher's voice is both a condition of the research and the vehicle by which interpersonal connection is established between the situated actors in the research encounter. Clough and Nutbrown (2012) also argue the researcher's voice is heard in, and emerges from, their relationship to the topic of their research. Hertz (1997) conceptualises voice as ideally being *how* the author's self is presented in reflexive accounts (that avoid narcissism by maintaining a focus on the interviewee). Therefore, the tone, metaphors, imagery, values and aspirations that are ingredients of the text within the introduction, the case studies and the other autobiographical and reflexive elements of this text comprise my researcher's voice.

Clough and Brown in explaining researcher positionality stress the importance of understanding *"the particular theatre of enquiry"* (2012, p.11) in which research

projects occur. Such positionality is seen as consisting of the context in which the research is designed, conducted and reported. Peshkin (1988) has demonstrated the possibility of seeking out and establishing the researcher's "I's" as a method of establishing positionality. These I's can be understood as the subsidiary roles or sub-personalities the researcher occupies within the research that go beyond what is strictly necessary for the research to occur. Bradbury-Jones (2007) has demonstrated how this might look in practice and illustrated how these I's are contingent on the character of the specific research project. Through this, she argues that rather than a single voice it becomes apparent that multiple researcher voices can be discerned within a single research project. Following this lead, I would propose that the I's which I occupy within this project are the neophyte coach, the aging academic, the humanistic counsellor and the theatre practitioner.

The neophyte coach: The online Oxford English dictionary defines neophyte as a novice of a religious order or a person newly converted to a religion (OED online, 2022). I began studying coaching before I became converted to coaching. In terms of my practice I am a still a novice. As a neophyte coach I teach coaching, I research coaching, I write about coaching and I spend a small amount of time practicing coaching. A part of my motivation for this is my belief that coaching has the potential to facilitate, within the coachee, a process that is akin to self-actualization (Rogers, 1951). As such coaching has the potential to support the coachee in gaining a greater sense of agency, creativity and self-expression in both the workplace and their life outside.   This emphasis on coaching as a pathway towards greater self-fulfilment leads me to be suspicious of in-house coaching schemes, the manager-as-coach and coaching based on return-on-investment formulations. These appear to have the potential to reinforce top-down, command-and-control power dynamics in the workplace which I believe is the antithesis of the humanistic philosophical perspectives that inform coaching (Garvey, 2011; Wildflower, 2013; Shoukry, 2016). However, I am also intrigued by the challenges offered to this employer vs. coachee framework by perspectives such as the network coaching discourse (Western, 2012) and challenger leadership (Dehnugara and Breeze, ND).

The dual roles of neophyte coach and researcher of coaching then asks the question raised by (amongst others) Smith (1999) as to whether I, as a researcher, occupy an insider or outsider position regarding the research field. Adler and Adler (1987) have suggested that such a dichotomy regarding position is simplistic and suggested four categories of researcher insider membership. Of these, the closest to my position is "active membership" which means I engage with some of the core activities of the research participants without being fully committed to the values, goals etc. held by that community. However, Naples (1997) has argued that the community being researched and the position of the researcher have a fluid and shifting relationship to one another rather than a fixed one. Taking the analogy above, of the wide-eyed enthusiast seeking to get backstage, my position could then be understood as someone holding active membership seeking to move towards being further assimilated within the community via the research being conducted. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) conceive of the researcher holding a third space between insider and outsider that they describe as "tensional" (p.60). They describe the researcher experiencing both conjunction and disjunction from the research participants as they move between the status of researcher and that of community member. This description feels the most accurate as I have never dropped my sense of affiliation and aspiration towards coaching or the sense of myself as a researcher but have moved closer towards, and more distant from, either position at different moments in the project.

The aging academic: I am a senior lecturer entering the final few years of my academic professional life. During the course of my studies for this project, I have been asked *"why are you putting yourself through this when you already have the job the rest of us want?"* (by a fellow PhD student), told I am *"a person who would not naturally be at university"* (by a professor declaiming a policy of widening participation) and described to a group of new PhD students as *"a hoary old dog who's seen it all"* (by the then head of the research office at York St John). All said with good intent and all (unintentionally) making me feel othered. Petre and Rugg have described the PhD as an initiation rite into *"the academic clan"* (2010, p.3). While I work at constructing a coaching identity, I am simultaneously authenticating my academic identity and demanding validation of my time as a denizen of academia. I am laying old ghosts to rest as a prelude to bowing out

with a flourish and helping pave the way for whatever lies beyond my current occupation.

The humanistic counsellor: Bondi (2013) has commented that psychotherapy and qualitative research have a similar propensity to generate meaning-making narratives. Beetham has noted how being a humanistic therapist and a narrative researcher has enabled her to *"sit with another human being and come close to their story"* (2020, p.9). A part of the humanistic philosophy is that meaningful encounters are driven by relationship as much as content (Rogers 1967, Mearns and Thorne 2013) and that this relationship is potentially developmental for both parties. In this way I carried my therapeutic identity into the interviews and on a couple of occasions received feedback from interview participants that they found they had disclosed in more depth than they had initially expected to. Given the therapeutic foundation of many of the coaching approaches, I felt that this gave me an advantage in understanding some of the likely topics that might be discussed. I also had an ear for what might be focused on in these dialogues that I might find useful to carry back from coaching discourses into my therapeutic practice.

The theatre practitioner: I believe that theatre is an encounter (Grotowski, 2002) that occurs between people occupying the active and mutual roles of spectator and performer. Meaningful theatre acts can be characterised as a joint search for truth or knowledge where the worlds of the participants meet one another in a liminal space and attempt resolution (Schechner, 1982; Quigley, 1985). Within such a frame, acts of theatre and performance do not require either a theatre building or an explicit attribution as "performance". Such a perspective means that my researcher's mindset (Garvey, Stokes and Megginson, 2018) has a predisposition to understand such events as research interviews, coaching sessions and lectures in terms of performances. I am, therefore, drawn to methodological approaches such as dialogical/performance narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008).

<p align="center">The narrative interview as a theatrical encounter</p>

My research adopts the dialogical/performance approach to narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008) as the framework for approaching interviews with the

coaches who participated. In doing so I directly equate the encounter between myself and the research participants with theatrical performances. The rationale for this is that the identity of the coach is not solely constructed by the biographical content of their narrative, but also in the performance of that narrative within the interview. Numerous commentators have supported the notion of the sharing of a narrative as a site for performance. McLeod (1997) has written that narrative is a story-based account of an event but contains within it other forms of communication. This includes communicating the subjectivity of the narrator along with the expression of relevant emotions. Maclean (1988) asserts that simply entering into a contract of sharing a narrative is to initiate a performance. The narrator both performs the act of telling the story and enacts the role of the storyteller. Langellier (2001) develops the point by differentiating between the narrated event (the story) and the narrative event (the here-and-now performance of the story and its reception by the audience).

In this sense, the performance of a narrative is taken to be intrinsically dialogic because the focus expands from the plurivocal content of the narrative itself to incorporate the nature of the dialogue occurring between narrator and audience. Etherington (2004) observes that such dialogue within the research interview incorporates the interview itself into the identity construction practices of the interviewee. The framing of the one-to-one narrative research interview as a theatrical encounter (a perspective that underlies this project) gains further affirmation through Grotowski's inquiry into the nature of theatre (2002) concluding that theatre is simply *"what takes place between the spectator and the actor"* (p.32) and that all other elements are superfluous.

The dialogical/performance approach to narrative analysis (Reissman, 2008) used in my research seeks to explicitly acknowledge and work with the performance dimension of the encounter occurring between the researcher and the participant. It draws from Bakhtin (1981) in that it works with both the dialogical nature of the interview encounter and the plurivocal nature of the interviewee's performance. The approach is also influenced by Goffman (1969) and takes as a given that the narrative event does not simply provide information to a recipient but presents a drama to an audience. The narrative

then is perceived as something that is co-produced through a *"complex choreography"* (Reissman, 2008, p. 105) occurring between teller and listener, speaker and setting, history and culture, and text and reader. Within such a frame, as the interviewer, I am an active presence in the text as an audience for the performance. The approach lends itself to a case study format because such a format can encompass the content of the narrative, the active presence of both the interviewer and narrator, along with an account of the performance event itself. The Bakhtian character of the approach is apparent through its appreciation of the narrator as a plurivocal entity (Arvaja, 2016) that draws from multiple voices and positions. This is manifested within the interview event as ventriloquation by the narrator (Samuelson, 2009). Ventriloquation occurs when the speaker employs the voice of another within their performance whilst simultaneously evaluating the other and positioning themselves in relation to them. In theatrical terms, it can be equated to the Brechtian alienation effect (Brecht, 1964) where the actor produces a distance between themselves and the character they are portraying, to create the psychological space for the spectator to critically evaluate the motivations of the character.

In writing up these case studies I have drawn from Denzin's sense that such performances of autobiographical material are acts of *"participatory theatre"* (Denzin, 2014, p.60) where I am simultaneously both a co-performer and (in keeping with Brecht's epic theatre) one whose function is to critique and reflect on that same performance. In initiating these biographical performances there is a tacit invitation, by me, to the narrator to persuade me of the veracity and authenticity of the identity being claimed. In this sense, the interviews are both performances and performative (Austin 1975; Langellier, 2001) in that the statements made by the interviewees are simultaneously affirmations of the veracity of those same statements.

Analysis of narrative/performance domains

In Reissman's exposition of the dialogic/performance approach (2008), it is apparent that the case study format is intrinsic to the approach in that it can capture a sense of the particular encounter between the performer of the narrative and the audience of that performance. She suggests that the analysis

of these narrative encounters consists of three aspects: thematic, structural and dialogical. I have attempted to incorporate all of these aspects in the individual case studies included here. However, Reissman does not give a clear account of how to work across a number of these studies. It has been difficult to locate theses that analyse groups of such case studies. One such study (Anthias, 2015), after focusing on the individual studies, works across the studies by focusing on thematic elements within the narrative and the formulation of narrative typologies (Frank, 2010). An issue with this strategy is that the very quality that makes the approach distinctive (attention to performance) then becomes diminished as the analysis returns to a sole focus on narrative content. Indeed, Holstein and Gubrium (2012) have argued that while the dialogic/performance approach foregrounds the performance, in reality, the analyses tend to prioritise the narrative content over the narrative practice.

To address these issues I have chosen to draw on a framework for theatre criticism (Quigley, 1985). It conceives of the theatrical event as the manifestation of a number of initially discontinuous worlds or domains that are the focus of parallel inquiries (by spectator, performer, playwright, director) to seek greater alignment and continuity between these worlds. In seeking to integrate elements of both the literary theatre and the director's theatre, it allows a focus on both the content of the text and the embodied performance. In adopting the world motif Quigley's approach is philosophically informed by the constructivist philosophy of Nelson Goodman (Donato-Rodriguez, 2009) and the pluralism of William James (Slater, 2011). The domains that Quigley conceives of are:

The dramatised worlds: these are the worlds that are not physically present. They are created through the content of the narrative that is performed and elements of the performance itself. They may be multiple domains.

The world of the stage: the present qualities of the here-and-now performance. This is the world that is present on the stage: the space occupied by the performer, the embodied performance, the props employed, the scenography.

The world of the venue: the wider space that contains the spectator and encompasses the stage area. The setting that houses the performance.

The world of the audience member: the context of the audience member, the elements of their wider context and perspectives that they are bringing to the performance. The audience member is an active partner in the performance who attempts to connect with the different domains of the performance and in doing so seeks both new knowledge and new ways of knowing.

Coaching identities both draw on the generic discourses of coaching but also seek to promote novelty through the construction of individualised identities. In this way, they move back and forth between generalisation and novelty. This critical approach both acknowledges the value of generalisation and recognises the dangers of reaching reductionist conclusions. It draws from Wittgenstein's (2009) suggestion that generalisations are helpful when they are regarded in the same manner as family resemblances: they may manifest in one individual and not in another. They are measuring sticks used to identify features of interest but not rules or values to be universally applied.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have explained that I adopt a pluralistic, constructivist position. I locate myself at the meeting point of micro constructionist and personal constructivist paradigms. I have aligned this constructivist perspective with a dialogical/performance narrative approach. In addressing the issue of individual agency in the narratives generated by coaches, I explain I have taken a position of strategic essentialism. I have established my role as researcher as an active, tangible and reflexive presence. I have articulated four aspects or "I's" within that presence. In considering the interviews I have conceptualised them as theatrical encounters and explained my understanding of the four theatrical realms used in theatrical critical framework I have integrated with a dialogical/performance narrative approach for this research.

Methods

Introduction to chapter

In this section, I outline the research design and method. It includes accounts of a preliminary meta-ethnographic review, the drafting of the interview schedule, recruitment of participants and ethical issues that arose. It also details the process of researcher immersion and analysis leading up to the writing of case studies

Meta-ethnographic review

Following my initial review of the literature and as a prelude to the fieldwork. I felt the need for a research-based activity that would move me beyond considering identity as a generalised, philosophical concept (see Chapter 2) towards a point of engaging with the apparently uncharted specific elements of coaches' identities. It therefore needed to be an exercise in which relevant elements could start to emerge into my awareness without becoming fixed or rigid. I wanted something tangible enough to inform the interview schedule that would remain sufficiently fluid to avoid pre-determining the findings. Because coaches draw from different coaching discourses and locate themselves within different areas of the terrain of coaching, a process was required that had the capacity move across contrasting imagery and metaphors in order to begin identifying shared elements within their narratives. The approach adopted also needed to be able to work with first-person qualitative type accounts and be able to incorporate grey literature such as websites, YouTube videos and other similar materials used to by coaches to convey a sense of themselves.

I chose to adapt the methods of a meta-ethnographic review (Noblit and Hare, 1988) to the published literature and grey literature of three published coaches (Andrea Dunbar, Ho Law and Doug Silsbee). The approach consists of a process whereby multiple texts are examined for common concepts or themes that are relevant to the research. The texts' original explanations in the author's own words are regarded as first order constructs. The researcher's

interpretations that develop through the process of familiarisation with, and synthesis of, the first order constructs are second order constructs. Second order constructs are the data of meta-ethnography (Toye et al, 2013). In practice it consisted of a process of working through the texts and noting themes appearing in the narratives that the coaches were producing about themselves, then checking back across the other texts to identify and document if and how equivalent themes emerged within the narratives produced by the other coaches.

Whilst Noblit and Hare (1988) and Britten and Pope (2012) provide guidance to structuring meta-ethnographic reviews and the synthesising of metaphors they offer little guidance on engaging with the text in order to identify the pertinent metaphors and narratives. Drawing from Reissman (2008) I devised an aid to this process (which I called a "coach identity narrative prompts tool") in order to draw out identity configurations and themes located within coaching texts. This was structured around the eight questions that Reissman (2008) argues all narrative analyses should attempt to address, along with the four approaches to narrative analysis she focuses on which are theme, structure, performance and visual (see Appendix 1 for an example of a completed one).

As a result of this exercise six themes and six sub-themes were identified that appeared to cross the texts and formed the basis of the interview schedule.

Emerging themes of coaches' identity construction
The coach's journey *(incorporating six sub-themes listed below)*
The individual personalities
A unique relationship with a specialist approach to coaching
Epistemology and ontology
The process of coaching and the role of the coach
Scenography

Figure 2: Emerging themes of coach's identity construction

Sub-themes of the coach's journey
Predispositions from childhood and youth
Previous professional roles that inform their coaching
The gaining of qualifications
Meetings with remarkable people
Achieving positions that evidence their coaching competence and knowledge
The onward journey: expanding, receding and letting go.

Figure 3: Sub-themes of the coach's journey

Constructing the interview schedule

Whilst the interview schedule I employed did not draw directly from ethnographic interviewing (Roulston, 2010) I tried to ensure that the interview schedule met the aspiration of exploring *"the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language"* (p.19). There was a dual need to facilitate participants in reflecting on the development of their coaching identities whilst producing rich and significant narratives. Following the analysis for the meta-ethnographic review of the literature of three coaches, a number of areas were identified that appeared to have the potential to elicit rich narratives relevant to their identity construction. These areas were:

- A predisposition towards coaching that could be seen (with hindsight) from accounts of their childhood and youth.

- Previous professional roles that inform their current coaching identity.

- The process of gaining qualifications.

- Meetings with remarkable people

- Achieving positions (possibly within professional organisations) that evidence coaching competence and knowledge.

- The onward journey beyond coaching.

Taking these areas as my starting points I built a framework of principal questions. Beneath each of the principal questions, I organised some subsidiary questions that had relevance for the same topics. The subsidiary questions were there to support me if I found my interviewee to be reticent or less forthcoming on a topic. In practice, these subsidiary prompts were rarely drawn on. The majority of answers provided by interviewees were fulsome enough to provide rich data in themselves and initiate further spontaneous dialogue on relevant topics.

Due to the elite status of the interviewees, a formal pilot interview did not seem a realistic option. Instead, an informal pilot was carried out by making minor adjustments to the questions and then an interview was conducted (and recorded) with a local published horticulturalist about her professional identity. Reviewing the tape did not lead to the changing of any questions but created an awareness in me that I could do more to facilitate my interviewees in fleshing out the support characters that they introduced into their narrative accounts. It became apparent to me that such figures are often key players in participants' accounts and that the richness of a narrative could be enhanced by giving them due focus in my interviewing. I also made the decision, on the back of this pilot interview, to reconfigure the interview schedule so that the questions designed to draw more personalised responses featured earlier in the interview and more general questions featured later. The rationale behind this was that if the interviewee responded to questions on more general topics later in the interview they would be more likely to be "warmed up" and so potentially give more personalised and in-depth responses to such questions (see Appendix 2).

Interview Participants

The criterion for inclusion in the sample was that interviewees should be professional coaches who could generally be perceived as having successfully established a positive reputation within their professional sphere (e.g. having authored successful commercial publications on coaching, having a high profile within professional events such as conferences, holding prestigious office within professional organisations, having high regard amongst peers etc.). In order to

do justice to the topic it was decided that Western's coaching discourses (Western, 2012) would be used as a convenient guide for the breadth of the sample and that each of the four discourses would need to be encompassed within the various profiles of the sample members. Access to high-profile figures (who charge for their time) was likely to be problematic and I had been transparent from the outset with one of my supervisors that I would be asking for his support in obtaining introductions to potential interviewees. Convenience sampling of this nature is generally regarded as being the least rigorous approach to sampling (Roulston, 2010) but misgivings of this nature were offset against the acknowledged difficulties in gaining access to research participants that can be considered as being members of an elite (Odendahl and Shaw, 2002). Charmaz (in Baker and Edwards 2012) notes that in narrative research generally a small number of interviews are usually conducted because the detailed analysis that each interview receives effectively precludes the use of larger numbers. In the event, nine interviews were conducted. Five interviews were as the result of direct introductions via my supervisors, three interviewees were accessed by "snowballing" and one interview was gained by cold emailing the coach. Of the nine interviews, eight were analysed to produce case studies for this thesis. The other was dropped because of the interviewee subsequently wanting oversight of the contents of the finished case study. Marshall (1996) has argued that in qualitative research of this nature, rather than generalisable conclusions, the research attempts to bring greater illumination to a subject. By covering this range of discourses and practitioners it was hoped that the results achieved would be significant enough to potentially provide greater depth of understanding and dialogue on the topic of the construction, composition and performance of coaches' identities.

The participants whose interviews were transcribed and analysed were:

Coach	Gender	Discourses
MW	Female	Managerial, Network

CJ	Female	Network, Soul guide
DF	Male	Managerial
PD	Male	Psy expert
FB	Female	Managerial, Psy expert
BC	Female	Soul guide, Network
NQ	Male	Network, Managerial
MB	Female	Soul guide

Figure 4: Participants' gender and coaching discourse

Consent, confidentiality and ethical considerations

Once an introduction had been made and the individual had signalled their interest in participating in an interview I emailed them informing them who my supervisors were, outlining the focus of the research and explaining the nature of the interviews would be informal and semi-structured (see Appendix 3). Once a date and venue for the interview were agreed I sent them an electronic copy of the consent form (see Appendix 4) to review so that they had the opportunity to ask any questions regarding it before the interview. At the interviews, they were again asked if they had any questions about confidentiality and the form was signed at that point. On the forms, it explained that to preserve confidentiality audio files and transcripts would be kept in secure locations. It

was also stated that the audio files would be transcribed by the researcher. An issue that arose after the first two interviews was that a transcription service had to be employed (see below) but that consent forms had already been sent out. To address this a transcribing service was used that had experience of undertaking work for academic research of this nature and had its own ethical confidentiality policy in place. This change was explained to the remaining interviewees at the time of the interview and all participants agreed to this change.

Another issue that arose after the first two transcripts had been typed was that it became apparent that although interviewees were anonymised, in the format of the transcript the narrative material they had shared in the interviews meant that, due to their high profiles within the coaching world, anyone reading the case studies who knew them or was familiar with their published work might be able to recognise them. To address this issue I raised this concern with all of them when I emailed them transcripts. This provided them with a timely opportunity to redact any such material or, if they wished, withdraw from the project. None of them asked for material to be omitted on this basis or wished to withdraw from the project. Two of the interviewees had already asked for other things they had said to be omitted and one interviewee asked for other material to be omitted on seeing the transcript. The participants had it explained that if they had not asked for any changes to be made within four weeks of receiving the transcript that consent for me to proceed with the analysis and writing of case studies would be assumed.

Journal writing

Journaling is a means by which a qualitative researcher can hone their reflexivity and capture multiple aspects of the experience of conducting the research (Etherington, 2004). Such aspects might otherwise dissolve out of awareness with the passage of time. Doherty (2009) has made a strong case for the use of creative writing and journal keeping specifically in pursuit of generating knowledge regarding coaching. I had kept journals and notebooks since the beginning of the project. However, the role of these writings had varied and had been an informal part of the process. As I began the process of

organising interviews this became a more formalised activity in order to bring greater depth and detail to the case studies I would be writing. I effectively conducted a pilot of this element of the fieldwork following a first-time visit to one of my supervisor's homes by immediately noting down my impressions and trying to develop them further through the act of writing.

In terms of the methodology journaling was the method by which I could detail the world of the audience member. In the build-up to an interview, I would use the journal to reflect on my responses to the interviewee's videos and publications, any "chatter" I had heard regarding them and my sense of them from our email communication. In this way, I could bring my evolving sense of the person into my awareness. Immediately before the interview, I would elaborate my thoughts, feelings and impressions going into the encounter. Immediately after the interview, I would find somewhere that I could sit and note down how I had reacted to the person, experienced the interview and contemplate any impressions I was left with. In the days and weeks following the interview I was able to record any moments that had subsequently gained significance in my recollections or other trains of thought that had evolved post-interview. This journaling was done in the belief that qualitative writing of this nature creates new understanding regarding the researcher context (Richardson and Adams St Pierre, 2018) and that, rather than controlling bias, such journaling functions as the means of making the researcher more visible to the reader (Ortlipp, 2008).

When arranging the interviews I looked to the interviewees to indicate where they would like to meet. In framing the interviews as a performance their choice of venue along with how that space was arranged and interacted with seemed a highly relevant element of the scenography of the performance. In conducting the interview I attempted to work at creating rapport between myself and the interviewee. This was not simply to engineer circumstances where they might be more forthcoming but, in keeping with my active role in the interviews, this was seen as key in producing a chemistry between us that would facilitate the co-construction of a performance. Once the interview was completed the move to writing the case studies entailed three stages of immersion:

1. The creation of the transcript

2. The construction of a prompt book

3. The making of a mind map

<div align="center">The creation of the transcript</div>

King, Horrocks and Brooks (2019) note that the first issue which needs to be addressed in the construction of an interview transcript is whether to attempt to construct a verbatim transcript or not. A verbatim transcript attempts to capture, every word, interjection, non-verbal vocal element, laugh etc. that occurs between the interviewer and the interviewee. Given that it was important to convey the elements of performance and the co-constructed nature of the interview encounter a verbatim transcript was the preferred choice. Reissman's (2008) own example of a transcript using the dialogic/performance approach is focused on the content of the interviewee's speech and works by breaking it down into scenes. Whilst this approach was constructive and became incorporated into my transcript (see below), on its own it seemed to diminish the performance elements of the event (by having a sole focus on the content of the spoken word) and I felt that an approach to transcription that conveyed more detail of the interview encounter itself would help address this. Duranti (2006) has argued that most researchers develop hybrid systems of transcription and that these should address the particular needs of the relevant domain of inquiry. Whilst this research is not based in conversation analysis, I judged that the style of transcription conventions used in that approach might go some way towards capturing the relevant elements that could contribute to a case study account. On the recommendation of one of my peers, I spent some time developing a set of conventions that could be used for the transcripts working from the system of transcription conventions outlined by Powers (2015).

Once I had decided on the transcript conventions I would employ (see Appendix 5) I began the process of transcribing the audio files of the first two interviews. The rationale for this being that the process of transcription would be the first stages of immersion in, and analysis of, the data, in keeping with rigorous qualitative research practice (Bird, 2005). However, this took an inordinate amount of time and it was clear that this was not a realistic option given the time

constraints of a part-time PhD. In consultation with supervisors, a confidential transcription service was employed for the remaining transcripts. Once the initial transcript was obtained, I spent a number of hours listening to the audio file and inserting the individual verbatim conventions into the appropriate points in the transcript. This became the first step of researcher immersion (Green et al, 2007).

In considering how to further work with the transcript I reflected on Reissman's approach of dividing the content of the interview up into scenes that the narrator performed. However, when I took an overview of the transcripts, it became apparent that, while a significant number of these scenes existed in the individual manuscripts, there was also a substantial amount of other data where the narrator would depart from performing a scene and talk about topics. Reissman characterises these moments as *"asides"* (2008, p.112). However, whilst this term accurately expresses the stepping out of a narrative to talk about a topic, it implies a momentary, passing and brief comment. This was not reflective of the content of the interviews where the participants moved between performing scenes to reflecting in-depth on relevant elements of their narratives. These periods in the interview seemed to me to be more in keeping with theatrical soliloquies that consisted of audience-addressed speech where the performer speaks directly to the spectator at more length and in greater depth. Hirsh (2003) has noted that in doing so the performer also establishes a stance toward the spectator; often one of confidante where they speak more transparently than they might ordinarily do and there is a tacit invitation for the spectator to adopt their perspective. This was in keeping with my experience of the interviews. When I reviewed the transcripts in the light of this reflection it became apparent that they largely consisted of three elements: scenes, soliloquies and interpersonal interactions.

The next step of my immersion was to listen to the interview again and then make brief annotated comments in the margins of the transcript identifying:

- Scenes

- soliloquies

- my (often unspoken) responses to what was said and my positioning within the performance

- metaphors and striking images

- comments made about the nature of coaching

- references to their own perceived personal attributes and characteristics

In order to differentiate between scenes and other elements of their dialogue, I drew on Labov's scheme of narrative structure (Labov and Waletzky, 1997). This scheme breaks narratives down into these elements:

- *Abstract*: puts the listener on notice that a story is about to be told and may suggest the genre, give a summary and/or the point of the story.

- *Orientation*: time, place and main characters of the story are indicated

- *Complicating event*: something that happens which is out of the ordinary or upsets the status quo.

- *Evaluation*: the narrator steps back from the story to comment on the meaning and/or communicate emotions

- *Resolution*: the complicating event is resolved in some way. The outcome. This is where the story will leave things although the action may continue.

- *Coda*: a return to the here-and-now. The closure of the story. The passing of the turn in the conversation.

Where I noticed the presence of these elements in the text, I noted them in the comments. Whilst the Labovian approach is more structuralist and linguistic in its character than this research, it is a scheme that is widely drawn on in narrative work (e.g. Frank, 2010; Bold, 2012). Noting down these Labovian elements where I observed them helped me identify scenes and aided my reflection of how the scenes were working within the wider context of the interview without constraining me towards specific interpretations.

74
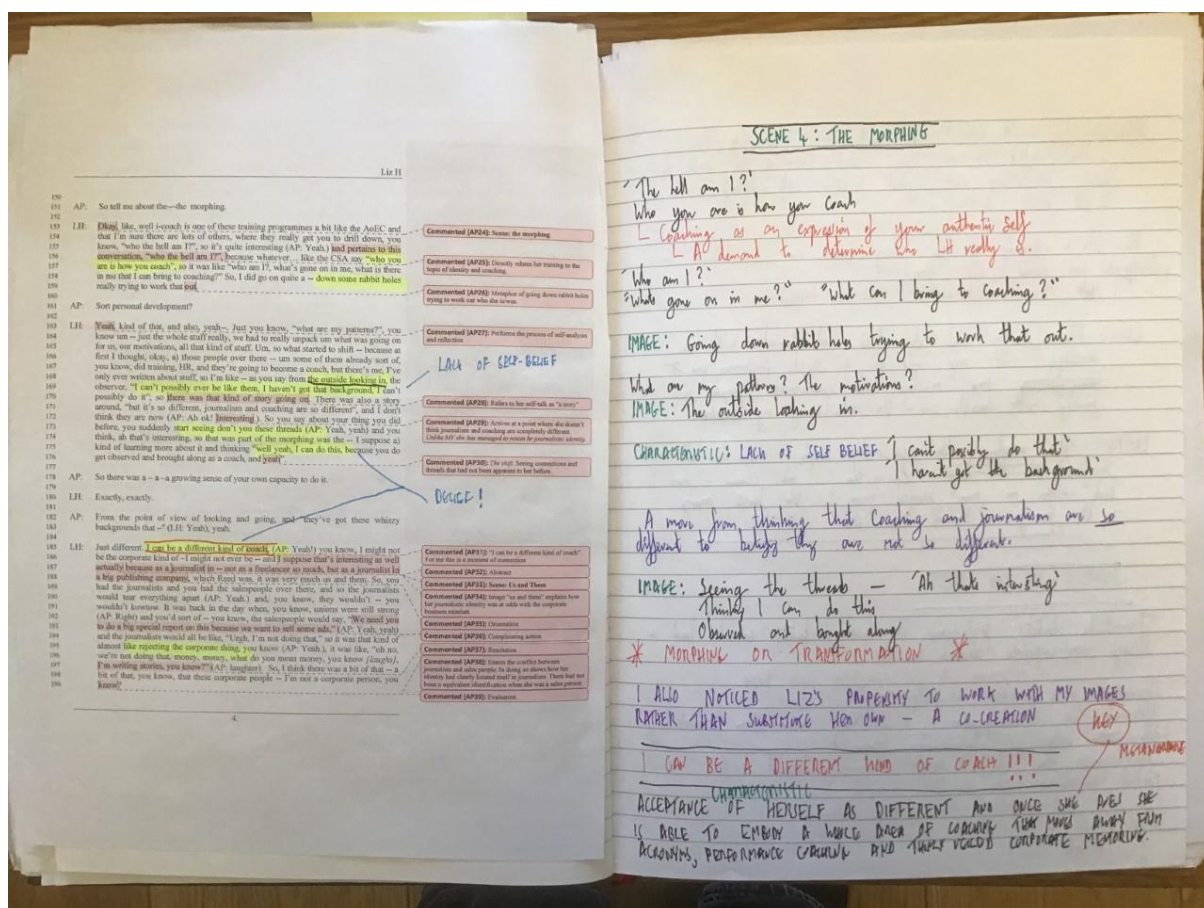
Example of prompt book

After creating the transcript of the first interview it became apparent that I needed to simultaneously both expand and order the elements that were emerging. For example, noting the existence of a scene and giving it a title (whilst annotating the transcript) did not help me to reflect on its significance or place it in the context of the wider narrative or the interview event. At the same time, I was initially overwhelmed by the number of different elements that were emerging and needed to somehow contain them. To this end, I decided to construct a "prompt book" for each interview that would help me achieve both goals of expansion and retaining structure simultaneously.

In theatre, a prompt book is a volume that is built around the foundation of the playscript. As the director, stage manager and technical director identify the needs of the performance through the process of rehearsal, other elements

(e.g. actors' movements, lighting cues etc.) are inscribed within the book. Layer upon layer is added so that eventually there is a record of the multiple elements that need to be employed, and a consolidated text of the performance emerges. In using this device I was working in the opposite direction; rather than using the book to structure a performance that did not yet exist, I was using it as a tool to effectively deconstruct a spontaneous performance that had already taken place. The book was initially created by obtaining a large notebook and gluing a sheet of the transcript on the left-hand side of the open book and leaving the facing sheet blank. On the facing page, I then began expanding and reflecting on the contents of the transcript. This was initially done in a relatively unstructured and intuitive way so that I noted things down as they occurred to me. Significant quotes, speculation on motivations, the role of supporting characters, the function of scenes, choice of metaphors were some of the types of elements that I focused on in this way. Retaining the linear structure of the transcript gave a foundation to this practice that prevented me from getting lost in multiple unstructured speculative reflections, whilst allowing the freedom to follow my chains of thought.

The making of mind maps

Having completed the prompt book my next goal was to begin forming an overview of the different emergent elements in a way that was not bound by the linear structure. I had decided that a large mind map derived from each interview and encompassing the various elements would be the ideal form to reconstitute the narrative and introduce my perspective (as co-producer of the performance) prior to writing up each case study. However, having completed the prompt book I was aware that I was still not at a point where I had sufficiently processed the material to move to this point. Reissman's example of a dialogic/performance case study (2008) demonstrated that she had developed an in-depth perspective on, and clear relationship to, her participant and his narrative before writing up the case study. I needed a place where I could interrogate and develop the elements of the performance and the content of the narrative further, before reconstituting them within a case study that would incorporate my perspective. To this end, prior to creating the mind map, I did further work in a separate A4 notebook. I began each of these notebooks by re-

reading the relevant journal entries and skim-reading the prompt book as a prelude to using the first pages of the notebook to expand on any relevant point, reflect further on any significant moments in the interview and identify any significant moments that had not yet been processed.
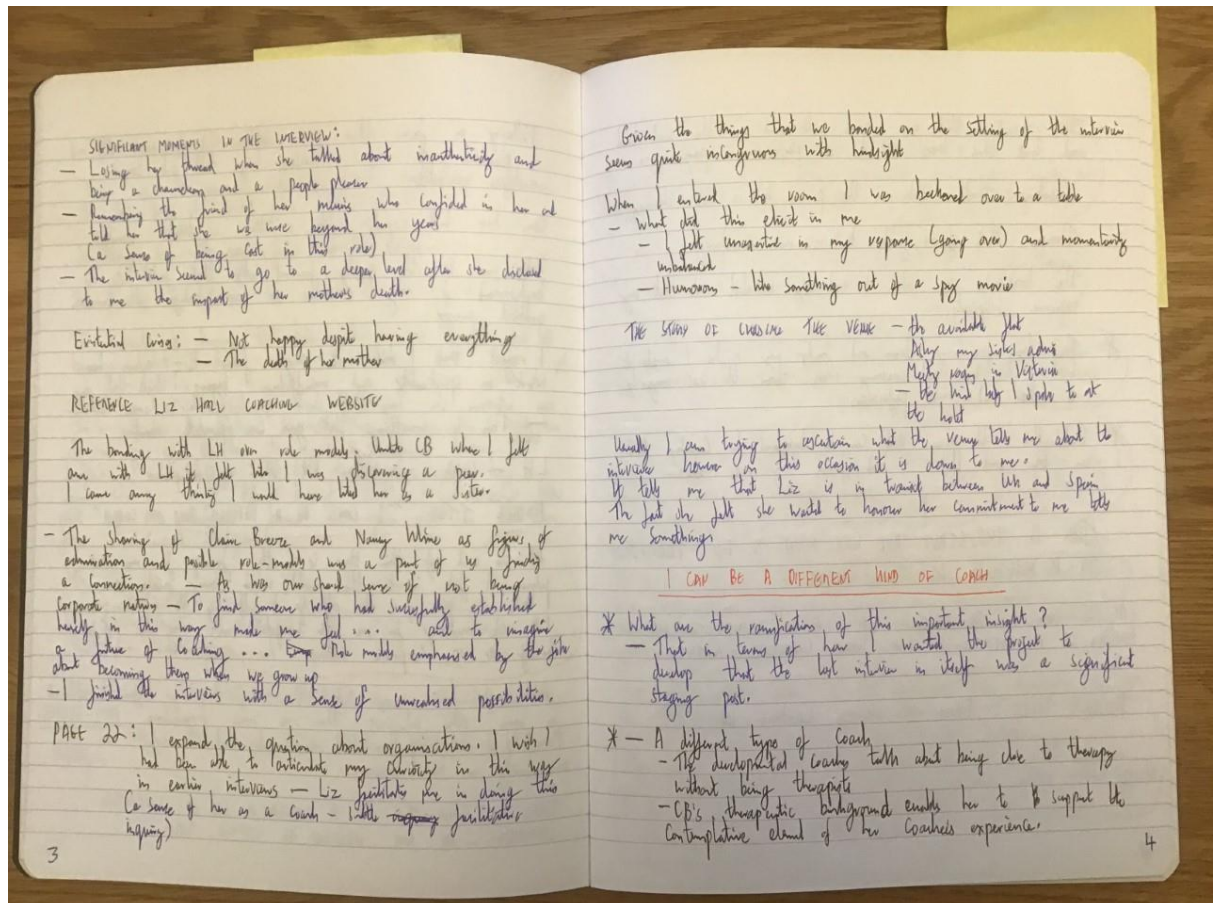
Example of notebook 1

Following this, I went through each scene and soliloquy. Identifying the action of the passage and the function within the wider narrative of the interview. If it was a scene, I would identify what the dramatic action was (i.e. what happened within the narrative and what the consequences were). If it was a soliloquy, I would identify the line of argument and where it led the discourse of the interview. By reflecting on their function within the wider narrative and performance of the interview I started to get an overview of the encounter and the nature of the identity that the interviewee was presenting.
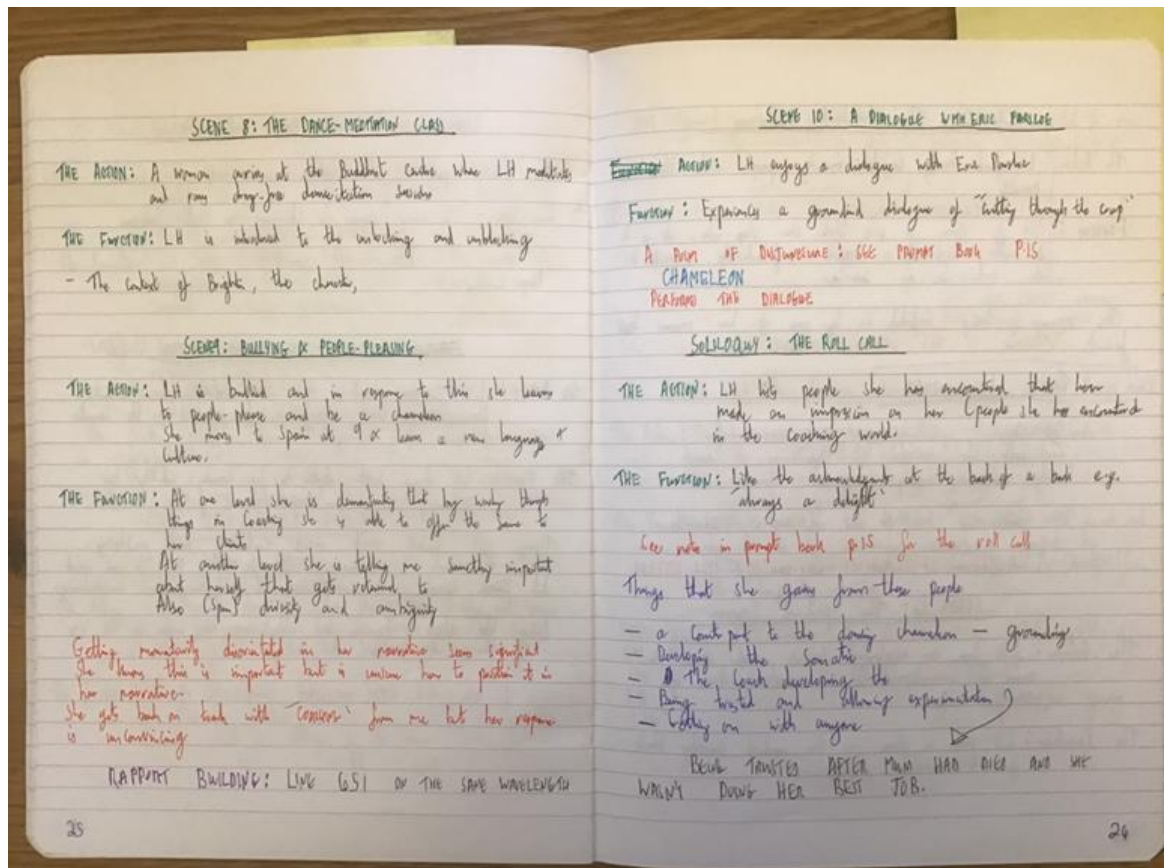
Example of notebook 2

I would then gather together what had been said across the interview regarding the nature of coaching and also how they had described themselves. The first would help me understand which discourses from the terrain of coaching they drew from in order to construct their identity and the latter would potentially show how they situated themselves in relation to it.

In Reissman's study (2008) I had been struck by how she had equated her interviewee and his narrative performance with a character from a play (Willy Loman in Death of a Salesman). Her doing so gave me a clear sense of the role that she was casting her interviewee in and gave further insight into the type of narrative her participant was performing. As I worked at the notebook stage of the process, I found myself becoming struck at times by the relationship of my participants' narrative to narrative forms (e.g. the hero's journey) or characters from stories (e.g. the poet in The Hunchback of Notre Dame). These insights seemed potentially significant for the findings or discussion so when I made such links I considered how they fitted in with other elements of the

interviewee's narrative and reflected on how they could potentially feature in the final case study.

Once these stages of the notebook were completed, I then started engaging with the creation of a mind map of the interview. I worked back and forth between the prompt book and the notebook creating clusters of the relevant themes and topics along with their sub-topics (associated metaphors, linked concepts etc.). I would attach the relevant scenes, soliloquies, page numbers and line numbers to the clusters. It was a time-consuming process that invariably involved more than one sitting but at the end of it I was left with a map of the terrain that provided an overview of what needed to be encompassed in the case study.
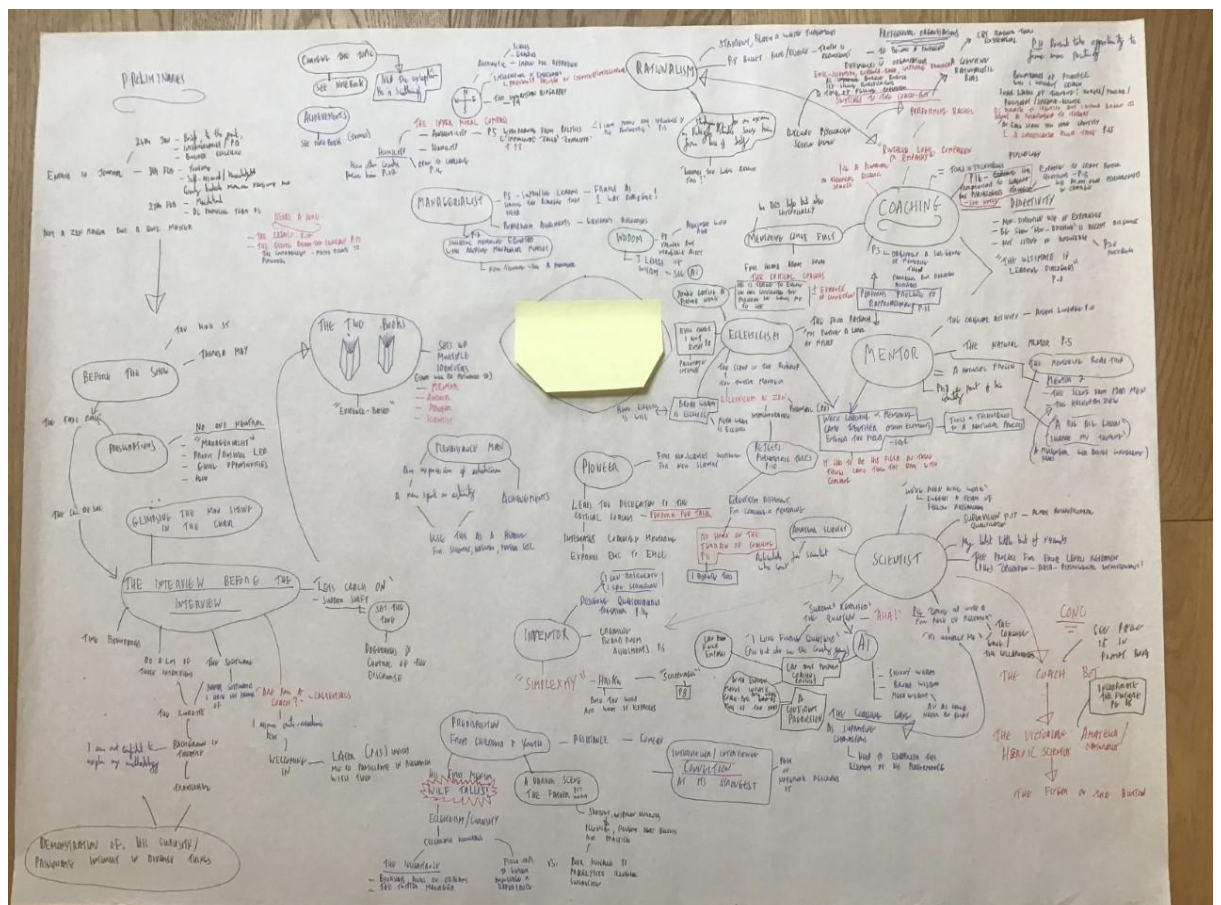
Example of mind map

To complete the process of immersion, prior to writing the case studies, I engaged in Frank's six acts of interpretation (Frank, 2010). Frank's dialogical narrative approach draws from the same Bakhtian sources as Reissman's

dialogical/performance approach. His acts of interpretation seemed appropriate to this project as they are premised on the notion that interpretation *"is less a matter of commenting on a story than of retelling it in a varied form to create new connections"* (Frank, 2010, p.105). The acts are:

1. Translate the story into images

2. Translate the story to tell it from the point of view of a marginal character

3. Ask which details might have been included but were omitted

4. Ask what the differences between the storyteller and the researcher are

5. Slow down – think about the story in relation to one's life. Have patience. What are the differences between the stories and the active belief systems (i.e. mine, the participant, characters in the story etc.)?

6. Appreciate the story and the storyteller. What would I put in a letter explaining how my understanding has been expanded?

See Appendix 6 for an example of my doing this prior to writing a case study. This approach is in keeping with using creative writing as a form of inquiry (Richardson and Adams St Pierre, 2018) and builds on Doherty's use of such writing in pursuit of knowledge and understanding of coaching (Doherty, 2009). Like Doherty, I found the use of these activities was unexpectedly effective and resulted in me gaining a number of new insights, images and perspectives that contributed towards each of the case studies. They also had the effect of helping me develop the sense of my own participation in the encounter.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined a meta-ethnographic review I conducted and explained how it informed the interview schedule. I have described how I recruited the interview participants and the ethical considerations I engaged with. I have detailed the process of transcription and the stages of immersion in the data that were engaged in prior to writing up the case studies.

Case Studies

M.W. the reluctant coach

Welcoming in

Moving nervously around Ilkley train station in February 2019, waiting for my lift, I had no way of knowing that the sunshine and warmth I was bathed in were the early start of a spring and summer that were going to break all records. My interviews over the coming months would be characterised by hot train journeys back and forth across the country along with snatched moments of sunbathing as I waited for my appointment times (I possess an obsessive need to always be early). MW had agreed to pick me up from the station and drive me to her home where we would conduct my first interview. I found myself filled with apprehension and experiencing imposter syndrome at the prospect of this first encounter. I have learnt from performing and lecturing that when I am stuck by these pre-performance nerves, I need to sit with them and not fight them. Let them be the energy that moves me into the meeting. So, as I shortly sat upright in the front seat of her car and we drove slowly through Ilkley town centre, to try and ease my discomfort, I struck up conversation by reflecting that Ilkley was the first place in the North of England I had ever visited. MW smiled and replied, "Me too". There it was. The first moment of connection. An acknowledgement that we were both sitting on narratives of migration that had led to this same place and at some point, we would probably both have eyed these streets and shop fronts with a similar mixture of trepidation and curiosity. MW continued that she knew one of my students. She was quick to explain that she was aware of his problematic relationship with education, thus seeking to give us permission to talk candidly. I had not realised it at the time, but this was the beginning of her performance, as she sought to establish rapport by seeking the points of connection between our two separate worlds.

During the afternoon it was a performance that drew me in through warmth, reassurance and affability. On arrival at her home, I was greeted enthusiastically by two Labradors; one of which dropped a wellington boot at my feet. MW explained that this was a gesture of extra special welcome. We sat at her kitchen table with mugs of coffee. The table and the kitchen initially had a

sense of homely, domestic clutter. The room had various artefacts of dog ownership scattered around. On the table there were a number of books; some of them lying open and others with markers in them. As the interview progressed and I learnt about her projects, her crusades and her forward-facing plans for philanthropic enterprises, a clear sense developed that this was a space where possibilities were glimpsed, ideas fermented and plans formed. The power of her performance reconfigured the scene in my senses from one of ordered domestic clutter to a hub of strategies, projects and possible futures.

In order to settle us I asked about previous interviews she had done:

"I'm just trying to think. I think JS was the last PhD I helped with (AP "Right"). Yeah."

When I later reflected on the moment, I felt there was an element of rite-of-passage for me in this passing reference. My supervisor had metaphorically been sitting where I was now, interviewing MW for his own PhD. Now here I was, as an aspiring coach and doctoral candidate, doing the same. MW could not have been unaware of this. MW explained at the start of the interview that her life has been lived in *"phases"*. It became clear that in this telling of her narrative the three substantial phases were the first career, the move to the North and the second career (coaching and mentoring).

The Corporate Career – shoulder pads and power

In the ensuing account, MW created a picture of her childhood as characterised by good works and good intentions: visiting isolated older people, volunteering to do odd jobs and fundraising for charities. She also aspired to be a doctor or a nurse. She talked about key characteristics she aligns herself with such as creativity, curiosity, love, compassion and kindness. She felt that these qualities contributed to her becoming the coach she is. There was no sense in this story of any youthful rebellion, adolescent angst or challenging upbringings. It conveyed little sense of how she later came to be a person who thrived in the mercenary world of City culture during the Thatcher era. This corporate setting was both the prologue to, and the foundation of her narrative of being a coach. The story that she told of this period was almost wholly positive. It was characterised by her as *"fast", "glamorous"* and *"powerful"*.

"So by the time I was 29 I was in one of the foremost senior HR roles…

I went into his office and worked on strategy for a year".

Across the interviews I conducted, I became aware that many of my interviewees are "corporate natives" which is not a context I have ever aligned with. MW was the only participant that ever successfully performed her narrative in a way that made this setting seem (momentarily) attractive to me. However, the qualities of this scene of corporate achievement were not presented as wholly in keeping with the values she now advocates as a coach. She referred to it being *"transactional", "powerful"* and agreed that there were elements that were Machiavellian. She talked about hiring, firing and millions of pounds being allocated by her in bonuses However, unlike the later sections of her narrative, where these types of characteristics (self-serving opportunism), in the coaching sphere, are denigrated, her story elicited a lot of playful laughter from us both. There seemed to be a collusion between us of tacitly approving of these self-serving qualities within that context. As the audience I was effectively egging her on to give a more detailed performance of these attributes:

"But at the time it was fantastic because I was in my – sort of early thirties.

The intelligence of the people I worked with was quite incredible.

(AP: Uh-hum). Um (pause) I::: loved it. I loved it."

Although there remained a disjuncture between this corporate period of her life and her later coaching identity in narrative terms it is bridged through becoming a parent:

MW: I feel quite – I think having that pause point with being at home with the children (AP: Um-hum) I think I needed it between the two parts of my life (AP: Yes) because it um -- do you have children?

AP: I don't.

MW: No. It's quite a leveller having children.

Although these two realms are bridged, they are not fully resolved. Motherhood created a pathway between these dramatised worlds but did not assimilate them.

"I think I wouldn't be the coach um and the sort of developer of coaching and mentoring programmes I am without that (AP: Um.).

If I'd gone into it without that experience –you know that time in business –

I know they were both corporate organisations I worked with –

but that time in those two cultures has shaped me. It really has."

The Move North – "getting out of the power"

The first career in the City was essentially a prologue to the main performance of her narrative as, in terms of the story, nothing happened. There was no complicating action. She had a career, and she was good at it. However, in considering the latter elements of her narrative (setting out for the North, losing her way, finding a new vocation, becoming a champion of that profession, returning to altruistic activity) I was struck by their alignment with the archetypal hero's journey documented by Campbell (2008). Elements that appear in MW's story, that resonate with this narrative framework, include "the call to adventure", "the refusal of adventure", "the road of trials" and "crossing the return threshold". In this phase of her narrative (the call to adventure) she finds herself in an unfamiliar landscape, lacking her previously secure professional identity, encountering strangers from an alien culture as she enters a new phase of her life and is not clear of the direction forward.

After becoming a mother, she moved North following her husband's career. This is a time in her story of searching and personal development in preparation for her second career. In this framing of her biography, it is possible to detect an undercurrent of existential restlessness regarding motherhood and homemaking. She describes *"coming up to Yorkshire where I had no support network."* She also gives a sense of her initial experience.

84

"Then I had five years at home with the children

which was completely different…

I had S. So I had, had three children four and under

and um –uh—so no career or anything.

I was just here. We moved here.

This house was a total tip."

This sense of needing something more was reaffirmed when she later said:

"I did the masters in -- at Sheffield

because I felt a bit rusty after being at home with the children;

I wanted to get my brain going again."

She rapidly recounted her progress between the point of being at home with children to arriving at Sheffield Hallam University in order to study coaching and mentoring. The story communicates a great deal of energy and initiative but little clear sense of direction. It incorporates starting an interior design business, getting offered a lecturing position, engaging with a European Social Fund initiative, setting up a mentoring scheme before enrolling for a master's in coaching and mentoring. There is a sense during this time of her desperately seeking to reorientate herself but also of becoming imbued with a newly found humility:

"I was just completely out of control

and I think after my powerful city career having that time.

I think I became a much nicer person doing that."

This was the abstract for a scene she then performed to evidence the levelling process and the journey to becoming a *"nicer person"*. She followed this abstract up with an orientation where she described a class in Interpersonal Skills, she ran for women of mixed ages who had never had a job, then proceeds to the story:

"She was a 22-year-old white Rastafarian single mum.

I have never seen so many body piercings in my life.

So here was—you know—middle-class MW from Ilkley and

this girl, we had to build some rapport quite quickly.

Thankfully we both had two-year-old daughters. (AP: Right).

Otherwise, we'd never have had that breakthrough (AP: Right. Yeah.).

And I managed to get that girl a placement in a garage.

She wanted to be a car mechanic.

And she ended up calling me her "second mum".

You know we ended up having such a good relationship."

It seemed to me that in recounting this period of her story MW was describing a liminal space where her attitudes and expectations of others became more fluid, open and accepting as a necessary prelude to her arrival at Sheffield. There was also an acknowledgement of the difference of social class that she encountered as she had these levelling experiences. She then used a coda to signal the end of the scene, reiterate her point and structure her meta-narrative by connecting the scene back to the prologue:

"Its experiences like that I think helped me develop as an individual. Got me out of the power –the padded shoulders sort of career."

In describing this phase of the hero's journey Campbell has written:

"*the familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals and emotional patterns no longer fit: the time for passing the threshold is at hand"* (Campbell 2008, p.43).

Although there have been flawed encounters with sub-standard coaching training before this, and she had been running mentoring groups, she was clear that the next phase did not begin until she arrived at Sheffield Hallam:

"Got on the first cohort of the masters at Sheffield (AP: Right).

And that's when my — that's my second career really…

That's when I got into coaching and mentoring."

The significance of Sheffield was later consolidated when she said in passing "*I never left Sheffield".*

The Worst Student and the Reluctant Coach

In recounting her time at Sheffield MW characterised herself as the *"worst student".* This second piece of complicating action is characterised by MW engaging in perilous self-sabotaging behaviours and refusing the coaching identity. She recounted completing assignments at the last minute, receiving a warning letter about her dissertation and being admonished by tutors for non-participation in coaching practice and explained *"I was that sort of student".* While she outlined competing demands on her time (i.e. motherhood and side projects) as a rationale for this, there also seemed to be a more instinctual underlying resistance that got framed as *"knowing what I was there for"* (i.e. setting up mentoring projects) and resisting other elements (e.g. practicing her coaching and mentoring skills). It seemed that there was a disconnect between the characteristic energetic engagement demonstrated in other sections of her narrative and how she behaved during this period.

These elements of MW's narrative are in keeping with what Campbell (2008) terms the "refusal of the call". In the hero's journey, this is when the protagonist attempts to turn away from the potential adventure. Whilst Campbell details a number of myths where the hero's refusal results in fatalistic tragic outcomes, he notes that *"Not all who hesitate are lost. The psyche has many secrets in reserve."* (p.53). In terms of MW's narrative, it builds suspense and gives a sense that her eventual achievements are achieved in the face of significant obstacles. In terms of plot, this impasse is resolved by the intervention of the benevolent mentor figures that occupy the role of the chorus (see below). It is in keeping with Campbell's framework that at the start of the hero's initiatory period that the protagonist is approached and aided by mentor figures. In this instance, their interventions both facilitate the dramatic action of the narrative whilst simultaneously foregrounding the values that are embedded within the narrative itself (i.e. the positive force of mentoring).

She went on to describe her historical resistance to calling herself a "coach". As I listened the reasons for this remained unclear to me. There was a sense that she was working this through within the performance of her story in the moment, as not only was she ambiguous in the reasons that she gave for not claiming this identity, but she also referred to our joint inquiry on this topic as "*interesting*" a couple of times; as if her curiosity came from the question still not being fully resolved. It was as if she was both inquisitive and uncertain as to the conclusions we might come to. The reasons that she gave for this reluctance were also indistinct. At one point she said it was because she lacked confidence but at other times, she gave reasons such as coaches having big egos or coaching not being as exciting as mentoring.

"I can remember turning round to JS one day

where I'd actually introduced myself as a coach

and I laughed and he laughed a bit too.

I said, "I've just called myself a coach".

I was a bit gobsmacked".

Hearing this I felt that somehow there had been an unconscious, internal shift. In terms of the narrative structure, it appears that her eventual acceptance of her identity as a coach unlocks a door and she crosses a threshold that leads her to positions of national relevance within the coaching world, where she can influence the wider culture of coaching. It is as if her initial resistance puts sufficient distance between her and the mainstream of coaching so that she is then able to coach in a manner characterised by humility and ethical practice (at odds with big egos and self-serving agendas) whilst challenging what she perceives to be negative aspects of the wider coaching industry.

<div align="center">The Chorus: the principal supporting characters</div>

While most of the supporting characters in MW's narrative either have fleeting appearances or feature prominently for only one scene, four characters appear as MW is admitted into the academic setting and then remain present throughout the rest of her narrative. Collectively they initiate her into the world of

coaching and mentoring, teach her about it, challenge her and remain presences that facilitate her onward journey. MW gave examples of how she viewed them collectively saying:

"(They) mentored me, cajoled me and helped me all along the route".

She also affirmed the significance of their presence by asserting that:

"I've been alongside them teaching with them and working with them all the way through."

In that, they represent a form of composite knowledge and perspicacity that has longitudinal oversight of MW's development within this new world, and the authority to comment knowledgably on it as she progresses, they can be seen to have a role similar to that of the Greek chorus commenting on the hero's journey. Writing about Greek theatre Wiles (2000) notes that *"The chorus is involved in the action and giving advice"* (p.57) and that they *"embody the collective wisdom of the community"* (p.142). In this case, it is the professional community that MW is at once seeking admission to whilst simultaneously resisting the costs of that access. Perhaps the clearest example of this is in the episode of the admonishment which appears to be a significant scene in the story of MW's movement towards accepting the coach identity:

"RB and GB got very firm with me during the masters.

I didn't want to particularly do some of the coaching practice.

I said "I've come on this--I need to—I want to work on more programmes.

I want to train coaches and mentors".

And they both were very firm with me

and said "unless you can coach and mentor

well there's no way you can do the rest of your work."

And I think that was a wake-up moment for me."

However, all four members of this group at times individually step out of the chorus and perform as distinctive characters. JS is presented as a loyal companion and collaborator:

"JS and I have developed so many little heuristics and models

and things like that in our, our mentoring collaboration together."

"But he's also good in that we've written some papers together and things."

However, like Sancho Panza casting a quizzical eye at Don Quixote's exploits, he provides a grounding realism:

"he has a slight Eeyore aspect in my life.

He's held me back at times.

But I think probably with good reason."

"He's good in that he does challenge me intellectually

(AP: Um-hum) and I'm not an academic."

RB is portrayed as providing MW with energy and a *"can-do"* approach in an ongoing project. DF is someone who provided her first paid consultancy work and given her professional credibility. GB has been an active mentor to her over the years. All four of them (individually and collectively) share the same benevolent qualities: they believe in her; they facilitate her and they possess a philanthropic authority.

The Shady Coaches – fighting the good fight

Over the course of the interview MW established that good, ethical coaching included the qualities of flexibility and humility. She also named *"loving, kindness, caring, compassion"* as characteristics that she had possessed as a girl that continued to influence her coaching practice. In the road of trials section of the hero's journey, Campbell writes that the protagonist *"moves into a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms where he must survive a succession of trials"* (2008, p.81). In MW's case, these trials appear to consist of championing ethical coaching and facing down unprofessional coaches who work in potentially unscrupulous ways. The figures in the chorus established a

secure foundation of professional coaching practice, and so provided a counter-point, in her account, to the incompetents and rogues that occupy (according to MW's discourse) other parts of the coaching world. She characterised the terrain of coaching as *"a morass"* suggesting the image of swampland. She described a great deal of coaching practice as *"appalling quality…manipulative."* She continued:

"a lot of coaches are desperate to coach.

They don't charge much or do it free.

I don't think enough –

I don't think people are supervised well enough

or understand supervision (AP: Um-hum)

and I don't think they understand CPD"

These themes culminated in the performance of two scenes (one humorous and one less so) where questionable coaching was equated with *"witchcraft"* and being *"spellbound"* whilst a dubious coach was presented as an unethical temptress figure:

MW: If they are NLP practitioners as well, I think they really can mislead people. (AP: Yeah, yeah). I've got to be careful what I say about NLP. {I described it as witchcraft}

AP: {This is fine} =

MW: = once to somebody and she said: "well I am a witch". Hehe.

AP: Oh right. Hehe. I thou(h)ght you were go(h)ing to say "I'm an NL(h)P pra(h)ctitioner!". Hehe. Great.

MW: She probably was as well but she was definitely a witch.

In the second scene the coach is presented as a temptress drawing an unsuspecting coachee under her spell and threatening the stability of his homelife:

"My little brother had a coach…

He came home, told us that he was going to climb the Eiger

um I had a look at this woman's website

she was lying on a sort of fur blanket (AP: Hehe) on this website.

My sister-in-law got totally upset during this coaching period

'cause she said "Oh I think – I think she's flirting with him".

I was just everything – everything (AP: Yeah.)

just stank around it (AP: Yeah.).

Thankfully he –you know – the coaching relationship was finished

and he came back to normal…

But he was just um completely spellbound by this woman

Once again, I was struck with the parallels of MW's imagery with the hero's journey where witches and temptresses populate this area of the journey and are adversarial figures. In this part of her performance, she effectively battled and vanquished the shady coaches wherever she found them. Achieving the position as head of a national coaching organisation she gets rid of *"the deadwood"*, she stops people using the organisation for their branding, she vanquishes a sub-standard coaching company from one major corporate setting and imposes standards regarding qualifications and supervision for contracted coaches with another. It seems that once she accepts the role of coach she moves swiftly (within her account) to become a champion at the national level for moral, ethical and principled coaching.

The onward journey: MW returning to self

When I asked MW how she imagined her future she told me that she did not have to imagine because she is already constructing that future. Campbell conceptualises the successful conclusion of the hero's journey as "the return". A return to where they started the journey, only now they are irrevocably changed. It involves becoming the "*master of two worlds"* (Campbell, 2008, p.1986)*;* that is the world they are returning to and the world they have ventured into. They

return to the world they left but share the knowledge they have gained on their quest for the greater good. She performed a scene where she had recently been offered voluntary work in the local Oxfam shop:

"*So I could do stuff like that and voluntary work locally*

but actually, I can do far more –

make a much bigger difference actually using my skills"

She went on to describe how she is perpetuating coaching and mentoring across numerous humanitarian and ecological organisations with global reach. She is returning to herself by reconnecting with her childhood desire to volunteer and do good in the world only now she is enriched by the knowledge she has gained on her journey and she has the potential for far greater impact. She finished the interview with a forward-looking coda that was optimistic regarding her onward journey:

"*Actually I think I'm very lucky I'm [pause] – with all the connections you make as you get better known in the field um it's opening up doors to places where I can go and do more of what I want to do.*"

The onward journey: AP something has shifted

On the drive back to the station MW returned to her earlier topic of my wayward student. Now, I listened to her thoughts differently, knowing that she too had once been "the worst student". When I found myself once again standing on the platform of Ilkley station, I felt that a shift had happened for me. A short time ago I had stood here filled with nervous anxiety and imposter syndrome. Now I stood here with an almost giddy relief, and there was something more; in recounting her initiation and journey as a coach she had effectively officiated at my own initiation as a researcher in the field. By sharing insights and methods she used for coaching it was as if I had finally made it backstage and been acknowledged as a peer within the coaching community.

The next day my own journey would continue. I would be heading to Victoria in London where I would stay overnight. The day after that I would be meeting my second participant.

<u>CJ: "I would like the world to be a better place"</u>

Killing time walking the grey Balham streets felt very different to being in the centre of Ilkley. The only stationary people were either selling the Big Issue or begging. Everyone else seemed to be moving hurriedly and avoiding eye contact. The rhythm of these streets created a sense of uneasiness in me. I did not want to look like a stranger.

I had been told that CJ was eccentric and idiosyncratic. As the time for our interview approached, I did not know what to expect. Part of me was preparing for disappointment while another part felt that, because CJ's history was rooted in the early days of both the counterculture and coaching, I could be gifted a unique account.   Her book on the history of coaching is one of my favoured coaching texts and as she opened her door, I recognised her easily from her photo on the back cover. She showed me into a spacious city apartment that was decorated with numerous ornaments containing Hebrew symbolism. In the hallway I passed a small placard with a humorous ani-Trump slogan on it and a bookcase with several coaching titles in it. We settled in the kitchen-living room area. I soon found we had an easy connection. I guessed she had picked up on my enthusiasm to hear the stories she had to share. As a performer she was highly energised; often taking on the role of other characters and ventriloquising their part of the scene. Her mind seemed to work in a swift, energetic, non-linear fashion. I witnessed her starting on a topic, move onto another one, digress further then bring herself back on track or come to a sudden halt. Her feet either rested on the coffee table or curled up beneath her on the sofa and as the stories were told I soon found myself imagining a younger CJ sitting around front rooms in California planning protest or insurgency. When I read the transcript back it became apparent that rather than telling her stories in terms of phases of her life CJ narrated tales of encounters with people. I joked afterwards that it almost felt appropriate to have run out and purchased some beers or wine. As the interview progressed it became like kicking back with a new friend and being regaled with stories of other times and other places.

Setting the scene: an uneasy history

A foundation of CJ's narrative was a parade of exploitative, manipulative or testing people alongside demoralising life events. Her parent's critical voices seemed to provide a background soundtrack of criticism and lack of empathy throughout. Her (now estranged) adopted daughter's character was described variously as *"mean", "cruel"* and *"weird".* CJ talked of her as having deep psychological disturbance, characterising her as *"a sociopath", "not connected"* (psychologically) and *"a fake person".* She later enacted her confrontation with the daughter's biological mother following CJ discovering the mother had misled them about the child. The mother confessed to her deception and admitted she lied to ensure they would agree to the adoption. When her adopted daughter was thirteen and her biological son was ten her first husband died leaving her to cope alone. CJ also talked about falling prey to an unscrupulous therapist who had *"no boundaries"* and unethically influenced her clients. CJ explained that the therapist would hook her in by telling her how special CJ was and how different to her other clients. She regularly dissuaded CJ from finishing the therapy (thus retaining the income her fees provided) whilst simultaneously encouraging CJ to invest in questionable financial schemes that inevitably gave no return. CJ performed her own internal dialogue of question-and-answer (like a self-directed two-chair exercise) when reflecting on the relationship:

"The big question is "why did you CJ?".

Well, I mean I was younger.

I-I didn't have a great mother.

This woman said "you're really smart.".

In a separate incident she related how she had *"lost all of my inheritance. Lost everything."* in a fraudulent financial scheme, which is why she continues working as a coach and a trainer today. In these sections of the narrative, she seemed to me like a hapless heroine in a melodrama, moving from one dastardly plot or perilous storyline to the next, but with her resolution and values remaining intact and unsullied.

Principal characters: the men of politics and literature

At the centre of the narrative CJ performed there were two principal supporting characters: her two husbands. Their roles in the drama seemed to be that of guides and initiators of action. Both ushered her into different cultural worlds.

Her first husband was a political activist who was deeply involved in the American civil rights movement. CJ and he were committed members of a radical student group in the Sixties. Although their activism was associated with the counterculture, she was clear where they positioned themselves within it:

"We had nothing but contempt for those people who were trying to [pause]

uh experience life differently or live in communes or go to Esalen,

and you know just sitting there staring at their belly buttons

(AP: Right) when they could be on the picket line".

Given the history of coaching (which she has chronicled) I did not anticipate her initial disparagement of those in the counterculture who had been focused on consciousness expansion rather than politics and had (retrospectively) been such a huge influence on the development of coaching. I wondered in what ways political activism had influenced CJ's coaching identity. She explained that her first husband was someone able to connect with and empathise with multiple viewpoints, even when they did not align with his own interests or beliefs. The significance of this became apparent when she later explained the importance in coaching of having a *"wide envelope"* or her interest in doing good and coaching as a force that can promote good in the world. Although his demise appeared to bring to an end this politically focused phase of her life there was also a hint of general weariness regarding it when she said:

"I mean part of the problem with early political involvement

is its all politics you know (AP: Yeah, yeah).

Day and night breathing politics."

Her current husband is an author and editor. He met CJ when he was on a teaching scholarship in the US. CJ moved to England with him when he

returned to take a second degree in creative writing. In her story he is initially someone who uniquely grasps the situation with her daughter *("that is the scariest person I've ever met")* in the face of CJ's isolation and lack of support from her parents. This perceptiveness and understanding had a powerful effect on CJ (*"And I thought "I can fall in love with him"")* and she also recognised him as someone who offered her a gateway to the world of literature that she wanted to engage with:

"my attraction to J obviously

was that I really wanted to learn about literature.

I really wanted to read novels."

Literature has become a way for CJ to experience and appreciate other viewpoints, a capacity which informs the values that underly her coaching practice. However, as the narrative developed during the interview J's role seems to shift or develop from the initiator of the story's development to a more supportive role as CJ consolidated her role as the protagonist. He supports her in editing her books. He helps her ghost write sections. He travels with her to coaching engagements and supports her during presentations.

Fielding: what do you think you want to know?

Fielding university is located in Santa Barbara, California. Its motto (which might have been written with coaching in mind) is' *"Change the world. Start with yours."* As the interview progressed it became apparent that CJ felt a strong connection to it and that it was a pivotal element in her narrative on several levels. It featured as a bridge between CJ's identity as a fulltime activist and her later incarnation as a coach and trainer. It had facilitated her PhD studies as a student then given her employment as a graduate and later still referred clients to her as a coach. At the time of the interview there were potential future collaborative projects being discussed by CJ and Fielding faculty members. At one point she performed as the voice of Fielding expressing a liberal, pedagogic approach:

"and Fielding was:

"You decide.

What do you know?

What don't you know?

What do you think you want to know?"

I mean it's all adult learning and it was great."

Fielding gifted her the psychological space to develop and reinvent herself. It provided her with a liminal space where she was able to exist between professional worlds. She described her PhD studies as the gateway for contacting people she admired who had created socially responsible businesses so that she could understand the motivation for wanting to do good in the world (*I mean what is it? Is it in your background? Is it in your you know?…The passion about doing good in the world"*). At one point she broke from describing the research and as an aside connected her research to mine:

"And uh it's a little bit like what you're looking at like

"What's the person?"

"What's the personal journey?"

This aside connected the action within the narrative world to both the setting of the performance (the interview) and to me as the lone spectator. Her research journey became aligned with my research journey and we both in our ways looked to potential role models for clues as to directions of travel.

<center>The People Who do Good in the World</center>

The individuals she connected with doing this research were striking individuals that have powerful, ground-breaking narratives associated with them. They include Greg Steltenpohl who was a pioneer in the wholefood drinks and food industry. Aaron Feurestein who after his mill burnt down kept 3,000 employees on full salary for six months while it was rebuilt, as well as the heads of the Body Shop and Neal's Yard. Alongside the figures she interviewed for her research there are also altruistic figures that she has encountered through other aspects of her life. One of these was AB who ran a Jewish adoption agency in

New York and helped CJ normalise and accept her responses when she struggled with her adopted daughter. Another was the developmental psychologist Robert Kegan who she was trained by and seemed to take a guru-like role within her narrative.

Her conclusions from encountering these people affirm her own identity as a secular Jew through the philanthropic and unselfish qualities she has encountered in the Jewish respondents she engaged with. Recounting her research on Feuerstein she enacted a phone conversation with his sister:

"So I finally get his sister who sounds slightly elderly.

I said, "could you just tell me why he did this?".

She said "He's a Jew. Whadaya think?"

Hehe.

It was nice to hear because I am a Jew too."

These reflections are also the site for the earlier political activist perspective to become integrated with an appreciation of individual journeys of personal development that she had earlier expressed contempt for. I reflected to her that she seemed to have found rapprochement between these two areas:

"That's exactly what was going on (AP: Yeah.).

A real division.

Now what's happened is its completely merged (AP: Right).

So taking care of yourself and healing the planet …

there's-- there's no issue. There's no problem."

If the personal and the political have become merged, then according to this perspective it becomes beholden on us individually to live a meaningful life which in turn gives purpose to the activity of coaching:

"the people I meet want meaningful work.

They want a meaningful life the people I coach […]

Ok so its – its very uh –

that's where I – I guess that's where my passion is."

Through this merging of the personal and the political in pursuit of a meaningful life CJ is clear that in her view the potential of coaching as a positive force has global implications:

"I can tell you what I think good coaching can do for the planet in the same way.

I feel like on the one hand I'm oriented to the individual.

On the other hand, I am oriented to the whole too.

So, …if you look at it what's the biggest problem? What's the biggest problem on the planet?

People can't talk to each other (AP: Right).

One country can't talk to another country. (AP: Yeah, yeah).

So what are we doing?

We are demonstrating or helping people with skilful coaching.

With skilful conversations. Skilful interactions."

<div align="center">Coaching: "it's nuanced"</div>

Recounting how she first engaged with coaching she located it temporally by saying *"It was just after 9-11"*. This powerful orientation device conjured an image for me of the world having altered irrevocably and CJ finding her place in this newly configured landscape. She gave an abstract for the story explaining that *"like most people"* she was *"coaching before it was called coaching"* this suggested to me coaching as an activity for which there is an intrinsic need, to the extent that the widespread organic growth of its practice preceded a term to describe it.

When I asked about significant events on her journey towards becoming a coach, she narrated the story of her being *"landed"* in a girl's independent secondary school during a period of scandal-driven upheaval, then being appointed to design and teach a course entitled Human Development (as a

response to the scandal). In the event she taught the students, amongst other things, about drugs (the cause of the original uproar), sex, death and Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This curriculum, unsurprisingly for the time, caused complaints. However, intrinsic to this story are the themes of CJ being guided in the moment by the needs of the other, engaging with existential themes and *"learning on the hoof"* which seemed to be characteristic of CJ's approach to coaching.

When I asked her about professionalization and regulation of coaching she seemed to have an ambiguous attitude:

"the problem is that you can't –

that really the biggest problem is its nuanced – it's nuanced.

I can teach you every you know, background theory there is

or every coaching exercise there is. All of it.

And – and – I'm working with a person

and whether or not that person has the capacity

(AP: Um hum) to be … I mean you're it. You're the instrument"

She returned to this theme several times and talked about the need for coaches to work on themselves, be self-reflective, intuitive and draw on age and experience. There was a clear sense from her that the coach embodies the coaching. This perspective was further emphasised by her cynicism around the use of competencies. She described them as *"totally unsuccessful"* in terms of measuring coaching and questioned the fact that the coachee's voice was excluded from them. She was clearly also cynical about both the genres of coaching and the more fringe approaches:

"There's no such thing as personal coaching vs. executive coaching

(AP: Yeah, yeah). Maybe there is someone who wants to just um specialise in – in you know …

I mean if you go to these conferences you'd go nuts (AP: Hehe.).

Using arts therapy. Dance.

102

X has said that he has given demonstrations on the tango

saying "this is coaching". (AP: Yeah.)

And everyone should tango (AP: Yeah.).

And I want to say – I can't stand it!"

Good coaching, according to CJ, is characterised by affirmation of the coachee. She believes that many coachees begin the process in a negative mindset bought about by unwelcome change, and that a part of the job of the coach is to normalise (or *"neutralise"*) their responses and affirm them. She also described coaching as being beneficial for her as the coach. It has a Zen-like capacity to slow her down, calm her and help her enter a meditative-like state. She was not optimistic about the future of coaching in its present form. She equated coaches to a group of organisational psychologists she had once addressed who she described as a *"dying breed"* as their profession became out of vogue in the corporate setting:

"I think that uh we're reaching a tipping point

where there are more coaches than there are clients

or (AP: Yes) potential clients."

The Wide Envelope

CJ introduced the image of "having a wide envelope" as a metaphor for an important quality in those people who had influenced her on her journey to becoming a coach. When it was apparent that I was struggling to understand the term she used the example of her first husband being able to sympathetically grasp differing, sometimes contradictory, viewpoints during a challenging period of their political activism:

"My first husband had a wide envelope so he could understand.

I mean when the – when the civil rights movement splintered up,

and the blacks kicked the whites out.

And one – one wing of it went violent.

People went underground …

he had this way of sort of um not, not having an opinion,

but he had an envelope that was wide".

She went on to illustrate this by performing a ventriloquation of her first husband in dialogue with her:

"Ok well these people, this is what they are thinking.

This is why they are doing what they are doing.

And no CJ you wouldn't be interested in what they are doing.

But don't condemn it".

She continued to explain that people with wide envelopes *"talk differently"*. She gave as further examples the politicians Barrack O'Bama and Beto O'Rourke. It became apparent that to have a "wide envelope" is important to coaching but extends beyond that to a way of being that is characterised by tolerance, understanding and a capacity to encompass multiple viewpoints.

Sliding Around Ethics

Another term that CJ introduced which I grappled with was *"hip-slick"*. The term was put forward to characterise the aspects of coaching practice that CJ finds repellent:

"there's people out there selling you something for –

I mean my friend T whose now head of the programme at Fielding

said that he just – on the internet – he just got a thing

that says "we can make you a coach for fifty bucks"

(AP: Right. Wow. Yeah. Yeah).

…and there's scams to get people who want clients"

As well as people making dubious claims or offering questionable products, she was also critical of coaches charging what she regarded as disproportionate fees. Making reference to specific coaches who charge extravagant rates based

on their personal reputation she exclaimed in a tone of exasperation "*You are not building a rocket ship to Mars!*". She finished her denunciation of these aspects of coaching by saying "*This is the stuff that sort of slides around ethics."* The phrase suggested that while she did not perceive these people to be doing anything that is overtly fraudulent or dishonest, she was clear that they were motivated by an amoral self-interest.

<div align="center">Pedagogy: where's the beef?</div>

CJ introduced the subject of pedagogy when she was already in her stride regarding the meditation-like qualities of coaching. She suddenly broke from the topic to declare *"My real passion however is teaching. (AP: Ok). Pedagogy."* Although the interview was clearly about coaching it was if she needed to introduce this aspect of her narrative in order to communicate a fuller sense of her story and she wasn't sure how to do it. This aside then gave her license to divert from the direction that the interview schedule was taking the narrative. She performed two scenes to evidence her engagement with teaching and training. In the first she set up a master's level coaching programme for Fielding. In the second she reorganised and revamped a training programme offered by one of coaching's professional organisations. The first scene gave her the character of a pioneer and invoked an earlier era of coaching. She drew a picture of lack of substance when there was only *"a couple of books and the guy in Australia"* (Anthony Grant). Coach training was described as *"a how-to game"* devoid of substantial theory. She took on the role of a garrulous inquisitor arguing with the existing trainers:

"So it was like you know

"we can teach you how to be a coach"

but where's the – you know having come out of university

I said "where's the theory?"

I mean "where's the beef?"."

She described reading every relevant book she could get hold of and then writing a manual for the course which then evolved into a published volume she

co-edited. Her sense was that this approach bought a more rigorous approach to coach training generally as other courses, in order to compete, began to take on a more evidence-based orientation. Unlike coaching which she suggested went against her natural way of being and slowed her down teaching was presented as being an innate part of her:

"Pedagogy.

I know Pedagogy

so I just know people learn and it's—

and I can't explain it completely but its intuitive.

(AP: Right. Yeah.) You know what I mean?

Its like I know it you know. (AP: Yeah.).

And I know how to help people really move along."

In terms of her style of teaching she communicated a sense that she is able to encompass varying learning styles and levels of commitment amongst her students with patience and lack of judgement. My assumption was that this tolerance probably extended to her coaching practice. As the narrative continued and began to fall into a temporal ordering for me, it became clear that CJ's coaching practice grew out of her pedagogical practice (the latter generating recommendations for the former). Without the pedagogy it became clear that the coaching would not exist. Reading the coaching transcript later I concluded that this was the reason that she needed to introduce the topic. Without doing so the account of how she built her identity as a coach would have remained incomplete.

<div align="center">My name is Lucy Barton</div>

Whilst explaining the "wide envelope" to me CJ looked to literature to find examples. As she cited the novel My Name is Lucy Barton her face lit up and she suddenly became more animated:

"<u>And it is wonderful</u>.

It is wonderful because you have sympathy for a mother

106

who doesn't have much sympathy for her daughter. (AP: Um hum).

And you have sympathy for her daughter

who is trying so hard to get a connection with the mother and –

and you real – you just – its just the way she writes

it makes you understand (AP: Yeah, yeah) multiple viewpoints."

Seeing the impact that this story had had on CJ I made a mental note to read the book after the interview. When I did the plot was much as CJ had described it. It concerns a woman who is hospitalised during a mysterious and life-threatening illness. She has suffered poverty, abuse and social exclusion throughout her childhood. During her hospitalisation her estranged mother appears and sits with her for five days. Over those five days there is an understated rapprochement between the mother and the daughter. As Lucy Barton narrates the story we understand that she is working hard to make connections with those who have caused her misfortunes. In the intervening years since leaving the parental home she has become a successful author. The wisdom she has gained from this journey is to understand that we only have one story (our biography) but we have multiple ways of narrating it. As I read the story I had a moment of insight regarding the biographical tale I had heard from CJ. Lucy Barton is not CJ's story, but it has resonances of her story and it helped me to understand the nature of the narrative that CJ told/performed. Like Lucy Barton CJ has an uneasy history and like Lucy Barton the way she tells it is as a narrative of growth. When her husband dies she finds ways to raise her children and bring in an income. When the toxic relationship with her daughter creates distance between her and her parents she finds connection and support from her second husband and her inspirational friend AB. When she becomes the victim of a therapist without boundaries she responds by framing it as *"a lesson"* and ensuring that she honours the autonomy of her coachees:

"that influence was huge on me

and I am absolutely squeaky clean around all this.

"You want to stop at any point it's fine"

(AP: Right). You – if we have six sessions

(AP: Yeah.) I am absolutely"

As a response to still having to work, through being defrauded of her life savings, she gives free coaching training to a homeless charity for young people in Los Angeles. On the relationship she has had with her own parents she said:

"So you know you just sort of get over that stuff and (AP: Yeah, yeah) go on"

Although CJ has been buffeted by events, like Lucy Barton she has not become a victim of circumstance. CJ's story, like Lucy Barton's, is a narrative of resilience, optimism and growth through connection to others. As the interview approached the end the mood in the room became more thoughtful. Suddenly she seemed to be reflecting on the random and arbitrary nature of life events:

"I think most of the time I um – I just sort of wait…

I mean why did I become a coach?

.hhh it was completely haphazard

I mean because JS …calls me

and says, "will you write a coach training programme" (AP: Yeah.).

So, I always think that's how we end up doing (AP: Yeah.) you know"

When I read these words on the interview transcript, I felt a passing sense of melancholy and was struck by how at odds they are with the purposeful and agentic nature of a lot of coaching discourse. I was reminded of some of the final words in Waiting for Godot which touch on the same topic:

"One day, is that not enough for you…

One day we were born,

One day we shall die,

The same day, the same second"

Then her internal gaze seemed to shift quickly to the future and there was a return to a more optimistic atmosphere. She speculated about the possibility of Trump losing the 2020 election then finished the interview by saying:

"Anyway I do believe that I'd like the world to be a better place."

DF: a quiz master not a Zen master

A weekday afternoon. Maidenhead was a ghost town. Shop after shop boarded up. It was not that the town was impoverished, more that its residents seemed to have withdrawn from the centre and were, I imagined, holed up in their outlying suburban homes, shopping online while becoming ever more insular. The sense of desertion and failing businesses impacted on my mood and sitting in a Starbucks (that was one of the last businesses standing) I wrote in my journal *"I am not in the zone with interviewing DF right now"*. I continued pessimistically *"I imagine DF promoting Team DF".* So far, he had communicated with me through intermediaries, who I assumed were PAs. This had suggested to me someone who felt too important to write their own emails. This distance between us had left me wondering how much potential there was for personal connection and rapport in the interview itself.

I got a taxi from the station to the address I had been given. As we drove out of the town centre towards the outskirts the houses became larger and more expensive. Finally, we turned down a short cul-de-sac and I alighted in front of a large house where the street came to a dead end. Although it was only February the impending summer-long heat wave was starting to ramp up and it was an unseasonably warm, sunny day. A small sign told me that the interviewee was in the back garden. Opening the gate, I saw a man in his seventies relaxing on a deckchair talking in an easy manner to his grown-up son. My initial impression was of success, comfort and repose. This seemed to be a person who has completed his major achievements in life and had won the right to be relaxing in the garden on a weekday afternoon.

Interviewing the interviewer

My sense was (and remains) that as a performer DF constructs an elevated status for himself with his audience. His performance rests on claims of authority and knowledge. He opened by reiterating the time boundaries (I had asked for an hour and a half and been granted an hour). As I set up the recording equipment, to cover any inept fumbling with the technology, I asked DF if he often did interviews of this nature. I found myself slightly nonplussed when he simply replied *"Yes"*. He then inquired about my methodology and data

analysis. He asked if I would be using qualitative analytical software, and if so which type. This increased my sense of being a novice. I felt that I was being tested and there was a tacit assumption that any proper researcher would be able to hold an in-depth discussion on analytical software (I still can't). I shifted the conversation to necessary preliminary contracting around confidentiality. He nodded all this through in a disinterested manner before returning to the theme:

"So, you're looking for more of an intuitive analysis rather than an analytical analysis?"

I got a clear sense that in his world an *"analytical analysis"* would score more points than an intuitive one. He continued by asking me if I am a coach. I explained fully my relationship to coaching practice as I wanted to retain a sense of truthfulness and authenticity throughout our time together but did not want to diminish my own coaching identity (I was starting to feel a need to push back). Surprisingly, this seemed to satisfy DF. I felt that I had been tested and somehow (I still don't know how), at that moment, I had just managed to scrape through. This interview of the interviewer ended. He suggested that we *"crack on"*.

<div align="center">Opening scene: trailblazing and the critical coaches</div>

In order to answer my first question ("how did you first come across coaching?") he first needed to establish his credentials as the trailblazer of mentoring in the UK. This initial story was one of innovation and pioneering in which he gets introduced to mentoring in the US then publishes one of the first books on the topic (*"the first proper book about mentoring", "evidence based"* and *"set the tone for European mentoring"* which was different from *"half baked"* American mentoring) before successfully setting up a key mentoring organisation. The complicating action of the narrative is an unforeseen attack on mentoring from across the Atlantic. He introduced negative chorus-like characters of the critical coaches. These characters feature as disembodied voices that are raised in the USA spreading malicious disinformation regarding mentoring in order to contrast with, and promote, their own coaching businesses. He performed a *"push back"* giving voice to both groups' perspectives:

"we had these people coming from the States and saying –

trying to put down mentoring,

to push up what they were doing as coaches. (AP: Ah. OK)

And we said "well hang on. No, no, no!",

they were saying "oh coaching is -- mentoring is all telling people what to do".

And we said "no, no, that's coaching".

He then ventriloquised the rapprochement he perceived to happen between the two groups.

"*in the end we said "no, no look,*

we both seem to be saying we're doing the same –

a very similar thing.

Um all the primary difference is that in one case we have some expertise,

which we use to craft better questions

and the other, you don't, so come and join us".

So that's where the whole thing came together."

During the course of my interviews, I would hear differing opinions about DF. One of those was a criticism of a line of argument attributed to him which is *"coaching is the same as mentoring, but mentoring is different to coaching"* when I looked back on the interview this seemed to be exactly what was being argued. Although coaches were invited into an alliance, they apparently had no expertise and their questions, as a result, were inferior to mentoring questions. In this narrative DF not only gives a historical foundation to his meta-narrative but also effectively established multiple aspects of his professional identity. In this performance he is a pioneer (setting the tone for European mentoring and then founding the EMC before helping introduce coaching to Europe), an author, a mentor and a scientist (his book, unlike lesser ones, is evidence-based). All these facets of his identity would be referenced throughout the rest of the interview.

Mentoring: *"thinking like a manager"*

For DF mentoring is conceived of as an ancient activity with a noble lineage that was temporarily threatened by the upstart coaching movement originating in America. He presented himself as someone who had an instinctive propensity for mentoring which had become consolidated through his life experience, professional practice and PhD. He also performed two compelling scenes drawn from his experience of being a mentee within a corporate setting in the States. In the first scene he goes on a mentoring road trip with his first corporate mentor, meeting customers along the way. As they travel together, they begin to engage in a mentoring dialogue and as a consequence DF experiences a profound shift that brings him promotion. DF explained to me that this mentoring relationship had been a seminal experience in shaping his thinking for the future. This was the second time I had pause to think of the themes of journey, transformation and encounters with significant figures in this research. It felt like Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance had been ported over into a corporate context and I still find it a powerful account that convincingly illustrates the spirit of mentoring. However, it was during this section of our dialogue that I became aware that the suggestion of DF being "managerialist" might have some substance. It seemed that, within his perspective, successful mentoring leads mentees to adopt corporate managerial mindsets. He ventriloquised the first mentor (who he described as *"brilliant"*) reflecting on their mentoring relationship:

"you needed to think about things in a different way,

if you were operating at a higher level…

you got promoted because

everybody could see that you were now thinking like a manager at that level".

The second scene I experienced as reminiscent of the television drama Mad Men. DF is summoned by his second mentor to an exclusive club in New York. The mentor is effectively a messenger who brings unwelcome but important news. The shifting politics of the organisation is explained to him, and he learns that he is being passed over for promotion on the basis of his nationality. He

has effectively got as far as he is going within this organisation. The resolution of the scene is that he strategically makes a timely exit from the organisation in order to successfully make his name elsewhere. The strength of this second mentor lay in his possession of an elevated political perspective or *"helicopter view"* that could only be gained by occupying a managerial position within an organisational hierarchy. At another point in our dialogue DF explained how he had come to the conclusion that supporting *"top leaders"* in having dialogue with others in the organisation was crucially important and that everything else was of *"minor significance"*. The notion of a desirable managerial mindset suggested to me a viewpoint based on the assumption that there is a right and a wrong way to think, and I speculated that there was potential in this viewpoint for a standardization of corporate thinking. Later, I found myself wondering what highly individualistic innovative entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs, Anita Roddick and Richard Branson would make of such a perspective.

Soliloquys of coaching: *"meekly, mildly they start to think again"*

In describing the qualities that made for effective coaching and mentoring DF referred to a combination of *"ruthless logic, compassion and empathy"*. When he registered my surprise at the combination of those qualities, he improvised a scene of him observing a coach who he felt exemplified these same qualities:

"She is brilliant.
People come to her because when she coaches, she cuts through the crap,
yeah, like a knife through butter.
I mean she goes [makes cracking sound] *um*
and you think (whispered voice) *"how could you say that to somebody?"*
but she does and they meekly, mildly they –they—they start to think again.
(AP: Yeah, ye(h)ah)
And it's wonderful because it's the rigour of her logic,
but that combination of that with compassion."

He explained that he could trace these qualities in himself back to his childhood and that, although he had worked on developing them, they were (along with his propensity for mentoring) innate to him. I asked what changes he had to make

114

as he "broadened out" his practice into coaching. He described it as *"adding tools and techniques to a natural process".* Mentoring and rationalism are therefore perceived as the core of his coaching identity and (in his view) coaching itself consists of tools and techniques that can be layered on top. His professional organisation is also clearly an important component of his identity both as a coach and a mentor. When I asked about coaching's professional organisations, I was told that coaching needed them if it was to become a profession. Coaching was conceptualised as *"an emerging profession"* going through a time of change and transformation. He described the organisation he had founded as *"scientific", "evidence-based"* and *"improving practice".*

When I questioned him about where he located himself on the terrain of coaching, he declined to do so. He referred to his celebration of eclecticism (see below) and explained that to position himself at a particular site on the landscape of coaching would be to limit himself. He developed the theme by asserting that all of the multitude of coaching schools have *"useful"* elements to draw on. However, later in the dialogue he reintroduced the notion of a coaching identity by grounding it within a framework of four levels of coaching maturity that he and GB had devised. Within this framework he suggested coaches had specific identities that emerged from their alignment with a particular level of coach-maturity. He then went on to explain that rather than being stuck at one particular level that many coaches have a fluid, shifting relationship to the different maturity levels, tacitly suggesting that their coaching identity morphed in a similar fashion. During the interview itself I felt that this was a sophisticated response to the issue of coaching identities. When I considered it afterwards, I was not so sure. I felt that DF had somehow sidestepped the question by moving it from being personal and about him to being a generalisation through referencing a body of theory.

Influence of childhood and youth: *"they milked him dry"*

The references to innate personal qualities led me to ask about any relevant characteristics he recalled from his childhood. He briefly spoke very generally about a desire to write and then attempted to turn the conversation to his more recent training in stand-up comedy. This seemed a diversion and I pushed to

return to the original topic. As we did a story then emerged of two very contrasting men and their impact on him.

The story of his father was a very dark one. A survivor of a Japanese prisoner of war camp; there were intimations of unspoken horrors encountered during his father's quest to endure. Returning home, he soon discovered he had incurable bowel cancer. DF described his father's world *"closing in"* and explained that *"the Jehovah's Witnesses got hold of him".* His distaste for this religious group became apparent as he asserted that *"they were horrible"* and that they *"milked him dry in so many ways".* DF had been compelled to reluctantly go door-to-door proselytizing on their behalf. DF characteristically responded by independently sitting an A level in Religious Studies in order to challenge the influence of the group from an informed position. He performed his forthright challenge to the group stridently declaiming *"well so where's the logic behind this?".* He explained that this negative experience had empowered him to question everything and help coachees "*ask the questions they should be asking themselves".* This story seemed profound to me. The acts of studying, researching and questioning had rescued and preserved his core sense of self. His mantra of *"where's the logic?"* had saved him from following his dying father into a world of darkness and superstition. It seemed to me that this illuminating logic and rationality was what he now sought to bring to others in his own coaching and mentoring practice.

The second man was DF's English teacher who he described as *"Bilbo Baggins"* with *"a twinkle in his eye".* DF described this man as his first mentor and explained that he still unconsciously models himself on him. The foundation of this inspirational relationship was the teacher's eclectic wisdom along with his generous nature in sharing knowledge with his pupils. DF described how he would start talking about one subject and then diverge knowledgeably into another, whilst still keeping his audience captivated. DF explained that the type of eclecticism, modelled by his teacher, is a quality that remains with him, and he consciously cultivates. He went on to play out an example of this:

"I'll go into a bookshop, yeah,
and I will deliberately close my eyes and point

and then I will go in the direction of wherever I pointed

just to see well what can I –

yeah –yeah

is there something I can learn from a quick skim through a book on origami?"

Although presented as "eclectic interests" when DF enthusiastically expanded on the topic it became apparent that it moved beyond this to an almost mystical belief in the holistic, interconnected nature of the world:

"we come back to the eclectic side of it,

we are able to capture lots of different um –

we're able to access lots of bodies of knowledge,

experience, scenarios, a mass of stuff, (AP: Um hum)

which is what connects us to the human world and the world in which we live"

This eclectic-holistic perspective is a motivating force that drives the nature of his engagement with the world and how he lives his life:

"I put it down to this eclecticism.

So, I'm interested in all sorts of things.

I learn a new sport every year or new activity every year."

It seemed that these two men had presented him with opposing possibilities. One personified hunger for knowledge, energetic engagement with the world and openness to possibilities. The other (due to the most awful of circumstances), represented the withdrawal from life and the narrowing of possibilities. DF appeared to have grown through his encounters with both.

I felt that a doorway to his past had briefly been opened for me and I began to understand his preference for focusing on theories, frameworks and accomplishments. I was grateful for the insight. Then, as quickly as he had opened this portal, I felt it firmly closed as he changed the subject. We did not return to the topic of his past. However, when I examined the transcript, it seemed that immediately following this our own interpersonal connection was at its strongest and the dialogue flowed at its most easy pace between us.

The inner moral compass

An aspect of DF's identity which I assumed originated in his childhood years I termed his inner moral compass. By this I meant a collection of positive qualities (humility, authenticity, and altruism) that he espoused and seemed to come out of an instinctual sense of right and wrong. The quality of humility initially seemed at odds with his willingness to name his accomplishments. However, its quality emerged when he was discussing the autobiography that he will never write:

"But for me the idea of putting me at the centre,

rather than the ideas is wrong and it's not –

it's not modesty or even false modesty,

it's just um an intellectual and emotional sense

of rightness and wrongness."

Whilst this shone a light on his avoidance of talking about himself, I was also interested that he referred to an inherent sense of right and wrong. This was the only time in the interview where he appeared to privilege his emotional sensing over rationality and logic. My sense was that he was naming an element of himself that was fundamental to his way of being. This sense of humility also emerged later when I asked him how he thought other coaches viewed him. He surprised me by explaining he thought they often overestimated his experience of coaching. He enacted an imagined scene of him challenging such a perception:

"I say "but you've done more hours of coaching than I have"…

I think they assume there's a lot more there

than there (AP: Yeah.) actually is."

However, he immediately contradicted this scene of challenge by an admission that I experienced as one of disarming honesty:

"And I don't go out deliberately to disabuse them of that,

but I don't try and bolster that perception."

I felt for a moment I had seen behind the curtain of this performer's booth and let into one of his personal trade secrets. It was an ambiguous moment when he displayed authenticity through acknowledging his failure to reveal something to his audience. Almost like a magician openly discussing misdirection. Authenticity also featured when he talked about becoming disaffected during a foray into politics:

I withdrew, I said "I don't want to do this,
I don't feel that I can make the influence that I want,
… and be authentic as well".

His own privileging of authenticity was at odds with a political discourse that he characterised as *"impersonal", "false"* and *"contrived"*. In addition, there was an emergent theme of altruism which appeared during the interview. When he had diverted the conversation into stand-up comedy, he mentioned in passing research he was involved in about teaching improvisation as a strategy for people who experience depression. When contemplating his future plans, he also talked of a project to create five million school age mentors and coaches. He then went on to outline an international project to create coaches and coaching in countries that do not currently have them. Although prior to our meeting I had heard him disparaged as someone keen on making money it became apparent that there was a side to him that went beyond this and wanted to contribute to the wellbeing of others.

<div align="center">The gentleman scientist-inventor</div>

DF was talking about having *"a passionate interest in everything"* when he paused to ask if I was *"getting a picture here"*. I found myself imagining a post-war world where boys were eagerly consuming brightly illustrated issues of educational comics like Look and Learn alongside the novels of Jules Verne. A time when science was portrayed as a wholly benevolent force and the world was alive with a forward-facing optimism and naivety. The scientist of this era was perceived as a heroic figure:

"Towering like a superman over his contemporaries, exploring new territories, or engaging with new concepts, this character emerges at periods of scientific optimism." (Haynes 1994, p.3)

I was reminded strongly of the Victorian gentleman scientist-inventor. The figure from fiction by the likes of Arthur Conan-Doyle and Jules Verne, who is an enthusiastic amateur, characterised by boundless enthusiasm and scientific curiosity, whilst enjoying a lifestyle that enables him to follow where his interests lead. This sense was exacerbated when he described his post as a young journalist on the New Scientist where he was *"the first non-scientist"*. There were also plentiful examples of his inventiveness. He regaled me with examples of new words he had invented that communicated multiple concepts in the manner of a condensed haiku such as *"simplexity"* or *"screenager"*. He made passing reference to questionnaires he had designed and boardroom assessments he had devised. However, the most striking example of this perspective was in his obvious enthusiasm for the concept of artificial intelligence and the resulting potential to create a *"coach-bot"*. It was clear that this was a topic he had decided he wanted to talk about. He asserted that AIs can already build empathy and then disclosed that he was collaborating on designing a coach-bot intended to support coaches with professional development planning.

I found myself questioning DF's optimistic vision of the coach-bot and his vision of the future impact of artificial intelligence in the coaching world on several levels. In the first place I wondered at his assertion that coach-bots can be empathic when empathy requires the experience of emotional resonance. An AI clearly has no feelings. In terms of a coach-bot that would guide coaches in their professional development, I was cynical. I did not find it credible that the very coaches who DF claimed had not bothered to devise professional development plans would wish to purchase a robot that's sole purpose was to do this for them. Such a device would need to be pre-programmed as to what professional development for coaches should consist of. It would therefore inevitably lead towards standardization in an industry where the USP of the individual coach is a central part of their marketing. It is both inevitable and desirable that in such an industry there are wide variations of what "professional development" consists of. I also questioned what impact the success of such a device could have on the emerging coaching supervision market.

Haynes (1994) observes that the cultural figure of the Victorian heroic-scientist emerged from a clash between science and religion following the publication of Darwin's evolutionary theories. It was exactly this tension that DF had re-enacted in the narrative of his father and the Jehovah's Witnesses. However, Haynes continues that in tales featuring this figure, the protagonist often displays an unsettling willingness to sacrifice the wellbeing of his companions in the pursuit of his self-centred quest for knowledge. I speculated whether the idea of a coach-bot was appealing to the side of DF that has *"a passionate interest in everything"*, but I also quietly wondered about its potential to make coaches obsolete. In our lack of connection on this topic I was left questioning if there was some generational factor at play. He might have been bought up on Jules Verne and H.G. Wells; I have been bought up on Bladerunner, Hammer Horror remakes of Frankenstein and the violent post-apocalyptic fantasies of Mad Max. In his desire to construct the coach-bot I suspect he saw curiosity and science as inherently beneficial forces leading to a brighter world. I was seeing a finger hovering over a self-destruct button of the very profession his organisation is tasked with representing.

<p align="center">Offstage after the performance</p>

Although DF had originally stipulated that we only had an hour (conveying a sense that he had back-to-back appointments), when we finished talking, he kindly offered to drive me to the railway station; implicitly suggesting his schedule was looser than I had believed. In the car the conversation was informal and more relaxed. We both disclosed different types of information about ourselves which had a more personal feel to it. I think there was a strangers-on-the-train affect occurring as we would probably not meet again. During the interview itself I had felt there was too great a focus on him for there to be any great personal connection, but rather we had engaged in a generous-spirited encounter with one another. There was a sense for me during this exchange in the car that we were now clearly off-stage.

Back in York, going through the transcript of the interview, I reflected that while I liked the idea of coaches' identities shifting, morphing and being fluid (as DF had suggested) his claim to occupy all areas of the coaching terrain is specious.

His gentleman-scientist personae, his elevation of rationality, his belief in expertise and his managerial mindset means that there is no soul-guide here. His love of facts and logic moves him away from the humanistic precept of clients as experts on themselves. When DF asks a coachee a question he is a quiz master looking for the right answer not a Zen master asking for the sound of one hand clapping.

PD: being drawn into a world of possibilities

PD had originally come onto my radar as a prospective interviewee who fulfilled the role of a Psy expert coach. He has published (and gained a professional reputation) as a coach who specialises in integrating extensive knowledge of gestalt psychotherapy with his coaching practice. The address PD had given me turned out to be a good-sized house on a very busy main road in Harrogate. He answered the door and led me into a large front room where there were a number of musical instruments on stands and some open sheet music conveying to me a sense of creativity, skills and playfulness. Large glass panels at the far end of the room gave onto a view of a well-kept garden, while letting a large amount of light into the space. I experienced PD as a large, amicable presence who spoke with warmth, humour and energy.

While he made us coffee, he elicited a brief version of my life story. This was the second time I had faced a preliminary interview from the interviewee. However, this time it felt like there was a genuine interest in who I was. My response was one of being flattered by his interest and so lacked the previous defensiveness. The small office he then led me into was like an antithesis of the living room. It was a smallish, dark room with the windows blacked out (to keep out the hectic activity of the road). The size of the room, along with the black background, served to emphasise the performance of PD. It had a similar effect to that of a small drama studio so that his gestures and presence became amplified within the small space. When he became engaged by a topic, one narrative section of his account would blend into another so that a series of stories or scenes were delivered in a block. Between these sections there would occasionally be humorous interludes where there would be some improvised repartee between us. However, these moments of joint performance were at his behest and gave me the sense of being an audience member who had been invited onstage to support the performance:

AP: *So really naïve question…and I hope this isn't an irritating question, is…*

PB: *I was expecting to be irritated, I'm irritated every day so this is not stuff for me.*

AP: *Right, well here it comes.*

PB: *Go for it!*

AP: If Gestalt is open to the moment and what's happening in the moment and what arises, like between the helper and their client.

PB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: How is it possible to put in place those boundaries between "this is me doing therapy" and "this is me doing coaching", if you're attempting to be open to whatever emerges in the moment?

PB: (Pause)That is not a naïve question.

AP: Oh good, good [both laugh].

PB: That's a highly sophisticated question.

AP: Good, phew, phew!

PB: Far too difficult for me. Pass! [both laugh].

There were other, less harmonious, moments where it seemed that we tussled over the question. My agenda to ask open, general questions that invited unforeseen narrative responses was occasionally wrong-footed with a repeated request for greater specificity. I wondered why this occurred and concluded afterwards that it might be related to, the sometimes challenging, I-thou, here-and-now nature of gestalt relationships that PD is practiced in. PD's story did not emerge in chronological order. We started focusing on coaching and then in the later parts of the interview we talked about his earlier life. However, across the interview a coherent and developmental narrative materialized. I began to get a picture of an independent spirit and a capacity to act autonomously. Reviewing the transcript later I felt that the earlier chapters of his life formed an important prelude to understanding his identity as a coach.

The kingdom of the beggars

PD described his younger self as a "hippy". It quickly became apparent that he was not alluding to having been a drug ingesting, peace-loving hedonist but rather an angry, dissenting and politically minded activist. He talked about protesting on the street against the National Front and in support of feminist and liberation causes. At Bradford University he said he was drawn to *"the misfits, the alternative people, the radical people, the people who were against"* and dismissive of the majority of other students who he described as *"mainstream people"*. He described his identity at the time as based on the belief that he was

"radical" and *"against the system"*. Yet it was apparent that there was a critical undercurrent attached to this description when he said:

"I could have told you 100 things I was against,
but if you'd said, "oh what are you for?",
I'd have had a lot of trouble with that question."

There was a sense that the hostility that drove campaigning did not originate with the issues he was protesting about, but that those issues were a convenient place to direct a pre-existing anger:

"I was a sort of angry young man,
and there were a lot of other angry young people around,
that there was a way you could express that through social activism."

He then told a story in which he hitchhiked down to London to see a band at The Roundhouse and as he later attempted to sleep on a bench in Waterloo station, he found himself becoming fascinated by the homeless people on the concourse. Although I did not disclose this in the interview, I would have been familiar with some of the people he was describing as I had worked on that station concourse a few years after the time he described. I remembered them as a loud, raucous, edgy presence who could suddenly break out into frightening alcohol-fuelled disputes and fist fights. PD described how his fascination with these people led to him wanting to talk to them. When I reflected on this story, I was reminded of the figure of the poet in the Hunchback of Notre Dame. He was a similarly independent and solitary figure who, adrift in a capital city, also inadvertently stumbled across the kingdom of the beggars. The poet is equally entranced and then discovers that, although he does not belong, he must now stay amongst them. PD's fascination with these people similarly led him to living amongst them when he returned to Bradford:

"I started a soup run in Bradford, …
went out every night around derelict houses,
dishing soup out and stuff,

and then got some charity money together,

and opened a hostel for single homeless,

and so, I was going to lectures during the day,

and running the hostel in the evening and sleeping in it,

nobody wanted to sit next to me in the lectures because of the fleas [both laugh]."

The story reached a resolution in PD becoming a qualified social worker who was in charge of dry hostels and detox centres. Listening to this story I learnt that PD is someone who becomes drawn to things which he then builds an identity on. This seemed to happen in an intuitive and instinctual manner rather than through a cognitive, rational one. When this occurred, it seemed to happen in an unequivocal way that could lead to life-changing decisions.

He provided a coda that completed this story:

"And that was my identity,

that was around the social work thing,

the margin, people at the margin,

and I did that for quite a lot of years"

However, in keeping with his storytelling style he then immediately moved onto the next part of his meta-narrative with the words:

"But my friends were discovering this other big thing that was going on,

which was like humanistic therapies."

Joining the mothership. Part 1

Being drawn into a world of possibilities

The poet in the Hunchback of Notre Dame enters the kingdom of the beggars ("the court of miracles") never to re-emerge. PD however, conveyed a sense that at some point he began experiencing an undercurrent of dissatisfaction and losing his way. It was as if this storyline had run its course; he had championed the cause, made his mark and lived guided by his values. There was a need for a new narrative, but no obvious direction to move in:

"I knew I'd grown out of the social work thing,

working with homeless alcoholics and all of that stuff.,

But did I know what instead? No, I didn't."

Then, through word-of-mouth, he became aware that his peers were becoming involved in workshops that were shifting the focus from the political to the personal. He performed the character of the cynic:

"They would say, "There's a workshop this weekend in Reichian therapy,"

I'd say, "What the fuck's Reichian therapy?"

"Well, I don't really know but I'm going to go, why don't you come?"

and then the following weekend, "There's a workshop in Gestalt therapy," like,

"Well, what's this?"

"I don't know, let's go," you know".

This was the start of his immersion in therapeutic theory and practice that was to become a hallmark of his identity as a coach. He described this period as getting drawn into a *"world of possibilities"* where his eyes became opened to new perspectives. A key insight was his realisation that what he took as his fight with the external world was now conceptualised as a projection of his own internal issues:

"And I started realising what should have been more obvious but wasn't.

That I was trying to resolve stuff in my work

that was really to do with striving to resolve me…

And the work I needed to do was not with, or on them,

but on me. And the penny dropped".

In narrating his journey to becoming a therapist he described gaining new powers while his values transformed, in a fashion that bought to mind a protagonist emerging from a rite of passage or a "dark night of the soul":

"And all of a sudden

I found I could see some things,

and understand some things I couldn't before,

and also, I could do some things that I couldn't do before,

you know, in terms of some skills that I had acquired.

My identity then started to change around,

and things from the past kind of dropped away a bit,

so, my interest in homelessness and all of that receded".

PD referred to this period of engaging with the humanistic therapies and being drawn into the new world of possibilities as the time he started to *"join the mothership"*. When I queried the metaphor, he explained that the mothership was how he conceptualised the mainstream: the people who are not at the margins.

Joining the mothership. Part 2

In The Journey to the East by Herman Hesse the narrator believes that he has once participated in a famous spiritual pilgrimage that had fallen apart due to extrinsic circumstances. He had taken part as an initiate of a spiritual organisation which he believes has now disbanded. Years later, in a revelatory encounter, all he believes is turned on its head. The pilgrimage did not fall apart but was abandoned by him. What he took to be external factors were his own self-defeating internal responses. As all these illusions fall from his eyes he is renewed, reenergised and rediscovers his meaning and purpose. As I listened to the story of PD's move into therapy, followed by his account of a leadership workshop he attended, it seemed to me that this was the new plot; a road-to-Damascus story. At the start of his account of the leadership workshop, I had an image of a countercultural figure who had fought the system, followed where that fight led, but had then run out of road and found himself without direction or momentum. His attitude towards leadership at the start of the scene is portrayed by him as negative and something that he is against:

"I*t was another thing I was anti,*

because "all these leaders are the bad buggers

who are screwing the world up

and what can we do to stop them?"

You know, not "how do we support leaders?"

Leadership is a bad thing."

128

Like Hesse's protagonist the plot is advanced through an unforeseen encounter. PD is unexpectedly invited by his employers to participate in a leadership workshop. He finds himself in a roomful of people who are senior to him, older than him and is perplexed as to why he is there. During the course of that workshop, he has a lifechanging revelation: his understanding of leadership is transformed forever:

"I got leadership for the very first time …
I understood what the importance of leadership was,
and of good leadership, and of supporting good leaders,
but also challenging poor leadership."

Like the unnamed character in Journey to the East he realises that what he once thought was a negative quality, external to himself, is actually a part of who he is and possesses great potential:

"Leadership is not about seniority,
it is not about role; it's about decision.
It's a decision about how you live your life,
I've always believed that, ever since."

The lifechanging effect of the experience was portrayed in PD's performance as both immediate:

"I came out of there saying,
"I'm a player now, not a spectator in terms of leadership…"
I'd stopped just wanting to blame the people out there for doing a bad job,
and said, "I want to get on that pitch and try and do something".
and ongoing:

"it's been core in my compass,
more so than any Gestalt training or anything else.
Been the single most important message
I ever internalised from anything I've ever done."

Within this powerful narrative the outcome of that road-to-Damascus revelation is that PD discovers what he once believed disempowered him and was external to him has the potential for personal empowerment, liberation and fulfilment. The corporate setting which has been perceived as the lair of the adversary is now the site where profound and positive transformation can occur. In terms of the plot, this section is the device that opens the doors to future possibilities and pushes his story along. In terms of the metanarrative all that follows is effectively a resolution of this one complicating event.

In a final reference to the metaphor of the mothership and as a coda to indicate the end of this scene he finished:

"So, I went away saying, you know "I have joined". In a way I had joined."

Coaching: a shot in the dark

PD explained how he had first heard of coaching through noticing something appearing *"on the horizon"*. He recalled seeing things with the word "coaching" attached and having a hunch that it was going to get *"bigger and more significant".* He said the only information regarding coaching at that time consisted of *"four books and a handful of articles".* He explained, "*I backed my hunch and I decided to rebrand my business"*.

In the image of looking to the horizon I imagined an entrepreneur who was looking for an opportunity to get ahead of the other players. However, there also seemed to be the recurrence of a theme. At one level there appeared to be a reprise of the narrative of the hippy looking at the homeless people in Waterloo and finding himself drawn to them. Looking to the margins or the horizons and being fascinated by what he sees there seems to be an inherent part of PD's process. The term *"hunch"* was used repeatedly in this part of his narrative, along with the act of *"backing my hunches"* or taking *"a shot in the dark"* (acts that push the plot along). This suggested intuition, risk-taking and farsightedness as important elements of how he constructs himself as a coach and an entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur he seems to operate like a seer trying to discern those things that are not yet part of the mainstream, and then initiates enterprises that promotes them. After rebranding his company PD described running a two-day workshop on coaching skills and subsequently establishing a

postgraduate programme in coaching at a time when he was *"still trying to…figure it out a bit"*. While this was a narrative of foresight and success, a part of me wondered if marketing these projects while still trying to figure coaching out was indicative of a slightly maverick quality that was happy to risk "busking it".

As PD's narrative unfolded the central importance of being at the forefront and pioneering became more apparent. He explained how his postgraduate coaching programme was one of the first wave that set up in the UK. He recounted having a stand at an EMC conference when:

"There were no more than ten outfits,
and they were the ten outfits in the coaching field at that time.
Full stop.
In this country, there was only ten.
Ten and four books."

At a time when he was trying to be a commercial success and build a professional reputation the importance of being invited to be one of the founder members of the EMCC (and first chair of the standards committee) was apparent. He said it felt good to be amongst *"the main players"* who had written the books, who were *"the leaders and founders of the main coaching consultancies in this country"*. However, although he had initiated these moves, he acknowledged that at the start of his coaching career following his rebranding operation *"it was just about a name change"*. He later described a process that could be characterised as thickening his coaching identity. *"Coach"* developed from being a superficial label he adopted to becoming an internalised identity which then led on to developing his own individual niche within the newly opening field. For PD, this thickening and internalising seemed to proceed from a period of immersion in the literature that he could find on coaching which seems characteristic of his process generally:

"When I get onto a project,
I get very busy and focused and research it deeply.
So, I was doing a lot of work to understand what I was saying I was in.

"What is this coaching thing?"
And what -- "is it just a name change?",
No, it isn't, it's something different"

He framed this process as working to understand the field he had told others he was in. I was again reminded of the possibility of busking it.

PD had been a gestalt psychotherapist for many years at this point and he successfully integrated his therapist identity with his developing coach identity. Whilst there are now many people in coaching who have therapeutic backgrounds, PD was one of the first practitioners to claim a coach-therapist identity. This branding was sufficiently innovative at the time for him to successfully build a distinctive reputation. He characterised his style of coaching and consultancy as *"going a wee bit deeper"*. In discussing the difference between coaching and therapy he introduced an image that he had borrowed from an early supervisor of therapy as *sitting back* in the chair (allowing things to emerge in the field in a more reflective fashion) and coaching as *sitting forward* (bringing momentum and purpose to the process). He became enthusiastic explaining his preference for coaching:

"but the coach … is more,
"So what is it you're wanting your life to be like?"
It's far more active.
It's more visionary.
It's more forward looking".

In delineating what he perceives to be the borders between coaching and counselling he characterised therapy material as historical and focused on unfinished business with themes of hurt and healing. He was clear that even though he is a trained and experienced psychotherapist when he encounters this in coaching sessions that he refers his client onwards. He feels it is important to differentiate between the two areas. While I followed the argument that PD was making, I found myself wondering if there was not an irreconcilable tension. PD's identity as a coach is based to some degree on his history and

competence as a therapist. Therefore, in order to meet client's expectations, he needs to both introduce therapeutic elements (to go *"a wee bit deeper"*) whilst simultaneously holding those same therapeutic elements at bay in order to ensure that the service he is delivering is distinctively coaching.

The big reveal

About halfway through the interview PD metaphorically turned the tables on me by kicking away some of the foundations that I had understood his coaching identity to be built on. As someone who has published extensively on gestalt coaching, he had seemed happy to answer my questions on the topic. Then he suddenly threw this into doubt. In terms of performance the transcript shows a build to the moment of revelation so his disclosure regarding a newly adopted approach to coaching had maximum impact:

PB: *Yeah, well we've arrived at a rather interesting junction, yeah. I think you're making an assumption that I work primarily or even exclusively as a Gestalt coach.*

AP: *Right, yeah I am, yeah.*

PB: *Right, okay [both laugh], we probably need to have this conversation.*

AP: *Yeah.*

PB: *So that, yeah, over the years mainly I have, I don't know whether you know but I wrote a book on Gestalt coaching.*

AP: *I do, I haven't read it but I've seen it.*

PB: *Yeah, you're aware of it, so completely understandable that you would be meeting me and thinking I'm meeting this guy who's a Gestalt coach.*

AP: *Yeah, and you've written that chapter in the Handbook of Coaching and…*

PB: *Books and all that stuff. So, it's not that I don't work from a Gestalt perspective and sensitivity in my work: I do. But my frame of reference has changed a little bit over the last three or four years, and relevant to*

133

the question you asked. To what extent are you familiar with the notion of vertical development?

In the dialogue that followed from this disclosure PD explained vertical development as a developmental staged leadership model. Whereas gestalt is open to what emerges in the moment and tries to carry no expectations of where the work will arrive, PD's new approach conceptualises adult development in terms of stages. The coaching focuses on identifying the stage that the coachee is currently located in, consolidating that and looking towards the possibility of transition to the next stage. PD made the point that people in leadership positions are people who are likely to be disposed to want to achieve the next stage. As he explained this to me, I wondered if the approach was self-perpetuating.

PD explained his new book to me which I took to be an integration or synthesis of vertical development and gestalt. This was a moment of minor disconnection between us. In my own practice and teaching I have an antipathy towards frameworks based on stages. They seem to lack subtlety, fluidity and rarely encapsulate the many aspects of a coaching encounter. Although PD was energised and enthusiastic when he talked about vertical development, I got a clear sense that underlying this new interest was a fatigue with coaching as he had been doing it. When I asked him a question about regulation and professional organisations, he was very candid on this topic:

"I like things in the early stages,

I like to be in on the early bits,

and when it's exciting and novel and untrodden.

And I kind of get a bit bored with it after a while when everybody is in it. …

So, I kind of got bored …with coaching,

and thought "this isn't interesting me as much anymore" …

if you asked me the last time I read any coaching literature,

I can't even tell you.

You'd have to pay me to read a coaching book."

Later in the interview he qualified this by explaining that vertical development had reignited his interest in coaching. I imagined PD growing restless, in the same way he had after years of running hostels, then once again looking to the horizon to see what was appearing that had potential to be marketed. Whereas gestalt has a renown, pedigree and research base that supports its efficacy I wondered if vertical development (in the absence of such elements) has the promise that PD suggested.

<div align="center">Finale and afterthoughts</div>

When I asked PD how he saw his future he did not talk about altruistic causes or winding down. Instead, he described his revitalised interest in coaching that derived from his adoption of a vertical development perspective. He spoke about having rediscovered his purpose and how he wanted to play a part in people having *"transformational experiences"*. He explained he was driving to the west coast of Ireland the following day to run a workshop that would be a *"five-day deep dive"*. He explained that he expected to be doing this work *"for some time to come"*. I was unsure how to align this final animated narrative about coaching with the disengaged one that I had previously heard. I still am.

At the end of the interview I felt energised and stimulated in the same way I feel coming out of a venue following an uplifting performance. PD is a competent and accomplished performer. His years of attending workshops, facilitating workshops and engaging in one-to-one encounters shine through. Even while talking about himself, he is able to keep a clear focus on his audience and create a positive chemistry. Undoubtedly this is a key element of his coaching identity irrespective of which theories and approaches that he happens to be drawing on. PD is not a stereotypical Psy expert lost in positivism and psychometric tests, but uses hunches, intuitions and draws from his edge of awareness. His identity shifts and morphs. He sells on consultancies and coaching companies and creates new ones. He finds new approaches that invigorate him and shares that energy with his audience. His identity is built on fluidity and adaptability. There is an openness to what is emerging on the

horizon, and I believe that this curiosity about the edge of awareness embodies the true spirit of gestalt.

FB: going off into the sunset coaching

"When things are in danger: someone has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them." - The Return of the King, J.R.R Tolkein.

Arrival at the venue: intercoms and keypad Codes

A seriously hot and sunny Friday lunchtime at the back end of March. Before the next interview there is time to pass on the banks of the Regents canal. On days like this London seems to take on a different mood. Affability and lazy contentedness radiate from the people around me. Barge owners are sunbathing on the roofs of their homes with music playing from the boats' open windows. Sunlight glistens and sparkles on water. People call to acquaintances while dogs greet other dogs. Office workers on early lunch breaks try to snatch a few moments of sun-drenched freedom before they return to airconditioned tedium. People who should know better fill the beer gardens drinking pints of strong lager and giving off an air of privileged idleness. On days like this anything seems possible. As I luxuriate in my own moments of sunshine and freedom, for one reckless moment, I find myself contemplating the idea of moving back to London.

An hour later I arrive at the gated complex of flats where FB has an apartment. I am a technophobe so, inevitability, the concierge, who should admit me, is absent from the gatehouse. As a result, I have to navigate my own way to the right apartment in the right block by means of fuzzy intercom conversations and misheard keypad codes. During the process I manage to present myself to FB as ineffectual and inept. Not an auspicious start. Finally, entering the right lift, I try to think of a one-liner that I hope will defuse any irritation my incompetence caused. I step out the lift and she is standing in the doorway of her apartment. I hit her with comedy gold:

"I feel like I have just done a round in the Crystal Maze."

Her steady, contained expression does not change: *"It's not that difficult."* She responds in a level voice.

Metaphoric tumbleweeds blow past me.

The apartment she takes me into is open-plan and well-ordered. There is a lot of glass and light. A large balcony overlooks the canal and draws my gaze in the direction of central London. Although we are in the capital, little noise penetrates from outside. I get a sense of ordered calm. Her office is on a raised level that we ascend to by a stairway. It has no walls and is separated from the rest of the apartment only by the stairway. Given the failed attempt at humour, as we ascend, I wonder how we are going to connect.

FB as a performer: subtleties on the edge of awareness

In a professional realm that has a lot of "big personalities" FB presents in a contrasting style. She is not charismatic or outward going but comes across as quietly spoken and self-contained. Her responses to questions were considered and succinct. It became apparent that FB has an active sense of humour. It is dry, sardonic and based in observation. So, for example, when she was describing a coaching supervision group that she was finding challenging she said:

"So, these are people

who are hired to work as coaches ..(AP: Um hum),

who are very, very young, 21, 22.

Probably quite immature

(looks at me and raises eyebrows)

because you know how adolescence is prolonged is(h)n't it?2

Listening again to the interview it was apparent that there were many moments of humour, but these were quiet chuckles rather than loud laughs.

The narrative that FB shared was a deep and rich one with many colourful characters. Although self-contained, FB was a very active performer. Numerous scenes were enacted and ventriloquised with a disciplined, channelled energy. After meeting her I journaled that she worked at a steady economical pace. Her narrative was peppered with references that located it historically, giving it greater texture. So, as examples, she described keeping her first coaching questions on a sheet of paper in her Filofax, and remembered addressing

138

everyone as *"guys"*. I noted that when she admired someone or wished to validate them in my eyes, she prefixed her reference with positive adjectives:

"he's a distinguished professor of organisational development"

"a very enlightened boss"

"a distinguished psychometrician"

"a seriously qualified psychotherapist and a seriously qualified executive coach"

In this she conveyed a sense of a narrator ensuring that her audience knew where to locate the supporting characters on the narrative landscape.

When I looked back over the transcript it was clear that FB edited her narrative and omitted some details:

"although I didn't last long in the FE world because –

it was all kinds of other reasons."

"it's probably not worth explaining why,

but I'd had to get into consulting

and income generating"

One noticeable occurrence of this was when I asked FB how she thought her new coachees experienced her. She gave a very insightful answer that suggested a high degree of personal awareness before suddenly breaking off:

"Um, I don't know. You'd have to ask them."

Overall, I think I experienced FB's performance the same way that I experience plays or films which I don't fully appreciate at the time. Its subtleties and nuances continued working away on the edge of my awareness, so that I was still thinking about it days later. Reviewing the interview transcript, it was apparent that FB has a lot of knowledge and wisdom, and that she spoke from a highly informed and grounded perspective. One of the difficulties for me in appreciating it fully at the time, was that it became clear that FB is a corporate native. Not only does this get in the way of me identifying with and visualising the narratives, but it can also activate a (wholly unreasonable) chip on my

shoulder. However, the temporary alliance between us seemed authentic. When FB struggled with a question I had asked about the terrain of coaching, she acknowledged that she wasn't clear regarding the concepts that informed it, before offering me reassurance that *"there's nothing wrong with your question"*. At the end of her response, she joked that she wasn't answering what was probably the most important question in the interview (it wasn't).

The BBC: a push-pull rhythm of creative tension

As the interview developed it became apparent that the BBC is a central foundation of FB's identity and narrative. It was symbolic of a bygone era; rich in resources and opportunities, but whose time of glory has passed. It featured as both scenography and a character. As scenography, it provided the background for FB, and other characters, to play out their dramas. As character, it was a shifting, morphing and multifaceted presence. At different times in the account there were references to its various incarnations as "*the virtual BBC", "John Birt's BBC"* and *"the real BBC"*. At one point in the interview use of the word "mentoring" was described as *"un-BBC"*. At another moment it was described as an ailing patient, desperately in need of a cure for its malaise (a toxic cocktail of obesity, sloth and self-importance). At other times it appeared to be a resource-rich creative playground where visionary pitches could be made, reputations could be built and successful careers launched. Within the plot of FB's narrative, the BBC gives her multiple roles and allows her to present and hone different aspects of her personae. It is a place where FB develops and discovers her vocation but must ultimately depart from. The changes that occur in the character and the nature of the BBC create repercussions in FB's world which culminate in her evolving into a successful, independent executive coach.

Possibly the most distinctive drama within the setting of the BBC was her account of her time as the producer for a famous TV chef. The chef was a ground-breaking media figure who became iconic and popularised cooking programmes (during the interview FB also described her in asides as *"exasperating"* and *"a bit dim"*)*.* In the narrative FB takes on sexist, cynical male channel controllers and department heads, and wins. My sense, listening to her account, was that she became profoundly empowered and realised the full

extent of her own potential during this time. This sense was epitomised for me in a scene she performed to illustrate the show's influence:

"It was entrancing, you know,

she waved a lemon zester in front of the camera,

the next day lemon zesters would sell out absolutely everywhere.

People just, you know, go "oh I'll have to have a lemon zester,

my life isn't complete,

D. says I have to have one."

It was clear that this period was the highlight of her media career and remains an important element of her own narrative.

"I loved the idea that I was D's first primetime producer;

that the book we produced

would be in more or less every British kitchen at the time,

and that people who thought they couldn't cook discovered that they could."

However, the sense it conveyed of a push-pull rhythm with the BBC was one that would be repeated in her account of becoming a coach. The BBC at once provided a nurturing setting, offering rich opportunities, whilst simultaneously creating barriers that she pushes against. It is by pushing against these elements that the narrative gets advanced, and she generates the creative tension that leads to her becoming a successful coach.

John Birt: running the virtual BBC

FB had two spells at the BBC in different roles. She achieved recognition and success in both. One potential development of this narrative could have been that she remained at the BBC for the rest of her career and built on her achievements. However, this would not have provided the drama necessary for a meaningful narrative and she would have remained an unknown inhouse coach. The complicating action in her story, that initiated events needed to progress the narrative, was the appointment of John Birt in 1992. In terms of the

dramatic action Birt is something of a pantomime villain that FB described simply as *"not a nice man"*. Birt's tenure at the BBC is generally regarded as one of political subordination to external Thatcherite philosophies (Born, 2004). It is an era characterised by increasing demoralisation and alienation amongst the corporation's staff. He attempted to institute radical reforms in corporate attitudes and organisational structures that sought to emulate the changes that Thatcher had wrought in the external world. Although FB's distaste for Birt and the changes he sought was apparent, there was also a subtext in her discourse that suggested she acknowledged that the time for a privileged and entrenched BBC culture was passing; that the changes Birt heralded were regretful but also inevitable:

"his diagnosis of what was wrong with the BBC

obviously was completely correct,

his remedy was bad."

"(they said) the real BBC's carrying on just as usual."

I mean that wasn't quite true because it couldn't."

FB created an image of beleaguered BBC staff keeping their heads down and engaging in passive resistance. She described an in-house perspective of a comically deluded John Birt running the *"virtual BBC"* where the majority of staff presented an outward face of compliance, whilst they attempted to preserve a culture on the ground of "business-as-usual". In FB's narrative, like many pantomime villains, Birt falls victim to his own machinations. His implementation of policy is flawed, and he is unable to sustain the effort to see through the changes he is trying to make:

"(they had) no idea that what they were up against was the BBC's culture,

which was just waiting for John Birt to pass away,

you know, and knew that he would…

kind of knew it would wear him out and it did."

However, this era is the pivotal element in FB's narrative. Ironically, FB and the department she ran found success within this regime and expanded. As she moved to take over and incorporate another department, she had a moment of illuminating realisation:

"I realised I did not want to be part of John Birt's BBC."

"I thought "Really do I want to be a BBC boss?" "No!"

FB's Journey to become a coach: meeting her tribe

FB's account of how she became a coach seemed to be told in two different ways. One perspective characterised coaching as something that she had stumbled upon by chance. The second version conveyed a sense of FB metaphorically finding her way home.

In the first perspective she inherited a new department. She described it as *"a complacent department"* that was *"jogging along quite nicely"* and that her immediate thoughts were *"this is awful, they really need a complete shake-up".* Whilst she was instituting a change of culture, that focused on running in-house professional development courses, she began being approached by senior figures who wanted to discuss professional dilemmas in a confidential setting. These anonymous senior figures had a chorus-like function in her story as their requests for 1-2-1 sessions become ever more frequent and strident, and started to become central to the services that her department provided. A chance encounter with a character, only ever named as Ben, on a psychometrics course led her to discover that there were people making their living coaching. She returns to her department to triumphantly announce:

"Hey guys…what were doing is "coaching". Let's call it "coaching!"

In the second version coaching is an activity that she has a natural predisposition towards. Becoming a coach has elements of inevitability, self-realisation and of fate being fulfilled. She told a story of her intuitively coaching a childhood friend (who suffered social anxiety) by employing an empathic combination of support and challenge. In her account of initiating 1-2-1 sessions at the BBC she explained that she instinctively took to coaching before she knew it was called coaching. In a later scene she got sent by one of her

managers to Colombia, New York State as a student on a course to support her coaching. She described an immediate and profound sense of connection with the people that she met there:

"So I went there.

For the first time I met my tribe.

I met thirty-nine other people

who thought the same way, had the same interests

and a lot of them were calling themselves coaches…

I felt immediately at home"

In the scenes that precede and follow this event there is an unconscious sense of fate and predestination communicated in that all she has to do is express her aspiration to become a coach and it comes to pass.

In the first scene of this version, she is having an appraisal session with a manager *"standing round a flip chart at the BBC's building in White City"*. She enacted the dialogue of the scene performing both roles:

"he said "well what do you see yourself doing in five years' time?"

Out of my mouth I heard the words

"Running my own coaching practice"

and he said "well in that case I'd better send you to Columbia".

I said "okay, alright, what does that mean?"

He said "well three separate weeks in upstate New York."

I did the course run by Warner Burke"

As the course ended, she got offered work by the tutor, who asked the same BBC manager if FB could have a temporary leave of absence:

"Bob said "No, she's ready to leave the BBC." Which is quite right; I was."

So, FB found herself a self-employed executive coach and in the first year quadrupled her BBC salary. This sense of FB meeting her fate, or self-actualising, is consolidated by the turns of phrase that she used to suggest an edge-of-awareness intuition being followed:

"Out of my mouth I heard the words…"

"I realised I did not want to be…"

"It made me realise I didn't want to be a manager."

FB's narrative of moving into coaching can be aligned with her story about the TV chef's cookery book. In both instances she followed her instinct, intuition and enthusiasm which took her in a different direction to the BBC. On both occasions following her instinct proves rewarding. The BBC at one and the same time facilitates her, while also giving her something to push against, until it is finally time for her to move beyond it and find her own place in the world.

The teaching identity: not downloading the standard lecture

FB explained to me how her first post-university role was as a tutor in further education. Although this role had not lasted long, the sense of herself as a teacher remains. She explained that this aspect of her identity contains an instinct that she finds safe to trust. This had been instrumental in her media career and is now subsumed into her identity as a coach. In the first place because she trains people to be coaches and writes textbooks on the topic. However, she believes that it extends beyond this and, whilst acknowledging that this is not a popular perspective with many coaches, she believes that there are strands of teaching that are inherent to coaching. At one point she became quite energised on this issue and asserted that if a coach had information or knowledge relevant to a coachee's situation:

"it is absolutely your duty to offer it to a client

and that if you don't

you are guilty of neglecting your duty of care."

However, she made it clear that there is a way of teaching that is in keeping with the spirit of coaching which ensures the autonomy and agency of the client

that is *"not downloading the standard lecture"*. In order to illustrate this point, she performed a scene of coaching a client on writing a CV (something that she possesses expertise on) with her taking on both roles and ventriloquising the client:

"Well, what would be useful to know?

Then people might say "well I know there's more than one format.

I know the chronological format but what others are there?"

They vaguely know there might be others.

So okay, "well how much detail do you want on this?"

And they might say "not much" or "do you have an example?"

So, I say "yeah, I can either show it to you now or I can send it to you later,

or I can just describe it, which would you prefer?"

I reflected that some people change their careers and view their new occupations as a rejection or antithesis of their previous professional life (e.g. the once stressed city businessperson who takes up a more aesthetic or sedate occupation). In contrast FB, in common with other coaches, takes her previous posts as foundations to build on. However, for FB these are not simply previous jobs where she has picked up relevant skills and knowledge but rather positions where she has been able to express aspects of her essential self.

The embodied coach: being a coach not doing coaching

FB had referred to studying psychometrics, using a list of *"magic questions"* and employing tools and techniques during her early coaching career. This created an image of someone who drew from frameworks and liked structure. However, as the discussion about the teaching element of coaching developed, she made it clear to me that in her view coaching has many *"grey"* borders; included its boundaries with mentoring and therapy. In her practice she moves around these different areas believing that "*clients are grown-ups"* and are able to decide how they want to work within sessions.

This conveyed a counter-impression, of a seasoned practitioner able to move flexibly between different roles, approaches and perspectives. This theme developed as she enacted her recent encounter with a supervision group:

"it kind of came home to me

that their preoccupations were things like

"I'm not sure I know how to ask the right question"

or "have I got the goal right?"

They're only, they haven't really finished their training

and "what do I do if a client cries?

This client cried and I didn't know what to do".

I thought "oh blimey".

You have to go through that phase

and stick at it enough to come out the other side and just keep on doing it,

and most people don't"

As FB developed this theme it became apparent that she believes competence comes with experience, and that meaningful experience results in the coach embodying coaching so that in the final analysis:

"It's about being a coach, not about doing coaching."

It was clear that this sense of embodying coaching ran deep in her sense of her identity and that she needed no validation beyond it. When I asked her whether she saw coaching as a "profession" or "industry" she spurned both terms and replied:

"No. I just say "coaching"

She became increasingly disparaging during our dialogue about tools, techniques and frameworks, equating them with bogus coach training programmes. She explained that in her view these tools are the start of the journey to become a coach and nothing more. She shared her enthusiasm for

the writings of the psychotherapist Irvin Yalom and how she sees the relationship between coach and coachee as the single biggest factor in successful coaching. At other points she talked warmly about humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers and transactional analysis As I listened, I wondered if she recognised how far she herself seemed to have travelled from a belief in *"magic questions"* to trusting the relationship, or whether she was unaware of this subtext in her story.

FB's persona: a puzzling mixture of cool and warm

When I looked to the interview transcript to try and create an overview of how FB presented, I did not find it easy. I experienced her as plain speaking, which instinctively made me trust her, but initially did not make me warm to her. I asked her how she thought her new coachees experienced her. Her response, *"a puzzling mixture of cool and warm"* aligned with my experience and suggested she possesses a high level of self-awareness. She continued that people probably found her thoughtful and direct, but that her level of directness might be scary for some. Earlier in the interview, when she had described finding her *"tribe"*, I had asked what those people were like. She had responded that they were *"curious about human nature"*, *"didn't accept shallow explanations"* and enjoyed working with senior people who could make a difference. Everything that she said aligned with how I experienced her. In terms of not accepting shallow explanations her diatribe against the more fringe elements of the coaching world made it clear to me that FB considered herself to be a rationalist who demanded coherent explanations for things. As I sat with her, I felt the underlying humour, empathy and capacity to connect with others had made itself apparent. I reflected that if she was my coach, I imagined she would be a calm and steadying influence in turbulent times. I would experience her as being wiser and more experienced than me. I would also expect her to deliver strong challenge.

The fringe element: "anything woo-woo"

When I asked FB if there were any areas of the coaching world that repelled her, she responded vehemently; beginning her response before I had finished my question. It became clear that she felt negatively about approaches that

lacked a rational foundation and were used (in her opinion) to financially exploit the vulnerable. Reading through the transcript of this section there were a number of exclamations that communicated the strength of her feeling regarding these elements:

"I really dislike it."

"I can't bear it!"

"Anything woo-woo"

"All based on lies"

"so exploitative it's awful"

The specific offenders identified were NLP, the family constellations approach, and celebrity coach Tony Robbins. Afterwards, when I read some of her papers, I found that a number of life-coach training schemes also attracted criticism from her. NLP was portrayed (possibly with some justification) as lacking an evidence base and being promoted in the style of pyramid selling schemes. I had not heard of family constellations or "morphic resonance" so she described to me how the approach works and how an important element is the telepathic communication of hitherto concealed insight from ancestors. Tony Robbins was cast as a malevolent mountebank exploiting vulnerable people in the style of a nineteenth century evangelist.

"The Tony Robbins kind of coaching phenomenon,

straight line from 19th Century evangelical preaching, including cures.

There are a lot of very needy, vulnerable people out there,

and people pay so much money

to go and be one of a thousand people at one of his so-called rallies.

It's no different from Morris Cerullo,

notorious American evangelist who promised to cure people of terminal illnesses.

So exploitative it's awful."

I felt that it was hard to argue with the points that FB made on this topic. The tales of pyramid selling, fake cures and evangelical meetings invoked for me images of the great depression in the US, with desperate people turning to novel places for alleviation of their suffering. FB's willingness to challenge these elements and demand evidence of their efficacy seemed to carry something of the rationalist spirit of the age of enlightenment. In FB's discourse there seemed to be a clear boundary line between the *"woo-woo"* and the rational.

After the interview, as I worked on analysing the data, I smiled to myself as this boundary became slightly more porous. Some internet research uncovered that a *"seriously qualified"* collaborator of FB's, and Professor Franz Ruppert (whose work they perpetuate through training courses), are both practitioners of the family constellations approach.

<div align="center">Finale</div>

FB's story cannot be appreciated outside of its historical context. Whilst FB bemoans the refashioning of the BBC into a more market-driven and downsized entity, she herself seems to share some of the qualities of the time and to be created (as a coach) through a combination of resistance to, and compliance with, John Birt's BBC (along with the wider Thatcherite agenda). Yet it was clear, as she spoke about producing cookery programmes or the BBC having funds to send her on a course in New York, that there was a fondness and nostalgia for the corporation as it had once been: resource rich and awash with license fee money. Whilst her move from the BBC into professional coaching is ostensibly a reaction against the Birt era at the BBC, it could equally be interpreted as an act of compliance with the Thatcherite zeitgeist. She moved from being an employee of a state-funded institution to becoming a self-employed, independent entrepreneur, with a role supporting top management in British businesses. She both resists the times and moves with the times.

The structure of her narrative, the period of history she described, along with her response to those circumstances was, for me, reminiscent of the closing chapter of Lord of the Rings. Within that mournful, sorrowful and epic text the age of magic is ending, and "the age of man" is beginning. Faced with the sad but inescapable circumstances, the surviving characters divide into two. There

are those who have no place in this new world and will depart it. In contrast there are the characters that remain; whilst mourning the passing of a more magical time, they have settled and found their place in this new world. FB is one of those who remained. She had work to do and new battles to fight. It was noticeable that when I asked her about plans for the future, unlike other interviewees, she intended to continue coaching *"until either the market decides I can't, or I lose interest".* My final sense was of someone who is content with themselves, and I had an image in my mind's eye of FB going off into the sunset still coaching.

<div align="center">Leaving the venue</div>

Outside it was still sunny and London still seemed a vibrant and optimistic place. However, something had shifted. I wasn't going to be moving back to London anytime soon. I needed to get back to King's Cross, find my train and return to my home in Yorkshire. I had also hit a milestone in my PhD journey in terms of learning about my own coaching identity. I understood that my coaching practice is never going to get me access to the corporate spaces and personalities that FB could talk about in such quiet, matter-of-fact tones. I am not a corporate native and this encounter had taught me that I would never feel at ease or authentic in such locations. The sources I draw from in my coaching begin with my practice of therapy, not my experience in the corporate setting, but I know that my coaching has value. As I looked to this native of the corporate world, she had returned my gaze. These were complimentary gazes where performer and spectator, corporate denizen and therapist, respectfully acknowledged one another and then went their separate ways.

BC: a strange, mysterious and wonderful encounter

"There's a battle outside and it is raging,
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls,
For the times they are a'changin' " - Bob Dylan

Beforehand – the curtain-raiser

I had not expected to get a meeting with BC. She was the only research participant I had cold emailed. I felt a bit in awe of her.

A few months before our interview I had attended a BACP coaching conference in York where I had found myself antagonized by the announcement from the podium that the BACP were devising a set of coaching competencies that were "soon to be unveiled!". As I sat in the crowded uninspiring surroundings, I was feeling like I did not belong. While slipping into a disgruntled, grumpy afternoon haze my focus was suddenly pulled sharply back into the room by a woman in dark clothes who took to the stage and announced:

"I was there at the beginning of coaching and I want to tell you that we were making it up then and we are making it up now."

This announcement was clearly off-message from the theme of standardization, competencies and at odds with the culture of the BACP. As I listened, I became more and more hooked into this speaker whose narratives of working with top companies because they can make the changes the world needs, becoming a Zen Buddhist monk and connecting top-end corporate executives with dying people so that the wisdom of the dying can be passed to the people who can make a difference fired my imagination. The successful combination of spirituality and coaching, which some other coaches aspire to but have never (in my eyes) fully pulled off, appeared unexpectedly to be embodied before me. I wanted to know more. However, I am not someone who is good at tugging at speakers' sleeves at conferences. A few weeks later I sat down to draft an email expecting to be rebuffed.

Arrival at the Venue

I arrive in London on another hot day in April. It is clear that summer has started too early. However, it is not relaxed or idyllic. There is something in the air that

feels unsettling. The climate rebellion is in full swing. London is not working like clockwork. After a week of minor disruptions people are starting to become spiteful in their comments. Insecurity about how public transport will be working in the face of protestors' direct-action results in me walking between Kings Cross and the venue in Tottenham Court Road. Elsewhere in the world the aging head of BC's monastery will be arrested as a part of the same wave of international protest. It feels as if the old order, the old way of doing things is shouting at the top of its voice *"business as usual!"* when it is no longer sustainable. Another, saner narrative is emerging but the two cannot co-exist. The resulting conflict is inevitable, and I find myself wondering how long this will remain affable and peaceful. Later, on BC's company website, I read the following:

"We have become a society in which the status quo is no longer a viable strategy. Disruption, disturbance, change, transformation, agility, boldness and creativity – these are the essential characteristics of a new leadership age."

The lift in the building is not working. I climb the stairs. The heat. The climb. The conflict. The unfamiliarity.

I occasionally experience minor anxiety states. They seem to have a life of their own. As BC greets me and sits me down in an unfamiliar setting suddenly my brain freezes, my breath is shorter than it should be, and I am aware that I have unexpectedly started sweating. *"Not now. Please not now".* I look down, fumbling in my rucksack while praying the moment will pass. BC announces that she will leave me for a moment while she goes to find a room. My internal voice unhelpfully scolds me. I try to take back control of my breath and look around.

The venue itself is like nothing I have ever seen. People hire tenancy for their business without having set offices or spaces that are specific to them. In my journal I wrote:

"A light modern space in central London. A workplace without offices. With its hushed conversations, quiet corners and table service it feels like a postmodern gentlemen's club. A serene space within busy central London. Lots of low comfy

sofas and large expensive wooden tables. People working with relaxed
concentration on laptops."

BC returns having found a corner room where we will not be disturbed. Herbal
tea arrives. We begin.

The audience and the performer

As I settled and my anxiety receded it appears (from the tape) I was listening in
a different way. There was less overt humour in this interview. There seemed
less need to bond in that way. Later in the interview CB described herself as
being an introvert who is happy on a stage or a conference platform.

Her discourse was peppered with words that suggested an attitude of curiosity
and unrealised promise such as *"intrigued"*, *"possibilities"* and *"potential"*. In
response to my opening questions BC dived straight into her account and I
found myself lost on her narrative landscape without any landmarks. After a
couple of questions, I had to ask her to back up and tell her story in a more
linear fashion. The narrative that unfolded was populated with the names of the
characters who are the founders of both action learning and coaching,
(validating the assertion that she was *"there at the beginning"*).

There were moments of intimacy in the conversation:

CB: *"I didn't probably use that word at the time,*
in fact I'm not sure I've ever said that to anybody before."

There were also moments of alignment:

AP: *stuff arising and you integrate it and then it…*
BC: *That's it!*
AP: *…goes away again, yeah.*
BC: *Yeah. Beautiful description (AP: Yeah.), yeah really.*

There was a particular moment where I flippantly said that I was scared to ask a
question and BC immediately replied *"Don't be scared."* When I listened back to
this on the tape I wondered if I had caught a fleeting glimpse of the person who

sits with those who are dying. It seemed to carry a message of reassurance and comfort in it; that everything would be alright. There are times during the encounter when she became more energised. These tended to be around the themes of the shortcomings of coaching and coaching's potential to be an agency of meaningful change in the world.

BC as a performer is not a natural actor. There were few instances of ventriloquising or scenes being enacted. However, rich stories were shared, and engaging images constructed. My sense was that as a performer she is a highly articulate and engaging storyteller.

Action Learning and the Alma Mater

Recounting her career BC explained she followed up training to become a psychotherapist by getting hired to facilitate action learning projects. She also enrolled on a master's course at the University of Surrey. Listening to her account, this period sounded like a kaleidoscope of amazing people and locations. This was the gateway for her to enter the corporate world as a harbinger of fresh insight and novel thinking. The people who initially hired her were Jonathan Coates (head of the Centre for Action Learning) and Alan Mumford (co-developer of Honey and Mumford learning styles). Their role in her narrative appeared to be as generous- spirited and visionary mentor figures. She described them as:

"two white, middle-aged, upper-class men
who were totally committed to taking learning,
not just leaving it in the classroom,
but taking it into the workplace
and getting people to learn and lead simultaneously."

She drew a picture of how radical some of this work could be:

"we went to Ghana …with bankers,
getting them to go on the streets of Kumasi and Accra,

155

looking at how women were burying money in pots
because they didn't trust banks,
and getting them to go and talk to those women,
about how they might help them."

Later I smiled as I imagined BC, full of confidence, leading the way into urban, deprived areas in Africa and coaxing women to come and make pitches to international bankers.

At the suggestion of one of these mentor characters she enrolled on a course run by the Human Potential Resource Group. This was a group that had been set up to incorporate humanistic and transpersonal psychology into education. Participation in this programme had clearly been a very powerful for BC:

"It was a rich time of, um,
reflection, practice, enquiry, reflection, practice, enquiry,
getting stuck, not knowing, not having the --,
not being able to formulate ideas,
standing in the face of complexity
and not knowing what to do with it,
but it was like an accelerator."

She explained to me that she can still recognise people who have taken that course by the language that they use and their quality of presence.

As I listened to BC's account it seemed that this era had been a transitory, liminal space between her identity as a therapist and her identity as a coach. A time when benevolent figures had appeared and offered her learning opportunities that bought momentum to her narrative. At this point in her narrative, she did not appear to be following a specific path but rather taking up opportunities. She talks about *"finding myself"* in situations and being *"super lucky"*. It made me wonder more generally if there is a period in our professional identity construction, immediately post-qualification, where we are more open to possibilities both psychologically (we stand at a crossroads in our

life) and materially (we have less to lose so we are ready to seize opportunities). In such a situation, I reflected whether professional identity is more likely to be a hotchpotch of elements we collect from others as a prelude to crafting our own distinctive identity configuration.

<div align="center">Coaching Then</div>

BC recounted being approached by the Alexander Corporation (run by Graham Alexander one of the originators of the GROW model) and that *"very quickly"* she was doing the work of a coach.

When BC talked about coaching it seemed to get conceptualized into three categories: coaching then, coaching now and coaching as it should be. "Coaching then" was the era when coaching had just begun to establish itself. She recalled her and her peers becoming aware, in the late 1980's and early 1990's, that here was something in the ether referred to as "coaching". She characterized it as a time when people had *"in-trays and out-trays, they'd send letters, so the pace of everything was just much less."* She painted a picture of a colourful and rich time when the pioneers of coaching were still trying to figure out what coaching was and how to do it. She described the conundrum as having a piece of language with nothing to inhabit it. She said that she could feel the *"intrigue"* of that time in the present moment as she described it to me. She characterised the era as a landscape containing elements from the sports world and the therapeutic world that had not yet gained a coherence or a fixed nature:

"being on the sports pitch and being on the therapist's couch and we tried to make an amalgam between those two things"

As I puzzled out what that amalgam might consist of, I reflected that a part of it was a quality of attention that combined the openness to the moment (she had experienced through Tim Gallwey's exhortations to "watch the ball"), the curiosity and willingness to experiment (imbued in action learning), and the forward momentum of the GROW framework. I reflected that being a pioneer who was there at the beginning of coaching and who now had access to the corporate world might have been sufficient foundation for a successful coaching

identity; that of veteran-pioneer coach whose depth of experience and scope of connections is an assurance of the quality of her work. However, BC is unusual in that she has inhabited two distinctive coaching identities. During the interview she was happy for me to talk about this in terms of her coaching "pre and post Zen".

Zen Buddhism

In performance terms the initial sections of the interviews had elicited soliloquys from BC. The first scene in the interview that had a clear setting and line of action concerned her time at the Upaya Zen Buddhist monastery in New Mexico. I later reflected that the narrative structure employed is similar to the archetypal one which Joan Halifax (the founder and roshi of the monastery BC attended) identifies in the anthropological texts she has authored on shamanism; the initiation, dissolution and reconstitution of the initiate (Halifax 1982).

BC recounted her arrival at Upaya, drawn by the reputation of Halifax for combining spirituality with social activism, along with a specific programme being run on "being and dying" which bought together *"contemplatives, medics and lay practitioners"*. BC had made numerous references to her work with dying people across the interview. She described this initial experience at Upaya as *"amazing. Absolutely amazing".* Following this initial experience of Upaya, BC described undergoing *"A profound wake-up call actually to leading a deeper life, not just an introspective life but a deeper life of service".* In response to this she explained *"I kept going back, I just kept going back"*. I was struck by how different the tone of this scene, (the line of action and the motivation of her character) was compared to the earlier segments of her narrative. Whereas previously it seemed she had found herself in the right place at the right time and seized the opportunities presented to her by others, here she seemed more agentic and driven. I had concluded that her previous coaching identity had bought together her natural talents with the roles that were gifted by others. Conversely in this scene she seemed driven from within and clearly committed to creating something that was unique to her. Her account of Upaya invoked a compelling scene of energy, diversity and creative thought.

"I spent time with neurobiologists, I spent time with peace activists,
there were projects working with street gangs in New Mexico,
there were creative writing projects…
Being in this amazing continuous flow of conversation
about practice and psychology and the state of the world,
and poetry and art, and life and death and, um,
the freedom inside all of that was quite remarkable."

As she explained the impact of this environment on her, I was reminded of my impression at the conference in York, that she seemed to have combined coaching and spirituality successfully:

"what happened was that there was a coalescing
of my kind of psychological training,
my work in organisations
that was being really well supported by the master's degree at Surrey,
and then this.
What felt like a deeper philosophy;
an older deeper philosophy,
actually, coming into relationship with those two other parts"

However, this initiatory journey also sounded arduous; there was a running theme of trial and challenge. At one end of the spectrum there was learning to give full attention to tasks and lose attention to her own needs which manifested in weeks of performing mundane tasks. At the other end she shared with me the story of a retreat to Auschwitz-Birkenhau where she had chanted the names of those who had been murdered and engaged with the descendants of both those who had been killed and those who had perpetuated the atrocities. Along with this, there were also the rigours of being a monk:

"Sesshin is a thing you might do once or twice a year,
where you sit facing the wall for between eight to ten days.
Just facing a blank wall,
and it felt to me like radical therapy,

that idea of just facing your own mind in an unintermediated way

with no distractions, so you don't talk.

You don't look at anybody else.

You don't journal.

You literally have to deal with what your mind throws on a wall,

and then you look back at it and it's a very intense process."

As a result of her sustained engagement with the practice of Zen she described a state of awareness that enables her to meet the encounters she engages with in her professional life:

"the Zazen has really helped with all of that.

It's just to observe, observe, notice, notice,

but not to be overwhelmed by it really…

In a curious way I think I'm a paradox.

I walk around with an empty head most of the time,

…until something arises to meet me

and then I'm very happy to meet it,

and of that I find intensity and depth"

Coaching Post-Zen

I was struck that BC seemed reenergized by the corporate setting following her immersion in Zen, rather than becoming alienated from it. She described encountering a book while spending time in the monastery that impacted powerfully on her (Senge et al 2005). It describes bringing a holistic and mindful quality of attention to corporate issues, whilst aligning personal development and greater self-awareness with professional impact. The quality of attention that the book describes can be equated with Zen. She recalled it as a moment of realizing that she was not alone. That there is a *"movement of people who may not exclusively identify as being a coach"* who are focused on meeting the challenges of corporate life by developing deeper states of awareness. As I listened, it felt that this was another moment when her psychological training, organisational work and spiritual outlook coalesced:

"It didn't turn me away from working in organisations,
if anything, I think it brought me back to them with renewed vigour,
with more of a sense of urgency about my own life and about the work."

Earlier in the interview she had referred to organisations as *"complex,*
stimulating places of great possibility". When I heard her in York, I recalled her
saying words to the effect that she chose to work with top end corporations
because they are the institutions that have the capacity to make the changes
the world needs. It was clear to me by the end of the interview that for BC the
workplace is in the process of evolving into something not yet realised.

Returning into the corporate world post-Zen her identity as a coach had
undergone a transformation:
"So, you know, when you talk about identity,
I started quietly to think about myself as a corporate contemplative,
a person who was trying to contemplate more deeply
what does it mean to participate in the flow of corporate life?"

Her description of her coaching post-Zen suggested a far more fluid, subtle and
nuanced process based on deepening awareness rather than goals or
strategies. She talked about bringing attention to smaller pieces of data on the
edges of awareness. There seemed to be a theme of flow in what she
described. The word *"impermanence"* got used several times and she spoke of
an increased consciousness of things coming into and going out of existence.
She also talked about Zen developing her capacity for greater intimacy and
equanimity. By *"equanimity"* BC explained that she meant the capacity to sit
with suffering without needing to numb herself to it or try to rescue the other
person. She referred to *"the wider dispensation"* that being a corporate
contemplative gave her. To illustrate this she performed a scene where one of
her coachees described their work to someone else:

"we could talk about what it's like to be impermanent
and to create a legacy or not,
and we could talk about what it's like to not know

whether you're working out of meaning and purpose

or whether you're just like Mother Theresa

for twenty odd years just showing up

without knowing whether you're still hearing God.

So, it felt broader, bigger, deeper.

The territory was less defined, but we weren't frightened to go there."

BC conceptualized coaching post-Zen as transcending the identity of a coach:

"I don't know if I've ever said this before

but I think what happened to me afterwards,

was that I came out from behind the identity of a coach,

I came out from behind it,

not like it was a front but that it was a structure and an archetype,

and I poked my head out round the corner."

Later I found myself reflecting on this image. I wondered whether it was possible to transcend identity. Certainly, I believe it is possible to reconstitute or reinvent identity. In that process it is also possible to attain greater levels of authenticity as well as an increased capacity for reflection and contemplation. In questioning this it seemed I was revisiting the essentialist vs. non-essentialist debate; "can I ever simply be myself?". I am not sure you can. By taking the robe did that not develop a reconfigured identity rather than shed one?

Altruism

"Work is love made visible"

Reflecting on the essentialist vs. non-essentialist riddle drew me to an element in BC's narrative that seemed to transcend her various professional roles; that of altruism. I wondered if it was a quality that was inherent or something she had developed through her various identities. Whilst compassion is an element of Zen it is clear that BC's active altruism predated her commitment to Buddhism. Her work with dying people and the scene she had performed of going into the streets of Ghana had already evidenced this.

The first time that this theme became apparent was when she spoke about becoming a nurse. She described nursing as a *"heart-based practice"*. She also spoke about the grace she experienced in the hands-on work of caring for others. As she reflected further on this topic she went even further back in time and recalled as a teenager being gifted a copy of The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran and coming across the phrase *"work is your love made visible"*:

"and just knowing before the age of 16
that the profound truth of that was irrefutable
and you just can't argue with it.
I could not argue with it.
And so, I could not imagine practicing employment,
without practicing love"

However, the assertion that *"I could not argue with it"* made me feel that this was a conscious recognition of a value that was already internalised. When BC made allusions to her family of origin it was clear that her background had been a challenging one (there were references to poverty, frequently moving home and a general lack of dignity) however BC's mother stood out as a role model for her:

"I was probably most influenced
in my relationship building skills by my mother,
who had lots of challenges.
But one of the things that she was absolutely great at doing
was being in service.
And so, she had a sense of generosity towards people
and a sense of extending herself towards people who needed things"

As examples of this quality she recalled being a child and sharing her packed lunch with another child who had no food. She recalled another scene where she gave toys away:

"I had a train set, didn't have very many toys but I had a fantastic train set,

and the kid who lived in the house next-door was really seriously ill,
and I remember getting on the stepladder from the kitchen,
and handing my train set over the fence
so that they could have my train set to play with
because they couldn't go out anywhere."

During this section of the interview BC seemed to have a moment of insight where it became apparent to her that this quality had transcended the individual roles she had occupied:

"And in a way if I look back on it now (breaks off)
Oh, that's interesting isn't it?
Nurse, therapist, monk, coach,
they're all helping professions, yeah.
I think that's true …"

However, it was unclear whether this was a quality that she had learned from her mother's modelling or whether it was inborn. She finished her reflections on the topic by saying:

"I picked that up. It was inherent to me."

Coaching as it is - Coaching as it should be

BC explained that the coaching landscape has changed dramatically (training, professional organisations etc.). Much of this she seemed to view with equanimity. However, she still sees the actual practice of coaching as needing an overhaul.

"I don't believe that what was begun thirty plus years ago is currently fit for purpose today…
So, we can't run coaching practices where the gap
between the way work is and the work we're doing,
it is just widening and widening."

As this theme developed it became apparent that BC believes in, what Western (2012) describes as, the network coaching discourse. In her view different factors are all interconnected:

"I think that's the real problem with coaching is
that we look at everything through an individual lens.
But these individuals are part of a system, or a flow,
that affects our society, our economy,
it affects people's empowerment, it's a much bigger issue."

BC sees much of contemporary coaching practice as failing to be an agent of positive change. In her view coaching has the potential to *"hold business to account"* but this can only be done if there is greater communication between coaches alongside a greater sense of joint inquiry. She does not see the professional organisations as the arena where this is likely to happen as she hinted there is too much focus in those groups on accreditation for such an inquiry to occur. She feels that those who come into coaching at the end of their careers, as a lifestyle choice, weaken the coaching profession *"immeasurably"*. She was clear that in her opinion coaching should be a vocation and not a retirement plan. She was also critical of those coaches who claim fidelity only to their coachees:

"It's much, much easier because you then,
you're just dealing with the person who's in front of you…
To stand there and say "I think actually we're a campaigning profession,
we campaign for better workplace, better skills and better purpose,
that it's not disconnected from society",
I think is a much tougher stand actually,
and therefore, you get yourself into more contentious situations."

Therefore, BC sees herself as someone who influences from the periphery both the world of coaching and the wider world of corporate culture. She has written about the figure of "the challenger" (as opposed to the rebel). The challenger questions the status quo and attempts to instigate positive change while working from the edges of the system they challenge. In creating her coaching

identity, she integrates a spirit of inquiry, a contemplative mindset with a challenger spirit.

In looking to the future BC mentioned that illness had bought an awareness of her own impermanence. She talked about a process of slowing down. She explained how in terms of her professional commitments she is *"intentionally putting things down knowing that I will not pick them back up again".* Her future work will have two strands. The first strand is selective one-to-one client work:

"I will keep working at depth with people
who have a need for the kind of work I offer,
and they are going to be people who are either in a crisis,
or in a significant life transition or uncertain where to go next,
or people who are stuck in difficult patterns,
and are actually just not sure where to go."

The other strand is an enthusiastic engagement with coaching supervision. She had explained shortly after the start of our interview that she sees supervision as *"the next emerging iteration of the coaching conversation"*. She has trained as a coaching supervisor in order to influence coaching to meet the needs of a working population who are *"working faster, harder and much more flexibly"*. Contemplating her future supervision practice, her energy and enthusiasm were palpable:

"I love being in training conversations with coaches and in supervision conversations with them and in peer conversations and internal coaches, I love it, so I get super excited about all that. It just feels like being with a bunch of peers, scrabbling around in stuff, trying to work it out and strengthening people's backs."

As I listened, I wondered if she was in part building a pathway to a role that would foster the spirit of the Human Potential Resource Group:

"reflection, practice, enquiry … standing in the face of complexity and not knowing what to do with it."

After the show

When I announce that the interview is over BC responds by saying:

"What a strange and mysterious and wonderful thing to be asked so many questions and then have to re-evaluate yourself in the process."

The tape machine gets turned off. I no longer feel flustered or anxious. She looks over at me and says:

"I hope you're not going to walk out of my life."

She continues by telling me that she would like to read my finished thesis.

Outside on the street it is still a hot day. I am looking forward to the walk back to the station. As I amble along, I suddenly realise that my backup recording device has not been switched off. I bend down to pull it out my rucksack and as I do so the image of a young girl selflessly handing her train set over the garden wall to a sick child comes unexpectedly and powerfully into my mind's eye. Without any warning I feel profoundly moved and I find my eyes filling with tears that threaten to spill over. The street. The heat. A young girl performing a compassionate act that she could not know decades later will leave an older man tearful by the side of a London street. In that moment I remember the children's novel The Secret Garden and the character of Dickon. A selfless child from an impoverished background who comes unexpectedly scrabbling over the garden wall bringing gifts and empowering people to flourish and grow.

I think a part of what caused my emotional reaction was the space between the young BC's capacity to give to others and my own more intrinsically self-centred nature. When later I reflected on this response I wondered if this is a part of how BC's coaching identity works. When you connect with such reflective and profound altruism the only way left to ground it is by attempting to narrow the gap between it and you through personal action. When I think about this it seems almost inevitable that those who spend time with BC as their coach would start to make profound changes.

NQ: Thin Pickings

I am running out of options.

I desperately need to rescue this.

We have torn through the interview schedule. I only have a couple of questions left. I have piled on improvised subsidiary questions trying to elicit the rich narratives that the textbooks tell me should have emerged. It is not working. My carefully crafted and piloted interview schedule is failing. My state of mind is not helped by his next-door neighbours having builders working on the front of their house. We are conversing with the curtains closed, against a backdrop of banging, hammering and shouting. In contrast my interviewee has adopted a reflective, meditative demeanour (I assume in order to be open to whatever emerges in our encounter) and is obviously not aware that this is falling apart. Every question is eliciting factual, conceptual responses where he talks about *things*. He is someone at home with *topics*. His predisposition is to reflect on a *subject* until something emerges about that *subject*, and then talk about that *subject* further. I, however, am interested in him: his stories, his relationships, his euphoric victories, his crashing defeats, his unique biographical journey. My final push is to ask him to tell me about his relationship with a university tutor who had been a major influence. Surely, he cannot resist this invitation to layer his discourse with personalised recollections of moments of inspiration, meetings of minds and illuminating instances of life-changing insight. He responds with a list of personal *qualities* she possesses. That is it...

I give up. Nothing is going to rescue this car crash. I stop trying. My mood lifts slightly as I give myself permission to stop swimming against the tide. This is the last but one interview after all. Time to collect my things, share parting pleasantries and get the hell out.

In writing this case study I could strive to perform for you; overinflate this account so it becomes a vacuous narrative on a desperate mission to fill its own empty gaps. However, that would betray and trivialise my credibility as a researcher. It would create a disingenuous relationship with you. So instead, we are left with this: thin pickings.

The Landscape and the Venue

Assembling a list of well-known coaches to interview had not been easy. As the final list of participants had gradually emerged, I was lacking an interviewee who inhabited the network coach discourse. When I put this dilemma to Simon Western, he had recommended NQ. In a previous interview a widely renowned coach's eyes lit up when I told her that I was interviewing NQ. Looking at his company website it seemed that an interview with him held great potential. He wrote about his scepticism of following *"unrealistic goals".* He explained how he specialised in working with narrative. He described his coaching as creating:

"*a reflective space in which clients can connect with their values, understand their networks and foster equanimity about the inevitable compromises of working life.*"

I had no doubts.

When I arrived in West Hampstead, I had time to wander the streets getting a sense of the landscape my interviewee inhabits. As I did a familiar insecurity about being a stranger hanging around the streets of strange neighbourhood began to awaken. This was not helped by a large sign at a long, high walled lane (which I needed to walk down) warning me of thieves on mopeds mugging pedestrians. Beneath the sign there was a man attempting to counter his poverty by selling dog-eared, second-hand paperbacks to passing commuters from a rickety wooden table. I assumed he was a familiar sight as occasionally people were stopping to strike up friendly conversations with him. As I wondered the streets it struck me that there did not seem to be deprivation, but there was a drab uniformity about the streets that on a bad day I would find depressing.

Arriving at the house NQ and his partner were having a healthy breakfast which I sensed followed on from exercise. It was late morning, and this conveyed to me a sense of autonomy; of having times when you live life at your own pace. The kitchen space was light with a lot of glass allowing in natural light and there were light colours in the room's design. It conveyed a sense of comfort without ostentation. I was offered food and coffee, and briefly the three of us chatted. In this context NQ was expansive and interested in the project. As the three of us

talked we found connections. His partner is an actress and knows Dartington Hall. NQ used narrative methodology for his master's dissertation and remains enthusiastic. They communicated a sense of informed interest. NQ and I retired to the front room, the curtains got drawn, the interview started, and the promising atmosphere began to shift.

NQ: the performer

Before we started the interview NQ asked who else I had interviewed. When he heard the list, he joked that he must be the only one who hasn't written a book. I acknowledged the truth of this and we laughed. Although this seemed a passing comment, when his history as a journalist emerged and he shared his aspiration to be a writer I wondered if there was a suggestion of insecurity. The moment the voice-recorder was turned on his manner changed. He adopted a contemplative, reflective expression as if he was waiting for things to emerge. In the latter parts of the interview, where he described his coaching approach, I realised he was simultaneously both describing and performing a central quality of his coaching identity; I was able to get a clear glimpse of him in the coaching encounter. This is someone who is patently able to facilitate a contemplative space. However, although it embodied and conveyed his coaching presence it failed to effectively communicate a sense of him and his character. My sense was that it was in danger of being vacuous both in terms of the contents of his narrative and the effectiveness of his performance.

Later, reading the narrative he shared with me, it became apparent that he presented events in a very linear fashion. One thing simply led on to the next. Reflecting on this I could see that in Labovian terms there was no "complicating action". There are none of the twists and turns of plot that are necessary to create a story or dramatic plot. When I later reviewed the transcript of our interview it also became apparent that there is a lack of supporting characters featured in his account. Other relevant personalities are mentioned but only in a utilitarian sense. So, for example, his business partner is mentioned as someone NQ set up a company and devised a marketing approach with. However, the partner is not named, is not characterized, is given no lines. He is not a character in drama but simply a title ("business partner") who once did

something. His motivations and relational qualities are entirely absent from the discourse. Similarly, in the performance there is no enactment of scenes, no ventriloquizing of characters or conveying of the emotional impact of events.

The interview was shorter than my other interviews. As I have reviewed and analyzed the data, I have come to the conclusion that NQ presented his character as a commentator not a performer. In this interview he functions like a theatre reviewer who is present for the dramatic events but is somehow standing dispassionately back from them in order to provide abstract comment at a later date. I also reflected that as a performer NQ never stood a chance. Although I had attempted to bracket all the interviews as separate and distinct events it was like having the warm-up act come onstage after the main act and then trying to do some of the same material to an audience now familiar with the routine. However, as I worked on the transcript I realised that out of all the interviewees he was the one who had talked most explicitly and at length, about the construction and performance of his distinctive coaching identity. The difference was that in his style of discourse he himself had been reduced to a topic.

<div align="center">The Linear Journey</div>

NQ explained that after doing a sociology degree he had become a journalist for the BBC before attaining a management position with the organisation. As a manager he had become a part of an in-house coaching scheme (driven by John Birt) where all managers had the opportunity to both coach and be coached. He found he enjoyed coaching more than his managerial duties and had taken redundancy to set up as a coach. He explained that the narrative used by him and his business partner to promote their business is *"we're journalists turned strategists turned coaches".* He told me the skillset used as a strategist are easily applied in coaching to support coachees construct forward-facing narratives about the direction they aspired their business or career to travel. Yet as we dug further into NQ's account, I got a clear sense that it was not quite such a straight line as it appeared. There was a radical shift in his understanding of the nature of coaching (which he referred to as *"the inflection*

point") along with a clear sense that he has always been someone who follows his individual enthusiasms and interests.

In the first place his move to coaching demonstrated that he was possessed of an independent spirit that is prepared to forge its own path:

"it sort of quickly became a more interesting and stretching part of my uh working life"

"if this is something I want to dedicate myself to -- a greater part of myself to, I'm probably going to have to um change my -- change my job"

He described his initial coaching practice as an extension of elements of his boyhood qualities:

"I was a great one for organising myself and making plans (AP: Um hum), putting things in folders and that sort of thing."

He also explained that he had once described his career prior to coaching as:

"a long career of bag-carrying"

As he explained this image to me it became clear that he meant that in his previous roles he had often supported people, been of service to them and functioned as a strategic confidante. I began to understand that coaching is an extension of his previous professional activities, which in turn are an extension of his interests, enthusiasms and personal qualities.

Sociology and Politics

Throughout our dialogue the three areas of sociology, politics and journalism were central. It seems the journalistic identity is one that he sometimes moves away from, and other times draws closer to, but never fully evaporates. The focus on politics and sociology are inherent in all his various roles and remain integral to his identity. These interests had become established as a young man and then developed through his sociology degree. NQ's enthusiasm to engage with them have become key areas of his individualistic coaching style. His impatience with people who perceive the workplace or their roles within them as detached from them was palpable:

172

"In being apolitical you're actually adopting a very political stand"

"My view is the politics is there,

the politics is in the room,

whether you make reference to it or not"

"I mean they're citizens and they're out there in that world anyway (AP: Yeah.),

and their organisations are subject to the forces in society.

So, you know, I don't treat the organisation

as a kind of hermetically sealed unit."

At the time of the interview the issue of Brexit was centre stage. In one of the closest moments to performing a scene he illustrated how he might introduce the topic to a coaching session. He set up the scene using rich images to create a backdrop:

"identity crisis…a sense of insecurity…heading for a deadline…don't know whether you'll be able to buy anything in supermarkets…personal insecurity…organisational insecurity"

Then he elaborated on how he would introduce such topics into a coaching session as *"just part of the chit-chat when we arrive".* As he explained this, I grasped a part of his coaching schtick. He effectively creates moments with his coachee that (within a Goffman frame), would be understood by the coachee as "off-stage", but in reality are a fully integrated part of NQ's coaching performance, where a context for the session is surreptitiously introduced. The coachee is then encouraged to locate themselves in relation to this context and reflect on how they might position themselves moving forward.

Grasping this, I realised that a part of NQ's coaching personae was to function as a conduit through which social, political and economic issues entered the discourse of the organisation. I imagined him as having a role like that of the messenger in Greek tragedy. He enters from the outside world and confronts the protagonist with events that are unfolding even as they speak. In doing so he shifts both the focus of attention and the ensuing dialogue from looking

173

inward, to gazing outward to the wider world which in turn leads to changes in the events that follow. In this account he seemed in passing to characterise other coaches as a sort of Greek chorus who looked on disapprovingly:

"there's a kind of ideology in coaching of being apolitical and serving -- serving the organisation."

"And I find a lot of coaches are quite hostile …

and they say "well, you know, he's being political".

Journalism

NQ's journalistic identity appeared in three different contexts which suggested it is a foundation stone for his various professional identities: albeit one that he has a shifting relationship to. The contexts it appeared in were:

1. His profession post-university where it served as a vehicle for his interest in political, social and economic issues.

2. A template to understand the initial character of his coaching identity.

3. Something that informs his future aspirations.

In describing his time as a journalist NQ spoke in short rapid sentences and built a picture of a fast-moving and self-serving existence where the person being interviewed was the means to meet a deadline:

"The interviewee is in – in the service of you (AP: Yes),

that you can get a news line in there –

you know, 5 o'clock in the afternoon."

"You're moving fast,

you're trying to fashion the conversation quickly,

and get to something that you can use and move on."

"you're less present in a way to what's happening,

174

because you're just trying to kind of um move –

move the conversation to a useful place."

Whilst he described it in unflattering, candid terms the topic was referred to frequently, and I concluded that it is important in both his personal history and professional identity. That he practiced journalism in the context of the BBC seemed to be mitigating factor:

"and the tradition of journalism I came from was –

was one which held impartiality as a –

you know, as a very strong value"

After becoming a strategist-manager he had apparently moved away from this identity. However, the journalistic identity was dormant rather than expired. The revival of it was one of the chief attractions to the practice of coaching:

"It sort of awakened um something of the reporter in me…

It took me back to that earlier place in my career where –

where you're having a purposeful conversation with people"

"It was the similarity that drew me into it,

and you know, eliciting someone's story so,

you know, hence my interest in narrative."

"The kind of Jeremy Paxman holding people to account was –

was manifest… it was all quite transactional at that stage,

um and so, you know, I challenged people quite assertively."

I imagined that these journalistic elements had remained integrated within his coaching identity. However, he explained his coaching had taken a more developmental, less goal-oriented path. The similarities had diminished, and he had effectively moved away from the journalist identity. It was only towards the

end of the interview when he was explaining his plans for the future that it resurfaced.

Coaching identities: the transactional coach and the inflection point

NQ's coaching personae seems to have three distinctive phases: the transactional, the inflection point and the developmental.

His journey into coaching began when John Birt had decided *"the* (BBC's) *leadership culture wasn't all it should be"* and inaugurated a scheme where everyone who managed people could have access to a coach. He described its purpose as learning to be *"a proper manager of people".* Hearing about a management culture that needed to become "what it should be" through people learning to be "proper managers" I had a sense of an in-house, top-down coaching culture that focused on pre-determined outcomes. As a participant NQ had the opportunity to both coach and be coached. He discovered that he experienced greater fulfilment in the role of coach than either manager or coachee. He used the word *"transactional"* a number of times to describe his approach and gave the impression of coaching as an activity led by goals, outcomes and acronym-type coaching frameworks:

"I had quite a kind of instrumental

sort of transactional approach to coaching.

…you know the initial training in the BBC

is also the GROW model (AP: Yeah.)"

I surmised that when he left the BBC he believed this was the universal character of coaching.

He started his training at the i-Coach academy. The i-Coach Academy had been involved in the coaching training at the BBC, so I assumed that he was looking for "more of the same". Looking at the website for that company I was struck by the corporate imagery and the talk of frameworks and signature approaches. In passing NQ told me that he had moved his studies from there to Oxford Brookes. Retrospectively I wish I had asked about his reasons for this,

but it was dropped into the conversation in passing and he moved on. Reading the transcript later I concluded that this event was significant. I assumed he was not getting something from the i-Coach academy that he felt Oxford Brookes could deliver. Studying at Oxford Brookes with Tatianna Bachkirova instigated what he termed *"the inflection point"*.

The *"inflection point"* seemed to be a liminal, transforming phase where NQ radically reconfigured his understanding of both coaching and the human psyche. He described it as a period where, liberated from a busy job with long hours, he was able to adopt a more fluid lifestyle, with greater focus on personal development. He learnt to live more healthily, and he took more time to read. This developmental shift seemed to be accelerated by studying a module on human consciousness with Tatianna Bachkirova that he described as *"transformational"*:

"the Self is something that's much harder to pin down

than I had been imagining (AP: Um hum)

and -- and therefore, you know,

that sort of threw into question

what I thought I was doing as a coach."

He described his focus on goals as *"falling away"* and explained that his coaching became *"much more about letting someone encounter themselves and seeing what emerges".* In keeping with NQ's style of discourse I did not initially get a glimpse of the tutor's role in this insight or her quality of presence. However later I guessed it to be key as he described her as *"intelligent…well read…creative in how she puts ideas together…an unassuming lack of ego … inspiring and supportive."*

Coaching identities: the developmental hybrid and the wider landscape

NQ seemed clear about the character of the coaching identity which then emerged. He was quick to define himself as *"developmental"*. He had moved away from performance-based goals towards coaching as an encounter which focuses on the coachee's intrapersonal awareness:

177

"My coaching is about giving space

and almost kind of not worrying too much about where –

you know, what the outcome is going to be."

"Ultimately it's about -- it's about you um –

it's about bringing your whole person to work,

and trusting that that will have a performance benefit"

"Much more about letting someone

encounter themselves and seeing what emerges."

In achieving this quality in his coaching it was clear that spontaneity and attunement to the here-and-now are key ingredients:

"For me it's about emergence.

Seeing what emerges. Letting it happen.

Giving it space (AP: Um hum).

So that's the difference and um -- and kind of using –

using what shows up as part of the -- part of the experience."

In performance terms NQ was forthcoming regarding props and costume. He described donning a suit and tie for coaching as *"collusion"* with corporate culture. I was struck how at odds this was with some executive coaches who go to great lengths to market themselves as natives of the corporate setting. In describing how he presents himself he said:

"I don't dress in a kind of traditionally corporate way…

I cycle. I turn up with my folding bike.

So all -- you know, all of these things are,

are just kind of notes of difference

I think (AP: Um hum) from conformity of organisational life"

However, as the interview unfolded it was clear that is not without anomalies and tensions. In the first place he acknowledged that a strand of his coaching personae is that he is free with his opinions about the world, which he introduces into dialogue with his coachees. An extension of both this and his network coaching identity is that he has a *"normative construction of what leadership is"* and this can create tension with his aspiration to coach in a non-directive way. I also wondered about a coach who foregrounds their history of being a strategist eschewing performance goals.

There also exists the issue of a coach who consciously constructs a non-corporate identity working with people in order to enable them to thrive in a corporate setting. In his explanation of this there seemed to be an element of "poacher turned game keeper" in that he explained he could work with people on *"both sides of the fence"*. He alluded to his professional image facilitating him both in working with managers trying to get *"uppity journalists"* or *"autonomous academics"* on-side and also professionals who do not trust the local management culture. In this he described his coach identity as being a *"hybrid"*. I understood him to mean someone who has a foot in both worlds; who has emerged from one world but who is now outside of that world looking in, and so able to facilitate novel ideas and innovative perspectives. His coaching identity seemed to rest on being a visitor to the corporate world who was once an inhabitant. He was clear that having had an immersion in corporate thinking was a key element in his capacity to coach as it helped him understand the issues around organisational politics and access to resources. In what I experienced as a deeply intelligent insight he said:

"So that, there's something interesting in that,

I think with the, you know, we're a bunch of individuals,

who place ourselves outside of the system,

and so some of the things we're actually helping our clients to do,

we're not very good at ourselves."

This was a perspective that I both identified with personally (thinking about my students' and coachees' career paths) and that I had previously mused on regarding coaches generally. It is something I have been left with after the interview and continue to reflect on.

I was left with a sense of his coaching identity having four strands to it:

1. the non-directive facilitator of personal development,

2. a conduit for wider political and social issues,

3. a clear vision of good leadership

4. a hybrid persona that moves between worlds.

Rather than these elements creating irreconcilable tensions, they contribute towards a successful, individualistic and possibly slightly quirky coaching identity. At one point in the interview, he described himself as the coaching equivalent of *"marmite"*. I suspect this is accurate. I also recalled the responses of his peers that suggest he is held in high regard. The unconventional synthesis of qualities creates an identity that can extend beyond simplistic coaching frameworks and enable him to bring an effective, individualistic quality of presence into coaching encounters.

In terms of the wider landscape of coaching he had mixed feelings regarding the professionalization agenda. He argued it could introduce a stifling rigidity into coaching. Whilst he disparaged the idea that anyone can call themselves a coach and claimed *"flaky practices"* had been introduced, he simultaneously celebrated coaching's fringe positioning that allowed it to borrow techniques from areas like shamanism and use them creatively. Whilst generally in favour of coaching's professional organisations, he is dismissive of the *"tick-box accreditation"* that he perceives to characterise them. He argued that the function of the organisations should be to inquire into the nature of coaching while maintaining a fluidity within the profession. He was clear that he is not sympathetic to the idea of psychologists having a role in somehow regulating coaching as they would in all likelihood define coaching in inhibiting terms

based on applying psychological models and cut out the very elements that characterise the network coaching discourse (environmental awareness, political sensibilities etc.) to which he signs up.

The Onward Journey

When I asked him about his future his face lit up "*I've been thinking about that.*" This was clearly a live topic that he wanted to engage with, but it became clear that it is still in process. He explained to me how he felt a desire to write a book. However, the nature of the book he wanted to write remained indistinct to me:

"I don't think it will be a coaching book but it'll be a book that draws on my, you know, my -- who I am as a coach. I don't particularly want to write a book for other coaches."

Given the link to his professional identity I grappled with how it would not be a book about coaching or a book for other coaches. He reflected on the changes he would have to make in order to achieve this ambition:

"I write quite a bit…short pieces….(I) notice the cost of it and what I have to put on the backburner."

"I want to reconfigure things…50% of my time devoted to being a professional writer rather than fitting it in to the interstices of other things."

As he spoke coaching shifted from being the centre of his professional focus to being the means by which he could support a new lifestyle:

"I think coaching will enable me to carry on working for quite some time (AP: Um hum) because you can -- you can make it as big or as small as you want it to be."

His reference to himself as a professional writer, along with his thoughts about recalibrating his working life, gave me a sense I was watching a reconfigured identity being constructed in front of my eyes. That he was able to refer to himself in the future tense as *"a professional writer"* but remained unclear about the nature of the book he wanted to write, made me wonder if the identity of "writer" is as important to him as writing. His repeated references to current affairs gave me a clear sense of someone who spends a lot of time reflecting on

the issues of the day. I believe NQ is someone who would like to be in the thick of contemporary events, and that coaching and writing allowed him to do this by proxy:

"I do get quite energized by um connecting with people,

 who are kind of properly in the world of work (AP: Um hum),

and dealing with the kind of things that, you know,

one reads about in the newspapers,

and um I still feel I have something to contribute to that for some time yet."

After the interview I speculated that this onward journey seemed to be another response to the call of his journalistic identity. The journalist within was awakening for the third time. However, in this incarnation, instead of being the journalist chasing down a story, I had an image of a leader- column writer who crafted mature and informed reflections. It also seemed to be a reprise of the theme of following his enthusiasms. Where once the role of BBC manager had supported his enthusiasm for coaching, now coaching was potentially going to fund his renewed aspirations to be a writer.

Leaving the Venue

Then I am outside in the fresh air. It is a relief to be in the natural light and alone with my thoughts. Walking towards the station, I am surprised to find myself relieved these interviews are nearly over. I begin to view this meeting with equanimity. My fear at the start of the data-gathering process was that all the interviews would unfold this way. In the event, taking a narrative approach had been like casting a spell and I have been astounded by the rich narratives gifted me. I started to understand this encounter was a one-off where the chemistry didn't quite work. A part of that recipe was that there seemed to be some unfathomable counter-transference happening between us. I had become like the journalist he once was, looking for a story, thinking about the next question and trying to make my own deadline. In pursuing narrative material I had forgotten one of the philosophical foundations of my own coaching identity; when the map doesn't fit the terrain, it is the map that is wrong. A few months

after the interview NQ started a blog that consists of his reflections on current affairs. As I began to write this case study, I logged onto it. There I read these words:

"I realised how rarely we ever take in the people around us. Our eyes see the form of a human face and our minds fill in the portrait before we have really taken the trouble to observe the particulars."

MB: a different kind of Cinderella

Intro: a final encounter

Another blazing day. Once again I am on a train heading to London. Watching the countryside slide by me I experience a combination of relief and regret. I was beginning to suspect that meeting the Zen Buddhist monk-coach meant the potential of these encounters had peaked. The regular jaunts across the country were interrupting the rest of my life. The repeated questions and the considerable expense were all starting to wear. I was also conscious of the time available for the project trickling away. I was spreading my wings one final time before a prolonged retreat to academia to process these encounters. As London drew closer, I tried to focus on the woman I was about to interview. MB is the editor of a widely respected coaching journal and the author of a seminal textbook on integrating mindfulness and coaching. This integration was a theme that had spontaneously emerged across the last two of my interviews and I was hopeful that it might get developed today.

Arrival at the Venue and Performance: Ancient and Modern

Arranging to meet MB had not been easy. She lives in Spain and was only passing through London. She asked me to arrange a venue for our meeting, requesting that it was in the Victoria area. The only solution appeared to be the Tea Lounge at the Victoria Grosvenor Hotel. The Tea Lounge attempts to model itself on the high teas popular amongst the upper classes of a bygone era: china crockery, finger foods and tiered cake servers. Previously I had deliberately left the choice of venue up to my interviewees as I believe the setting for the interview is a significant choice to be reflected on. The only conclusions I could now draw from the choice of venue is that MB spends time in transit and that, despite the grounded nature of mindfulness, she is frantically busy, meeting deadlines and keeping appointments.

After checking in at the Tea Lounge and confirming our booking, I had time to enjoy the sunshine. I wandered up Buckingham Palace Road and briefly settled myself on the Queen Victoria Memorial beside Buckingham Palace. I found

myself feeling uneasy around the stone monuments celebrating an obsolete empire and a declining monarchy. The tourists swarmed around me revelling in the photo-opportunity and so I retreated to St James's Park. Away from the pathway I found a tree to sit under. I opened MB's book. I had an hour to kill and so in this peaceful, idyllic spot I read and reflected. Nearby the tourists attempted to consume history, culture and faded grandeur before heading back to the coach. As I immersed myself in MB's volume about ancient practices becoming located in contemporary coaching, I reflected that I have developed during this process. At the start of the project I was a proponent of GROW and a solution-focused approach. Coaching was a fast-lane, high performance vehicle for quick results. My more recent reflections on coaching increasingly employ terms such as *"emergent", "developmental", "reflexivity"* and occasionally *"spiritual"*.

A short while afterwards, sitting down across from MB, in a room invoking the opulence of another age, I find we have an easy chemistry. Rather than being in awe of MB, it felt more as if we were friends and collaborators. Listening to the tape I realised that I dispensed with the opening routines used in previous interviews. About eight minutes into the interview LH would often start answering questions before I finished, as our dialogue gained energy and momentum. The quirky formality of our surroundings soon faded from my awareness. As a performer MB brings a sense of collaboration with her audience and a willingness to acknowledge her vulnerabilities. MB's discourse was rich in enacted scenes and ventriloquised internal dialogues. She employed a highly skilled use of imagery in her narrative. At one point she connected Nancy Kline's image of "*igniting the human mind*" with her own "*kindling of desire*" to be a coach. At another she responded to my use of the image of the "*terrain of coaching*" by answering in terms of the geographical features. This collection of rich imagery and narrative was a relief after the previous interview. I would finish the process with abundant material.

The narrative that unfolded was structured around three meta-themes:

- How MB became a coach

- How her coaching identity gained substance

- Reflections on coaching and professional organisations

Becoming a coach: happenstance and resistance

Listening to MB's account of becoming a coach it appeared to be characterised by a combination of happenstance and resistance. This seemed at odds with the discourses of coaching about self-determination and self-belief. According to her narrative she *"fell"* into a job selling advertising space after university. She then *happened* across the opportunity for journalist training funded by her employer. She got offered the editorship of a journal on coaching out of the blue (when she knew nothing about coaching). She was also resistant to becoming a coach. At the time I accepted the story as she told it (I continue to believe its sincerity). Afterwards I wondered if there was an element of self-depreciation, possibly fuelled by underlying questions of self-esteem.

In her account of the first job, she foregrounded her capacity to connect with people but then attributes her successful sales to people feeling sorry for her:

"I loved meeting people, but they'd say,

"Oh, I can't afford to buy any,"

and I'd be like, "That's fine, let's just have a chat,"

(AP: Yeah, yeah) you know -- absolutely useless at closing any sale,

but got on with everybody like a house on fire,

sometimes I think they felt sorry for me and would buy some space anyway."

I found myself questioning the likelihood of someone paying for advertising they can't afford because they felt sorry for the person selling it. Similarly, she talked about her employer letting her access journalist training for free, rather than having belief in her and investing in her. After accepting the editorship of a coaching journal, she needed to read up on coaching and attend coaching events to learn and report. She painted a picture of pushy coaches cajoling her to participate in workshops while she tried to remain detached:

"You know what coaches are like,

they get you to do things …

I'd be in a session and,

"Oh no I can't possibly try that out because I'm just observing,

I'm just a journalist," (AP: Right. Ok.)

"Oh no, come on, give it a go, give it a go,"

and I was like, "oh god, how embarrassing",

I'd give it a go."

The theme of coaches trying to coax her into participating (alongside her resistance) was a theme she returned to a couple of times. I had an image of someone sitting on the periphery of a dance floor at an evening wedding reception constantly being cajoled to join the dancing. Their social anxiety makes them resistant, whilst secretly they would dearly love to join these joyful celebrations.

However, there was a counterpoint to this tale of resistance in the figure of Nancy Kline. MB described hearing her speak at conferences and being *"bowled over"*. Kline modelled positive qualities that impacted on her. These included being eloquent and having humility. Kline had spoken about being able to *"get herself out the way"* while coaching and elicit unexpected, spontaneous and insightful responses from coachees. But it was Nancy Kline's gift as a storyteller that seemed especially significant:

"Hearing all these stories of transformation,

(AP: Right), and just thinking,

"Wow, wouldn't" -- in a humble way,

"wouldn't it be wonderful,

to be involved in helping those transformations take place."

The power of these narratives resulted in Nancy Kline becoming a role model to MB before she had consciously acknowledged that she wanted to be a coach:

"and (I) just thought, wow, "when I grow up I want to be like Nancy"

The i-Coach Academy and beyond: getting past the "people over there"

The issue of self-belief returned when MB described the insecurities she experienced starting training at the i-coach Academy:

"Those people over there -- um some of them already sort of,

you know, did training,

HR, and they're going to become a coach.

But there's me, I've only ever written about stuff,

so I'm like -- as you say from the outside looking in, the observer,

"I can't possibly ever be like them, I haven't got that background,

I can't possibly do it".

So, there was that kind of story going on."

"Those people over there" seemed to personify MB's internal uncertainties and doubts. She had commenced training still casting herself in the role of a journalist-observer, and I wondered if the internal mantra *"I'm not really here to learn to be a coach"* offered some protection from possible failure. A part of the course's ethos is *"who you are is how you coach"* so the stance of objective observer became less sustainable as she was required to engage in a period of asking *"who the hell am I?"* In doing so she found herself shifting from a position of believing that journalism is at odds with coaching to seeing strong connections between the two occupations. The newly realised alignment between journalism and coaching seemed to gift MB self-validation and empowered her to shed the stance of objective observer to stand alongside *"those people over there"* who had HR backgrounds. I thought it was interesting that the profession of coach was not perceived to stand in its own right but required a foundational professional background for it to be seen as valid.

The ensuing integration of mindfulness and coaching MB achieved generated a unique coaching identity along with the realisation that *"I can be a different kind of coach"*. As she spoke these words in our interview, I felt touched and moved. I let out a celebratory *"Yeah!"*. I did not yet realise what had been touched in

me, but I was aware that the movement in the narrative from *"who the hell am I?"* to *"I can be a different kind of coach"* was a profound one. She had realised the validity of her presence and come to value her difference. Beyond the course MB's newfound coaching identity became grounded and consolidated through a pro bono scheme within an organisation. She described it as letting her dip a toe in the water at a point when she felt *"half like a coach"*. Through seeing the impact of her coaching reflected in the responses of her coachees she moved to *"completely taking on the role of a coach"*. I recalled my early days as a counsellor. I reflected that post-qualification many of us feel like imposters so need to repeat and rehearse the role to find evidence of competence. In this respect constructing an identity is so much more than marketing or branding but rather a process of practicing, inner attunement and nurturing self-belief.

Coaching and journalism: a shifting discourse

The tension between journalism and coaching was a significant element in the narrative she presented. Journalism begins in the account as requiring a stance of disengaged onlooker. However, she later reconstituted it as a collection of behaviours and attitudes that are antithetical to coaching. In this formulation Jeremy Paxman became a symbol of all that is incompatible with coaching, where an unwavering journalistic drive to *"just get at the truth"* is played out through images of people being door-stepped, their narratives being attacked and interviewees being at the sharp end of strong, unempathic challenges. MB located her own journalistic identity at the other end of this spectrum. She characterised her own practice as hearing *"people's stories however they want to tell them"* and letting people speak. As she gave no further explanation for these characteristics it seemed that she was positing them as her own essential traits. However, she tempered this softer image by being clear that even this approach to journalism was very different to coaching:

"but that's still very different,

you still have an agenda.

You go in there (AP: Certainly.), you want your –

189

you know, article (AP: Yeah, yeah),

and you have an idea already in a way,

of what it's going to look like, usually"

I was struck by how the image of going *"in there"* could be interpreted as the interviewee's narrative being a site to be colonised by the journalist. This self-serving agenda of journalists was developed further when she contrasted coaches contracting with coachees with the more uncompromising process of journalists. She performed a scene of how she might react to an interviewee trying to retract something:

"And in those days if they then said afterwards,

"I didn't mean to have said that,"

that would be tough luck really (AP: Yeah, yeah).

Be like, "Sorry, you didn't say it was off the record,"

She outlined some of the journals she had written for and some of the topics she had written about. These were eclectic. She argued that *"a good journalist can write about anything".* Given that her journalism involved listening to diverse people' stories this clearly carried an implication that she could also engage with the narratives of diverse coachees. It was only afterward I thought about the contradiction between a journalist being able to engage with any professional context while a coach needed a relevant professional background.

As she reflected on her history she slowly shifted to a far more positive perspective on the relationship between journalism and coaching. Phrases such as "*draw them out…Hear their voice.", "meeting people where they are", "*and *"building a relationship"* began to pepper her account so that the declaration *"I can be a different kind of coach"* sounded like the denouement of a coming-of-age story. During the interview she had replayed her process of reconceptualising journalism so that its alignment with coaching became clear. Once she gained this insight, she gave herself permission to occupy the coaching identity with newfound self-belief.

190

There was an anti-corporate flavour to much of MB's discourse. She clearly did not consider herself a corporate native. I imagined that once she arrived at these insights regarding coaching and journalism it must have been a very powerful experience to believe she had a right to be a coach and look across the room at *"the people over there"* with renewed confidence. With the passing of years, she has successfully gained a sense of a versatile, authentic core self that dons *"different hats"* as she shifts roles. However, the roles have adapted and modified to assimilate one another (i.e., her journalism is about coaching, her coaching is characterised by mindfulness and her writing is about mindfulness) and incorporate her existential concerns and life interests. In aligning these various roles with one another as well as her own spirituality she has successfully created a highly individualised and holistic identity.

<u>The Spiritual Procrastinator and Existential Crises</u>

MB recounted three existential crises that featured as separate sub-narratives. In the first of these she described becoming aware of an existential void in her life on a visit to Thailand:

"I wasn't happy and I had everything,

all the conditions to be happy, really …

I now know so much more about it,

but back in the day I was thinking "why aren't I happy?",

you know, "why do I get so stressed?" why – (AP: Yeah.)

"I've got my husband, I've got my kids, nothing's wrong"

In this story MB presented herself as someone called to seek spiritually who has ignored the call. She explained that when she was younger, she had tried yoga and meditation, but this did not appear to be a serious endeavour. It is as if (within the narrative) she was a spiritual procrastinator. I was reminded of the poem the Hound of Heaven where the protagonist is evading their own salvation. She described time in Thailand visiting Buddhist Temples and reading relevant texts that bought her to an epiphany:

""if not now when?" sort of (AP: Yes),

you know. Let's just really turn towards this,

stop running away from stuff,

really look inwards,

and so that was it really."

When MB developed this theme, she spoke in a non-specific way of courses she had taken so I did not realise the extent of her commitment. It was only later when I looked up the term "*take refuge*" (she had used the term in passing) that I understood that it refers to a ceremonial commitment to live the rest of your life by Buddhist principles. I began to grasp the extent of the changes she had embraced. It also threw light onto the dilemma that *"who you are is how you coach"* would trigger. It would be impossible to leave her spirituality out of the equation. It seemed to me that integrating coaching and mindfulness during the i-coach course must have been like trying to puzzle out a challenging equation when you no idea what the solution looks like. She enacted a scene of being challenged by the corporate natives on the i-coach course as she sought to integrate coaching and mindfulness. In this scene they cast doubts on how possible this is because coaching is results-driven whilst mindfulness is about being in the moment and letting go of attachment to specific outcomes. She portrayed herself as lacking in confidence as she performed acknowledging their criticisms *"Mmm. Yeah. I suppose you're right".* Then, in an odd piece of performer/spectator interaction, I unconsciously took on the role of the corporate cynics and said that I too found it hard to visualise what it would look like in practice. It became like an impromptu piece of forum theatre where the performer begins by presenting the audience with a dilemma, and then together they collaborate on improvising and performing alternative, more satisfactory resolutions. She was able to let me see how the two elements might be synthesised in practice. Her performance demonstrated how she had evolved from the reticent trainee, and I glimpsed the confidence and conviction that empowered her to assert *"I can be a different kind of coach".*

The other two crises she described were both induced by the death of her parents. The death of her mother appeared to initiate a profound dissolution of her sense of self:

"My mum had just died …

My whole world fell apart. I didn't know –

in terms of identity I didn't actually know who I was

maybe a year after I was still trying to work everything out (AP: Yeah.).

I didn't know who I was at all"

She then introduced the character of the *"wonderful"* coach she hired to be her companion through this time. It was clear this character was a powerful force within MB's narrative who facilitated MB's healing whilst simultaneously modelling how coaching can legitimately have therapeutic qualities. It seemed to me that this figure's approach seemed to have alignment with the compassion and humility that MB had experienced in her other role model Nancy Kline. When I reviewed the transcript, I was struck that this healing seemed to contain elements of cognitive insight:

"but being able to go near that stuff …

helped me see the patterns

in terms of issues that were coming up …

we were just able to draw all sorts of parallels

from how I related to the world"

This seemed a sharp contrast to her account of processing the death of her father. Elsewhere MB has written how her father had attempted suicide and had died *"lonely and broken hearted on a psychiatric ward"*. In that writing she described a combination of grief at not being able to save him and *"petulance and anger"* at the feelings of abandonment. In this sub-narrative she introduced the character of the dance-meditation facilitator who runs drug and alcohol-free sessions that combine mindfulness with rave-influenced music and dance. Through participating in these sessions MB had felt the grief for her father and other emotional baggage surrounding it spontaneously unlock and profoundly shift. As a result of this and MB worked at introducing a somatic dimension into her coaching practice.

I was aware that in one way or another all three crises had been grounded through her coaching practice. MB's parents were off-stage characters that had met their end before the start of the narrative but whose demise remains a significant element of the plot and initiates further action. This process brings greater authenticity, self-awareness and capacity to co-create meaningful coaching relationships.

The Chameleon

The theme of painful events becoming catalysts for professional development extended into MB's clear capacity to build rapport. It developed during childhood when she was bullied. This had taught her to become a people pleaser to manipulate potential bullies. However, the cost had been authenticity and transparency. I recalled Carl Rogers' notion of externally imposed conditions of worth causing us to become distanced from our authentic selves. She enacted a scene, successfully ingratiating herself with others whilst cynically manipulating the encounter:

"I would be a chameleon, you know,

so they liked me because that was safe,

you know, because that would be okay,

I could do that and I got really good at it,

you know, so everyone would be like,

"Wow, you know, so on the same wavelength",

you know, and I'd be thinking, "no we're not",

you know [laughs].

This image of a multifaceted chameleon developed as she explained that she had moved to Spain at the age of nine and had needed to be able to navigate two distinctive cultures. I was also struck that when she listed the coaches that had been influential to her that they broadly divided into two camps; those who *"cut through the crap"* and grounded her, while others encouraged her to expand coaching possibilities. She also explained that since she was young,

people had felt able to confide in her. In my role as a trainer of counsellors this is a narrative that I have heard many times and I prepared myself to sit through a familiar account. However, when she described a grownup friend of her mother's confiding in her (when she was still a child) I was shocked. MB explained how her mother's friend had told her she was *"wise beyond your years"*. When I asked her what it was like to be told this she responded:

"Yeah, it was lovely actually.

Yeah, it was very nice and sort of edifying and empowering

and you want to live up to that then you see

(AP: Yeah, yeah), so there's something about that,

wanting to -- you know – "must be true then, better try and be mature and wise"

I was not convinced and recalled Roger's conditions of worth. Later she acknowledged that she had felt the weight of keeping other people's secrets. When she said this, I found myself experiencing a sense of sadness for a young girl burdened by events that others could not keep to themselves. It seemed unfair that they should impose a vow of silence on a child that they themselves could not sustain.

Coaching and Professional Organisations

At times MB seemed quite committed to a particular strand of coaching that was informed by psychotherapy and dismissive of the type of coaching that she characterised as *"performance"* and *"masculine"*. I was surprised at her vehemence when she explained her feelings toward performance-based coaching. She mimicked an imaginary proponent of such coaching:

"Boosting the performance at all costs"

"Increasing your productivity"

"Just push hard"

The last image clearly related to the metaphor of this type of coaching as masculine and she answered this last point as herself replying to this imaginary character:

195

"Well okay, who's in the way then?"

In considering where she placed herself on the terrain of coaching, she used Spinelli's image of the *"fuzzy line"* between coaching and therapy. She characterised herself as being about *"development, growth and learning"* rather than achieving goals. She developed the theme by playing with the imagery of the terrain of coaching that I had introduced. She concluded that therapy-informed coaching could be seen as a mountain and that she was currently occupying the foothills of that mountain.

She laughed about coaching being in step with the times because *"everyone's falling apart".* Then she immediately made it clear that she was not joking and that she genuinely sees these as challenging times. There was a clear belief that coaching has responsibility to meet the demands of the time in pursuit of the greater good. She argued that contemporary times are far tougher for people in the workplace than they were when the standard coaching texts were written and that the style of coaching they promote is outmoded. Later, she suggested that market forces are likely to transform the coaching occurring in corporate settings into a hybrid of coaching and consultancy. When explaining this she seemed a lot more at peace with it than she had been with performance-coaching. She also reflected on how coaches had spent time and effort moving the profession to a more coachee-led, person-centred enterprise only to find that model of coaching in danger of being overturned by its customers. Although she laughed at the irony of this, she seemed quite at peace with it. When I questioned her attitude, she seemed to shrug it off. She explained it is not a way that she would choose to work but she thought there was an inevitability about this that made it pointless to oppose.

When I asked her what her future might hold, she described a different version of the future of coaching. She talked about the potential of coaching to be a foundation for as yet unrealised forms of group events and workshops that had ecological and altruistic areas of focus. This seemed to be a million miles away from the corporate agenda she had just outlined. I had no problem imagining MB in the thick of such activity.

I was reminded of MB's capacity to wear different hats when I asked her about coaching's professional organisations and their potential to regulate coaching. She explained that as an editor and a journalist she had close relationships with the organisations whilst needing to retain some independence. In that capacity she had fulsome praise for them. She believed they had played a key role in raising standards. She drew a picture of coaches as isolated souls working in diverse environments and in need of a tribe. The organisations filled this need. However, all of a sudden, she asked if I wanted to know her "*position really*". I indicated I did and she drew a picture of individuals with big egos driving organisations that had territorial agendas. She doubted the organisations would be suitable to regulate coaching and feared that such regulation could take the *"fun and creativity"* away. The global code of ethics along with supervision were suggested as more helpful in maintaining standards.

<u>The Outro</u>

The interview came to an end. It was time to go our separate ways. As we stood up MB hugged me and told me she thought I was a talented interviewer. We chatted about where we were heading. Then I was out of the artificial setting of the tearoom, blinking in the sun and crossing the bus bays at Victoria station. This phase of my PhD journey ended here.

I found MB's narrative a powerful story. There were many story forms crammed into her single narrative. On one level it was a coming-of-age story where a young woman adrift in the world of work finds professional fulfilment. On another level it was an account of an existential crisis where a depressed mother, daughter and wife sets out on a journey of self-discovery. In an archetypal sense it was a retelling of the reluctant hero story where happenstance finds an initially unlikely figure making a heroic contribution to a profession she once avoided joining. But most of all it seemed a contemporary version of Cinderella. Her mother died and she felt abandoned by her father. In response to bullying she put on an agreeable face. She resisted invitations into the coaching world because she lacked self-belief. Then finally she joins the party. In defiance of "the people over there" she begins cooking up a new recipe and exotic smells waft into the ballroom. Where she was once the reluctant

197

guest refusing exhortations to join the dance, she finds not only has she missed the midnight chimes, but she has danced through the night, she has both her shoes, and no one is suggesting that she leaves.

I had started this project wanting to hang out with people who have made a mark in coaching. I had started to become depressed at how many of my interviewees were corporate natives, claiming this as a central plank of their identity. It had seemed coaching is a club I would not be offered membership of. Now something else was stirring in my awareness. In the previous interview NQ had talked about working developmentally with his coachees and trusting there would be a performance payoff. BC had drawn from both therapy and Zen to facilitate a contemplative way of working with her coachees. Now MB (not a corporate native) had spoken about coaching in a therapeutically informed way. It has become apparent that these borderlands between coaching and therapy are clearly the part of the coaching terrain I naturally inhabit. I am a native of these borderlands in a way that others are not. I looked at the commuters waiting for their rides home and felt like calling out to them "I CAN BE A DIFFERENT KIND OF COACH!". I was returning home in more ways than one.

And as I write this now there is a sadness that this period of the research has ended. It has been transformative. My understanding has changed. My coaching has changed. I have changed.

Findings

Introduction to the chapter

This chapter breaks down the performances of the coaches and the associated narratives into the four realms drawn from Quigley's (1985) framework (world of the spectator, world of the venue, world of the stage and dramatised worlds) and considers the qualities encountered in those areas that contribute to the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the performances. It then focuses on the content of the narratives and, drawing from Frank (2010), I propose a typology of coach identity narratives that characterise those used by the participants to construct their professional identities. These narratives are characterised as assumption, foundation and encounter narratives.

The world of the spectator

Quigley's framework (1985) concerns itself with the marking, alignment and transparency of the various worlds connected through a performance. The different realms begin the performance (according to Quigley) opaque, misaligned and discontinuous to one another. Within Quigley's framework an effective performance initiates shifts in which they become aligned, transparent and continuous so that each realm illuminates and informs the others. The most significant of these is the world of the spectator whose realm incorporates the worlds outside the theatre and off the stage. The impact of the performance on the spectator is the major purpose of the event and a means by which its efficacy may be gauged. In terms of this project there was both the differing impacts of the individual performances on me (as the spectator) and a cumulative affect that built up across the eight encounters.

As the audience of these interviews, I began by wanting them to be the means to gain access to an imaginary backstage area where the workings and mechanics of tricks, devices and routines would be revealed. As such I approached the interviews wanting the world of the performer and the world of the audience to become aligned through a process broadly corresponding to initiation. Moments of shared humour, confidences that were excluded from the transcript, along with disclosures that had never been made previously, communicated to me a sense of being accepted and being admitted "behind the

scenes". Various other devices employed by the interviewees suggested to me a sense of being recognised as a peer. As a coach I was invited to participate in ongoing projects by one participant and offered some "behind-the-scenes" style information about how they did their style of coaching by others. Two coaches, who had backgrounds in the media, told me I was a talented interviewer. Another recalled one of my PhD supervisors interviewing her when he had been a doctoral student, that conveyed a sense of the interview being an academic rite-of-passage. Two of the interviewees had moments of insight within the interview itself which had the effect of breaking the fourth wall and making me an active participant in their performance. In these ways there was a sense of greater transparency being achieved and our worlds being bought into greater alignment (without being assimilated). That the participants met my unspoken aspirations in this way suggests that as performers these particular coaches possess both perspicacity (they are able to "read" their audience) and versatility (they can shift their performance style according to their sense of the audience).

There were elements of some encounters that psychologically pushed me away or caused (for me) a sense of disconnect. At one level there were moments that suggested a lack of rapport that could occur in any conversation. Humour not landing well, or questions getting closed down were examples of this. Where an elevated status was claimed by the participant through how the interview was framed (stipulations around the timing, communications through third parties) and the narrative content (foregrounding of the interviewee's achievements) I felt a widening distance and a sense of misalignment between us. However, on the other hand, a lack of confidence by the interviewee regarding their status (commenting on their lack of publications compared to other participants) and the interview itself (challenging me as to whether I was omitting questions) caused me to question the substance of the interviewee's identity. It appears a convincing performance of a coach identity requires the performer to inhabit the role in a confident, open manner without it tipping over into ostentation or arrogance.

There was a marked movement in my attitude to the interviews themselves across the eight encounters and also a clear shift in my take on coaching. Prior to the first interview I was apprehensive, pacing and filled with imposter

200

syndrome. Before the final one I was sitting under a tree contemplating the relocation of ancient perspectives within contemporary settings. The interviews had become familiar and fatigue with the process was just starting to impinge. My sense of coaching had shifted from a formulaic, performance-based practice to one of developmental-focused reflection.

Across the interviews two dilemmas had begun to take on a life of their own: the relationship of my identity as a counsellor to my still forming coaching identity, and my lack of connection to the corporate setting. I had started my PhD feeling an undercurrent of discomfort and self-consciousness about being a counsellor studying coaching; I felt like a cross between a nosey neighbour and an interloper. However, across the interviews I had gained a growing belief that my identity as a therapist has validity and significance within the coaching world. All interviewees bar one referenced the importance of therapeutic theories to the practice of coaching. Two of the participants had trained as therapists as a part of their own journey to becoming coaches. Most significantly for me, two of the interviewees had left me with the distinct impression that they envied me the therapist identity. One of them had spoken energetically about the existential therapist Irvin Yalom being their single biggest influence. The other had described her practice as *"along the spectrum towards therapy"* and talked of therapy as a mountain while explaining that she had only made it to the foothills. The idea that I might possess qualities that would be envied by these high profile and successful coaches was unexpected and provoked a revaluation of my potential place in this world.

At the start of the research my lack of connection to the corporate setting had not been an issue. The coaching psychology MSc I had completed, and the coaching texts I had studied, had not referred to familiarity and ease with the corporate setting as a pre-requisite for a successful coach. However, the centrality of this element in the identities of those that I interviewed became ever more apparent. In the first interview that world had seemed appealing and entertaining. In the ensuing dialogues it became apparent that it was, in reality, alien and inaccessible. Whilst two of the interviewees structured their coach identities around challenging corporate tenets, the effectiveness of this was based on their access to, and familiarity with, corporate sites. By the end of the

fifth interview this became a significant issue for me that did not appear resolvable.

These two issues came to a head simultaneously and found resolution on the back of the final interview when I had the "aha" moment of insight, described in the final case study, as to how I could be *"a different kind of coach"*. Across the interview process the coaching, corporate and therapy worlds had become opaque, misaligned and discontinuous in terms of their relationships to one another, me and my coaching. Finally, they had all shifted and achieved clear, constructive inter-relationships in a moment of illumination. In this sense the performances as a collective were profoundly successful; they raised a dilemma for the spectator, developed the detail of it and then facilitated me in resolving it. There now exists for me the beginnings of a vison of practice aimed at a different market. A hybrid practice and identity: an identity that incorporates developmental coaching, humanistic counselling and reflective mindfulness. A practice that dwells in the borderlands.

The world of the venue

The venue is the site of the stage before the performance itself has begun. Its selection is significant because there is a tacit assumption that it will support and possibly enhance the performance. It may be indicative of elements of the performance. It prepares the spectator for the evocation of the off-stage, dramatised worlds that, while not physically present, will colour the here-and-now performance. When arranging interviews, I always left the choice of where they would occur with the interviewee. My assumption was that the choice would be considered and therefore intrinsic to the coaches' performance.

The corner room BC employed in the serene central London workspace was highly effective. It had the effect of creating a sanctuary within a sanctuary as a backdrop to narratives involving contemplation, reflection and Buddhism. Meanwhile, protests relevant to the narrative (the failure of old styles of leadership) raged outside. The here-and-now reality (climate protests alongside new environments for doing business) became aligned, through the performance, with the various dramatised worlds being invoked by the narrative. Each of the invoked worlds illuminated each other and the power of this

202

contributed to my emotional response after the interview. PD's use of his darkened office was also an effective setting. The darkened room with soft lighting magnified the embodied performance of PD without it becoming intimidating. The dim light and the shadows enhanced the accounts of night-time soup runs, sleeping on Waterloo station and the world of homeless women and men. The boxes of workshop materials ready to be loaded into his car gave an authenticity to his stories and linked the worlds he evoked from his past with the reality of his present and so created a sense of narrative coherence and continuity between the evoked worlds. The least effective venue was the darkened room used by NQ. It failed to keep the external world at bay (the noise of the adjoining building site) whilst detracting from the potential connection between audience and performer. I concluded that the most effective performances of coach identities seem to occur in private, intimate spaces. Whilst most coaches need to work in spaces that are convenient to their coachees I was struck that the most effective performances happened where the coach was able to position objects or inject qualities that alluded to their foundation and encounter narratives (see below).

World of the stage

The world of the stage is the world that is summoned into being through the here-and-now performance. It is the scene that is being performed in the present which consists of the atmospheric transformation of the venue into a site of the performance of a story. In terms of these interviews it consisted of how the interviewee transformed the space we were in during their performance and the style of relationship that was created with me. MW transformed the initial friendly domesticity of her kitchen table into a central hub where plans were devised, and theories conceived. FB used the light, the act of ascending a stairway and the view over central London to facilitate a reflective and "elevated" dialogue. MB transformed the discomfort of an overly formal tearoom into an environment where friends met for coffee and shared confidences. All these effects were striking and cemented the sense of these coaches as accomplished performers, but also left me reflecting how varied and diverse they were.

When a coach performs with a coachee they need to be able to transform the space that they are in from a mundane one, to one where new insight can be gained and new possibilities can be envisioned. The majority of the interviewees created relationships with me for purposes of their performance that I did not imagine translating easily into the coaching relationship (e.g. confidante, partner in double act, friends meeting for coffee etc.). From the content of the interviews, it was not easy to glean how they did this with coachees. I specifically asked some of the participants how they imagined their coachees experienced them when they first met. Again, the responses were diverse. FB replied *"a puzzling mixture of cool and warm. Thoughtful. Direct."* MW talked about adapting her interpersonal style once she had assessed how individual coachees wanted her to be. BC talked of a quality of presence derived from Zen, a *"wider dispensation"* of topics that could be reflected on and a focus on impermanence. NQ explained he begins coaching sessions by chatting informally about current affairs. MB asks coachee's questions that help them shift their focus towards their intrapersonal processing. I concluded that coaches have highly individualised ways of performing their identities by which they attempt to distinguish themselves from other coaches. These diverse styles could in turn be aligned with, and seen as extensions of, their foundation and encounter narratives (see below). I also reflected that these individualised performance styles had almost certainly evolved or developed across time so that they attained depth and were performed with skill and flexibility.

The dramatised worlds

The dramatised worlds are conceived of as worlds that, while not physically present, were verbally constituted through the narrative performances. Hann (2019) (borrowing from Heidegger) writes on the concept of *"worlding"* (p.11). This is the process by which physically absent worlds are evoked (but never finalised) on the stage. Quigley (1985) conceptualises this process as one in which a number of realms are theatrically represented and differentiated from one another. Across the performance their differences (misalignment, opacity etc.) are problematised then move towards potential resolution through achieving greater accessibility, transparency and resolution between them.

Within the narratives gathered for this project an equivalent structure seemed to operate. The coaches recollected different realms within their biography which initially conflicted with one another. There followed an element of the narrative that can be considered a liminal passage, in that the coach steps away from the conflict and undergoes an experience that triggers a resolution of it, either through a reconciliation of the opposing worlds or the banishment of a negative one. The resolution and resulting enhanced perspective then become grounded and embodied through their coaching identity. So, for example, MW evoked a childhood world that was characterised by selfless, altruistic works. In recounting her City career she drew a contrasting picture of a world that was powerful, greedy and self-serving. The liminal passage occurs when she becomes a mother, loses professional direction and encounters individuals that were initially alien to her (e.g. women who had never worked, a white Rastafarian with multiple body piercings etc.). This period features as *"a great leveller"* in which she became *"a much nicer person"*. Her corporate background, altruistic drive and her newly found *"humbleness"* all then become synergized within her integrative coach identity. CJ talked of a period of social activism within the counterculture where she engaged in mass political action but had *"nothing but contempt"* for the members of that same movement who were focused on personal development. The liminal revaluation occurred during her later research on powerful figures in the corporate setting who *"have a passion for doing good in the world"*. She gained the insight that personal development and making ethical change in the world, rather than conflicting, are actually interdependent qualities. In her coaching identity she then strives to develop the individual coachee and incorporate the spiritual into their work but remains *"oriented to the whole… for the good of the planet"*.

There were some variants of this narrative structure. In BC's performance there was little in terms of conflicting worlds or complicating action. Instead one realm led to admittance to the next one i.e. continuity and alignment seemed to have been implicit. The narrative worked through its accounts of engaging encounters and settings (e.g. trying to figure out what coaching was, taking international bankers to urban areas of Ghana). There was also a clear liminal quality at work in the scene in Upaya monastery where profound personal

transformation led to the reconstitution of her coach identity and how she performs coaching. PD's performance initially appeared to consist of two separate narratives: social activism around homelessness (*"the kingdom of the beggars"*) and becoming a coach (*"joining the mothership"*). The first narrative superficially seemed complete in that he fulfilled his potential as a social activist by it developing into his professional identity. However, the link between the two narrative realms is the existential weariness that made him aware that he had *"grown out of the social work thing"* and *"didn't want to be on the margins anymore"*. It forms the end of the first narrative section and the start of the next one. It is this weariness that creates dissonance between the world of social activism and his intrapersonal world, which in turn drives the narrative forward to his encounters in humanistic therapy and leadership workshops. Rather than being two separate narratives contained in one performance it is actually a single, cohesive narrative that contains an initial dramatised world of large proportions.

Many of the participants occupied multiple professional realms. In the effective performance of coaching identities these worlds became aligned and characterised by a mutuality that was grounded in coaching. BC wears monastic robes within corporate settings because the two roles of coach and monk support and inform one another as a corporate contemplative. MB is a journalist and a coach who writes for and edits a coaching journal. FB's backgrounds in education, media and publishing become aligned through her being a coach who publishes books teaching people how to coach. However, some narratives failed to find this alignment and could be considered less successful constructions of coaching identities. A problem with NQ's performance was that the coaching identity was not grounding the different professional realms but was obstructing the more-or-less dormant writing identity. Rather than his coaching identity grounding the conflicts existing between the different worlds his narrative evoked, it appeared to be an element of that conflict, delaying him from coming home to his identity as a writer. The narrative he created was not *"this is how I became a coach"* but rather *"this is how I am going to become a writer"*. The dissonance of the two realms was underlined by his assertion that his book would not be a book for coaches.

Coaching potentially functioned as the means by which he could create time and income to facilitate what (within his narrative) was the higher calling of writer. Temporally it was being told at a point where he had not yet achieved this goal so it lacked a satisfying resolution because the spectator (on this occasion) was left with questions about whether this would be achieved. Similarly when DF enthused about the prospect of creating a *"coach-bot"* not only did the outcome appear dubious to me, but it seemed that the identity of coach was getting diminished (or even sacrificed) in favour of that of gentleman-scientist.

Typology narratives

Frank (2012) conceptualises typologies as demonstrations of how actors in a particular field are enabled to be who they are through employing the narrative resources available to them. They can be conceived of as a collection of narrative "templates" (Frank 2010) through which people construct their stories and thereby their identities. The present typology, which is employed to construct coach identities, consists of *assumption, foundation* and *encounter* narratives. Assumption narratives tell the story of how the narrator became a coach in an unplanned or unexpected manner. Foundation narratives claim that the narrator is more than simply a coach and attempt to distinguish their individual style of coaching by combining highly individualised qualities with the generic role. Encounter narratives tell the story of life-changing journeys and encounters that extend or thicken the foundation narratives.

Assumption narratives

These narratives revolved around the narrator explaining that they found they became a coach when it had not been planned, was unexpected, or even resisted. The theme within this narrative is "*I didn't set out to become a coach, but I did".* Within this type of account the narrator details elements that interrupt their career trajectory and concludes with them claiming the identity of coach. If the story is located in the appropriate temporal setting it serves to distinguish the teller as a pioneer of coaching and emphasises their capacity to innovate. These narratives foreground the narrator's qualities of curiosity, openness to novelty and willingness to act on opportunities. They convey to the listener that

the narrator is open to life events without being the victim of life events (i.e. they have responded successfully to an unexpected opportunity) and thus foregrounds their individual initiative and agency.

There can be further complications to the plotline if they are assigned the role by others and are initially resistant to the identity (as with MW and MB). This variant narrative is resolved when they reach a point of overcoming their resistance, accepting and then internalising the role. Within such narratives there is a tacit message to the listener that the narrator has achieved in spite of themselves, and so effectively thickens the narrative of success. This variant can be aligned with the reluctant hero storyline (Campbell,2008). All of the versions of this narrative attribute assumption of the coach identity, to a greater or lesser degree, to happenstance.

All the participants performed a version of the assumption narrative. MW was at a crossroads in her life when she took a call from her alma mater asking her to design a course on coaching. She described becoming a coach as *"haphazard"*. Possibly the most straightforward version was the account provided by NQ. As a manager in the BBC he was given the opportunity to become an in-house coach. He unexpectedly discovered that he enjoyed coaching more than being a manager, so he then chose to change careers. As he told this an underlying ambivalence about the coaching role surfaced as he explained that the attraction of coaching was that it took him back to an *"earlier part of my career"* and *"reawakened the journalist"* in him. FB was similar to NQ in that she chose to step away from an earlier version of the same management culture. However, her telling of the narrative foregrounded the unexpected qualities of the narrative far more. In the first place she drew on a narrative theme (which was shared with CJ) that she (as head of the BBC's Management Development Department) was spontaneously working like a coach before she realised that coaching existed. This element of the story provides a far stronger claim on the coach identity because the spontaneity of her practice suggests to her audience that she is a natural coach. It also establishes her as a pioneer, in that coaching had not yet emerged into general awareness. The claim of discovering an unrealised predisposition for coaching was further established by her account of how she spontaneously committed to becoming a coach when, in answer to a

query she responded, *"out of my mouth I heard the words "running my own coaching practice""*. It suggests to the listener that a deeper, more intuitive, part of her had already adopted the coach identity unbeknown to her conscious awareness.

In contrast to being a natural coach, two versions of the assumption narrative presented coaching as a puzzle that the narrator needed to solve. Solving the puzzle then took them in new directions. Both PD and BC described hearing about the new practice of coaching but not being clear what it was. PD had a *"hunch"* that he should engage with it and described a solitary process of locating the few texts available and trying to envisage what it would look like in practice. On the basis of this he set about deconstructing and recreating his professional identity from *"therapist-consultant"* to coach, before offering training and marketing in the area. His version of the narrative presents him as innovative, intuitive and entrepreneurial. BC described a very different process in which she was encountering many of the originators of coaching alongside people from the world of professional sport (who were now working in executive settings). She recounted being *"on the cusp of something"* and a more joyous process of joint inquiry where they tried to make an amalgam of therapy and sports coaching. In contrast to the figure of PD as a creative loner this version presented BC as fully embedded within the new world of coaching and someone who takes delight in imaginative experimentation.

DF gave a unique version of this narrative. As an established mentor unexpectedly confronting adversarial coaches, he resolved the conflict by successfully negotiating a rapprochement between coaching and mentoring practitioners resulting in an expansion of his professional organisation's remit. The ensuing adoption of the coach identity appears unplanned and to be an astute strategic move in a war of position between two closely aligned disciplines. Whilst unplanned, adopting a coach identity served to preserve a position of influence while also resolving a problematic conflict.

Foundation narratives

Foundation narratives convey to the listener that the distinctive coach identity is founded on individualised biographical history and/or ideological commitments

that predates or parallels their assumption of the coach identity and makes the claim *"I am more than just a coach"*. They are sometimes tangential to assumption narratives because they often consist of an account of their life before becoming a coach. They make the claim that the coach possesses expertise or experience in an area that is not coaching but supports coaching. They add substance and novelty to the coach identity by imbuing it with individualised value-added qualities that differentiates or distinguishes the narrator from their colleagues. As well as differentiating them from their peers (who they may be competing with for commissions) these narratives also serve to separate the coach from the "hipslicks", opportunists and charlatans that featured within some of the interviewee's accounts, thus adding a further layer of authenticity to their identity.

Across the interviews it was noticeable that none of the interviewees created their coaching identity simply on the foundation of being trained as a coach or achieving the competencies and accreditations offered by professional organisations. The foundation narratives drew from numerous sources that included:

- Previous or parallel careers

- Spiritual practices

- Altruism

- Historical social activism

- Therapeutic training

NQ told me he uses this narrative strand in his marketing by stating to potential clients that he and his business partner are *"journalists turned strategists turned coaches"*. He also adds further substance by bringing his identity as an informed observer of current affairs into the coaching dialogue. Two of the participants are qualified therapists, while two others unambiguously referred to their knowledge of therapy as an important element of their coaching identities and practice. Previous careers in a corporate or similar setting (e.g. local authority) also featured in this way. Possessing credible and established plural identities also seemed to function in the accounts that were given. So, for

example, DF not only claimed a philosophical allegiance to eclecticism but also occupied eclectic identities of journalist, corporate native, gentleman-scientist, academic, coach and mentor. Similarly BC's narrative made connections between her coaching and her roles as nurse, therapist, monk and action-learning consultant.

That coaches choose to communicate this narrative to their audience suggests that the identity of being a coach demands greater substance or a thicker narrative than simply training as a coach and attaching yourself to a particular area of the terrain of coaching.

Encounter narratives

These narratives are effectively an extension or adjunct to the foundation narrative. They consist of accounts of encounters with remarkable people and/or journeys that have a profound, positive and lasting impact on the narrator. The result of such encounters is a redefinition or reconfiguration of the coach's identity and self-concept. This in turn distinguishes them from other coaches. It bestows on them an aura of authenticity and enhanced personal development that gives them license to be the coach they are. Whereas foundation narratives tend to focus on more constant elements in the coach's practices or biography that have a cumulative impact (e.g. a previous career, regular spiritual practices etc.), encounter narratives focus on more episodic events such as meetings with inspirational people or visits to personally significant locations that have a lasting impact on the coach's sense of self and their way of coaching.

Sometimes encounter narratives are the liminal passages in the coach's meta-narratives. They tend to climax in the coach achieving some sort of enlightenment or a life-changing psychological reorientation. Whilst being episodic an encounter can still occur over time. It is the life-changing force of the encounter that is significant and drives the narrative. So, for example, in MW's account of being at Sheffield Hallam University rather than focusing on the qualification gained (creating a foundation narrative of "I am a qualified coach") her assertion *"I never left"* suggests a sense of psychological or spiritual homecoming. This sense of an encounter is bolstered by the meetings with

significant people she described and the accounts of subsequent collaborations that illustrate the developmental change. Through the ongoing encounter she becomes transformed from *"the worst student"* to the influential champion of ethical coaching. A parallel narrative of homecoming was told by FB. She recounted travelling to New York state to go on a course and experienced a similar profound sense of homecoming when she said, *"I met my tribe"*. The encounter created a sense of psychological connection, shared values and homecoming.

All the participants told at least one encounter narrative with many using two as key elements of their coaching identity. Some focused on the journey (e.g. MB's spiritual awakening in Thailand) while other's focused on the encounter (e.g. PD's lifechanging experience at a workshop on men and leadership). It is notable that powerful encounter narratives lead simultaneously to a change in the person's understanding of themselves and a change in their professional practice. NQ's *"inflection point"* when he encountered the teaching of Tatianna Bachkirova led to him revising his understanding of human nature, changing his approach to coaching and changing his lifestyle so he lived more healthily and took more time for reflection. BC's time in Upaya monastery led to her feeling a call or desire to lead a deeper and more introspective life of service, whilst in her coaching she noticed smaller pieces of data *"at the margins"* of her coachee's discourse and a capacity to focus on a broader range of the coachee's experience. DF's road trip with his mentor resulted in him not only changing his professional practice but also "*thinking like a manager".* It is also notable that the content of the coaches' insights vary substantially. So, for example, FB's strong sense that *"I met my tribe"* (i.e. gaining a sense of group membership) is very different to MB's insight that she can be *"a different kind of coach"* (gaining a distinctive individual identity). It seems that these encounter narratives are the means by which coaches construct a strongly individualistic sense of their coaching identity and create a sense of uniqueness about the services that they offer others.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has translated the performances given by the participants into four theatrical realms conceptualised by Quigley (1985). In doing so it concluded that effective performances by coaches were characterised by versatility and perspicacity, in which they performed in an open and confident manner. The dramatised worlds invoked in the individual performances were often conflicting in that they were characterised by perspectives that appeared initially incompatible with one another. The performances of the coaches seemed to consist of resolving these inconsistencies and aligning discontinuous realms.

Across all the interviews the coaches told stories that could be assigned to three narrative categories which taken together form a typology of coaching identity narratives: assumption, foundation and encounter narratives. Assumption narratives foreground the unplanned nature of the participant assuming the role of coach, and are characterised by initiative, spontaneity and capacity to respond positively to unforeseen events. Foundation narratives bring greater substance and novelty to the identity by referencing biographical and professional components of their identity which are supplementary to the coaching role. Encounter narratives were characterised by accounts of journeys, awakenings and unique meetings that have led to reinventions of the self.

Discussion

Introduction to chapter

In this chapter I will focus on an exploration of the subsidiary questions (posed at the conclusion of the terrain of coaching literature review) to develop my arguments on how coaches construct, compose and perform their professional identities. This will enable me to present my conclusions and arguments regarding the primary research question in the final chapter.

Subsidiary questions

What can be learned from the narratives and performed identities about the processes and experiences of becoming a successful coach?

Addressing this question enables a focus on some of the more specific elements that contribute to answering the original research question in the final chapter. These are:

- Substance and authenticity of the coach
- Training and education
- Relationship to the corporate setting
- The onward journey of the coach

Substance and authenticity

The performances experienced by me for this research demonstrated that effective coach identities have *substance*. Substance can be understood in two ways. Barkitt (2008) has conceptualised the search for identity as an attempt to create thick narratives that give coherent form to fragmentary experiences. Similarly Giddens (1991) has argued that identity is found in the capacity to sustain a particular narrative that successfully integrates the stories an individual tells about themselves with events in the external world. However, the term "substance" is used here to extend the notion of thick narratives of identity, to also incorporate the embodied performances through which they are conveyed. The performance can be conceived of as the *form* of the identity, while the narrative can be conceived of as the *content* of the identity; ideally

these elements become synergised into a substantive and plausible presentation of self.

In the performances given by coaches, the specific stories employed need to align with one another so that the coaching identity is experienced as coherent and credible. Failure in this respect is likely to result in cynicism on the part of the spectator and a resultant foundering in the marketplace. The narratives also serve to identify the coach's distinctive discourse and identify their individual location on the terrain of coaching. To achieve authenticity within their narratives and fluidity in their performances the constructed coach identity needs to have developed over time so the performer can incorporate the quality of spontaneity i.e. the necessary qualities are embodied by the coach and thoroughly embedded within their performance. Wang (2013) refers to this quality as a coach's *"way of being"* (p.13) that comes from a profound internal consistency that is manifested in the alignment between what coaches do, what they say and who they are. He is clear that in good quality coaching the interventions a coach uses proceeds from this way of being. Therefore, it would seem that the internal consistency of the coach is more important than the interventions employed. It was this type of consistency that FB referred to when she asserted *"It's about being a coach, not about doing coaching"*.

Training and education

All the narratives and performances foregrounded the biographical journey of the participants, along with their capacity to reflect on it, understand it as meaningful and integrate relevant elements of it into their coaching personae. Within the majority of the accounts, positive stories of training and education were a feature. Although not everyone had done courses that were specifically about coaching (e.g. action learning, self-directed research on altruism in corporate life) the majority of the interviewees shared positive and powerful stories of their coaching-related education. A noticeable feature of these accounts was that the impact of these courses did not lie simply in the content of what was learned, but rather on the power of the learning communities they found themselves within and the highly individualised moments of insights they gained in these settings. In this way the courses did not simply feature as the

conduits of information relevant to coaching or allied topics but rather places of belonging that enriched their intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness along with their reflexive knowledge of human processes. MW compared her training course to a homecoming. FB described it as meeting her tribe. BC described her experience thus:

"I was taking this back to this amazing learning community on the Masters' degree and it was a place for group work and experimentation and self and peer assessment and really, really honing the skills of the change agency in a number of different ways. It was a rich time of, um, reflection, practice…I can still spot a person who's been on that programme. It's absolutely incredible to me. I can hear it in their language, I can hear it in their presence, there's something extraordinary about it, really amazing."

MB, while initially struggling with her training, had a profound moment of insight on it that she could become *"a different kind of coach"*. NQ's encounter with a powerful teacher changed not just his understanding of coaching, but also of human nature and caused him to make significant changes in his lifestyle. The type of learning-experiences stressed in these accounts seem to be those that promote qualities such as self-awareness, authenticity and relational maturity (Drake, 2009; Wang, 2013).

Gannon and Myers (2018) have noted that there are numerous types of coaching training courses available. However for the person aspiring to be an independent, professional coach they suggest that there are effectively three training routes:

- Accreditation based training schemes

- Discipline specific courses

- University courses

The accredited training schemes are largely focused on competencies, skill sets and number of hours coaching. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) criticise such training on several levels. They argue that the dominant reductionist, cause-and-effect understanding of coaching interventions is overly simplistic. Nadeem, Garvey and Down (2021) also argue that competency-based coaching

fails to address the complexity of coaching and moves coaching away from being *"coachee-centered"* (p.19). Hurlow (2022) associates such a cause-and-effect mindset, along with the invocation of the figure of the scientist-practitioner coach, with a behaviourist perspective that diminishes relational factors. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) also note that there is no established correlation between the number of hours spent coaching and the level of competence of the coach. They conclude that there is an absence of focus on the personal development of the coach on such courses. Therefore, according to Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015), the very elements that the interviewees cited as transformational in their training experience appear to be absent in these settings. The narratives and performances I experienced would seem to align with Stacey (2012) who has argued that reflexive, conversational exploration by the coach and coachee with an openness to the novel and unpredictable emerging is the most productive way of coaching. Therefore, it would seem that the personal development of the coach and the associated capacity to think reflectively and to embrace the unpredictable precedes the learning of known and formulaic interventions in importance. Bachkirova et al (2017) align with this perspective and also that of Wang (2013) when they argue that *"the coach's whole self is expressed in his/her interventions."* (p.37). I would then argue that there is a potential for the development of the person of the coach to take a more central role in coach training than it does presently and that it could have an equal, if not greater, prominence to the teaching of interventions, approaches and frameworks

In contrast to the courses based on accreditation Gannon and Myers (2018) have noted that there are discipline specific courses which offer aspiring coaches a level of interpersonal and intrapersonal development opportunities. However, such courses tend to draw from specific discourses that are usually grounded in particular therapeutic or philosophical approaches (e.g. transactional analysis coaching, gestalt coaching, existential coaching). Whilst student coaches will be encouraged to engage in reflexive practice on such courses it is likely to be within the confines of a particular therapeutic or philosophical perspective. In the short term this will move them away from working in an integrative or pluralistic fashion. It is also a framework for

personal development more in keeping with therapist training and fails to incorporate the themes of individualised journey and encounter which featured in the narratives encountered during this research.

Gannon and Myers (2018) give a highly positive review of university master's-level coach education. They note that it is compatible with the profiles of those coming to coaching as a second career (Gray, Garvey and Lane, 2016). They also observe that master's-level courses go to greater depth and incorporate reflexive strands of learning and practice. Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) also provide a strong argument for the quality of such courses and further suggest that universities should have some sort of oversight of the accreditation style training. They argue for a move from competencies to more individualised and context-specific "compatibilities" in assessment. Bachkirova et al (2017) along with Garvey and Stokes (2022) also argue for greater emphasis on personal development or *"psychological mindedness"* (Bluckert, 2015, p.123) at this level. However, the frameworks that are proposed by them envisage personal development as something that comes out of coaching related learning activities and not as an entity in itself. The type of highly individualised significant experiences alluded to in interviews (e.g. road trips with managers, time spent in monasteries, spiritual journeys to Thailand and encounters with altruistic corporate heads) which the interviewees foregrounded as central to their identities do not appear to have a clear place in these course designs.

<div align="center">The corporate context of coaching</div>

The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines "corporate" as *"Of or relating to a large company or business corporation"* (Anon, 2022). Corporate culture consists of such elements as the values, ethics, goals, behaviours, dress codes and power structures that are typically adopted within a given corporate setting, and which embody the corporation's expectations of its employees (Tarver, 2021). Across the case studies it became apparent that the participants in the research were either corporate natives or had career trajectories that had led them to feeling professionally at home in corporate settings. This had a growing negative impact on the neophyte coach element of my personae as it became apparent through the interview process, that my lack of experience and

affiliation with the corporate context was a significant disadvantage. As someone who had previously studied coaching to master's level, was published on coaching and is widely read on the topic it is telling that this had not been an issue for me previously. While texts on executive coaching do locate coaching in the corporate setting, many of them then emphasis the psychological nature of the work and so start re-locating it back within the Psy expert discourse (e.g. Peltier, 2010; Sandler, 2011) or emphasis that the corporate setting is one of any number of settings that coaching occurs in (e.g. Passmore, Underhill and Goldsmith, 2019) thus diminishing the significance of the corporate context. Conversely Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) have gone as far as to claim that the suggestion it is acceptable to coach people from a business background without the coach possessing business knowledge and understanding is *"one of the most pernicious myths about coaching"* (p.306) and state that anyone who does *"poses a risk to both clients and to himself or herself"* (p.306).

The fact that a number of the coaches interviewed did not have corporate or business backgrounds at the start of their careers (e.g. PD was a social activist and social worker, BC was a therapist turned consultant) suggests that Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) have possibly taken a particularly strong position on the topic. That all the participants had found their way to this setting and a significant amount of their coaching work occurred there does however, suggest that finding a relationship to the corporate setting (even an antithetical one) is an important component of constructing a successful coach identity. This appears to be largely omitted from coaching literature and training. In the same way that not all coaches come to coaching with a background in counselling or psychology but will need to engage with such knowledge at some point, so there appears to be room for a similar stress to be placed on corporate culture within the discourses of coaching.

Onward journeys and fluid identities

In the meta-ethnographic review conducted as a prelude to the fieldwork for this project (see Methods chapter) a prominent theme which became apparent was the "onward journey". It became clear that the coaches studied in that preliminary exercise experienced existential factors causing them to adapt,

develop or relinquish their professional coaching identity. As a result of this, the final question on the interview schedule was *"What do you imagine your future in or out of coaching to look like?"* (see Appendix 2). It was noticeable that all the participants readily answered this question and it seemed apparent that each of them had previously reflected on this topic in some detail. In narrative terms their responses to this question affirmed the climax and provided a resolution of the stories they told (McKee, 1999). The climax of all the coaches' narratives was that they had been successful and reached the height of their powers. This effectively affirmed the decisions they had made and the directions they had taken in the earlier parts of their stories. The fact that they were now being interviewed on the basis of their reputation as a coach and corroborated this. The ending of their story (i.e. their response to the onward journey question) bought a resolution to their narrative and gave greater coherence to the performance. McKee (1999) argues that such narrative resolutions have three functions:

1. They tie up the loose ends of the plot.

2. They show the spread of the protagonist's influence and the consequences of their decisions into the wider culture.

3. They provide a satisfactory end of the narrative for the audience that then allows them to move out of the performance space back to their world i.e. functions as a coda (Labov and Waletzky, 1997)

The futures that the coaches envisioned usually had strong altruistic themes (e.g. MW working in humanitarian global settings, BC using supervision to help create a future for coaching that is *"fit for purpose"*, DF contributing to developing the ethical side of coaching). All of them imagined transitions from their current situation in one way or another. In narrative terms these resolutions are important because it imbues their stories with significance and meaning; *"If everything remains the same then the journey is meaningless"* (Ashton, 2011, p.191).

In terms of constructing their coach identities it seemed that these envisaged onward journeys related to their assumption narratives. In the same way that the tacit message of the assumption narratives was *"I didn't set out to become a*

coach, but I did" the implicit message of these resolutions was *"the coach you see before you won't always be here".* That these imagined futures carried themes of positive transformation and highly constructive responses to aging, echoed the assumption narratives' qualities of adaptability, fluidity and openness to opportunity. They reiterated the theme of being open to life events without being the victim of life events. For me, as the audience, I was able to imagine the coaches addressing compelling existential challenges and, in meeting them, going off into their futures still agents of positive change and transformation for both themselves and those they encountered. As I left the interviews these narrative resolutions invited me to begin considering how I might meet the same existential challenges.

How aligned is the literature that maps the terrain of coaching to the narratives of coaching as performed by the participants?

Given that the qualities discussed above contribute to the construction and performance of coaches' identities it is relevant to then ask how much the content of the literature reflects the lived experience of the participants. As has been noted earlier in this thesis there are a number of areas where the impressions conveyed in the literature have questionable alignment with the experience of the coaches interviewed or the actuality of the coaching industry. In particular the areas where impressions conveyed in the literature appear to have questionable veracity are:

- The notion of discrete and pre-established genres of coaching that are agreed within the industry.
- The prominence of psychologists within the field and the archetype of the coach as a scientist-practitioner.
- That there are approaches to coaching with substantial evidence-bases that are practiced by the more effective coaches.
- That coaching is an emerging profession on-track to becoming a recognised and regulated profession

The notion of discrete and pre-established genres of coaching that are agreed within the industry that the coach then attaches themselves to.

Accounts of the genres of coaching are often written as if there are agreed, distinctive and pre-established categories of coaching (e.g. Cox, Bachkirova and Clutterbuck, 2018; Palmer and Whybrow, 2019). The implication is that aspirant coaches need to determine the genre of coaching they are going to operate within as a prelude to practicing, in a conscious and linear process of decision-making and marketing (e.g. Rogers, 2006; Brown, 2017) during which the aspiring coach commodifies themselves and conforms to the norms of their chosen genre. However, a closer examination of these texts demonstrates that the genres which are promoted in this way do not have the unanimity suggested (e.g. Bachkirova, 2011) and that the definitions of them vary across texts, suggesting that the proposed concise, pre-mapped genres do not actually have the concrete existence that is claimed. That being the case the process of coaches positioning themselves within an area of the terrain where they are able to operate may be less linear and more individualistic than is implied by the literature. It can be inferred that in reality many coaches will find their own way to areas that align with their biographical journey and individualised identity rather than follow pre-determined and well-trodden pathways. So, for example, MB reluctantly became a coach as an extension of her role as an editor of a magazine about coaching in the workplace, but then developed a way of coaching that enabled her coaching to reflect her spiritual beliefs and her wish to *"go deeper"* in her work with coachees. Similarly BC, after training as a Buddhist monk, felt she was able to come out *"from behind the identity of a coach"* and find a new way of practicing as a *"corporate contemplative".* CJ became a coach as an unplanned extension of her role as an educator. She described becoming a coach and her potential coachees finding their way to her as "*completely haphazard"*.

The prominence of psychologists within coaching and the archetype of the coach as a scientist-practitioner.

Coaching literature has often foregrounded the figure of the coaching-psychologist, the genre of coaching psychology and the archetype of the

scientist-practitioner (e.g. Law, 2013b). The implication of this discourse is that there is an area of coaching based on positivist science and evidence-based practice that is somehow superior to other forms of coaching (Rushall, 2003). Whybrow and Palmer attempt to historically embed coaching within psychology by claiming that through the use of Socratic questions *"psychologists have been practicing coaching for decades"* (2019, p.5). They differentiate coaching-psychology and coaching-psychologists from coaching and coaches while claiming that coaching -psychology is a distinctive profession. However, they also acknowledge that there is no clear definition of what coaching-psychology specifically consists of.

Amongst the interviewees there was a mixture of indifference and cynicism to the coaching-psychology/psychologist discourse. NQ argued that psychology was only one of a number of influential discourses that coaching draws from and reflected that it would be a shame if psychologists had a disproportionate influence in defining coaching. MW believed that a lot of coaching-psychologists *"look down on us who aren't psychologists"* but suggested that there was a backlash against this as their reasons for claiming an elevated status are questionable. DF contended that coaching draws from psychology but should not be a part of psychology. He recounted an incident of providing coaching training for a psychiatric institute where he found that a significant minority of psychologists he worked with could not move beyond diagnosing and pathologizing coachees. Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron (2018) have acknowledged that there has been a dilution of the scientist-practitioner narrative of late due to the reality that the majority of practitioners do not in practice contribute to refereed journals.

<u>There are a number of more effective coaching approaches to coaching that have substantive evidence bases and that these are the approaches practiced by the more effective coaches</u>

Some of the literature of coaching suggests that there are more substantive approaches to coaching that are evidence–based and that these approaches will form the basis of more effective coaching (Rushall, 2003; Lowman, 2005; Law, 2013a O'Donovan, 2013; Palmer, 2013; Fillery-Travis and Corrie, 2019).

Such a perspective is at odds with that argued by Kilburg (2004) and Wampold and Imel (2015) that there appears to be an equivalence of results across the different approaches. It also moves the focus away from the quality of presence of the individual coach or the character of individual coaching relationships and suggests instead that the efficacy of coaching resides in the approaches and interventions that are employed.

Several of the coaches interviewed (MW, DF and CJ) reflected that they felt it was important that coaching drew from approaches that were psychologically informed. Whilst the majority of coaches interviewed did draw from approaches that would be associated with the Psy expert discourse (Western, 2012) they did not however focus on the evidence bases of the approaches or (with the exception of PD) have allegiances to specific approaches. A picture emerged of seasoned practitioners drawing intuitively from a palette of approaches and interventions, guided by what felt right for them and their clients at the time. MW, for example, described herself as eclectic and said:

"I pinch and use wherever I think it could be helpful to the client. So what I'm – I'm probably master of no particular approach but just got lots of little bits of different ones. I feel that serves me well."

DF described his philosophical foundation in terms of eclecticism and made an argument that all the different approaches had elements in them that are of value for coaching. BC had trained as a therapist in two therapeutic approaches and also in action learning. However, she was clear that the power of her coaching resided in the quality of presence that she was able to provide and, in this way, she also introduced elements of her Zen Buddhist training into her coaching practice. Whilst PD did have an allegiance to a gestalt approach, the nature of the approach means that it emphasises the quality of the individual relationship and the uniqueness of the individual encounter (encouraging the use of individualistic "experiments" rather than specific evidence-based interventions) and so ironically moves it away from the bias inherent in the evidence-based discourse. NQ did not foreground therapeutic approaches in his coaching but celebrated the diversity of resources that coaching can draw from:

"coaching borrows from all sorts of areas and there's a long, in a long tradition of, you know, helping and Shamanism and things. And so some of the stuff that's on the kind of whackier sort of far reaches of coaching can, you know, we can borrow from it and use it quite creatively and it makes for quite an interesting open-minded profession"

Therefore, the attitudes found within the participants seemed to have more in common with those of Kilburg (2004) and Wampold and Imel (2015), in that while psychologically informed approaches contributed to their practice those approaches did not define their practice. None of them suggested that their effectiveness as coaches corresponded to the evidence-bases of specific approaches they employed. The eclectic and pluralistic approaches employed suggest an artful adaptation to the individual coaching relationship in keeping with that found by Huggin, Klar, and Andreoli (2021) and the light holding of skills, models and theories identified by Rajasinghey et al (2022). While, at one level, this supports Garvey and Stokes's assertion that the Psy expert discourse (Western, 2012) is dominant within coaching (in terms of the materials adapted for coaching) (Garvey and Stokes, 2022) it also modifies it, in that the coaches interviewed did not appear constrained by the perspectives or schoolist allegiances associated with the approaches.

That coaching is an emerging profession on-track to becoming a recognised and regulated profession

Grant and Cavanagh (2004) argued strongly that coaching should strive to achieve professional status. As well as establishing an agreed foundation of evidence-based practice and industry-wide skill sets they argued it would also create *"generally enforceable barriers to entry"* (p.5). There appears to be an implicit assumption that in doing so it would legitimise the field of coaching by differentiating it from the "Wild West" of coaching (Garvey, 2011) and assumedly drive-up standards across the field. The assertion that coaching is an *"emerging profession"* (Global Coaching Community, 2008) inherently suggested that the occupation of coaching is worthy of achieving professional status and that the process of achieving that status is already underway. Such a status potentially offers members of the coaching industry higher fees, greater

autonomy and a greater degree of trust from the public (Gray, Garvey and Lane, 2016).

As indicated in the terrain of coaching literature review, a move towards regulation and professionalization also raises a number of potentially problematic areas. Given the multiple and complex identities of many coaches (Pennington, 2009; Gray, Garvey and Lane, 2016) there may be issues incorporating such variety into any given professional framework or aligning the entry points into coaching with those of other professions that coaching may be trying to emulate (Bachkirova and Lawton Smith, 2015). The introduction of industry wide modes of practice and knowledge bases potentially leads away from individual, creative practice and towards a *"dominant, totalizing discourse"* (Garvey and Stokes, 2022, p.318). Lane, Stelter and Stout-Rostron (2018) argue that it is valid to look towards the neighbouring field of psychotherapy for lessons in what coaching may encounter in attempting to achieve the status of a profession. It is therefore interesting to observe that the latest move towards professional status in that field, the SCoPEd framework (BACP, 2022), has resulted in significant dissent amongst some of the membership of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, and there is potential that it will, in reality, diminish standards of counselling training and practice, while disadvantaging its members (UK Counsellors, 2019).

That all the participants drew extensively on foundation narratives and assumption narratives in the accounts of their coach identities suggest that, at some level, these accounts are counter to, or diverge from, the discourse of professionalization. Foundation narratives, through privileging previous occupations and professional settings, seem to express a perceived need to add extra substance to the identity of a coach. Assumption narratives foreground that coaching was not the initial professional destination of choice. This propensity to draw on supplementary and supporting professional identities and histories appears to be at odds with other regulated professions such as law or medicine. In those settings practitioners are not expected to provide a biographical narrative beyond their professional qualifications in order to have sufficient credibility to gain employment. The neighbouring professions of counselling and psychotherapy are also often second careers; yet this tendency

to reference previous occupational histories is not apparent in those fields either. This tendency by the interview participants suggests there may be a vacuous quality in how coaching is perceived that creates a need for it to be filled by supplementary narratives in order for the coach's identity to gain substance. In this sense the narratives gathered for this research do not appear to align with a clear and unambiguous pathway to coaching becoming a recognised and regulated profession.

Do coaches experience the type of insecurity and uncertainty suggested by the literature review? If so, how is this resolved? Is the lack of coherence and clarity in the literature a bad thing?

Given that this research suggests there is a disjuncture between the reality of the journey to becoming a successful coach (e.g. non-linear journeys, individualistic presence, outsider status etc.) with that suggested by the literature of coaching, and which can also be inferred from the structure and content of some training courses (e.g. linear pathways, standardized interventions, compliance with professional bodies etc.) it seems likely that prospective coaches may experience a period of disorientation and confusion on their journey towards becoming a coach as they discover there are no comprehensive maps or texts that chart such individualistic journeys. De Haan (2008) has argued that doubt is the overriding form of tension experienced by novice coaches: *"doubts about yourself, your professional interventions and the boundaries of your profession"* (p.98). A survey of the narratives gathered for this project seem to support this supposition. PD, for example, characterised his initial engagement with coaching as *"a shot in the dark"* and described a solitary process of trying to figure out what coaching was from the few books that were available and by engaging with a professional organisation before formulating his own variety of coaching that incorporated his previous identities as a therapist and a consultant. CJ was perplexed by the apparent lack of substance in coaching when she first encountered it and performed her initial exasperation within the interview by exclaiming *"where's the beef?"*. She described her initial cynicism about coaching when first encountering the field before being challenged by her husband:

"I had a slightly sarcastic attitude about coaching…I was slightly cynical about the whole thing. I remember my husband saying, "CJ you're running the programme, unless you get a better attitude..."".

MW described a lack of connection to coaching and a sense of alienation from coaches when she trained. She initially experienced coaches as people with *"big egos"* and felt a sense of alienation from those coaches she encountered, resulting in a period of time when she resisted coaching and using the title of "coach". After this period of disaffection from the coaching industry she recounted feeling *"gob smacked"* one day when she heard herself in conversation refer to herself as a coach and she realised *"I was coaching all along"*. BC perceives this lack of clarity and foundation to be industry wide proclaiming at the conference where I first encountered her *"we were making it up then and we are making it up now."*

Such disjunctures between the literature, training and the reality of individual experiences inevitably have the potential for negative consequences. The suggestion of a liner process, lacking in complexity, towards becoming a coach fails to communicate the need for coaches to be quick-witted improvisational performers possessed of perspicacity and versatility. It also lacks any sense of the complex and multifaceted identities that the participants in this research revealed. By failing to communicate these dimensions of coaching and coaching identities it can be argued that this discourse is unethical in that it is complicit in people potentially wasting substantial amounts of time, effort and money in coach training. Positivist discourses around coaching that potentially misrepresent it, by purporting that coaching is a scientific endeavour practiced by scientist-practitioners, could similarly be seen as unethical in that they may alienate potential coaches who feel they lack an appropriate profile who, in reality, might thrive in the developmental, spiritual and more creative areas of the terrain of coaching.

In one way or another the coaches who participated in this research all appear to have had such periods of disorientation early in their careers where they described having been insecure regarding the nature of coaching and/or their relationship to it. In all cases this appears to have been resolved through a

process of resilience and determinedly working through their uncertainty. In this way DF was able to successfully incorporate the identity of the coach with that of mentor, author and business veteran. MB was able to connect with her coaching identity through integrating her spirituality with coaching resulting in the realisation that she could be *"a different kind of coach"*. It is noticeable that the various resolutions that these coaches arrived, although highly individualistic in character, were all comprised of achieving a synthesis of biographical history, existing or previous professional identities along with the knowledge and practice of coaching. In this sense the disjuncture and the confusion discussed here can be understood to be possessed of a positive aspect in that the period of disorientation it initiated facilitated the coaches in constructing individual, signature identities that positively distinguished them from other coaches. The period of disorientation can therefore be equated with the quality of liminality within a rite-of-passage, in which a threshold period of uncertainty and disorientation is experienced by the individual as a prelude to a reconstituted sense of self (Turner, 1969; Deegan, 1978). In this way it can be argued that while there are negative aspects to confusion in the literature and overly simplistic discourses within training, they may not be bad things in themselves.

What are the implications of this moving forward regarding how people are signposted into the coaching industry, being a coaching trainee and for providers of coach training?

Taking the above into account it can be argued that it is potentially helpful for the discourses of coaching to have less emphasis on positivism, professionalization and generic-based commodification of the coach. The interviews conducted for this research seem to suggest that rather than standardized, off-the-peg coach identities, possessing a competent, confident and effective coach identity appears to be more about the person you are than the interventions you employ. The coaches interviewed, when they talked about their coaching, seemed to emphasise the qualities they possess rather than the approaches they used. Therefore, becoming a coach should, ideally, be a process where the coach creates an identity that effectively embodies a holistic or integrated sense of Self and achieves a quality of presence that enables their

interventions to simultaneously perform this sense of Self (Wang, 2013) whilst positively influencing their coachee (O'Neill, 2007; Bluckert, 2018). Given this it seems reasonable to suggest that there might be benefit from refocusing the literature, training and discourses of coaching to give a greater emphasis on the development of the person of the coach. This might involve a reassessment of how prospective coaches are signposted into the industry, greater emphasis on personal development for the trainee coach and an increased focus on relational aspects in coach training and the literature.

<u>Implications for the signposting of people into the industry</u>

Newton (2013) presents a narrative of people entering coaching in a casual, almost nonchalant, manner. He recounts meeting an acquaintance at a professional conference who had retired the previous day. The acquaintance had reinvented himself as a coach over the preceding twenty-four hours and was now at the conference handing out business cards promoting himself in this role. In his interview PD drew a cynically humorous image of the number of people entering coaching:

"the number of coaches has gone to 5,000, you know, within five miles of wherever you live, you know, they're everywhere, there's probably one living next door."

MB bemoaned the coaching industry becoming *"saturated"* by people who had taken redundancy from local authorities. Similarly, BC felt that the vocation of coaching was being weakened *"immeasurably"* by individuals seeing coaching as a post-retirement *"life-style choice"*. Such a narrative suggests that many people who retire and go into coaching in this fashion are likely to want to trade on their professional history with little commitment to personal development, questioning their historical occupational knowledge or having openness to new and novel narratives. A refocusing of how people are signposted into coaching that took account of the above would emphasis to the prospective coach the substantial journey of personal development becoming a coach should ideally entail, the necessity of a wholehearted commitment to reflexive practice and the importance of developing the capacity to embrace multiple perspectives.

Another issue around signposting is that all the coaches interviewed for this project worked predominantly in the corporate sector. It could be inferred from this that the corporate context is the site where, in practice, many successful coaches are able to thrive. It seems reasonable that people entering coaching should be aware of this and could be invited to consider what their relationship to this setting is at the start of their training and how this might transform as they develop as a coach. In this way the nature of coaching is not misrepresented to people about to invest time and money in a new career. This is not to suggest that people entering coaching should be business or corporate veterans (four out of the eight participants were not). However, the capacity to construct a positive working relationship with that setting may be an issue in assessing possible future careers in coaching. Such considerations should also be tempered however by acknowledging that there are other areas where coaching is active, so that non-corporate individuals are not unnecessarily deterred from entering the industry. Examples of such areas might be using coaching in mental health (Pendle, Rowe and Britten, 2017) life coaching (Jarosz, 2016) and coaching for retirement (Dodwell, 2020).

<u>Implications for trainee coaches</u>

A recalibration of coaching so that there is more focus on the person of the coach would suggest that as well as learning about coaching (approaches, genres, skills etc.) potential coachees would benefit from the opportunity to focus on and work on the Self. Personal development work and the desirability of personal growth is taken as a given in counsellor and psychotherapist training (e.g. Donati and Watts, 2005). However, during the fieldwork for this research, as I listened to the accounts of the coaches that I interviewed, it became apparent that the narratives of personal change appeared to differ from those I hear from counsellors. The developmental narratives that I regularly hear from counsellors and trainee counsellors tend to be focused on a sense of personal renewal arrived at through inward-looking experiences in personal therapy or during counsellor training. Typically something from their past has blocked their psychological wellbeing and a therapeutic shift has then occurred resulting in positive and profound transformation which subsequently motivates them to want to facilitate equivalent experiences for their clients. Rather than

having such an inward-looking focus, coaches' narratives, gathered for this research, had a more external focus on physical journeys undertaken and often involved meetings with remarkable people. The impact of them tended to be more outward facing so that, for example, FB met her *"tribe"*, PD *"got leadership"* for the first time and DC learned to think like a manager. This more external focus appears to align with coaching having a greater emphasis on performance than therapy and suggests to me that there is possibly a different, more outward-facing predisposition amongst coaches. Given this, it might be that while coaching could borrow from counsellor training to create a developmental, reflexive space, it would be unhelpful to unquestioningly emulate it.

In counsellor training the personal development group (PD group) is a timetabled activity that attempts to create such a developmental, reflexive opportunity. Rose (2008) conceptualises the PD group as a time and place where trainees can question and revise what they know about themselves whilst learning about their impact on others. She argues that by virtue of having such groups there is an explicit acknowledgement that the person of the practitioner has a relevance beyond the models or frameworks that they are being trained in. Fox and Godward (2020) conceptualise the PD group as a site of identity working in a social context where trainees can develop their individual professional identity in the company of their peers. They argue that the resultant identity development and increased self-awareness is key to trainees understanding the impact they have on their clients. In this way the energy of being members of positive learning communities, which was referred to enthusiastically by a number of the interviewees, can be harnessed so that trainee coaches can offer one another active support and challenge in pursuit of developing positive coaching identities.

Many PD groups in counsellor training, whilst facilitated, are unstructured, which often causes frustration amongst group members in the early life of the group (Godward, 2020). Given the more performance orientated outward focus of coaches it may be that this unstructured approach would not suit the learning style of trainee coaches. In terms of identity working it might be helpful to introduce themes for the group to focus on, reflect on and process, such as

motivations to become a coach, significant autobiographical episodes, role models, previous occupations and how they imagine they impact on others. In this way the trainee coaches can help one another develop substance in their identities through both the content and the performance of their identities being experienced and fed back on by their peers. Such reflexive activity could in turn lead to forward-facing individual enterprises of identity working such as identifying areas of the Self they might want to work on, journeys they might want to undertake and encounters they might want to initiate.

<u>Implications for providers of coach training</u>

This research suggests that successful coaches are highly competent and versatile performers who are able to psychologically connect with their coachees and empower them to reconstitute their worlds. In achieving this it is evident that the coach's capacity to form impactful and constructive relationships with their coachees is a key element in co-constructing effective coaching encounters. The centrality of the relationship has been clearly established in counselling and psychotherapy (Cooper, 2008; Wampold and Imel, 2015) and a parallel significance has been proposed in coaching (McKenna and Davis, 2009). Bluckert (2005) has argued for a shift in emphasis in coach training from approaches and frameworks towards a greater focus on relational factors. However, specifics of how this shift might occur in coaching are short on detail. As discussed above the narrative within the coaching literature of evidence-based approaches that are effective in their own right and practiced by more effective coaches is a questionable one and appears at odds with the narratives shared in the interviews conducted for this project. The participants in this research seemed to work from more eclectic or pluralistic foundations that evidenced their capacity, as skilled improvisers, to respond in the moment to individual coachees. Whilst those approaches adapted for coaching from the Psy expert discourse (Western, 2012) form the palette that many of the coaches interviewed drew from, it can be argued that it would be helpful for such therapeutic approaches to be augmented by other elements that transcend specific approaches or frameworks. Such elements that could be introduced in coach training might be an understanding of relational depth

(Mearns and Cooper, 2018) and how to work pluralistically (Pendle, 2015; Utry et al, 2019, Walker, 2021).

Relational depth is a concept that originates in the existential and person-centered quarters of the therapeutic terrain (Mearns and Cooper, 2005) and draws from the work of Buber (1958) and Rogers (1957) respectively. Although the concept originates in these quarters, the authors are able to identify examples of effective working at relational depth in Kleinian, behavioural (Krumboltz and Thoresen, 1969), gestalt and psychoanalytic (Stern et al, 1998) therapies and make a convincing argument that relational depth is a quality that moves across the different approaches. They define it as:

*"A state of profound contact and engagement between two people in which each person is fully real with the Other, and able to understand and value the Other's experience at a high level" (*Mearns and Cooper, 2005, p.xii)

It is further conceptualised as an experience of the full power of the therapeutic relationship and manifested through

"a gestalt comprising the core conditions in high degree and in mutually enhancing interaction" (Mearns and Cooper, 2018, p.45).

McMillian and McLeod (2006) have equated the experience of moments of relational depth with Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Interestingly (for coaching) two elements identified as conducive to generating relational depth are letting go of formulaic methods and letting go of aims i.e. goals (Mearns and Cooper, 2018). Mearns and Cooper (2018) acknowledge that Rogers worked from the unitary, modernist, epistemology of his time where the core conditions were conceptualised as an intervention delivered by the therapist to the client. Instead it attempts to position relational depth in a more postmodern, relational paradigm where the therapeutic encounter is a two-way meeting in which both parties have the potential for growth. It is a concept that has been expanded on (Knox et al, 2013; Mearns and Cooper, 2018) and developed through research (e.g. Wiggins, Elliot and Cooper, 2012; Bakwr, 2015; Ray et al 2021;). Whilst there is no formulaic way in which such a quality can predictably be generated there are clear contributory factors identified by Mearns and Cooper (2018) that are conducive to facilitating

such connection (e.g. willingness by the practitioner to disclose, enhanced self-awareness, "presence", appreciation and valuing of the other). As such it is a relevant phenomenon to coaching that has specific qualities and characteristics associated with it that can be explored in a training setting. Therefore, it could potentially be introduced as a topic into coach training and education in order to enhance coaches relational working.

The pluralistic approach to counselling and psychotherapy (Cooper and McLeod, 2011) is an approach that goes beyond singular and schoolist allegiances to specific approaches and enables the therapist and client in partnership to draw from a palette of approaches and create a way of working that is bespoke to that particular therapeutic relationship. There are three foundations to the approach:

1. A postmodern philosophical base that challenges the notion of single, definitive truths.
2. Greater collaboration with clients with regards to selecting which approaches and interventions to draw on.
3. A structure to the work based on goals, tasks and methods.

(Cooper and McLeod, 2011)

Training coaches in the pluralistic approach has the potential to both enhance their capacity as perspicacious and versatile performers (adapting the coaching in response to the dialogue with the coachee) whilst encouraging them to work in a way that can enhance the relational dimension of their coaching (creating a collaborative partnership with the coachee). In conducting a qualitative research project with practicing coaches into the potential of the approach being adapted for coaching (Pendle, 2015), I introduced the participants (all practicing, professional coaches) to the approach in a stepped fashion involving a video, a written summary of the approach and the key text on the approach (Cooper and McLeod, 2011). In subsequent interviews all of the participants were able to envisage positive benefits to coaching from adapting the approach and there was an emphasis across the sample on the benefits of having a positive framework to organise their eclectic knowledge base and frameworks around. However, there was also a general feeling that the approach needed to be

reworked so that it was more accessible to coaches and aligned with coaching rather than therapy. Following this the founders of the approach collaborated with two coaches and produced an introduction to pluralistic coaching (Utry et al., 2019) that adapted their framework for coaches. In doing so they emphasised the importance of metacommunication between the coach and coachee along with the creation of a *"feedback culture"* (Utry et al., 2019, p.156). By overtly focusing on the expectations, aspirations and preferences of the coachee (and adapting the coaching in response) it offers a dialogue with coachees that demonstrates an active valuing of their experience which, in turn potentially creates a more authentic, consensual and relational way of working. Walker (2021) conceptualises this approach to pluralistic coaching as both an organising framework that enables coaches to engage creatively and spontaneously with their coachees, as well as personal stance by the coach towards coaching practice. In this sense he is promoting the approach as one suited to versatile and perspicacious performers. He argues we are living in an age where the model of an active provider of services selling them to a passive consumer is becoming redundant. He maintains that pluralistic coaching offers a model more in keeping with contemporary times where the service provider and consumer (i.e. coach and coachee) become collaborative partners actively working together on a shared enterprise.

<div align="center">Conclusion to section</div>

In the literature review it was observed how the mapping of the terrain of coaching seemed to align with Martin's notion of the integration and differentiation perspectives employed in the mapping of organizational culture (Martin, 2002). An integration perspective is one where the culture studied is viewed as homogenous, consensual and lacking in ambiguity or contradiction. Martin describes it as a culture where *"each cultural manifestation mentioned is consistent with the next, creating a net of mutually reinforcing elements"* (Martin, 2002, p.94). The integration perspective regarding coaching can be aligned with those commentators that attempt to portray coaching as a cohesive, unified field characterised by industry-wide, coherent shared values and practices (e.g. van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). I have argued that such homogeneity evaporates upon closer examination of the terrain of coaching and something closer to a

differentiation perspective emerges. According to Martin a differentiation perspective is one where consensus only exists within subcultures rather than across a culture as a whole. Relationships between subcultures can be reinforcing, conflicting or independent. She writes *"subcultures are like islands of clarity in a sea of ambiguity"* (Martin, 2002, p.94). While studying the literature of coaching for this research it became apparent to me that there is no single, consensus way of mapping the terrain of coaching and that the prospective coach is effectively encouraged to locate themselves within such subcultures through giving their allegiance to various tribes, approaches, genres and organisations within the coaching industry.

However Martin proposes a third possibility, a fragmentation perspective. Such a view understands ambiguity as both normal and inescapable. It is able to incorporate ironies, paradoxes and contradictions. She writes that it is able to *"encompass the complications the clear oppositions of dichotomous thinking omit"* (Martin, 2002, p.104). While CJ was the only coach to describe her journey to becoming a coach as *"completely haphazard"* all the narratives provided to me were imbued with similar themes. The participants' journeys to becoming coaches seemed to be complex and characterised by such elements as random encounters, unplanned career changes and sudden moments of insight. The very core of the assumption narrative, that was given in one form or another by all the participants, was *"I didn't set out to become a coach, but I did"*. The participants also seemed to subsequently find their own way to various parts of the terrain of coaching in a way that reflected their individualistic history, approach and temperament, rather than following well-trodden paths to membership of pre-existing subcultures. In this sense the findings of this research suggest that a fragmentation perspective is more in keeping with the reality of successful coach identity working. A fragmentation perspective of coaching can therefore be seen as both a realistic and positive one in that it has capacity to embrace multiple and complex coaching identities, varied routes of entry into the industry and diverse approaches to coaching.

It is likely that the regulation of coaching would bring with it standardization of routes of entry, mandatory membership of professional organisations, a hierarchy of genres of coaching and the listing of approved (and disapproved)

approaches to coaching. While coaching remains unregulated and embraces multiple and complex coaching identities then those identities will continue to be open to new and novel formulations. Therefore, while the unregulated status of coaching remains there will never be an exhaustive and complete account of coaching or coaching identities. In considering their onward journeys a couple of the participants (BC and MB) imagined coaching morphing into something that is radically different to its current form. CJ and MW imagined it developing to have a more altruistic character than it currently does, which could be more attuned to the needs of a fluid and changing world. It seems possible that while coaching is unregulated there is potential for coaching and coaches to continue to reinvent themselves in positive, constructive and creative ways. As Garvey (2017) has noted, as well as being unregulated and unpredictable the Wild West of coaching, at its best, possesses the qualities of a pioneering and creative energy, a desire to do things differently and a willingness to engage in different forms of conversation that may make positive difference.

Chapter summary

Has focused on the subsidiary questions from the terrain literature review chapter in order to build towards answering the principal research question in the following chapter. In answering that question I will focus on these qualities:

- Non-linear narratives

- Individualistic signature presences

- The coach as an outsider figure

- Coaching maturity and a developmental focus

This chapter has also outlined some of the implications of this research. In doing so it has questioned the desirability of movement towards the professionalization of coaching. It has noted that the character of the terrain of coaching appears to be aligned with a fragmentation culture that can incorporate multiple and complex coaching identities. It has also argued for a shift in perspective within coach training towards an emphasis on personal development, identity working, relational depth and pluralistic practice.

Contributions to knowledge

Introduction to chapter

In this concluding chapter I outline contributions to knowledge made by this thesis. In addressing the question how do coaches construct, compose and perform their professional identities, I begin by arguing that who you are as a coach is more important than the interventions or approaches that you employ. In integrating Reissman's approach to narrative inquiry with Quigley's approach to theatre critical analysis I argue that I offer a unique means to addressing a shortcoming in narrative analysis. I also evidence that the typology of coaches' narratives identified in this research are an original way to understand coaching identities. I then consider the limitations of this research and offer suggestions for possible future research. I conclude by reflecting on the impact of this project on me.

How do coaches construct, compose and perform their professional identities?

Who the coach is has more significance than the interventions or approaches they employ

The argument that who you are as a coach is more important than the interventions you make, is not new to this thesis (e.g. Rajasinghe, Garvey and Smith et al., 2022). However, this research makes an original contribution to the discourse that the person of the coach is of more significance than the approaches, models and competencies they employ, and demonstrates that the construction, composition and performance of effective coach identities are based on an embodiment of biographical journeys. This is at odds with the majority of coaching literature that implicitly promotes a focus on approaches and interventions in pursuit of off-the-peg coaching identities (e.g. Palmer and Williams, 2019; Passmore, 2021). Whilst acknowledging that there are discontinuities as well as continuities between the case studies presented here, it is possible to identify tendencies shared amongst the participants in relation to the composition and performance of their identities as coaches. The noteworthy factors identified in this respect were:

- Non-linear narratives

- Individualistic signature presences

- The coach as an outsider figure

- Coaching maturity and a developmental focus

Non-linear narratives

In the construction of their identities greater substance has been achieved by all participants through drawing on elements of their wider biographical history. In this sense an effective coach identity appears to be an integrative construct that incorporates plural identities, (e.g. previous careers, spiritual orientations etc.) in keeping with the *"multiple and complex"* identities that have been noted by Gray, Garvey and Lane (2016, p.259). None of the participants gave a linear narrative of setting out to be a coach, training to be a coach and then becoming a coach,. This seemed at odds with the impression conveyed in the literature of finding a niche (Brown, 2017), positioning yourself (Rogers, 2006) and then promoting a USP (Newton, 2013). It appeared that there tended to be a more organic process, that has an emphasis on the development and personal growth of the coach, who then finds their way to an aligned area of the market rather than a self-conscious process of creating themselves in the image of the market.

It seems that successful coaches have often experienced a disruption in their career trajectory (e.g. FB not wanting to work in *"John Birt's BBC"*) and then resolved this by assuming the identity of coach. The disruption to their career is turned into an advantage as their former identity is often invoked to add substance to their newly created coach identity (e.g. NQ referring to himself as *"journalist, turned strategist, turned coach"*). When the coach identity is voluntarily adopted, the narrative showcases their personal agency, openness to novel situations and capacity to act on opportunity (e.g. CJ becoming a coach as a result of a teaching job). When the role is conferred on them by others and they are less enthusiastic (e.g. MB training as a coach in order to validate her editorial post) the narrative foregrounds their capacity to grapple with a problematic situation, resolve it and emerge positively transformed. It conveys a combination of stoicism, resilience and openness to personal development.

While the majority of the participants had engaged in coach training this was not the case with them all and it seemed that formal training to be a coach was a positive, but not always an essential, element of how the coach identities were composed. Because they were often training as a response to disruption to their career path, the point of entering training was individual and not part of a linear career trajectory. This reflects a culture that is aligned with diverse entry points as suggested by Bachkirova and Lawton Smith (2015) rather than a profession with a stipulated and standardised degree-level entry point envisioned by the proponents of professionalization. Indeed, under such a regime a number of the participants would not be eligible to practice. All the participants were members of professional organisations but only one of them referred to their membership in terms that suggested it was a key element of their professional identity.

In their life prior to coaching they often recounted one or more incidents where they encountered disruptive, conflicting forces impacting negatively on them (e.g. DF being conscripted into the Jehovah's Witnesses). These dilemmas were addressed by stepping into a liminal psychological space that enabled them to resolve this conflict (e.g. DF gaining an A.level in religious studies in order to dispute the dogma being imposed on him). In a period preceding becoming a coach, or in the early days of their coaching, it is likely they will recall going on a life-changing journey (e.g. MB's trip to Thailand) or encountering a powerful mentor figure (e.g. NQ encountering Tatiana Bachkirova) that has a significant and meaningful impact on their coach identity. The nature of this encounter appears highly individualistic, as do the ensuing insights, but the pattern of the narrative was constant across the interviews. These consequential journeys and encounters all had the character of rites-of-passage . In this way the stories and performances of the coaches had more in common with accounts of initiatory journeys (Turner, 1969; Campbell, 2008) than they did with processes of commodification.

When hearing these accounts I reflected that it is likely the significance of them does not lie in the events themselves but rather in the capacity of the coach to reflexively understand them as meaningful and develop the associated insights in such a way that they later become integrated into their coaching identity. This broadly aligns with Weick's concept of sensemaking (Weick, 1995) where the

thickening and consolidation of an identity within a given context (e.g. an identity as a coach) occurs through the retrospective performance of narratives to an audience with the shared task of co-constructing plausible meaning.

Individualistic signature presence

A successful coach is able to compose the above elements into an individualistic, signature presence that feels authentic to both coach and coachee. This identity will clearly distinguish them from other coaches. Bluckert (2018) contends that the coach's quality of presence is the source of their capacity to influence. O'Neill (2007) argues that the coach's signature presence is effectively their major coaching intervention rather than any particular technique they may employ. All the coaches interviewed possessed highly distinctive signature presences. The performance of these signature presences appears to tacitly embody their assumption, foundation and encounter narratives. As such they give a performance of a renewed and reinvigorated sense of self. All the narratives that make up the proposed typology foregrounded flexibility, adaptability and the capacity to be responsive to changing circumstances. In this way they all align with the espoused discourse of coaching (Garvey, 2017) and their coach identities are therefore inherently conducive to co-constructing similar, forward-looking narratives with coachees. In terms of the identity heuristic presented earlier in this thesis, the emphasis on an individual, signature presence (as opposed to standardised off-the-peg identities) suggests greater significance on the internal personal constructs element of identity as opposed to adopted external discourses.

Quigley (1985) argued that theatrical performance is a mode of inquiry in which the spectator engages in critical and philosophical work in which they put at risk their assumptions and attitudes through recognition of the possibility of adopting new ones. He contended that transformation through performance occurs via a tension between mimesis of what is known and the novelty of what is new. The spectator, faced with a choice between what is known and what is novel, sorts through the various strands and makes forward-facing choices. He argues that such a process can:

"…reveal and reinforce our human capacity to grow, to change ourselves, by developing new kinds of understanding and new modes of being on the basis of extrapolation from old ones" (p.63)

Similarly, the coachee is confronted with novelty through the figure of the coach and the invitation to think and reflect in ways that are not habitual. This echoes the structure of the coaches' own narratives, where discontinuous dramatised worlds are bought into alignment across the course of their stories.

The coach as an outsider figure

Doherty (2016) conceived being an outsider as a crucial element of the independence required for his identity as a coach. Western (2012) characterised coaches as post-modern nomads moving between organisations carrying knowledge, insight and narrative. MV also alluded to coaches' outsider status:

"we're a bunch of individuals who place ourselves outside of the system and so some of the things we're actually helping our clients to do, we're not very good at ourselves."

The sense of perceiving themselves as outsiders was a theme that surfaced, in different ways, in six of the eight interviews. It seems likely that these nomadic, individualistic elements form foundation stones for their constructed identity and introduce elements of novelty into their performance within coaching sessions that in turn facilitates the coachee in their own journey of personal and professional change. In this sense independent coaches are analogous to the sociological archetype of "the stranger" (Simmel, 2016). According to Simmel, the stranger's semi-autonomous relationship to the community receives validation through their status as independent, solitary traders, bringing something to the group which it lacks. Their value and acceptance depend on their managing a tension between social proximity and distance. Marotta (2012) argues that the stranger possesses a valued perspective because:

"the marginal situation of strangers has allowed them a different type of knowledge that lends itself to a critique of conventional knowledge" (p.684)

Coaching maturity and a developmental focus

An element of a successful coaches' signature presence is substantive inter and intrapersonal awareness that is manifested through high levels of perspicacity and versatility where they can read the situation in a session from moment-to-moment and perform timely, improvised responses. These qualities broadly align with Clutterbuck and Megginson's notion of coaching maturity and their concept of the systematic eclectic coach (Clutterbuck and Megginson, 2011). Their framework emphasises the quality of presence of the coach (rather than the interventions employed) which they suggest is developed through a combination of elements that include a commitment to personal development, a sense of a personal learning journey and an individualistic philosophical perspective regarding coaching. Clutterbuck and Megginson (2011) diverge from the findings of my research in that they argue that these qualities are achieved through a combination of studying coaching, coaching experience and business experience leading to professional maturity. The narratives presented by the participants in this research suggest a far broader range of relevant developmental experiences.

While a tension exists in the literature between performance (Wilson, 2020) and developmental coaching (Silsbee, 2008) none of the coaches interviewed described themselves in terms of being performance coaches. All of them performed a narrative suggesting they were either located within the developmental region of the terrain of coaching or worked eclectically (and so implicitly suggested that they could incorporate both genres). It seems likely therefore that (if circumstances permit) coaches will prioritise the development of the coachee over the performance of managerially defined tasks but nevertheless will have faith that the professional context the coachee functions within will benefit from this.

It is also notable that all the above elements gleaned by moving across the case studies, have a clear primary focus on the developmental journey of the person of the coach. In some cases the story of that journey incorporated elements of training as a coach while in others it did not. None of the participants foregrounded the approach they used. This suggests that the

emphasis on approaches promoted in handbooks along with the notion of the scientist-practitioner (Lane, Stelter and Rostron, 2018) might be at odds with the reality. Instead, it seems that those promoting individualistic integrative or pluralistic approaches are more aligned with what is happening in actuality (e.g. Garvey, 2011; Utry et al, 2019). It was also the case that none of the participants foregrounded a coaching genre they worked in or aspirations around professionalization of the coaching industry as primary elements in their coaching identity. This suggests that there is a mismatch between the detail of the coaching literature and the discourses of professionalization with the lived experience of people who have succeeded in establishing themselves as professional coaches.

The methodological approach as an original contribution

The performance dimension of narrative inquiry has been acknowledged by various commentators (e.g. Maclean, 1988; Langellier, 2001). Adopting Reissman's dialogic/performance approach to narrative (Reissman, 2008) entailed a commitment to a focus on this performance element (along with the structural, thematic and dialogical elements). An issue I encountered in this is that, while the performance dimension of narrative inquiry is acknowledged, there were no examples or frameworks for how this dimension can be developed in analysis. In addition to this I was unable to locate an example of how to work across a number of case studies using this approach.

While reflecting on this dilemma I had a spontaneous moment of recalling a volume on theatre critical analysis I had read in the late 1980s (Quigley, 1985). The framework presented in that text attempted to mediate the disjuncture that exists between the writer's theatre (focus on text) and the director's theatre (focus on performance) and as such potentially provided a template for integrating the spoken narrative and the performance of narrative.

After locating a hard copy of the volume I discovered that although Quigley wrote about a number of "worlds" in his text, he did not present them in a diagrammatic or formularised fashion but rather made passing reference to different named realms. I therefore had to re-read the text and identify the specific theatrical worlds to which he alluded (spectator, venue, stage and

dramatised). Once this was done, as well as scrutinizing my transcripts and case studies for thematic, structural and dialogical material, I now had the means to form an assessment of the efficacy of the performance element through reflecting on how effective the alignment and transparency between the various realms was achieved. This approach is an innovative contribution in the sense that it is a wholly original and it produces a constructivist-narrative approach that future researchers can potentially follow or adapt.

The typology of narratives as an original contribution

At the outset of the project I was unable to locate any extensive understanding of coaches' identities (see Introduction). While various commentators (e.g. Drake, 2007; Rettinger, 2011) name the significance of the concept of identity to coaching none appear to successfully address it. At the time of writing I am unaware of any other narrative analysis of coaches' identities. Having chosen a particular approach to narrative analysis as my methodology (see Methodology chapter) I was concerned that there were few, if any, exemplars of the process of moving from case study to interpretation. Two PhD theses I encountered that had alignments to my approach (Anthias, 2015; Beetham, 2020) drew from Frank's notion of typologies (Frank, 2010). However rather than describing a process of interpretation Frank encourages a fulsome engagement with immersion (see Appendix 6). Choosing to progress in this manner required, to some degree, a leap of faith, which was rewarded as the typology of three narratives outlined below became figure in my awareness during the process.

Assumption narratives

The theme within this narrative is "*I didn't set out to become a coach, but I did*". Each of the participants told a story about becoming a coach despite the fact that this had not been their planned career destination. Becoming a coach was an unexpected outcome within their professional life and on occasion was even resisted. The stories often featured elements that interrupted their career trajectory and concluded with them claiming the identity of coach.

Foundation narratives

These narratives inform the listener that the narrator is making the claim *"I am more than just a coach"*. They draw on the individualised biographical history and/or ideological commitments of the coach that pre-exist or align with their assumption of the coach identity and thicken the discourse of their professional identity by integrating aspects beyond coach training and approaches into their coaching personae.

Encounter narratives

Encounter narratives extend the foundation narrative. They tell a story of encounters with extraordinary people and/or journeys to significant locations that have a lasting, profound and positive impact on the coach. The outcome of these encounters is that the coach has reconfigured their identity and self-concept in a way that distinguishes them from other coaches and is of benefit to their coachees.

Checking back across my case studies I discovered that a version of each of the three narratives appeared in all eight case studies. This typology of narratives is original to this thesis in that this is the first time they have been identified and they form a unique contribution to the literature of coach identity development.

The implications of all of the above further substantiate the earlier argument that the performance of a mature, developed and honed coaching identity based on the autobiographical journey of the coach and the resulting narratives of self, has a more profound impact than the interventions, approaches and frameworks that a coach might study and utilise. The implications for signposting people into the industry are that ethically it should be clear that aspiring coaches should commit to a substantive journey of personal development and reflexive practice. Not to be transparent in this respect creates the potential for novice coaches to pour substantial money and time into an enterprise likely to fail. In terms of the content of coach training there is potential for a shift of emphasis towards greater focus on identity working and pluralistic practice.

Limitations

Whilst the use of a dialogical/performance approach (Reissman, 2008) in understanding the construction of coaches' identities appears to be clearly aligned with its subject matter (see Methodology chapter) it also brings with it a number of limitations that should be acknowledged in order to place this research in perspective. This research has been conducted with a small number of participants using a methodology that facilitates in-depth interpretation across a limited sample. Therefore, as with most qualitative research, generalising the findings across the wider field is a questionable exercise. In keeping with Wittgenstein's view of generalisations (Wittgenstein, 2009) this research seeks only to identify elements that have the character of family resemblances (i.e. appearing in some members and not others, possibly missing altogether in some branches of the wider family) rather than to uncover universal or generalisable truths. The participants themselves were drawn from either the first generation of UK coaches or the subsequent one. So BC and PD talked about trying to figure out what coaching was, FB talked about doing coaching before it was known as coaching and DF encountered it as an attack from across the Atlantic on his mentoring organisation. Whilst there is some sense of inevitability of drawing from coaches of these generations for my interviews, in that this research was purposely focused on established and successful coaches, more newly established coaches that have not authored books or addressed conferences, have not had their narratives included in this research. It could be that a study of this latter group might arrive at different conclusions.

The interviews that this narrative analysis is based on were embodied, in-the-moment performances that were filtered through my senses, personal history and biases then subsequently translated into the written case studies presented here. Inevitably the reader is forming their own perspective several stages removed from the original event. While I have been clear throughout that I intended to be a subjective, meaning-making presence, both in the case studies and through the thesis generally, it should be acknowledged that had the reader been physically present in the room when the interviews occurred, they would, almost inevitably, have come away with different recollections, insights and perspectives.

Minister has commented on the *"ghostly audience"* of narratives (1991, p.29). This term alludes to those who are physically absent from the telling of a story but who the teller is, at some level, aware are likely to be recipients of their narrative. The assumption is that this awareness inevitably impacts on the narrator's delivery of their narrative. I acknowledge that the ghostly audience is especially relevant to this project. All but one of the interviewees were introduced to me via another party. Five of the interviewees were introduced to me via my supervisors therefore they would have known there would be a wider audience of their professional peers for the stories they recounted. One interviewee was introduced by an earlier interviewee who she has a close friendship with and so the interview was effectively an expression of good will towards her friend. The interview that was conducted, transcribed and then not used in this thesis got dropped because the participant wanted to exercise greater control of the contents used than was felt reasonable by myself and my supervisors. In fact only one interview was gained without intermediaries from the coaching profession. It is possible to infer from this that none of the accounts were entirely innocent, in that the performances would almost certainly have been executed in the conscious or unconscious knowledge of the potential wider audience and the influence that resides there. However, this is not to suggest that the performances were somehow tainted. I would argue that the performances were coherent, competent and authentic attempts by the participants to socially construct their identities within specific geographical and social contexts. This tension between the immediate and the absent audience was demonstrated by LH who gave a positive perspective in her interview on the topic of coaching's professional organisations before asking if I wanted to know what her real position was really and then articulated another, much less positive, view. These qualities of the interviews can be aligned with Bakhtin's notion of plurivocality (1981) and as such I would argue can be understood as valid and authentic elements of the encounters.

Future Research

Two contributions of this research are the conceptualisation of coaches as performers and coaching as a performance. Another is the integrative narrative framework I developed (see above). In the findings inferences were made

between the experience of the alignment of worlds in the interviews through the performances of the coaches and how I imagined that this would transfer into coaching sessions. A potential way of extending this research would be to use the integrative narrative framework in studying actual coaching sessions that were recorded and observed. In doing this, rather than the researcher simply observing the session, it would be important to conduct semi-structured interviews subsequently with both coach and coachee so that they were be able to reflect on which elements of the session touched on which areas of their own multi-layered identities and biographies. In this way it would be possible to assess which dramatised worlds had been invoked and how the different realms of both the coach and the coachee became aligned or remained opaque during the session. The integrative narrative framework I developed could also be extended to other areas of professional practice where the performance of the narrator was relevant to their occupational role. It is noticeable that in Reissman's original case study employing the dialogical/performance approach that, while she was respectful and empathic towards her narrator, she also introduced a degree of scepticism (Reisman, 2008). It is important that the use of the framework entails a degree of critical assessment of the participant's performance and the researcher should be able to comment as such if they perceive that the performance lacks substance or the narratives do not align. Therefore this approach would not be suitable to those narrative research projects where the purpose of the research is to amplify and find wider audiences for oral history and overlooked or oppressed voices (Czarniawska,1994).

Other areas for research arising out of this thesis might be in the areas of pluralistic practice in coaching (Pendle, 2015; Utry et al, 2019, Walker, 2021) and relational depth (Mearns and Cooper, 2018). While there have been significant levels of research into relational depth in the area of therapy (e.g. Wiggins, Elliot and Cooper, 2012; Baker, 2015; Ray et al 2021) it would be of interest to collect and analyse coaches accounts of their experience of relational depth using an approach such as interpretive phenomenological analysis (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In this way areas of convergence and divergence with experiences of it in a therapeutic setting can be identified with a

view to understanding which practices are conducive facilitating it within coaching sessions.

Utry et al (2019) have produced a coach-friendly guide to pluralistic coaching practice that draws from Cooper and McLeod's original framework (Cooper and McLeod, 2011). However, the guide appears to be a hypothetical exercise in that it seems to be an adaption of the framework that does not appear to be based in practice. It might be that this initial attempt at providing guidance for coaches could be used as a foundation for volunteer coaches and coachees participating in sessions that are recorded and transcribed. Transcripts from the sessions and semi-structured interviews, conducted with both participants, could be analysed using an approach such as constructivist grounded theory (Chamaz, 2014) in order to develop a practice-based version of the pluralistic approach that takes into account the fine detail of the differences between coaching and therapeutic practice. In this way the approach could be developed in detail and then introduced into coaching practice in an informed and considered way.

<div align="center">Implications for me</div>

Within this thesis I have cited other commentators (e.g. Hertz, 1997; Etherington, 2004; Reissman, 2015) in arguing that the researcher is an active presence and partner in the generation of knowledge and that reflexivity necessitates the researcher articulating their subjective experience and insight. In doing so I have attempted to work in the spirit suggested by Finlay of enhancing informed self-awareness *"while eschewing navel-gazing"* (Finlay, 2002, p.215). The implications for me arising from this research occur on two levels: the findings of the research and a retrospective understanding of the impact on me of the process of conducting the research. In earlier chapters I have compared the process of becoming a coach with my initiation into the world of street performers. In the latter process I learned the most from hanging out with more experienced and successful performers (Pendle, 1990). The time spent listening to stories on the pitch while waiting for my turn to perform and later reviewing the day in the bar were the times the most valuable learning occurred. To this end there were numerous trips to Covent Garden and

Edinburgh fringe in order to meet the most renowned performers in that world and hear their stories. By using a research approach that involved sitting and conversing with experienced and successful coaches I hoped to emulate this process. While the street performers taught me to develop a necessary attitude of self-belief verging on arrogance, the coaches have taught me that, in developing my coach identity, who I am is as important as what I know. These were not magician's secrets shared backstage in a sly, confidential manner but positive, human qualities hiding in plain sight.

When I began work on clarifying what I understood by "identity" I had no idea of the dense philosophical territory I was naively entering. While I was in the York St John library grappling with essentialist and non-essentialist philosophical perspectives, the public debate around gender identity unexpectedly (to me) flared into a bitter, polarized and ongoing conflict with sound-bytes being used to mobilise reactionary conservative elements in a supposed "war on woke" and "cancel culture" (Morgan, 2020). I am reassured that the voices I have cited in that chapter, who argue for essentialism in regard to gender are from within the transgender community and not raised against it (Namaste, 1996; Prosser, 1998). The heuristic I arrived at is an integrative one, embraces complexity and hopefully moves beyond polarized and entrenched positions. It is a framework that I now use as my working model and I have incorporated into my teaching.

At the start of the methodology chapter I acknowledged that I have always struggled to locate myself philosophically. In establishing my positionality I identified four "I's" (Peshkin, 1988; Bradbury-Jones, 2007) or aspects of my identity that I took with me into the research: the neophyte coach, the aging academic, the humanistic counsellor and the theatre practitioner. The insight afforded by this research has helped me consolidate the coach, teacher, researcher and counsellor elements of my identity. In terms of the neophyte coach there has been seven more years of coaching practice since this project began and a coaching style has developed that is clearly different from when this project was first conceived. When I started practicing coaching I revelled in the use of solution-focused, problem-solving frameworks and models that attempted to achieve quick results. They gave me license for a euphoric, heady outing away from non-directive, Rogerian-based practice. In the event my

experience of, and reflections on, the stories shared with me by the coaches has returned me to a humanistic-existential, pluralistic practice. A huge influence on this was my meetings with BC and MB. Daily mindfulness meditation practice has been adopted following those encounters and there is an ongoing endeavour to introduce greater qualities of equanimity, compassion, authenticity and reflection into both my coaching and counselling practice. I am now more committed to developmental coaching and share NQ's faith that such developmental work will have a performance outcome. Originally, I stated that I hoped this research would facilitate me in becoming "assimilated" into the coaching world. "Assimilation" resonates with a sense of becoming the same as something, being absorbed into something and being hard to individually differentiate. Rather than this I feel I am independently finding my own way towards the area of the coaching terrain that aligns with my practice, philosophy and developing coach identity. I can become a different kind of coach.

In the methodology section I also referred to myself as an "aging academic" and wrote about feeling othered in the academic setting. I wrote about this PhD being a prelude to bowing out of the academic setting. In reality this research has facilitated me in finding my researcher's voice and positioning myself within the terrain of research. Rather than proving myself before walking away from academia I now feel a greater sense of authenticity and belonging within the academic setting. Instead of bowing out a more helpful metaphor is one of pausing at a crossroads wondering which path to take, knowing that a decision must be made in the medium-term. In terms of my teaching, as a result of the encounters with BC and MB I now teach the potential of mindfulness in therapy to both undergraduate and postgraduate students (Germer, Siegel and Fulton, 2013). I make a case that although it has been adopted by third wave cognitive approaches (e.g. Crane, 2017) that its place in the humanistic approaches pre-dates this (Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993). I have also introduced a class for the third-year undergraduate students on outdoor walk-and-talk therapy in natural settings which includes a trip off-campus and a practical introduction (Jordan, 2013). An amalgamation of the above has fed into my work as a counsellor and I now consider my therapeutic practice also firmly located within the humanistic-existential, pluralistic area of the terrain of therapy. The "I" that this research has

had the least impact on is that of the theatre-maker. It feels as if that informed the research more than the research informed that element of my identity. I have had to take a three-year sabbatical from the semi-professional theatre company that I am a member of in order to complete this research. The theatre form we practice is playback theatre (Rowe, 2007) a form that takes the stories and narratives our audience privilege us with and then immediately embodies them in the performance space in improvised performances. The process of this research has clearly given me a more detailed eye for the narratives of others that I will carry back into that setting.

Chapter summary

This chapter has detailed the three principal contributions to knowledge made by this research and given an extended explanation to the principal research question before briefly reiterating some of the implications of those contributions. I have offered suggestions for future research and given an assessment of its limitations. I have concluded the thesis by outlining the implications for me of this research.

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Appendix 1

Example of a completed Coach Identity Prompts Tool

Coach Identity Narrative Prompts

Coach focused on: Doug Silsbee

Artefacts used

Silsbee, D. 2010. The Mindful Coach: seven roles for facilitating leadership development (2nd ed.) John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco CA.

Silsbee, D. 2008, Presence-Based Coaching: cultivating self-generative leaders through mind, body and heart

Presence-based Coaching, 2016, http://presencebasedcoaching.com/

+ 7 X training short videos accessed via YouTube

Keynote for Hudson Institute

What are the narratives that the texts convey?

- Doug Silsbee is a wise man whose wisdom is able to cross a number of settings that might be seen to contradict one another
- He is a successful coach. He is a highly experienced coach (see quote pg. 2 of mindful coach)
- Many of his coaching clients are powerful people
- There are apparently no life-changing moments beyond the setting up of Bend of Ivy Lodge (modify this we now have the Buddhist teacher leading retreats)
- An anecdote regularly referred to (which might be a key moment of insight for him) is when he changed a coaching program he was running from English to Spanish. Revisit text for relevance of this (p.137 MC) (working in the here-and-now with what was emerging from the group)
- He comes from an academic family background but is not an academic (although he has been a visiting lecturer)
- He is a coach who can easily slip into teaching.
- He is widely read and is able to summon up any number of relevant, inspirational quotes from diverse authors
- The texts he draws on are modernist; he will quote Huxley rather than Springsteen or Kanye West
- He is familiar with Buddhism, aikido and yoga and brings elements of them to his coaching practice
- He is connected to the natural world on several levels
- He believes that coaching is a way of being with the client as much as a series of interventions.
- He has engaged in rock climbing, sledding, hiking and camping
- Every morning he walks the dog in a natural setting and practices meditation outdoors
- He was director of corporate programs for North Carolina Outward Bound. Clear from keynote speech for Hudson that he used coaching approach in this job.
- He positions himself as a leadership coach
- Coaching is about developing competencies rather than achieving goals (however understands goal-focused models and acknowledges you can do well enough using them) **see quote pg.116 PBC**
- He sees the world as fluid, fast-changing and networked.

- He talks in terms of "awakenings" (see video 6 plus anecdote in epilogue about the national park). This can be aligned loosely with the Buddhist concept of Bodi (awakening or enlightenment). On teaching video 5 he relates this to Zen Buddhism
- Relates this specifically to Buddhism enlightenment pg. 53 PBC.
- Links to "Realization". Realization is a step on from self-observation. It is a moment of insight when we are totally in the moment.
- Self-generation is the whole process self-observation-realization-reorganization-stabilisation
- He is not postmodernist or constructivist in that he believes in real and authentic you and reality **see quote pg. 105**
- He believes in working in a way that is informed by a somatic, embodied sense.
- He sees no contradiction between the natural setting and the corporate setting
- Refers to "the greening of coaching"
- He sees historical significance in the activity of coaching and the place of coaching in the contemporary world
- The quasi-spiritual nature of his approach is emphasised by training at Bend of Ivy lodge being referred to as a retreat.
- He quotes poetry in his texts suggesting someone who is deep and thoughtful.
- He believes in moving from a social identity to a more authentic you
- Coaches should work on themselves rather than learning new interventions
- **Sophisticated viewpoint as he addresses both the external context the coachee exists in and the internal landscape of the coachee**
- Substantive change in the coachee when the system conspires to keep her forever the same- relate to Brockbank & McGill
- Recommendations on back of MC show he is well connected. (also quote about thousands of hours)
- There is truth to be discovered rather than a discourse to be constructed
- Presence Based coaching courses are aligned with IFC credentials
-

Who was the story constructed for?

The story has been constructed for corporate clients and for trainee coaches. The clients are likely to be leaders and top-end organisational employees in powerful positions with high status. DS uses the term "leader" a lot so the assumption is he considers himself a leadership coach and is looking for coachees who consider themselves leaders.

The trainee coaches are likely to be fairly successful individuals from diverse backgrounds. The courses are not cheap and involve a commitment in terms of time. The trainee coachees are unlikely to have a cynical disposition in that DS promotes developmental coaching (i.e. self-development) over performance coaching (e.g. goal focused coaching). DS's approach draws from Buddhism, mindfulness, aikido, tai chi etc. Many of the interviewees are employed in organisations. It is hard to work out if this is the profile they wish to promote or whether this reflects an absence of independent, self-employed coaches. In PBC (p.4) he states that it assumes some level of previous experience of coaching. This can probably be extended to the courses he runs.

What was the purpose of it?

- To promote presence-based coaching
- To promote Doug Silsbee
- To promote a discourse from coaching that is based in the "soul guide " discourse (Western, 2012)
- i.e. a philosophical perspective that has foundations in Buddhism and ecological awareness
- Differs from Soul Guide discourse in that he nails the integration of spiritual approach with the corporate setting. Also integrates internal and external landscapes.
- To recruit new people to Presence-Based coaching (a sense that many of the trainees he works with already have some background in coaching and/or consulting)

Why are elements configured in this way?

- It is noticeable that Doug Silsbee has not produced any texts for academic journals. Given his proficiency at marketing and self-presentation alongside the familial background of physicists and parents with PhDs it is hard to ascertain why this might be. He has also taught coaching skills in a number of US university settings.
- Given that his core market seems to be drawn from the corporate sector it may be he feels that this is a time consuming activity that is likely to have little return for him and his company.
- Ironically his volumes are far more conscientiously compiled than David Drake's (i.e. accurate referencing and indexing)
- On several occasions he addresses the reader with immediacy in the here-and-now breaking the conventions of text books (that whilst acknowledging the reader tend to perceive them as a relatively passive passenger receiving the journey of the text).
- One potential reason for this might be to engage the reader in a more personalised fashion that is likely to make the reader more disposed towards working with DS in person.
- It is also possible that by doing this DS is trying to engage the reader in the type of mindful, reflection that is characteristic of his approach to coaching. DS refers to "reading as experience" (p.7 PBC). Also the inclusion of "presence pauses" where reader is invited to stop reading briefly and spend time reflecting on their response to the point just made.
- The individual mindfulness, somatic and spiritual way of working is integrated to both the coachee's internal landscape and the external work environment which in turn is aligned with a wider (soft-edged) political agenda. DS describes the approach as "greening coaching". This in turn can be aligned with Western's network coach, Du Toit's complexity theory and Hetty Einzig's perspective. However unlike Einzig and Du Toit he perceives this as all synching together harmoniously (i.e. the coach and coachee's world's interact and the coachee self-generates, this causes the coachee's environment to adapt which in turn causes the world to become a better place). Naive?   However he does talk in terms of a global urgency that this happens (aligning with Garvey) and notes that often work environments have an interest in keeping coachee's exactly as they are.
- The complexity agenda is the theme for a retreat for more advanced practitioners
- There is a foregrounding of natural elements. The cover of TMC shows a stepped path through a forest with a fine mist up ahead. The PBC website has many images from Bend of Ivy Lodge that incorporate woodlands and rivers. Shots inside the comfortable classroom space show a great deal of natural wood incorporated into the architecture. Other images from the site show stonework, tree roots, forest scenes etc. A section of photos he personally has taken communicates an affinity for nature with shots of glaciers, birds of prey, jungle wildlife etc. The images suggest a less materialistic, less urban set of values. Nature carries with it a sense of timelessness and this aligns with elements of his narrative around coaching. They also suggest a less frenetic landscape which is conducive to the type of mindful, reflective experiencing that DS perpetuates.
- At the same time DS is very proud of the status of the coachees he has worked with, the settings he has consulted in and the company that he keeps e.g. the president and cabinet of Nicaragua, CEOs, managers developing military aircraft, Fortune 100 companies.

What cultural elements does it draw on?

- West Coast spirituality
- The outdoors adventurer who has come indoors
- The learned man who appreciates poetry and art
- The scientist-teacher who likes methods and models
- The marketplace and other corporate settings as essentially ok
- A corporate landscape that is changing in a generally positive manner (whilst becoming ever more complex)

What does it take for granted?

- Benevolent sense of Buddhism
- Benevolent view of nature
- Capitalism is acceptable
- A positive sense of our potential
- The meeting of the world of the coach and the world of the coachee will have positive affect for both parties
- Coaching as a positive force

What plot does it call up?

There was a man who came from a family of highly educated people. Many of his family were physicists but his mother was a poet. He did not follow his family members into physics but became an outward bound facilitator for corporate clients. In this role he practiced facilitating others to find wisdom and new knowledge that could be arrived at experientially. As well as this the man demonstrated that he was practically skilled through many challenging but rewarding projects. He demonstrated his appreciation of art through his photography and his marriage to an artist. He proved what a caring family man he was through the raising of his children and his ministering to his wife (along with his connection to his Peruvian godchild). Together he and his wife created a beautiful retreat in the mountains and wonderful things happened there. Later they had to relinquish stewardship/ownership of it but he continued to run courses there. He was also a deeply spiritual man who engaged in many spiritual practices. He has integrated Buddhist practice with the corporate setting through his approach to coaching. His approach is developmental and experiential-cognitive rather than performative and simply cognitive. His approach integrates the internal and external landscapes. He conceives of external landscapes being changed on both the micro and macro level.

What does it accomplish?

It communicates a high level of competence. It stresses the importance of ongoing personal and professional development for coaches. It makes clear that this should be a lifelong journey. It effectively integrates spirituality and coaching. It promotes DS as an accomplished, thoughtful and intelligent individual. It promotes DS as a teacher. It introduces an emphasis on here-and-now somatic awareness. It creates an imagery of natural landscapes and settings (interesting given that much of the coaching occurs within corporate-style setting as- this imagery is largely absent). In this sense the concept of coaching itself as a sanctuary or a retreat is created.

Thematic Analysis (focus on what is said rather than to whom or for what purpose)

- Whilst models of coaching may be helpful coaching is more about a way of being rather than a set of interventions
- We win the right to coach by our commitment to our own ongoing development
- The coaching encounter develops both the coach and the client
- Coaching draws on ancient wisdom and we have been doing something akin to it for millennia
- Interpersonal connection and heightened self-awareness are key ingredients in effective coaching
- Our society is entering a time of change and potential crisis and coaching can serve this transition in a positive fashion
- By focusing on the inner responses of the coachee we can achieve positive change for both the coachee and her work environment
- The coach can orient herself by using different "voices" that emerge from different sub roles

Structural Analysis

- His first book can be conceived of as a "how-to-do" book whilst his second book can be conceived of as a "how-to-be" book.
- There is a stress in both books on leaders. It is clear that this is classifying itself as leadership coaching.
- The use of Marshall Goldsmith and Strozzi-Heckler to write the introductions conveys a person who is well connected in the coaching world is approved of by significant coaches
- Although the website extensively features Bebe Hansen the books themselves could be seen to present coaching as a male discourse.
- The cover of M.C. has a path ascending into woodland with a very fine mist ahead. It suggests walking amongst nature. Because of the mist and that we cannot see where the path leads it suggests that we cannot know the final destination but the surroundings suggest that it will be positive.
- The cover of PBC has a more abstract image on the cover and it is hard to tell whether the objects featured are made of cloth or wood or even stone. However there is still a sense of natural materials. The colours of the cover are warm autumnal colours.
- **Website and YouTube**

- The website reiterates the warm, natural colours
- That the majority of the images on the site are taken from Bend of Ivy Lodge they also emphasise the notion of coaching and coach training as a retreat or a sanctuary.
- The blog on the site is not updated frequently but contains full and detailed entries that appear to be continuations of PBC.
- The philosophy video talks about living in a crucial time and relates the micro to the macro. How we are as individuals is significant and runs through all levels

Dialogic /Performance Analysis

- DS talks in the videos in a deep, resonating voice
- He presents as psychologically grounded and focused
- He wears a kind of smart/casual look that suggests he is able to adapt to a number of settings and styles of presentation
- The use of a prayer bell at the start of some of his sessions whilst not corny due to his humorous references to it does however emphasise the Buddhist, spiritual dimensions of his work
- The content of the books regularly emphasises the types of clients that he works with
- Anecdotal material he uses emphasises his connection to nature
- Other anecdotal material makes us aware that he takes on challenging practical projects and completes them

Visual Analysis

- The website is slick and professional. It conveys a sense that whilst there is a foundation of West Coast spirituality that this is successfully adapted for contemporary media and corporate clients
- All the materials suggest a connection to nature. However this is not a version of nature that is red in tooth and claw. Rather it is a serene place that conveys the sense of an eternal order. The implication is that if we align ourselves with this natural order things will turn out well.
- The use of I mages of people doing martial arts based exercises drawn from tai-chi and aikido again suggests that there is ancient wisdom being accessed.
- However the martial arts are not martial but clearly about focus, grounding and centering.

Character and characterisation

DS portrays himself as having an exceptional background (family of PhD's and physicists, mother a published poet). There is possibly a sense of him as an extraordinary individual. This is affirmed by the "Dragon's tail" list on the website which lists a large number of enviable achievements. There is no real "road to Damascus" moment described so it is difficult to know where his approach It is hard to know where the approach and his spiritual orientation comes from. Checking out materials from the Strozzi institute there is a sense that there is an element of re-packaging or re-branding. This is not plagiarism (he is clear about his background there and RSH writes foreword for PBC). However he does talk about PBC as an approach in itself without referencing Strozzi in the way that Strozzi references body psychotherapy.

Metaphors, similes and language

There are a large number of images and metaphors used in the texts and videos. Themes that emerge are the timelessness of the work that is being done, the crucial nature of the current time and how the corporate culture is at a crossroads of change. Anecdotal case studies are used. This varies from Dunbar who tends to use transcripts. DS used transcripts more in the first book but these are not particularly convincing or naturalistic.

The image of the jazz ensemble runs through M.C. This is built on with metaphoric roles within the ensemble e.g. master,, investigator, the teacher, the guide etc.

M.C. begins with a poem that compares the instinctual song of a bird with the instinctual striving for understanding by humans.

Relationships to organisations, and structures of authority and power

- DS and PBC is aimed at leaders although the term is used loosely.
- There is no suggestion that organizations do not have their issues but there is a clear belief that if you change the leaders then the culture and behaviour of corporations will follow.
- **Aligns with Maslow's notion of Eupsychian Management**
- This could be interpreted as both naive and convenient

Disjunctures

- A lot of talk about Bend of Ivy lodge but you need to go on wife's website to discover that they no longer own it
- The metaphor of the jazz ensemble used in M.C. seems to get dropped. Finding and distinguishing the 7 voices forms one session in the first training course offered by the PBC organization.
- Beyond this the 7 voices are not really integrated into DS's writings on coaching
- Does not align his approach with Strozzi institute where it is possible that some areas of convergence exist with the place that he trained.
- Alignment with Eupsychian management concepts can work to pathologise the coachee. The problem always resides with them.
- **Presence and realization not adequately explained and not really differentiated from one another.**
- **No explanation why as soon as you become aware of realization the moment of realization has passed. This appears to be taken from elsewhere (zen?)**

Alternative narratives I could take from this analysis

- A cynic could suggest that DS's move from outdoor management development to spiritual management development is timely in terms of aging.
- Zen and the art of leadership is already covered and DS is not a specialist in Zen. So needed to package in a way that could introduce these elements whilst appearing both original and suitable qualified
- The bulk of DS's qualification claims are around the length of his experience
- Could it be that the 7 voices format was giving him a unique model for the earlier part of his career which became less necessary as he became more established???

Other Factors

- Works with the coachee's internal landscape and their external context
- Differentiates between performance coaching and developmental coaching. Aligns PBC with developmental coaching which he sees as incorporating performance coaching.
- DS definition of developmental coaching possibly differs in details from that offered by Brockbank and McGill

Before interview:
- Consent form
- Dictaphone
- iPad

"How did you first come across coaching?" (narrative)

"What are the elements of the coaches that you first encountered that you found admirable?"

"What was life like before you became a coach?"

"What did making the move to being a coach involve?"

"How did you feel differently about yourself when you did?"

"How was life different?"

"What aspects of the coaching world attract you to it (or attracted you to it)? (ethnographic)

"Which part of the coaching industry/profession do you think you occupy?"
examples

"Are there parts of the coaching industry that repel you?"
examples

"How has it changed since you started out?"
Examples

"How do you imagine other coaches perceive you?"

"What sort of setting do you prefer to work in as a coach?"

"Can you give an overview of the significant events or times of your life that feature on your journey to becoming a successful coach?" (the coach's journey/ narrative)

"You mentioned….tell me about that…"

"You mentioned...can you describe a specific element of that…?"

"When you think back to your childhood or youth are there any characteristics or personal qualities that with hindsight are significant to becoming a coach or how you practice as a coach?" (predisposition from childhood and youth)

"Are you able to think of a time or incident in your childhood or youth when that came to the fore?"

"Any other times that comes to mind?"

"What else in your personality is helpful for your coaching?" (the individual personalities)

"Can you tell me more about how that features in your working life?"

"Can you give me an example of that?"

"Who are the particularly significant people you have encountered on your journey to being the coach you are today?" (meetings with remarkable people/narrative)

"Can you tell me a bit more about …."

"How did they appear? How would you describe the quality of their presence?"

"Who are the other people who have inspired you?" "How did you come across them and what made them significant?"

"How have they inspired you?"

"When you first meet a coachee how do you imagine you come across to them? What do you want them to make of you?

"What are the elements that help you achieve this effect?"

When you coach does the quality of your attention or the way you process things shift? (emergent theme)

How has your identity as a coach shifted over time ?

"What is the approach or approaches that you employ in your coaching?" *(a unique relationship to a specialist approach to coaching)*

"How did you come to be using that approach/those approaches?"

"Do you think that you have an individual approach? Can you describe that?"

"Is there anything about that particular approach that aligns with you personally?"

"Are there any approaches to coaching that you react or feel negatively towards?"

"What are your thoughts on the relationship between coaching and psychology? (epistemology and ontology)

"Do you think of coaching as a science or an art?" (closed question)

"How did you arrive at that conclusion?"

"Can you expand on that?"

"Can you give any examples from practice?"

"How do you think the coaching process works in practice?" (process of coaching and the role of the coach)

"How does the coach actually facilitate the client?"

"How does your particular coaching approach or process work?"

"How would you characterise the coach's role in this?"

"How do you individually achieve this? What are your qualities and how do they come into play?"

"How do you feel that previous professional positions or roles you have held impact on your coaching and your marketing?" (previous professional roles that inform coaching)

"What qualities do you think that awareness of those roles communicates to your potential clients?"

"Do you hold any qualifications that are significant for you as a coach?" (the gaining of qualifications)

"How did you find gaining those qualifications?" *(tutors, peers course content, assignments)*

"How significant are those qualifications to your actual coaching?"

"How significant are those qualifications to your marketing?"

"What do you think is the relevance of coaching's professional organisations?" (achieving positions that evidence coaching competence, achievement or acknowledgement by peers)

"Do you have any criticisms of those organisations?"

"Have you held any positions within those types of organisations?"

"How did you get involved"

"Are there any other types of position that you have held that are relevant to your coaching or your profile as a coach?"

"In what ways was holding those positions helpful for you?" ("Marketing?")

"What do you imagine <u>your</u> future in or out of coaching to look like?" **(the onward journey/ narrative)**

Appendix 3

Text from introductory email

Dear

My name is Andy Pendle and I am the PhD student who is being supervised by Bob Garvey and Paul Stokes. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed by me as a part of my doctoral research. The project is focused on how successful coaches construct and perform their coaching identities. The interviews themselves are informal and semi structured (although I will record and transcribe them for the purposes of analysis). I want to ask you about topics such as how your personality and biography feeds into your coaching, your beliefs about coaching etc. The interview is likely to last just over an hour (although to allow for the realities of travel, setting up and the possibility of over running it might be helpful if you felt able to consider blocking in one and a half to two hours).

I am based in York but happy to travel within the UK to a place that is convenient to you. As well as being a doctoral student I am also a full time university lecturer (in the subject area of counselling, coaching and mentoring). Inevitably this means that I have some constraints on my availability. However I normally have availability on Wednesdays, Fridays and at weekends. I wondered if it would be possible to look in your diary to see if you have availability on any of those days in the coming months and consider where and when it would be convenient to meet.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to get back to me. Once again thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this project. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Appendix 4

Consent Form

Dear Participant

I am a doctoral student conducting research at the Sheffield Business School at Sheffield Hallam University. My supervisors are Dr Paul Stokes and Professor Bob Garvey. This project has received ethical approval from Sheffield Hallam University. Many thanks for agreeing to contribute to it as an interview participant.

Research Project Title: *A narrative inquiry into the construction, composition and performance of coaching identities.*

My contact details: **Andy Pendle**,
                                   Senior lecturer in Counselling, Coaching & Mentoring,
                                   York St John University,
                                   Lord Mayor's Walk,
                                   York,
                                   YO31 7EX

                    Email: a.pendle@yorksj.ac.uk

You have been asked to participate in this research project because you are perceived as a successful coach who has individually earned recognition within the coaching industry. The purpose of the research is to inquire into how effective coaching identities are constructed, constituted and performed and thus contribute to the body of knowledge specific to coaching. The interviews are expected to last a little over an hour and will be recorded for the purposes of transcription. The data that is produced through the interview will remain anonymous; it will be transcribed by the researcher and kept in a secured location. After the project is complete the recordings will be destroyed. Anonymous quotes from the interview may feature in texts (such as articles) or presentations arising from the research.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without disadvantage to yourself and without being obliged to give a reason. Should you withdraw more than one month after the interview has taken place the researcher reserves the right to use anonymous data in the write-up of the study and in any further analysis that may be conducted by the researcher.

It is not envisaged that participation in the project carries any risk. However I am available after the interview for a debrief should you wish.
I have read and understand the above. I agree to take part in this project as an interview participant.

Participant's Name (BLOCK CAPITALS) …………………………………………………..

Participant's Signature…………………………………………………………………………

Researcher's Name   …………………………………………………………………………..

Researcher's Signature………………………………………………………………………….

Date …………………………………………..

Verbatim transcript conventions

"Oh:::" Colons = extended sound

-- False starts, incomplete sentences, breaks between sentences

---- Missing word or section that cannot be heard

[pause] What it says

[…] omitted material

! joke or ironic comment

_____ emphasised or loud comment

(Interviewer: I see) inserting brief comment made by interviewer.

[coughs] square brackets for anything that needs to be inserted into the original transcript

IR: So then surely {you know} that I want {} = overlapping speech

L.W   {oh yes}

= "latching", no interval between turns

hehe laughter

Fun(h)ny words spoken laughingly

↑↓ upward or downward rise in intonation

°softly° words spoken softly

.hhh in-breath

hhh. out-breath

Appendix 6

Example of Frank's six acts of interpretation

The story into images

A girl carrying around a new weight and keeping secrets. It is the cost of praise, the cost of being wise beyond your years, the cost of being trusted and valued.

An innocent girl being targeted and victimised. She will learn to say the right things. She will learn to be agreeable. She will learn to please others. Finally she is on the right wavelength. There is an absence of anger that belongs to being bullied.

In the temple amongst the frescos, gold and incense she is staring in awe and fascination. Amidst the splendour and the promises of enlightenment she wonders why she feels so sad.

Amongst the ravers and reflectors, the recovering and the lost she is dancing. Dancing like one who is unburdened. A shift is happening and as she becomes lost in the ecstasy, she just cannot put it into words.

She does not know who she is. She is unravelled. A foundation stone has been removed.

She sits with the coach and they are following the moment. They are open to each other. They are sifting though the debris looking for the threads that will help her reconstitute herself.

She is being invited into the coaches' world. The coaches are wanting to dance with her. She stands with her back to the wall explaining she is not a party goer but an observer of the party. No one takes any notice and the invitations come thick and fast. Then all of a sudden dawn is breaking and she finds she is on the dancefloor and has forgotten to leave.

In the face of the denizens of the faceless corporations the people-pleaser finally understands that she can please herself. She begins afresh. She is making something new. She is cooking up a new recipe. Fresh and interesting smells are beginning to waft into the room.

She is a variation of Cinderella. The adult orphan without the confidence to go to the ball. But once she finds the shoe fits, she not only stays at the party but invents a new way of coaching that integrates the ancient and the modern.

There is nothing cynical here.

Perspective of a marginal character (the husband)

"I have seen you struggling on your own and wanted to reach out. I have known there are times when I have failed to make you happy. I have sometimes felt excluded as you have walked your own path. I have watched and waited and sometimes kept my own counsel. My words have sometimes failed to reach and reassure. Then I could see that you were starting to return. Under your own steam, at your own pace, on your own terms. You have your answers. Our life has coherence.

Details that might have been included but were omitted

The story of her late sister
The true weight of the disclosures as a child
How the passive-aggressiveness played out
How she came to be a working, single mum at the start of her book. Is there a break in the relationship?

Differences between the storyteller and the researcher

When she is bullied, she becomes a pleaser where I become angry.
Her engagement with spirituality was sustained. Mine was different.
She has a gentler more positive demeanour than I have.
She has an openness to others that is immediately apparent.
She is a mother/parent. I am not.
She is a woman. I'm not.

Thoughts about the story in relation to my life

In her there is greater sadness and greater positivity.
There is a lot more physical movement. She moves between countries.
There is immersion in spirituality that is sustained.
She never became a therapist and I think that she envies me that.
When I look at her, I learn I can be a coach in my own right – she lights a pathway for me.
We have both found our way through benefactors
We were both directionless when first put into the adult world.
Because of university she has never had the experience of camaraderie I had at London Transport.
Her journey into coaching has parallels with my journey into education.

Unsent letter of appreciation

Dear MB,
It was so wonderful to meet you. The biggest and most valuable piece of insight was to show me that I can be "a different kind of coach". This is so reassuring for my future (should we ever emerge from covid). I think another gift of understanding is that you affirmed the connection with mindfulness and

spirituality at has been growing across this process. You and BC have both sustained me in this.

Your warmth towards me affirmed me to myself and your comments on my capacity as an interviewer helped me believe in myself. Although you do not foreground it you have borne a number of crosses in your life and you are a model of how such things can be met with equanimity rather than anger and alcohol.

<div align="center">
Bless you for your time

Andy
</div>