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Coaching Psychology: A journey of development in research

Jonathan Passmore and Tim Theeboom

Introduction

In this chapter we aim to review the developing journey of coaching psychology research, which has emerged over the past two decades from ad hoc, grass roots research to dynamic, serious academic study.

The chapter explores the theme of coaching psychology research by considering its development through a series of research phases. Our selection of phases reflects how we see this journey of development looking back from 2014. We recognize there are other ways the journey could be segmented, and that our view is just one perspective.

To illustrate these phases we have selected one or two sample papers from each period that we believe illustrate many of the points we are raising about the phase in question. By selecting these papers we are not suggesting they are the worst or the best examples, but rather the example is typical of the research that was being undertaken, referenced and quoted in coaching research papers at the time, including by ourselves. In fact just to balance up the critique of these papers, we have deliberately included papers written by one of us, to show that our own work is not beyond criticism or improvement.

Our aspiration is that the chapter will provide future students and those studying coaching research with a summarized 'history' of the development of coaching psychology, which shows its emergence towards a respected strand of psychological research. Further, we will argue that such a journey of development is typical for most emerging areas of research.

A brief review of Coaching Psychology Research

As researchers we have both been challenged in the past by practitioners; '*So why is research important? I know it works and that is enough*'. For many practitioners, that is enough. However, when decisions need to be made about the impact of coaching, we would argue as psychologists that companies and individuals need to ensure that they can demonstrate that coaching is both the right intervention to address the perceived problem and secondly that it actually works – i.e. that it will deliver the perceived benefits.

We would argue that research can provide valuable benefits for practitioners too. Research aims to identify and define the knowledge base upon which practitioners

work – what is coaching’s combination of knowledge and skills which differentiate what coaches do from other helping and learning interventions? Such a differentiation is essential for any consideration of coaching.

With the idea of an evolving and developing knowledge base, supplied by appropriate research, there comes the potential of enhancing coaching performance of current coaches. Training and development becomes underpinned by evidence and becomes a process of continuous professional development for established coaches.

Further, with increased demand for coaching, new coaches also need to be trained. With this new evidence base, formal training too can be underpinned by research about what works and how. Those involved in coach training need to understand this research for course design and delivery. For example do open questions make a difference in coaching? If so how? Are listening and empathy enough to help provide a space for reflection, learning and change? Or do support and empathy need to be matched by challenge? Does it matter if the coach moves from one approach to another within a coaching session, or is consistency in approach important in producing effective outcomes? What approaches work best with different presenting issues, for example is Transpersonal coaching the most effective model for career coaching and Cognitive behavioural coaching most effective for coaching on skill development? When should we coach and when should other interventions be used from instruction, or mentoring? These are important questions and in many cases we still do not know adequate answers, although the past two decades or so have given us a much better insight into the process and the experience of coaching.

The past twenty-five years has seen an explosion of coaching psychology research. This research has gone through a number of phases, as our understanding of coaching as continued to grow and the expertise of researchers has developed.

Each phase has required different methodologies and instruments. In the first phase the approach was experiential and theoretical. In this phase the focus was on individuals sharing their examples of practice and debating the boundaries of a emerging domain. In the second phase the case study and survey became popular tools for helping to explore the phenomena. Later in phase three and four qualitative studies sought to build our theoretical knowledge, while small scale quantitative studies, often Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT’s) provided interesting insights to specific populations. Most recently we believe we have embarked upon a fifth phase where larger scale RCT’s and meta studies are providing insights into collections of studies, to provide a more definitive answer to the question, does coaching work?

In the following sections we aim to look at each of these phases with a particular focus on one or more papers which illustrates the phase. We will start by considering the first phase, which was dominate during 1990-2005, but has now almost slipped from the literature. Of course, prior to this there were a number of early studies of coaching, starting with Gorby’s 1937 paper (Gorby, 1937) looking at the impact of coaching in a manufacturing setting. This was quickly followed by a second study in 1938

(Bigelow,1938). In the 62 years following 1937, to the end of the century, there were a total of 93 articles, PhDs and empirical studies published. The 1937 and 1938 papers were followed by a slow trickle of papers. One research paper was published in the 1940's (Lewis, 1947) and this was followed by nine studies in the 1950's, the majority concentrated in the later half of the decade. This was followed by three studies in the 1960's and three in the 1970's. It was not until the 1980's that the first signs of growth were seen. Several of these early papers hinted at the potential that coaching may be a separate organizational intervention, or as a complimentary intervention to help in skills transfer after training. An example is Holoviak's study (Holoviak, 1982). Holoviak's study examined training programmes in relationship to variations in company productivity levels in the coal industry. The study used a semi-structured interview method and identified that companies which provided greater amounts of management and supervisory training, including coaching, achieved higher productivity.

It was not until the 1990's that coaching research papers became a common occurrence in the literature. During this period some 41 papers are cited by PsycINFO and Dissertation Abstracts International. This reflects the growing interest by organizations in coaching, and the emergence of practitioners writing up their experiences in journals to share with their colleagues.

Phase 1: Boundaries and theories

There has been considerable debate about coaching and coaching psychology. Are they the same thing or different things? Some writers have implied that coaching psychology is a different discipline. That is not our view. We hold the view that coaching and coaching psychology are parallel disciplines. The evidence appears to support this view. In a UK based study comparing psychology and non-psychologically trained coaches the results indicated that both groups reported employing similar behaviours with clients (Jenkins et al, 2012).

Early in the journey of coaching psychology Grant and Palmer (2002) defined coaching psychology as:

Coaching psychology is for enhancing performance in work and personal life domains with normal, non-clinical populations, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established therapeutic approaches.

A possible implication of this definition was that coaching psychology was distinctive in some way from coaching. Further the definition of coaching seeks to draw a distinction with counselling by suggesting that coaching is targeted at 'normal' and 'non-clinical' populations. This distinction was true in 2002, but by 2010, coaching had extended into new areas including smoking cessation and other health related areas. This trend is likely to continue as coaching skills continue to be adopted by clinically trained staff for use in medical settings – making the coaching boundary with counselling fuzzy.

Secondly, Grant and Palmer's original definition suggests that coaching psychology must draw on models grounded in therapeutic approaches. This potentially limits coaching and restricts the development of approaches which are grounded in organizational practice or are specifically developed for coaching. In response to these and other points, Palmer and Grant updated their definition:

"Coaching Psychology is for enhancing well-being and performance in personal life and work domains, underpinned by models of coaching grounded in established adult learning or psychological approaches," (adapted Grant & Palmer, 2002).

The definition is more inclusive but implies that there is a distinctive nature about 'coaching psychology' process, in contrast to 'coaching'.

Rather than focusing on the coaching process, one of us (Passmore, 2010) has previously offered an alternative definition for coaching psychology:

"Coaching psychology is the scientific study of behaviour, cognitive and emotion within coaching practice to deepen our understanding and enhance our practice within coaching."

This definition echoes definitions for other areas of psychology, such as health and organizational psychology, where the focus of psychology is towards study rather than practice, recognizing that many non-psychology trained practitioners in these areas use psychometrics and other psychologically informed processes without the wider academic psychology training.

While there remains some discussion about these issues, the trend in coaching psychology research has moved away from definitions towards areas of practice and impact, specifically the use of case studies and surveys. This shift in the primary focus is itself a reflection of a growing confidence in what the focus of study is. This is the theme for the next section.

Phase 2: Case studies and surveys

In phase two the focus was on case studies and survey based research. These studies can be found in the two journals that were actively publishing coaching psychology research during the mid 1990's to around 2009. These were *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice & Research* and *International Coaching Psychology Review* (from 2006).

During this phase papers were focused on the experience of coaching, either from the perspective of the coach in the form of a case study, or drawing on the experiences of coaches through surveys. One example of the survey-based approach that looked at both the views of coaches and coachees was Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck. (1999). This paper sought to identify the key behaviours which participants perceived to make a

material difference in the process. What is most interesting about this paper, is that looking back the study identified most of the key behaviours subsequently referred to in research papers focusing on coach behaviours over the coming two decades. While the method may be challenged as being basic, the outcome provided a useful platform for future multiple studies on coach behaviour that followed.

Tables 1.1 and 1.2 A summary of the Hall, Otazo and Hollenbeck study.

Table 1.1: What works best in Coaching?

Coaches	Coachees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest, realistic, challenging feedback • (positive & negative) • Good listening, sounding board • Good action ideas, pointers • Clear objective • No personal agenda • Accessibility, availability • Straight feedback • Competence, sophistication • Seeing a good model of effectiveness • Coach has seen other career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting personally, recognizing where client is. • Good listening, being a sounding board • Reflecting • Caring • Learning, demonstrating trial & error attitude • Checking back, following up • Committing to client success and good organizational outcome • Demonstrating integrity, honesty • Openness, initiative of client coaching • Having good coach/client fit • Knowing the “unwritten rules” • “Pushing” the client when necessary

(Adapted from Hall et al, 1999)

The second popular methodology used during this phase was the case study. This type of paper offered the coach (mostly psychologists) perspective on their work and on the coaching process. In this sense the approach is limited by the impact of attribution bias in reporting our own work.

Table 1. 2: What works least well in coaching?

Coaches	Coachees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nothing • When recommendations are self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being judgmental • Poor timing or impatience

<p>serving for the coach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When feedback is all negative • Feedback only, no action ideas • When feedback deals with others' feelings, not results • Invasion of privacy • When recommended actions seem naive or unrealistic 	<p>regarding executive's readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the right degree of bluntness and honesty for the individual
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A commonly cited example is Winum's paper (Winum, 2005). The paper offers a case study of coaching a black American coachee. The first three quarters of the paper is presented in a story format, rather than as a classic academic paper or even as a business case study. There is little critical reflection, and little insights as to the coaches personal learning from the process. In some senses this style of paper can be viewed as presenting a highly personal and rosy perspective of the work undertaken by the individual or by the consulting company concerned. Too frequently the unspoken implication is '*see what we did, we can do this for you*', as opposed to '*see what we did, if you learned from our mistakes you could do this even better yourself*'.

In the Winum paper, the final quarter of the paper, the paper partly redeems itself by offering a handful of insights into the coaching process. These include the importance of challenge and candid feedback for the coachee and organizational clients, the role of contracting with all of the stakeholders, including coachee, organizational client and peers who have a view about the outcome, and the role of organizational culture in supporting the coaching process.

This is not to say that case study papers cannot make a significant contribution to the literature, examples such as Freedman and Perry's (2010), case study from one to one coaching with a client from the nuclear industry offers fresh insights into both the coaching process and the coach. Although this paper, suffers the same core limitation of not being able to move from the specific to the general – for the reader to generalize, with any reliability, to their own work.

Phase 3: Qualitative research

The third phase which we have described as qualitative, emerges around 2005 and continues to be a feature within the literature. In this phase researchers drew on qualitative research methodologies, such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, (1967 Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis (Smith & Osbourne, 2003 & Smith et al, 2009). This would also include Discourse Analysis, as yet unused coaching research methodology, but in our view one which offers a rich vein to explore, particularly with respect to the role of power within the coach-coachee and the coach-organizational client dyads.

Such methodologies are useful in building theory and also diving deeper to understand the personal and less tangible aspects of coaching as a phenomena of human relationships and interpersonal processes. One example of a paper in this area is Duff and Passmore (2010).

In this paper Duff and Passmore, apply the Grounded Theory approach to understand coaching decision making with a view to building a ethical decision making model. The study used a semi-structured interview design, complemented by a focus group of experienced coaches. The study identified key elements used by coaching psychologists in making decisions which include ethical principles such as those presented in professional codes and relevant literature (see Table x.3).

These elements were used to build firstly descriptive and later conceptual codes and from these a decision-making framework was developed and tested on coaching psychologists.

The outcome of the research was an ethical decision making model which the authors claimed offered a sequential but non-linear model to guide the subsequent decision making of practitioners.

Such models offer the opportunity for further testing, for example by assess their value to practice through the use of RCT's, comparing the model with a placebo approach to decision making or practitioners who don't use a model in their decision making.

Table X.3: Ethical Principles in decision-making

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal ethics• Moral values,• Duty to society,• Standards of practice,• Relevant laws for the region in which they worked• Conversations with others such as supervisors, e• Experience, respected others" views,• Implicit and explicit contract with clients along with boundaries• Implications involved with a situation
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(Adapted from Duff & Passmore, 2010)

Thus, qualitative research methods can provide valuable insights into the potential benefits of coaching, as well as the processes underlying effective coaching (Grant, 2013). Indeed, it has been argued that qualitative research methods are especially suited for studying individualized interventions such as coaching. First, coaching is a client-directed intervention (Grant, 2003): each coachee has his or her own unique problems and/or goals. Thus, the standardization in both the coaching intervention and the targeted outcomes needed for quantitative studies is often problematic.

Second, (most) coaching is based on Socratic dialogue and therefore non-linear and unpredictable in nature. In this sense, qualitative research methods are ideally suited for capturing the organic nature and the richness of individuals' lived experience (Grant, 2012).

While qualitative approaches may offer insights about the participants, they lack the ability to generalize the results from one sample to the wider population, or to offer definitive answers to questions, such as *'does coaching work?'* or *'what behaviours used by coaches create the biggest outcomes?'* In this sense we argue that qualitative studies need to go hand in hand with quantitative studies in mixed methods research. Specifically, the numerical data provided by quantitative studies allows for comparisons with related developmental interactions such as mentoring and training (D'Abate, Eddy & Tannenbaum, 2003) and could thus provide a reference point for the human resource development decisions and strategies for both organizations and individual clients. To conclude, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies have answers to give, but only by bringing different methodologies together can maximum insight be gained by the process in question.

Phase 4: Quantitative – Small scale RCT studies

The area of quantitative research too has grown over a similar period, from early 2000's and remains a popular topic of coaching psychology research. In this category we consider Randomized Controlled Trial's (RCT's) to be the gold standard of research methodology, although quasi-experimental design and similar methodologies have also been used and provided interesting studies.

RCT's provide a unique opportunity to control for confounding variables that cannot be addressed by other research designs (Cook & Campbell, 1979). Especially relevant for coaching, RCT designs allow us to control for selection effects (e.g. coachees that participate in a study are strongly motivated for change), placebo effects and natural maturation (change that cannot be ascribed to the intervention). Research on related interventions such as psychotherapy consistently shows that these factors play a significant role in determining the effectiveness of interventions, and even are stronger predictors of effectiveness than the specific type of intervention used in the study (McKenna & Davis, 2009, Messer & Wampold, 2002).

The exact number of RCT's in coaching is hard to measure because it depends how the literature search categories are defined (see also Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014). Anthony Grant, who actively maintains a bibliography of coaching research, has suggested, there are less than 50 such papers. However, a larger net, collecting papers from health and education, as well, business and psychology, is likely to see the number of RCT's rise beyond 100. This reflects the spread of coaching into health and education and the popularity of RCT as a method for use in such domains. These numbers are still relatively low when compared to studies in related areas such as therapy and mentoring. As Grant notes *"For some observers the small number of randomized controlled outcome studies may be considered to be the major shortcoming*

in the literature on coaching efficacy” (Grant, 2012). The table below (adapted from Grant, 2012) provides an overview of the current RCT studies to the knowledge of the current authors.

Table X.4: Randomized Control Trail & experimental design coaching research

Study	Intervention Overview	Type of Study	Key Findings
Gyllensten & Palmer (2005)	31 participants from UK finance organization	Quasi-experimental field study (a) Coaching group; (b) Control group	Anxiety and stress decreased more in the coaching group compared to control group
Evers, Brouwers & Tomic (2006)	60 managers of the federal government	Quasi-experimental field study (a) Coaching group; (b) Control group	Coaching increased outcome expectancies’ and self-efficacy
Green, Oades & Grant (2006) *	56 adults (community sample) took part in SF-CB life coaching program	Randomised controlled study (a) Group-based life coaching; (b) Waitlist control	Coaching increased goal attainment, well-being, and hope. 30-week follow-up found gains were maintained
Green, Grant & Rynsaardt (2007)	56 female high school students took part in SF-CB life coaching program for 10 individual coaching sessions over 2 school terms	Randomised controlled study (a) Coaching group; (b) Waitlist control group	Coaching increased cognitive hardiness, mental health and hope
Spence & Grant (2007)	63 adults (community sample) took part in SF-CB life coaching program	Randomised controlled study (a) Professional coaching group; (b) Peer coaching group; (c) Waitlist control group	Professional coaching more effective in increasing goal commitment, goal attainment and environmental mastery
Duijts, Kant, van den Brandt & Swaen (2007)	Dutch employees assessed for the effectiveness of a preventive coaching program on sickness absence due to psychosocial health complaints and on wellbeing	Randomised controlled study: (a) 6 month course of preventive coaching; (b) control group	Significant improvements in health, life satisfaction, burnout, psychological wellbeing but no improvement in self-reported sickness absence

	outcomes		
Spence, Cavanagh, & Grant (2008)	45 adults (community sample) took part in mindfulness-based health coaching over eight weeks	(a) Randomised controlled study: SF-CB coaching followed by mindfulness training (MT); (b) Mindfulness training followed by SF-CB coaching; (c) Health education only control group	Goal attainment greater in coaching than in the educative/directive format. No significant differences were found for goal attainment between the two MT/CB-SF conditions.
Fielden, Davidson, et al. (2009)	Nurses from six UK Health Care Trusts were allocated to a coaching group (n = 15) or a mentoring group (n = 15)	Quasi-experimental field study (a) Coaching group; (b) Mentoring group in six-month coaching/mentoring programme Qualitative and quantitative data at (T1 = baseline, T2 = 4 months and T3 = 9 months)	Mentoring was perceived to be 'support' and coaching was 'action', Both reported significant development in career development, leadership skills and capabilities, mentees reported the highest level of development with significantly higher scores in eight areas of leadership and management and in three areas of career impact.
Franklin, and Doran (2009)	First-year students: Co-coaching with Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning Coaching or Self-regulation Coaching PAAL (N=27) or Self-regulation (N=25)	A double-blind random control trial in which participants were randomly allocated to either a Preparation, Action, Adaptive Learning (PAAL), or a self-regulation co-coaching	Both co-coaching conditions produced significant increases in self-efficacy and resilience, however, only those in the PAAL condition performed significantly better on decisional balance, hope, self-compassion, the incremental theory of change, and independently assessed academic performance.

<p>(Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009)</p>	<p>41 executives in a public health agency received 360-degree feedback and four SF-CB coaching sessions over ten week period</p>	<p>Randomised controlled study (a) Coaching group; (b) Waitlist control group</p>	<p>Coaching enhanced goal attainment, resilience and workplace well-being and reduced depression and stress and helped participants deal with organisational change</p>
<p>Aust, Rugulies, et al. (2010)</p>	<p>Seven intervention units (n = 128) and seven non-randomized reference units (n = 103) of a large hospital in Denmark participated in an intervention project with the goal of improving the psychosocial working conditions</p>	<p>Quasi-experimental field study (a) Coaching group; (b) Control group</p>	<p>In the intervention units there was a statistically significant worsening in six out of 13 work environment scales. The decrease was most pronounced for t aspects of interpersonal relations and leadership. In comparison, the reference group showed statistically significant changes in only two scales. Process evaluation revealed that a large part of the implementation failed and that different implicit theories were at play.</p>
<p>Cerni, Curtis, et al. (2010)</p>	<p>14 secondary school principals: all school staff in the 14 schools were invited to rate their school principal using the MLQ (5X) questionnaire.</p>	<p>Pre-test, post-test control-group research design (a) Coaching group; (b) Control group</p>	<p>This study provides initial evidence that by creating changes to rational and constructive thinking, it is possible to increase coachee's use of transformational leadership techniques</p>
<p>Grant, Green, et al. (2010)</p>	<p>44 high school teachers were randomly assigned to either SF-CB coaching or a waitlist control group.</p>	<p>This study was both an experimental (randomly assigned) and a WS (pre-post) study</p>	<p>Participation in coaching was associated with increased goal attainment, reduced stress, and enhanced workplace well-being and resilience. Pre-post analyses for the coaching group indicated that coaching enhanced self-reported achievement and humanistic-</p>

			encouraging components of constructive leadership styles
Kauffeld & Lehmann-Willenbrock (2010)	Spaced and massed training are compared using behavioral and outcome criteria. 64 bank employees (n = 32 in each training group)	Quasi-experimental follow-up research design with a sample of 64 bank employees (n = 32 in each training group) is used	Spaced rather than massed training practice resulted in greater transfer quality, higher self-reports of sales competence, and improved key figures. Spaced training did not surpass massed training in terms of transfer quantity
Kines, Andersen, et al. (2010)	Foremen in two intervention groups are coached and given bi-weekly feedback about their daily verbal safety communications with their workers.	A pre-post intervention-control design with five construction work gangs: Foreman-worker verbal safety exchanges (experience sampling method, n = 1,693 interviews), construction site safety level (correct vs. incorrect, n = 22,077 single observations), and safety climate (seven dimensions, n = 105 questionnaires) a measured over 42 weeks.	Coaching construction site foremen to include safety in their daily verbal exchanges with workers has a significantly positive and lasting effect on the level of safety, which is a proximal estimate for work-related accidents.
Kochanowski, & Seifert, et al. (2010)	Experimental group of managers received individual coaching several weeks after attending a feedback workshop. The control group of managers also attended a feedback workshop but did not receive the follow-up coaching.	Quasi-experimental field study (a) Feedback plus coaching group; (b) Feedback only control group	Coaching significantly increased the use of collaboration with subordinates, but results for the other three "core" tactics were mixed.

Leonard-Cross, (2010)	Investigated the impact and process of developmental coaching evaluating coaching which took place over a two-year period.	The study used action research (Lewin, 1946) and a quasi-experimental method. Coachees and the comparative group of non-coached staff completed questionnaires	Participants that had received developmental coaching (N = 61) had higher levels of self-efficacy than the control group of participants (N = 57) who had not received coaching
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Passmore & Rehman, (2012)	The study investigated the efficacy of learning methodologies, comparing a blended coaching and instruction approach with an instruction approach	Randomized control trial, involving 208 participants drawn for the armed services.	Participants in instruction & coaching group (104 participants) had reduced learning period and higher level of pass rate than the instruction group (104 participants).
Passmore, & Velez, (2012).	The study investigated driver behaviour in HGV drivers, comparing blended coaching and instruction with an instruction method for a one hour refresher course for 327 HGV drivers	Randomized control trial involving 327 participants and 12 coaches & 12 instructors	Participants in the two groups reported similar speed convictions and similar occurrence of accidents. Results may be due to limited one hour of coaching or instruction, neither of which led to a behavioural change in long-term driver behavior over the forthcoming 12 month period.

In the light of the relatively small number of studies, it is encouraging to observe that the amount of RCT studies has increased substantially in the period 2001-2011 (Grant, 2012; Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010). Anthony Grant has been one of the most active contributors to the research in this area and has published a number of the RCT studies. One exemplary study combines an RCT design with qualitative research methods (Grant, Curtayne and Burton, 2009). In this study, 41 executives in an Australian public health agency were randomly allocated to either a coaching condition (half-day workshop plus four individual solution-focused coaching sessions over 10 weeks) or a wait-list control condition (half-day workshop only). The quantitative data showed that coaching enhanced goal-attainment, resilience and well-being and decreased stress and depression as compared to the control condition. The qualitative

data indicated that coaching also fostered self-confidence, personal insight and helped the managers to develop their managerial skills. In our view, studies such as these reflect the ongoing development of coaching as a field over the past decades and contribute substantially to the evidence-base of coaching.

All in all, the amount of rigorous and methodologically sophisticated quantitative studies seems to be on the rise. This is good news for scholars and practitioners alike. In order to establish coaching as evidence-based practice and respected academic field, we need to recognize and embrace the diversity of research methodologies (as well as practice-based insights) that can capture the equally diverse ways in which coaching is applied as a change methodology. At the same time, this rise of RCT studies also poses new challenges. In this sense, the use of RCT's in coaching reflects the common challenges of applying interventions in non-health based and specifically in organizational settings.

Firstly, most of the coaching papers published draw on small sample sizes, often 30, but usually less than 50 in each condition. Secondly, the most common samples consist of students based in educational settings. These two aspects reflect that accessing students and working with small, contained groups, is substantially easier than working with samples of 200 or more participants in an organizational settings. Thirdly, given the samples, the focus of the RCT studies has often been towards exploring psychological dimensions such as goal setting, hope or resilience, in contrast with leadership dimensions or personal work based performance. Once again such dimensions are more challenging to collect and to maintain a group where meaningful comparison over time can be achieved.

Last but not least, we hope that future research will be theoretically enriched. Coaching is frequently defined as a change methodology ultimately aimed at enhanced well-being and functioning (Grant, 2003). By incorporating seminal psychological theories on for example individual change (e.g. self-regulation and adult learning) and its' ultimate aims of well-being and functioning (e.g. Self-Determination Theory; Deci & Ryan, 1985) we can gain insight into the question how coaching works rather than if coaching works (Latham, 2007; Spence & Oades, 2011). These insights could be used to develop both existing and new coaching interventions as well as the development of the cumulative knowledge framework needed to advance coaching psychology as a field of practice and an academic discipline.

Phase 5: Meta research

As mentioned above, the literature on coaching has grown substantially over the past two decades or so. This growth has mainly been driven by the scientist-practitioner. Most of this research focuses either on a specific type of intervention (e.g. cognitive-behavioral solution-focused coaching) or outcome (e.g. burn-out) that is of interest to the researcher and/or sponsors of the research such as the companies hiring scientist-practitioners. As a result, the current literature is somewhat fragmented and this has resulted in a mixture of skepticism and confusion with regard

to coaching psychology as a domain of practice and research (Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014).

In response to this increasing skepticism and confusion, several excellent qualitative literature reviews have been published over the years (e.g. Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007; Brock, 2008; Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010). In addition to these qualitative reviews, recent meta-analytic reviews form a welcome addition to the literature for two interrelated reasons. First, meta-analyses use statistical methods rather than narrative reviews in order to synthesize data from multiple individual studies. In this sense, meta-analyses can provide a more objective review of the literature (Wilkinson, 1999). Second, meta-analytic reviews can provide insight into the between study variability and the generalizability of results (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins & Rothstein, 2005). In this way, meta-analyses can shed light on potential theoretical (e.g. number of sessions) and methodological (e.g. study design) moderators of coaching effectiveness. Identifying these moderating factors can have strong implications for future research on coaching. At the time of writing this chapter, two meta-analytic studies have been published and will be discussed below (De Meuse, Dai & Lee, 2009; Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014). A third meta-analysis has been completed by Jones, Wood and Guillemeau (2014) and the details are the subject of a paper to be published reviewing internal and external coaches impacts. At the time of writing however, not enough details were available to the authors to include the paper in our review.

In the first meta-analysis in the field of coaching, De Meuse, Dai and Lee (2009) used meta-analytic techniques to estimate the effects of executive coaching interventions. They identified six studies that met their four criteria for inclusion: 1) coaching was targeted at executives 2) coaching was provided by external coaches 3) the methodological design included pre and post coaching ratings and 4) the statistical information provided was sufficient for estimating effect sizes. As an outcome variable, they took an average of all outcome variables included in the studies under analysis. Furthermore, they distinguished between self-ratings by the coachee, and ratings by others (managers and/or peers).

According to the standards of Cohen (1988), effect sizes less than 0.30 can be considered to be small, an effect size between 0.31 and 0.50 would be moderate and effect size above 0.50 would be considered large. The results of their analysis showed that coaching can have moderate to large positive effects depending on who was responsible for the ratings. The estimated population effect sizes were much larger when the outcome were rated by the coachee (1.27) rather than by others (0.50). This was in line with the results of a study by Peterson (1993) that showed that relative to the estimates of others (e.g. supervisors), coachees tend to overestimate the effectiveness of coaching interventions. Furthermore, the results showed that the effectiveness of coaching was highly inconsistent. In other words, there were major between-study differences in effect sizes. In addition to the small number of studies, the authors identified several factors that might have contributed to this inconsistency: differences in outcome criteria, characteristics of the coaching intervention (e.g. type

of coaching) and methodological rigor of the studies.

These factors were explicitly addressed in a recently published meta-analysis by the second author of this chapter and his colleagues (Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014). The team used similar inclusion-criteria for our meta-analysis as De Meuse, Dai and Lee with two notable differences. First, the team focused on all studies investigating the effects of coaching interventions in organizational settings (thus not only coaching targeted at executives). Second, the team only included studies in which the influence of other interventions (e.g. when coaching was part of a broader leadership development program) could be ruled out. This resulted in a total of 18 studies included in the final analysis.

Regarding the differences in outcome criteria encountered by De Meuse et al., the team used both a bottom-up (looking at available data) and top-down (looking at well-known outcomes in the broader psychological literature) approach to categorize the various outcomes into five clusters: performance and skills (e.g. transformational leadership behavior), well-being (e.g. mental health), coping (e.g. problem vs. emotion focused coping), work attitudes (e.g. job satisfaction) and goal-directed self-regulation (e.g. goal attainment). The results showed that coaching had positive effects on all of these categories (see table x). In line with the results of De Meuse et al. however, the team also found that effect sizes differed considerably between studies - even when comparable outcome measures were clustered into the five categories mentioned above.

Table: 1.5 Summary of Effect Size

Outcome category	Effectsize
Performance/skills	.60
Wellbeing	.46
Coping	.43
Self-regulation	.74
Work attitudes	.54

In order to check whether the between study variance could be attributed to factors related to either characteristics of the coaching intervention and/or the methodological design of the studies included in the analyses, we performed two different meta-regressions. Regarding the characteristics of the coaching intervention, the team tested whether the number of coaching sessions had an influence on coaching effectiveness. Somewhat surprisingly, the team did not find an effect. In other words, the number of coaching sessions seemed to be unrelated to the effects of coaching interventions on the coachees. Two possible explanations were proposed by the authors. First, it could be that in the studies included in our analyses, the number of sessions was related to the severity of the problems that the coachees were coached for. If this were the case, more severe problems would require more sessions to attain a similar effect (rather than having a larger effect). A second possibility is that the lack of differences between studies with more or less coaching sessions was due to the nature of the type of intervention in the majority of studies. Most of the coaching interventions were solution-focused in nature and solution-focused coaching (derived from solution focused brief therapy) is well known for its quick results and its ability to 'jump to the heart of things' (Kim, 2008). From this perspective, the fact that there was no difference in effectiveness between studies using more or less sessions may simply reflect a psychological equivalent to economics law of diminishing returns (Theeboom, Beersma & van Vianen, 2014).

The team performed a meta-regression in order to check whether the methodological design of studies impacted the effectiveness of in the studies included in our analysis. Specifically, the team checked whether there were differences in effect sizes for studies incorporating a control group (mixed within between subject designs) and thus controlled for additional sources of bias (see above) as opposed to studies lacking a control group (within-subject designs). The team found that effect sizes in the latter were significantly larger, hinting at the idea that confounding factors such as natural maturation of coachees and placebo effects should be a concern in future studies addressing the effectiveness of coaching interventions.

In sum, both meta-analytic reviews show that coaching can be an effective change-methodology and that additional (methodologically rigorous) research is needed to build an evidence-base for coaching. Furthermore, the meta-analysis by Theeboom, Beersma and van Vianen (2014) indicated that the coaching literature and (meta-analytic) estimates of overall effectiveness might be susceptible to publication bias: an overrepresentation of studies displaying significant positive results in the literature. Although the problem of publication bias is by no means limited to the field of coaching research, it is worth to mention explicitly since the estimated \$2 billion yearly global revenue on coaching (International Coach Federation, 2012) seems a potent precursor for wishful thinking regarding its effectiveness. To conclude, the meta-analytic research up to date seems to provide a fruitful starting point for future research.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly reviewed the journey of coaching psychology research. We have argued that coaching psychology research has transitioned from small scale and highly personal to larger studies and meta-analysis. This journey echoes coaching psychology's own journey from an emergent discipline within psychology to a discipline which is growing in maturity and an evidence basis.

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