

**MORE THAN A BRAIN ON LEGS:
AN EXPLORATION OF WORKING
WITH THE BODY IN COACHING**

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requirement for the degree of
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“I love being interviewed.....

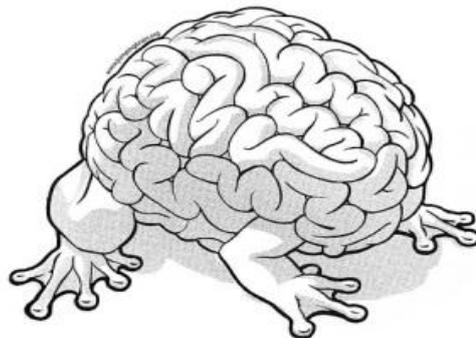
.....It’s the only way I know what I think”

(Attributed to Peter Ustinov, quoted by one of the study participants)

First and foremost I would like to extend my grateful thanks to the coaches who agreed to be interviewed and who were so open about sharing their thoughts and enthusiasm for these ways of working. They were a source of fascinating information, an inspiration ...and without them there would have been no study!

Thanks also to the staff at Oxford Brookes for all their help and support, and to my supervisor for sharing my enthusiasm about the topic. Answering his questions about the assumptions I made during this research has challenged both my brain and my page limit!

And finally thanks to my family, friends and fellow students who have kept me relatively sane and given me the support, encouragement and push to complete this work – and promised to remind me never to do it again ☺



ABSTRACT

More than a Brain on Legs: An exploration of working with the body in coaching

Trish Matthews, September 2012

Background: Although it is generally accepted that people take in information using various different intelligences, conventional coaching typically takes place in the form of a seated conversation aimed at stimulating cognitive reflection.

Objectives: This study explores why some coaches are choosing to combine a physical intervention with their coaching rather than working in a more conventional manner. It aims to provide a starting point for understanding the relevance of these kinds of approaches to the coaching profession.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a convenience sample of 6 coaches who were working with the body in some manner in their coaching. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis was used to analyse the data and to identify the themes relating to their experience of working this way.

Findings: Two major themes emerged. Firstly, working this way allowed coaches to use all of themselves in the coaching interaction, including their embodied awareness and intuition. Secondly, they had personal experience of these approaches being effective both for themselves and for their clients.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that working with the body may have the potential to add an extra dimension to the coaching process but more research is needed to provide academic support for the experiential knowledge of practitioners and clients. In the absence of coaching research, it may be necessary to explore the literature from parallel disciplines. The findings also suggested that to work with the body, the coach may need to be experienced in the physical activity they use, as well as in coaching.

Keywords: *Coaching, IPA, Somatic, Embodied.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The idea that individuals take in and process information in different ways has been generally accepted for many years in many different fields of learning. These ways include not only conscious cognitive intelligences but also those that relate to the physical body. For example, Gardner's multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993) include bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, while Kolb learning styles (Kolb, 1984), emphasise the importance of experiential learning by actively doing. There has also been increasing recognition of the importance of implicit learning and development of unconscious competence and tacit knowledge that appear to occur outside of the range of conscious cognitive processing (e.g. Tsoukas, 2003; Taylor 2001; Whitmore, 2009).

Despite this, most individual coaching is delivered in a room as a seated conversation that aims to stimulate cognition and reflexivity in the client. In terms of Gardner's intelligence, the focus is on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, although in recent years there has been increasing interest in emotional and social (inter and intrapersonal) intelligence (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008).

This focus on cognition stimulated via a purely linguistic interaction between coach and client seems surprising considering that coaching developed at least in part from sports coaching with its emphasis on physical activity, for example, the work of Tim Gallwey who extended his learning from sports coaching to develop the inner game approach, (Gallwey, 2003). Physical activity also often plays a part in other developmental approaches such as outdoor learning (Watson and Vasilieva, 2007) and in an increasing number of therapies (e.g. horticultural therapy, Millet, 2009).

This study set out to examine the relevance of working with the body to coaching by exploring the experience of coaches who are choosing to combine physical interventions with their coaching rather than working in a more conventional manner.

1.1. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND CONTEXT

Coaching is a relatively young discipline whose boundaries, practices and definitions remain ambiguous, resulting in a wide range of different approaches and rationales (Feldman, 2005, Joo, 2005, Sherman and Freas, 2004, Grant *et al.*, 2010). Coaching typically follows a personal consultancy model where the intervention takes the form of some kind of conversational approach, usually delivered as a seated dyad and aims to stimulate cognition and reflexivity in the client to support developmental change. The focus on this way of working may in part arise because, in my experience, coaches often come from a Human Resources, counselling or consultancy background and are familiar with this kind of approach.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the use of multiple intelligences in coaching (e.g. Harding, 2006a, Gardner, 1993) but little attention is paid to working directly with physical learning/development occurring below the level of consciousness, such as implicit learning and tacit knowledge. In fact, many coaches seem to assume that emotional intelligence is equivalent to accessing information from the body (e.g., Goleman and Boyatzis, (2008) relate EQ with bodily sensation), whereas others such as Gendlin (1982) treat the body as a separate intelligence.

Neuroscience is also beginning to identify the biological elements of intelligence and the mechanisms of how we learn. Rock & Page (2009) provide an overview of some of these discoveries in relation to coaching. Psychological theories of self are increasingly realising the role of the unconscious mind and the body (e.g. Haidt, 2006, or Bachkirova, 2011). Coaching too is often described in terms of physical interaction, e.g. coach and client “*dance in the moment*” (Whitworth *et al.*, 2009).

This suggests that physical interventions have an essential part to play in learning and sustainable change but may be currently underutilised in coaching. Although some coaching approaches do involve some direct work with the body as part of the coaching session, for example in rehearsal and role playing, these are generally

aimed at increasing understanding and encouraging reflexivity rather than aimed at working directly with the body to enable implicit learning.

1.1.1. My personal experience

Prior to this course, I had some experience of coaching individuals and teams in the IT industry but my main experience had been eighteen years of coaching the Japanese martial art of aikido. My experience is that studying aikido frequently leads to developmental changes in students that impact all areas of their lives. This seems to involve many factors: an increase in self-confidence and agency; a change in the way they interact with others and deal with conflict; an increased kinaesthetic awareness and capacity to be present in the moment and the ability to access a deep level of embodied awareness. The philosophy behind aikido is an holistic one, based on the integration of mind, body and spirit (Palmer, 1994, Strozzi-Heckler, 1993) and recognises that each of these areas are of equal importance and are inter-related.

When I began coaching, I found that much of my experience in aikido was transferable and that I was working with clients in a very similar way that I did with my aikido students, particularly in encouraging repetition and direct experience to facilitate experiential learning. I also felt that there were times when physical activity was useful as a way of bypassing blockages and opening up the client to new experiences.

I have also found that in a wider context, many people who work with the body or with physical activities (such as hairdressers, massage therapists, martial arts teachers, crafts people such as basket makers) report that these activities frequently give rise to coaching type conversations (discussions relating to the resolution of problems, life choices, goals etc.). I have also experienced this myself when working with massage and alternative therapies such as reiki.

This experience meant that my main interest at the beginning of the research was on the nature of the phenomenon itself and the mechanisms underlying it, i.e. how does this physical activity give rise to an unconscious process of development and change? Inherent in my position was a belief that physical body work can be a catalyst

for development and change, often happening below the level of conscious awareness and an assumption that, because coaching is typically a conversational intervention, this embodied element was being underutilised.

1.2. DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My initial research question, based on my experience outlined above, related to what does embodiment mean in coaching and has this somehow been lost as coaching has evolved as a profession? It soon became clear that this was too broad a scope for the time allowed for this study and that I would need to narrow the focus.

Reviewing the coaching literature indicated that little work had been done in this area and there appeared to be little direct evidence to indicate whether my experiences were generalisable or relevant to coaching. This suggested that before investigating how working with the body might impact coaching, there was a need for a preliminary exploratory study to investigate the relevance of these kinds of physical approaches to coaching and that this could best be done by looking at the experiences of coaches who were working in this way.

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

I identified a simple research question as a focus for this study:

Why are some coaches choosing to combine physical interventions with their coaching rather than working in a more conventional manner?

The objective of this research was to collect information about the experiences of coaches who are using a physical activity as part of their coaching and to explore their motivation for taking this approach and what they believe it adds to the coaching.

1.3.1. Terminology and definitions

Terminology and definitions are frequently an issue in coaching research (for example, definitions of coaching are confusing, as are definitions of what is, or is not coaching, Jackson, 2005). In this study, I will use the term **personal coaching** to refer to executive or life coaching (as opposed to sports coaching) and **conventional**

coaching to refer to personal coaching carried out as a seated dyad in an office or room. I will use the term **embodied intelligence** to refer to knowledge and intelligence that resides in the body but is normally not conscious or explicit (and encompasses ideas such as somatic intelligence, Gardner's bodily-kinaesthetic, naturalistic and spatial intelligence, implicit learning and tacit knowledge, intuition etc.). I will use the term **physical intervention** to describe a physical activity primarily targeted at using embodied intelligence and working outside of conscious rational cognition.

1.3.2. Constraining the study

Having decided on this focus, the next challenge was to constrain the boundaries of the study. Two sub-genres of coaching (sports and health coaching) inherently involve working at a physical level with the body. I chose to exclude these from the scope of this study (although these will be discussed briefly in the literature review) and to focus on coaching that is not directly related to a physical goal.

Any coaching that takes place with a physical presence of both coach and client will by its nature involve some level of physical interaction (for example, the subconscious effects of body language). This makes it difficult to clearly identify when a coaching intervention is working at an embodied rather than intellectual level. One option would be to select coaches who believed that they were working at an embodied level. This had the potential to introduce additional variables into the study, since it would not only involve their experience of the phenomenon of working with the body, but also their perception of what working with the body means. To reduce this uncertainty, I chose to constrain the study by focusing on physical interventions where:

1. The intervention was consciously introduced by the coach and was clearly identifiable.
2. Equal weight was given to both the coaching and the physical activity.
3. The coach was experienced in the physical intervention as well as the coaching.

Since the intention was to explore a coach's experience of the general phenomenon of working with the physical body, rather than a specific intervention, I decided to look for coaches using a variety of different physical interventions.

1.4. RESEARCH APPROACH

Chapter two reviews the literature relating to the use of the body in coaching. There is little literature on the use of physical interventions and most of this relates to health coaching rather than conventional coaching. I therefore extended my literature search to look at findings from other similar disciplines such as outdoor learning, team building and therapeutic approaches, as well as information relating to the use of the body in learning and development, and some of the recent findings from neuroscience.

A phenomenological approach was chosen for this study using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The reasons for this choice and the experimental design are explained in chapter three. IPA takes an idiographic and hermeneutic approach to phenomenology and is widely used in psychology and social and health research (Smith *et al.*, 2009) and its interpretative approach fitted well with my ontology and epistemology.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews from six participants who offered a varied and rich perspective on the research topic. Since the intention was for this to be an exploratory study, participants were chosen using a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. Thematic analysis was used to categorise substantive statements from the individual interviews and these categories contrasted and compared across the set of interviews to identify general themes.

Chapters four to six describe the main findings from this study. Two main themes emerged: one relating to the coaches' sense of identity and authenticity and the second to their experience of the benefits of these approaches. Chapter seven discusses the implications of these findings and proposes some future areas for investigation.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. OVERVIEW

There are many ways in which the body can be used in coaching and more generally in learning and development. This chapter does not aim to provide a comprehensive review but rather seeks to explore these different approaches and to demonstrate how apparent gaps in the literature provide a catalyst for this study.

This first section of this chapter outlines how the review was conducted and how my understanding of the literature evolved during this research project. The second section discusses the coaching literature on working with the body, focusing particularly on case studies and the coach's experience of these interventions. Since I found limited material relating directly to coaching, I then look at other approaches to learning through physical activity such as therapy and outdoor learning. These are described in the third section. The fourth section briefly discusses learning theories and other research that inform current coaching approaches. The final section explains how the gaps in the literature were used to guide the research topic for this study.

Although a literature search is usually considered a prerequisite for good research (Bryman, 2008; Gray, 2009), this has been challenged for methodologies which require the researcher to come to the research with an open mind (such as grounded theory and phenomenology), since examination of previous concepts and theories may influence the conclusions researchers draw (Denscombe, 2003 p105). I did not consider that a literature search would unduly influence my preconceptions, since these were already informed by my own experience of working with the body. Examination of previous studies seemed an essential starting point for exploring the current use of the body by the coaching profession.

Developing this literature review was an iterative process. I undertook a preliminary search during the initial research proposal which highlighted the need to

reduce the scope of the study. Gray (2009 p101) suggests that this is a common occurrence in the early stages of the literature review. Having defined a more specific research question, and before beginning the data collection, I performed a more targeted search of the coaching literature and also widened the search to look for similar examples and supporting evidence from other disciplines. After the interviews, and during the early stages of transcription and analysis, I returned to the literature to follow up on approaches and research recommended by the participants, as well as looking for additional material relating to the emerging themes. This review is the combined product of the findings from all of these searches.

The biggest challenge for this review was defining its scope. Since I found little relevant coaching literature, it was necessary to expand into other areas but there was a vast range of possibly relevant literature. After my preliminary reviews, I decided to focus on two main areas: similar disciplines (such as therapy or team building which used physical interventions for learning and self-development) and research into learning and development happening at a subconscious/non-cognitive level (such as implicit learning, mirror neurons etc.).

I used Google Scholar as a starting point for my preliminary review due to the potentially wide scope of subjects that might be relevant to this topic. Although this does not provide comprehensive coverage (Gray, 2009 p120) it has the advantage of enabling a very fast 'skim' of a wide range of publication types (journals, books and also non-academic articles) on a wide range of subjects (e.g. coaching, education, sport, therapy etc.). I could then target my detailed search to the relevant academic bibliographic databases as I refined the scope.

My primary focus was on articles in peer-reviewed journals, since one of my research aims was to investigate the relevance to the coaching profession. Secondary sources included books by authors with an academic background or who were recognised authorities in their field. The tertiary sources included more populist material by coaching or body work practitioners (including web articles etc.). Although

this does not exactly match the categorisation literature proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2009), it does follow the general idea of the primary literature being the most detailed and authoritative. I gave priority to recent publications unless there was an indication that a particular article was a key or seminal source (indicated by the number of citations) or was recommended by the study participants.

Figure 2.1 shows the evolution of the search keywords used for this review. Tracking my use of keywords helped me to constrain the scope of my search.

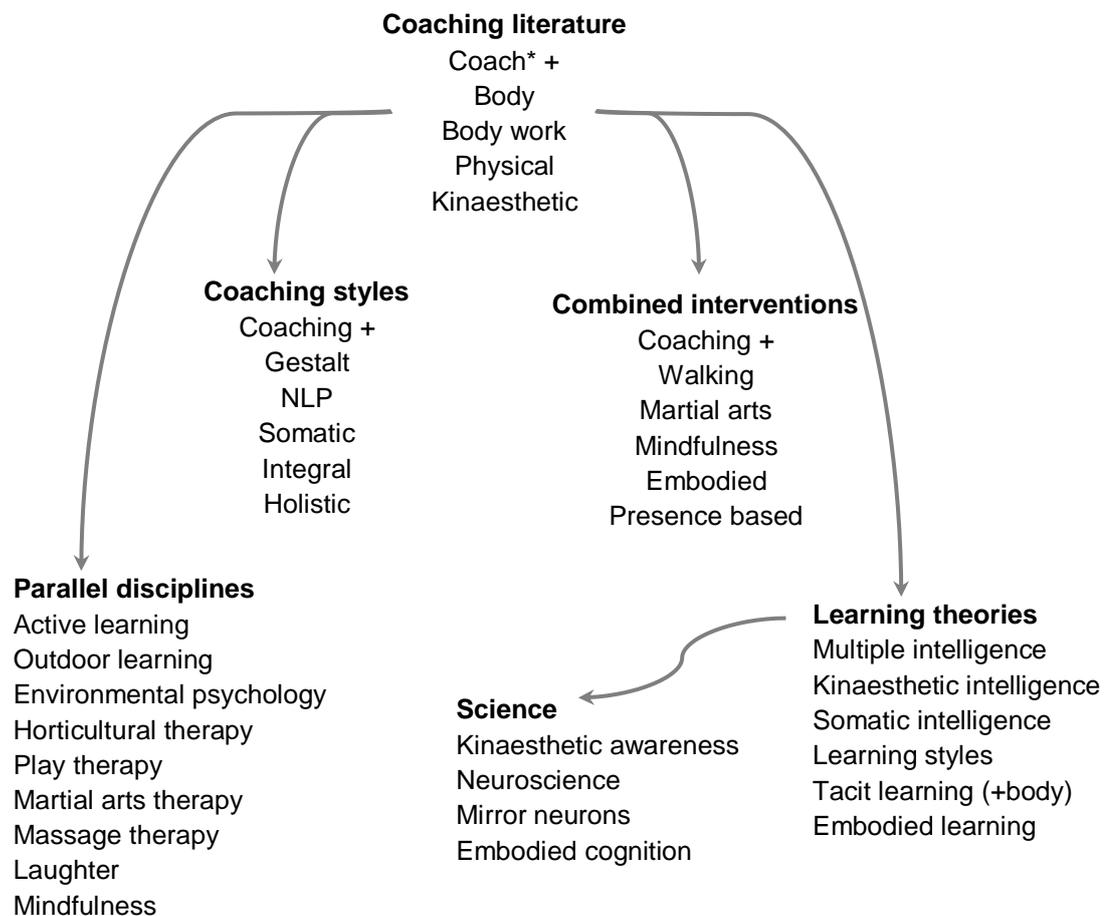


Figure 2.1: Evolution of search keywords for the literature review.

Searches also included wild cards, e.g. coach* to catch variants e.g. coach, coached, coaching etc.

2.2. WORKING THROUGH THE PHYSICAL BODY IN COACHING

The starting point for the literature search was to look for examples of coaches working with a physical intervention. These generally fell into two categories: those

included as part of a conventional coaching session and those where the coaching occurs in combination with some kind of physical intervention.

2.2.1. Using physical interventions within a coaching session

I found several examples of minor physical interventions used as part of a conventional coaching session that was otherwise predominantly based on a dyadic conversational model focused on stimulating conscious cognitive reflection.

Cognitive-behavioural coaching: Rock and Page (2009) describe a cognitive-behavioural coaching intervention for encouraging behavioural change. The client wore a rubber band around their wrist which they “snapped” whenever they became aware of negative self-talk. This reminded the client to notice and alter their habitual behaviour. CBT assumes a feedback loop so *“people can behave their way into thinking differently and then think their way into feeling differently – which then in turn motivates them to behave differently”* (Rock and Page, 2009 p303).

Boyatzis (2009) suggests that positive and negative emotional attractors are important factors for driving change in intentional change theory (ICT). ICT is based on complexity theory and sees the human organism as a self-organising, open loop system influenced by environmental attractors and the physiological impact of these. This suggests that working with the body at a physical level has the potential to drive and sustain new behaviour until this becomes automatic and hence may be a useful approach for coaching. (It is also the case that CBT is a well-established approach whereas, although ICT provides an interesting, holistic model for change, most of the references relating to ICT appear to originate with Boyatzis and it’s not clear how widely accepted this theory is.)

Gestalt coaching: Wright (2012) describes physical activities in gestalt coaching. These included creating polarities by having the client physically move from one spot in the room representing a particular perspective to another spot representing the opposite perspective (similar to the well-known ‘empty chair’ technique, Joyce and

Sills, 2010 p98, Rogers, 2009 p186). Other approaches included role play (physically acting and behaving as different people), and a form of creative play using toy figures to represent characters in the client's environment. Wright found that these approaches opened up new insights and ideas for both coach and client, creating a "*physical mutual engagement, quite different to traditional observing and reflecting*" (Wright, 2012).

Joyce and Sills (2010) provide a detailed discussion of body processes in gestalt counselling and psychotherapy and how retroflected thoughts and feelings (suppressed impulses to take action) are manifested in the body and may be surfaced by physical activity. Similarly, Gendlin (1982) describes the concept of "felt sense", a way of becoming aware of such bodily sensations and then using these to assess a deep level of "knowing", although he also suggests that these may be used to engender change without necessitating conscious understanding or analysis. Although these last two studies relate to therapy rather than coaching, it is likely that working with the body in coaching would also enable access to additional knowledge and insights, particularly those which the client may have suppressed.

Joyce and Sills (2010 p150) also highlight that the nature of touch in gestalt therapy is different compared to that in massage or other body therapies and that practitioners should not mix forms unless they have specialist training in the body work. It's likely that there would be similar issues in coaching if incorporating touch.

Neuro-linguistic programming: NLP, another approach often used in coaching, includes as one of its presuppositions that "*the mind and body interact and influence each other. It is not possible to make a change in one without the other being affected*" O'Connor (2002 p6). It also recognises that "*in order for desired change to occur, the conscious mind does not really need to be involved*" (Grimley, 2010 p190). This raises the possibility of coaching working through the body outside the conscious awareness of the client. There may be additional ethical consideration related to working in a

covert way, outside of the client's awareness that need to be considered in all coaching approaches working through the body. For example, this may reduce the client's control of the coaching agenda and development of resourcefulness (two of Rogers' principles of coaching, Rogers, 2009). A different form of contract may be required to set the boundaries of this different kind of interaction.

Many NLP techniques involve a physical component (for example, the Disney strategy which involves changing perspectives in a similar way to the empty chair approach, O'Connor, 2006, p34, p125). There is still little academic research on NLP (Grimley, 2010 p197), and practitioners have tended to focus on whether the approach is useful, rather than whether it is 'true' (Linder-Pelz and Hall, 2007, Tosey *et al.*, 2005).

Somatic coaching: Another approach which works closely with the body is somatic coaching. Somatics sees the mind and body as a unified system (Strozzi-Heckler, 1993, Kerka, 2002) and considers the body as a key element that "*has a wisdom and intelligence all of its own*" (Aquilina, 2011, p27). Blake (2009) presents a case study of the work of somatic coach Richard Strozzi-Heckler. He coached a CEO by changing patterns of walking and posture and breathing to raise somatic awareness. She describes this in terms of freeing implicit memories and training the body to a new pattern of responses.

Kerka (2002) reviews somatic approaches to education and states that physicality has traditionally been seen as "*something that must be tamed or controlled to achieve cognitive performance*". Lawrence (2012) also suggests that one of the issues with somatic approaches may be learner resistance (due to embarrassment at moving or because they do not consider it "real learning") and recommends beginning with small non-threatening exercises and gradually moving on to challenging activities.

Goldman-Schuyler (2010 p25) proposes that there are two different approaches to somatic learning: one based on martial arts such as aikido which deal with power dynamics, particularly in interactions with others; and a second based on "*learning to*

observe and sense oneself in action, without acting 'against' anyone". Clawson (1996) suggests that these two approaches may be interdependent and that individuals need to observe and work on their own internal states before they deal with the external world.

The somatic approach is based on a belief that the body-mind is an integrated holistic system operating within, and interacting with, the surrounding environment and that both coach and client are physically involved in the coaching interaction. Aquilina (2011) describes the somatic approach as "*it is not a set of techniques that you apply to a client, it is a way of being for coach and client*".

Discussion: Although attempts are now being made to use the results of recent scientific discoveries (particularly neuroscience) to support the kind of approaches described above (e.g. Blake, 2009), the rationale for many of these approaches appears more philosophical than scientific. For example, gestalt coaching bases itself partially on existential philosophy (Bluckert, 2010) while Strozzi-Heckler's (1993) somatic approach bases itself on the philosophy of eastern (particularly Japanese) martial arts as does the conscious embodiment approach of Wendy Palmer (Palmer, 1994). In some cases (such as NLP), practitioners seem content with experiential and anecdotal evidence rather than being concerned with academic research. Since there is a drive in the coaching profession for evidence based approaches, more research may be needed before these kinds of approaches are more generally accepted.

In these examples, the physical intervention is a relatively minor part of the overall coaching interaction. It is one of the tools available to the coach. These are more integrated in the somatic approaches where the body is considered an essential source of knowledge for the embodied learner (Kerka, 2002). I did not find any research literature that explored how much the physical intervention contributes in terms of the overall coaching outcome. I also found that it is not easy to specify where the boundary between physical intervention (embodied) and cognitive intervention

(“disembodied”) lies. For example, in the empty chair technique, Rock and Page (2009, p294) suggest that the physical movement is critically important since “*this technique is based on assumptions of holism and necessitates shifting sensations and perceptions*” but it is not clear whether the shifting sensations themselves engender the change or if these are just a stimulus to conscious insight.

2.2.2. Combined interventions

The second group of examples I considered was where the coaching was combined with a separate physical activity either in parallel or sequentially.

Health coaching: Most combined interventions that I found in the coaching literature were in the field of health coaching (for example, diabetes control (Ghorob, *et al.*, 2011), or chronic care management (Linden *et al.*, 2009) For more examples see Newnham-Kanas *et al.*'s (2009) bibliography of life coaching and health research). I chose to exclude health coaching from this study for the reasons given in 1.3.2, so will not review these studies in detail but just briefly highlight three findings that may be more generally relevant.

Carrieri-Kohlman *et al.* (1996) found no significant advantage to including coaching as opposed to just monitoring the health intervention. Ventegodt *et al.* (2004) showed that coaching the patient on their personal development caused physical symptoms to disappear and suggested this enables the health practitioner to work with the client even if the causes of disease cannot be identified. Palmer (2012 p37) suggests that it is strongly desirable for health coaches to have expertise or in-depth knowledge of the health issues and treatments that they are working with. This differs from conventional coaching where the coach is generally not expected to be an expert in the client's area of concern.

For health coaching, the main focus is on the health related physical intervention, with coaching generally added as a secondary intervention to support the

client in achieving their health related goals, rather than giving the coaching and physical intervention equal weight.

Combined interventions in personal coaching: Very few studies were found where a physical intervention was used to enhance the efficacy of personal coaching. Goldman Schuyler (2010) describes an integrated approach including somatic awareness (Feldenkrais method of body work) and intentional mind training (Tibetan Buddhist mindfulness) alongside coaching for leadership development. She presents a case study showing how the Feldenkrais approach to embodied learning, combined with coaching, leads to transformational learning in clients (described in more detail in Goldman Schuyler, 2007). She proposes ways for developing increased capacity to act with awareness rather than resorting to habitual responses:

Focusing the learner on close observation at a micro-level of movement, breathing, and one's state of mind can yield change at the level of tacit knowledge, an arena where we "know" but usually cannot articulate what we know. It is from this part of human "knowing" that change in values and long-standing habits are possible. (**Goldman Schuyler, 2010 p34**)

Harding, (2006a, 2006b) presents an interesting study where coaches attempted to address all eight of Gardner's intelligences in the coaching process. They divided the intelligences into those they considered familiar (inter and intra personal, logical-mathematical and linguistic intelligences) and those that were less familiar (bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, spatial, and naturalistic intelligence). This second unfamiliar category represents more embodied intelligence, relating to the body and senses suggesting that these may be less used by coaches. The study found that emphasising embodied intelligences helped learners involve both mind and body in the process and aid goal achievement.

One issue raised in this study was the ability of the coach to retain control of the process and maintain the flow of the session while working with "hands on/practical activities, particularly when these activities were unfamiliar. It would be interesting to see if this was the case with coaches who were familiar with working in a physical

manner, e.g. sports coaches or body workers. Another challenge was how to use naturalistic intelligence. One approach was to use metaphors from the natural world to provide a new perspective on their learning. The coaches also conducted sessions away from usual working environments, e.g. during a walk in a natural environment. Although learners were initially sceptical about this approach, they found it enabled them to think more creatively.

Other examples of combined interventions include Spence *et al.* (2008) who describes the use of mindfulness training as a method of enhancing the effectiveness of coaching. They found that goal attainment was greater with a mindfulness/coaching approach than with a directive educational approach (health seminars). They also found that the order of interventions made no significant difference. Aquilina (2011) briefly mentions a coaching session combining bodywork (massage) with affirmations and releasing tension and discomfort aimed at helping the client to be more centred and grounded.

Discussion: Again, a challenge with these combined interventions is to identify what is a physical intervention. For example, mindfulness might be expected to work with the mind rather than the body. Passmore and Marianettie (2007) examined the current research on mindfulness in coaching, including its neurological/physiological effects. They suggested that, since it enables individuals to note bodily sensations and behaviours as well as thoughts and emotions, it could be used to develop unconscious competence (Whitmore, 2009) through conscious repetition of new behaviours. Since mindfulness is working to some extent with the body, changing physiology and physical awareness, it could be considered to utilise embodied intelligence and to be a physical intervention within the terms of the definition given in chapter one. On the other hand, the Feldenkrais method is considered a form of body work but Feldenkrais intended this as a way of developing flexible minds and improving learning and performance, rather than primarily focusing on the body (Goldman Schuyler, 2010 p22).

I originally expected to find more research articles relating to combined interventions in coaching. One reason for the lack of these may be the focus in the coaching research on executive coaching in corporate settings (Grant, 2010) where a conversational approach is traditionally expected. Coaches working with physical intervention often had a background in physical/outdoor education or therapeutic body work. For example, Goldman Schuyler (see above) is a qualified Feldenkrais practitioner with more than 30 years' experience. I therefore widened the scope of the literature search to look for research relating to use of the body in these areas.

2.3. COMBINED INTERVENTIONS IN OTHER DISCIPLINES

This section provides a brief review of the research literature in disciplines that are similar to coaching and which work with the physical body. Researching these areas highlighted the scarcity of similar studies in the coaching literature and the need for an exploratory study to see if such approaches were relevant to coaching.

2.3.1. Outdoor learning

Combining physical outdoor activity with reflective exercises has been a common approach to both team building and leadership development since the early 1990s (Watson and Vasilieva, 2007; Burnett and James, 1994), although much of the evidence for its effectiveness is still anecdotal (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004; Williams *et al.* 2003). The outdoor activities are normally unrelated (or only metaphorically related) to the client's day to day work but aim to provide novel experiences and challenges. Williams *et al.* (2003 p47) describe three types of interventions in outdoor training: Excursions (distracting the conscious mind from problems it is working on and allowing the subconscious to generate new creative solutions); Pattern breaking (interrupting habitual cognitive patterns to gain a fresh perspective) and Shake-ups (taking the client out of their comfort zone, making them more open to unusual ideas). The description (and intention) of these interventions seem very similar to those used in coaching, e.g. Rogers (2009 p80) describes interrupting as a coaching tactic to break habitual loops.

As well as the direct effects of physical activity, studies suggest that being present in a natural environment can also have a beneficial effect. A qualitative survey of 50 senior leaders on the benefits of wilderness retreats for sustainable leadership development reported that the environment setting was a key factor for engendering sustainable change, including increased self-belief, confidence and self-awareness (Watson and Vasilieva, 2007). Taylor *et al* (2010) similarly suggest that the immersion in wilderness environments may be a crucial (but often overlooked) factor in facilitating lasting change. They use integral systems theory (Wilber, 2001) to explain this, in terms of the client as a self-organising, complex system that exchanges energy with the interconnected and interlocked systems of the surrounding environment.

Although I did not find any coaching literature that studied the effect of the physical environment in which the coaching was conducted, the field of environmental psychology provides many studies on the complex interactions between the individual and the external world and the impact on cognition, wellbeing and behaviour (e.g. Uzzell and Rätzzel, 2009, Berman *et al.*, 2008). Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) propose two additional effects of natural environments: they provide a sense of vastness and scope but also of connectedness (being part of) and they enable individuals to recognise parallels between their concerns and environmental patterns.

Brown (2009) criticises outdoor adventure education for its focus on learning strategies based on cognitive processing of experiences that “*overlook the situated and distributed nature of learning*” (p3). Most approaches tend to be based on Kolb’s (1984) cycle of learning with its balance between experience and reflection (Moon, 2004 p120 suggests that the reflective feedback on experiential learning may be non-deliberate or subconscious in some cases). Brown suggests that Kolb’s learning cycle does not take into account the context (including both social and spatial relationships) as part of the learning process and assumes that knowing and doing can be separated. He emphasises the need for an holistic view of the nature of learning that is dependant both on integration of mind/body but also of person/situation.

2.3.2. Sports coaching and the inner game

As with health coaching, I chose to exclude sports coaching from this study so will not look in detail at the literature relating to this but just mention two points, which may be more generally relevant. Exercise and participation in sport has been shown to improve performance at work, cognitive function, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Cockerill, 1995), all of which are common coaching issues. Secondly, Strozzi-Heckler (1993 p87) suggests that sports coaching focuses too much on performance and misses the *“creative wisdom that comes from living in our bodies”*, and may benefit from taking a more holistic somatic approach (Strean and Strozzi-Heckler 2009), suggesting that even activities which apparently work with the body may not actually be using embodied intelligence.

Gallwey (1983, 2006) explains how he took ideas that he developed playing and coaching sport and found that he could apply these in other areas, including personal coaching for work related activities. The literature relating to this inner game approach were identified as a key influence by all of the participants in this study and quoted as an example of how the mind can interfere with the knowledge and wisdom of the body. Gallwey’s approach proposes a double layered self, with a judgemental, cognitive, reflective ‘Self 1’ that interferes with and overrides, a more intuitive, subconscious ‘Self 2’. He describes Self 2 as *“the human being itself. It embodies all the inherent potential we are born with, including all capacities actualized and not yet actualized”* (Gallwey, 2003 p7). Lawrence (2012) proposed that intuition arises from embodied knowledge (see section 2.4.2) which suggests that Self 2 may relate to embodied intelligence rather than conscious cognitive processes.

In his sports coaching, Gallwey found that athletes were able to perform better and more naturally when he could distract Self 1, so that they were *“not thinking about much at all”* and *“their minds were quiet and focussed”* (Gallwey 2003 p6). Gallwey considered that the same principles applied in other areas, such as work, and that the purpose of coaching is to get Self 1 out of the way and to access the knowledge,

natural abilities and flow states of Self 2. Similar to the mindfulness approach above, the inner game involves the individual in non-judgemental observation of their behaviour which results in spontaneous positive changes (Gallwey, 2003 p11).

Gallwey also suggests that the environment impacts the internal conversation between Self 1 and 2 (Gallwey, 2003 p29). This environment includes the immediate external environment (colleagues, family, coach etc.) and also the wider cultural environment.

2.3.3. Therapeutic approaches

Physical activity often forms part of therapeutic interventions combined with counselling or other support from the therapist. For example, Serlin (1999) describes the use of kinaesthetic imaging (a dance movement therapy) in the treatment of breast cancer and found this had psychological and physiological effects, improving mood and quality of life as well as reducing fatigue. Horticultural therapy has been used for treating depression (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2010) and for aiding clients with chronic fatigue to return to work (Millet, 2009). Distance from everyday demands and an engagement of effortless attention (soft fascination) were the key components to the success of these approaches. Laughter therapy (the use of purposeful 'faked' aerobic laughter) has been shown to improve employees' self-efficacy (Beckman *et al.*, 2007) and to reduce depression in a similar manner to exercise (Mahvash *et al.*, 2011). It has a measurable physiological effect but also leads to positive emotional states and may also have the effect of increasing social support and empathy (Beckman *et al.*, 2007). Again, it is difficult to identify clearly whether the benefits of the therapeutic interventions are coming from the physical, cognitive or emotional effects.

2.4. RELEVANCE OF BODY IN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This section takes a brief look at learning theories which involve the body and suggest that it has an important role to play in learning and development and hence that this kind of approach should have relevance to coaching.

2.4.1. Multiple intelligences

Gardner proposed eight intelligences that can be used to solve problems, learn information and make changes (Gardner, 1993; 2004). The use of these in coaching has been discussed in 2.2.2 above. Although consideration of multiple intelligences is becoming increasingly common in coaching, this is generally focused on cognitive, emotional and social intelligence (Sherman and Freas, 2004; Joo, 2005; Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008) and less attention is paid to physical interventions.

Griss (1994) describes the use of bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence with school children and suggests similarly that this can encourage increased awareness as well as channelling disruptive energy into creative expression.

2.4.2. Tacit knowledge and implicit learning

Understanding the mechanisms of implicit learning and how tacit knowledge is created and used is key to understanding how physical interventions can impact coaching, since these appear, at least in part, to work without the need for cognitive reflection. Taylor (2001) uses research from neurobiology, psychology and physiology to explore the how transformative change can occur on an implicit level, outside the awareness of the individual and questions the dependence of learning theory on cognitive critical reflection. This research suggests there is a need to include “*other ways of knowing*” to foster transformational learning.

Tsoukas (2003) explores the nature of tacit knowledge, how it can be developed and transferred and whether it is possible to make it explicit. The author proposes that tacit knowledge (and mastery) is gained by repeated observation and practice even when the skills cannot be directly taught. He concludes that since tacit knowledge is essentially ineffable, it cannot be captured but only manifested in what people do. This suggests that physical “mimicry” may have an irreplaceable role in changing/learning behaviour and hence be a useful tool in coaching and mentoring.

Lawrence (2012) suggests intuition arises from embodied knowledge (hence terms such as 'gut feeling') and can be accessed via physical activities such as dance, artwork or being in nature. He presents a model that divides knowledge into cognitive (mind), affective (heart) and embodied or somatic (body). Embodied knowledge is considered the most primal way of knowing but Lawrence also suggests that these ways of knowing are interconnected and do not exist in isolation. Williams *et al.* (2003 p49) suggest that trainers in outdoor education often have a "*tacit, intuitive sense of what they want to accomplish and how they will accomplish it*". Although this may be as valuable as their explicit knowledge, it creates a challenge in trying to evaluate the performance of trainers and of the approach. This is also a challenge when attempting to evaluate non-cognitive processes in coaching, such as working through the body.

2.4.3. Neuroscience

Neuroscience is increasingly being quoted in the coaching literature as an explanatory mechanism for how coaching works (e.g. Rock and Page, 2009). It also appears to be showing that the mind and body are not separate and that parts of the brain relating to emotions and motor functions may be involved even in apparently rational decision making (Goleman and Boyatzis, 2008), although Mahon and Caramazza (2008) question whether this means that these systems are required for cognition.

Blake (2009) suggests that the mechanism for embodied learning may come from neurobiology, including the role of the enteric nervous system (the 'second brain' in the gut). Weidemann (2003) discusses the role that mirror neurons may play in embodied cognition. Mirror neurons mimic the neurological activity of another person and are triggered when we observe another person's actions. They may play a role in social interaction, as well as in conscious and unconscious imitative learning (Downey, 2010). Goleman and Boyatzis (2010 p78) also describe oscillator neurons which act to "*coordinate people by regulating how and when their bodies move together*".

Much of this research and its interpretation are still tentative but it appears to support the view that mind and body are integrated and that learning can occur at a subconscious or embodied level, as well as at an intellectual, cognitive level and may be an essential part of cognition, even when we assume this is conscious and rational.

2.5. CONCLUSION

Gray (2009 p98) suggests that one purpose of the literature review is to *“identify the gaps in knowledge that are worthy of further investigation, challenge current ideas or take an accepted theory but apply it in a new field”*. My research showed there was limited coaching literature focusing on the use of the body in coaching. There is understandably more literature relating to sports and health coaching where the goals are intrinsically related to the body. Minor physical interventions are used as optional tools in several coaching styles, although it is not clear what coaches’ understanding is of these or whether they are intentionally trying to work through the body or just stimulate cognitive reflection. Somatic coaches appear to work with the body in a more integrated way and with greater focus on the body. This lack of research on working through the body seems at odds with anecdotal evidence that suggests that many coaches are using physical interventions and believe that subconscious, embodied learning has an important role in the coaching process.

Searching the literature for similar disciplines such as outdoor education and therapies showed that working through the body is an important factor in these approaches and in many cases given equal or more weight than conversational reflective interventions.

Neuroscience appears to be indicating that what we consider to be rational, cognitive processing inherently involves emotive and physical systems operating outside of our conscious awareness. Similarly, theories of tacit knowledge and implicit learning suggest that knowledge can be developed outside of the individual's conscious awareness and is to some extent stored in the body, where it can be accessed by physical activity. This raises questions about conventional coaching’s

apparent focus on working with cognitive critical reflection and suggests that there are other mechanisms involved which can be used to encourage transformative change, including working at a physical level.

The literature survey also highlighted some problematic issues with this kind of investigation. Firstly, there is no commonly agreed terminology. Different authors use different terms with different meanings. For example, terms for learning through the body include somatic, embodied, active, implicit, physical, neurological etc. I have attempted to clarify my use of terms in the previous chapter. Secondly, it is difficult to identify whether an intervention is working physically or cognitively, and in many cases it appears that these two may not be separable. I decided that the best way to overcome this was to focus on the coaches' experience, rather than on specific interventions and to select participants who were experienced in some kind of physical body work that they were combining with their coaching.

Overall, my literature survey suggested that an exploratory study to gather information about the experience of coaches of using physical intervention to work with, and through, the client's body would be a necessary starting point for examining the relevance of this kind of approach to the coaching profession.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study was to explore the experience of coaches working with a physical intervention and to investigate their beliefs and motivations and the meaning they attach to this combined approach. A phenomenological approach was chosen, using interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The reasons for this choice are discussed below, along with details of how the data were collected and analysed, and a review of the validity, generalisability and ethical considerations of the study.

3.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY

3.2.1. A qualitative exploratory study

Creswell (1998 p17) suggests a qualitative approach is appropriate where a new topic needs to be explored, i.e. where “*variables cannot easily be identified, theories are not available to explain the behaviour of participants*” and where the researcher “*builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of information and conducts the study in a natural setting*” (p15). The literature review (see previous chapter) uncovered little research in the coaching literature on combining coaching with working directly with the body. This suggested that an exploratory study was needed in this area and a qualitative approach therefore seemed appropriate.

I was also interested in undertaking a qualitative study to understand more about how it differs from a quantitative approach. Classification of research as either quantitative or qualitative is still prevalent in social research, despite the on-going debate between authors about the relevance and validity of such a division (Bryman, 2008 p21). My previous experience of research (a Ph.D. in geophysics, Long, Matthews and Graham, 1994) would be considered a quantitative study but it shared many factors normally associated with qualitative research. The data were analysed by a process of iterative modelling, effectively developing a “story” that would explain the

data. Hence it involved an inductive (involving the generation of theory) and an interpretivist rather than positivist stance (since the focus is on the model as the interpretation of an inaccessible reality, contextualised by a particular research culture and its associated assumptions) – both of which are characteristics that Bryman (2008) suggests are key features of qualitative research.

Crotty (1998 p2) suggests that there are two questions in particular that need to be addressed when designing the methodology for a qualitative research project: what methods and processes will be used and how is the use of these justified? Underlying the answers to these, are the intentions and desired outcomes of the research and also beliefs about the nature of knowledge and reality; those of the researcher, of the subjects of the research and of the recipients of the research. He suggests that the choice of methodology is driven by the theoretical perspective of the researcher that is in turn underpinned by the researcher's epistemological stance.

3.2.2. Ontology and epistemology

Ontology and epistemology relate to an individual's beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge respectively. Crotty (1998 p10) states that "*ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together*" and this gives rise to some confusion in the literature – for example, Bryman (2008 p13) considers interpretivism to be an epistemological position, while Crotty (1998) suggests that this is a theoretical perspective rather than an epistemology (a theory of knowledge).

My background involves a physics degree (including advanced quantum mechanics), a geophysics Ph.D. (described previously in 3.2.1), the use of emergent software development processes such as Agile (Thomas, 2011), and also an interest in complexity and particularly its use in the management of complex, as opposed to chaotic, systems (Mitchell, 2009). These have given me a belief that, although there may be an objective reality, it is a complex system and subject to the rules of complexity. This means that we are not able to know or measure reality, since we are

part of the system under observation and our observations perturb the system we are trying to observe. My understanding is therefore that:

1. My ontological stance is that there is a reality that exists outside of the mind but it is by its nature complex and synergistic (hence irreducible to its individual components) and therefore unknowable (I refer to this as complex realism)
2. We are unable to discover objective truth but “*meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world*” (Crotty 1998 p8). Our meaning making is a construction about reality (a constructionist epistemology)

Understanding the philosophical stance behind a research study is important, since it provides a context for the process and highlights the assumptions that the researcher brings to the study which may influence the interpretation of the results (Crotty, 1998 p7). My belief in a complex reality and constructionism leads to an interpretivist approach, i.e. belief that that information gathered in this study will not be an objective truth but will be the participants’ interpretation and meaning making of their experiences. Similarly, my presentation of the findings inevitably will be my personal interpretation and meaning making. These constructs are based on a reality that is not directly observable but offer secondary information about the nature of the reality (in a similar way that observations of the boundary conditions or interactions of complex systems link to the nature and operation of this system).

To some extent, I also take a pragmatic stance (if it works, use it). I am primarily interested in how these experiences and beliefs influence the interaction between coach and client and the achievement of coaching objectives, rather than their “reality or validity”. This is also in keeping with a complex realist approach, which would suggest that it is possible to use the boundary conditions to influence the system without understanding the internal working of the system. It is also similar to the position of NLP practitioners discussed in the previous chapter (2.2.1) in relation to the lack of academic research evidence.

3.2.3. Theoretical perspective

Creswell *et al.*, (2007) suggest that, as well as ontology and epistemology, the researcher should also make explicit the impact of their values and past experience and the expectations that these generate.

My expectation prior to the study was that the analysis of these multiple perspectives (interpretations or constructions) would give rise to common themes which could be indicative of something of the nature of the phenomenon. But I also needed to be aware that these could equally well be social constructs that are common across the population rather than “reality”. During the data analysis and interpretation, I needed to be careful about extrapolating from the participant’s experiences to the nature of the phenomenon, and instead focus on describing the experiences.

Since I take an interpretivist position, I recognise the analysis of the data is my personal construction and influenced by my theoretical perspective. One major influence is my pre-existing beliefs about the phenomenon based on my personal experience of working through the physical body in aikido (discussed in chapter one). These may lead me to subconsciously notice themes which correlate with my pre-existing beliefs and discount those which oppose them. My belief was that it would not be possible to put these preconceptions aside but that by maintaining an awareness of them, I would be better able to see how and where these influenced my interpretations. Reflection on my pre-existing beliefs, and an on-going process of reflexivity during the data gathering and analysis were key elements of this research process and will be discussed in section 3.4.

3.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Crotty (1998) distinguishes between research methods (concrete techniques and procedures) and research methodology (the overarching strategy “*that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcome*” Crotty, 1998 p7).

Several qualitative methodologies were considered for this study, in particular grounded theory, comparative case study and phenomenology. Creswell *et al.*, (2007 p238) suggest that the choice of research question “*informs the approach used to gather and analyse data in qualitative research*”. Choosing the methodology and defining the research question were an iterative process. As I explored the different methodological approaches, I was able to clarify what I was looking for and develop coherence between the question and methodology. Caswell (1998 p37-38) suggests that clarifying the focus of the study is one way of choosing between the different traditions. He describes the different focus of the approaches as follows: “*The focus of a phenomenology is on understanding a concept or phenomenon. In grounded theory, one develops a theory. In a case study, a specific case study is examined.*”

My initial aim for my research was to develop a theory to explain the phenomenon (see section 1.1.1), which suggested that a grounded theory would be appropriate. In grounded theory, the intention is to derive a general theory grounded in the views of the study participants (Creswell, 2003 p14) although Charmez (2006 p10) suggests that grounded theory still offers an “*interpretative portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it*”. The approach aims to saturate the data until no further themes emerge. This typically involves conducting 20-30 interviews over multiple visits to the field interspersed by data analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Creswell, 1998 p56) and then using the emergent themes to construct a theory about the phenomenon. This gave rise to a practical concern regarding whether it would be possible to gather enough data to adequately “saturate” the study given the time constraints of the MA programme. Another challenge to the grounded theory approach was the need to clearly specify the phenomenon being studied and to identify its expression in coaching. On reflection, it became clear that I was making an unsubstantiated assumption that the use of physical interventions was relevant to coaches but there was no clear support for this in the coaching literature. This suggested that a grounded theory approach would not be appropriate.

The second method considered was a comparative case study. This had the advantage of requiring fewer subjects and allowing a more in-depth, detailed investigation of the phenomenon as seen in coaching. Including several different cases would allow some variety and enable me to look for commonalities and differences in coaches' experiences. The primary difficulty would be to constrain the study. Creswell (1998 p64) describes a case study as "*the exploration of a bounded system*" that is "*constrained in terms of time, events and processes*". Ideally, my study would require several cases with minimal variability and where the contextual conditions of the case could be identified (Yin, 2003). Preliminary investigation of possible cases showed that there was a lot of variability in coaches' use of physical interventions and it was unlikely to be possible to significantly constrain the variables. Also constraining the cases studied would lose the potential richness and variety of experience.

Creswell (1998 p39) suggests that gaps in the existing literature can be a factor in the choice of methodology. As the literature survey progressed, the lack of studies in the coaching literature on combining coaching with physical activity suggested that an initial exploratory study was needed to examine what coaches were currently doing and whether this was a relevant approach for coaching. Such a study would also be able to explore a wide range of different approaches in order to obtain a more generalised experience rather than experience specific to a particular kind of physical intervention.

This enabled me to further refine the research question to focus on the experience and meaning making of coaches of working with the physical body. Having framed the question this way (and clarified the exploratory nature of the study) a phenomenological approach seemed the most appropriate choice.

3.3.1. Phenomenology

Phenomenology has its roots in philosophy and has been commonly used as a research method in the social sciences (Creswell, 1998). It aims to describe the "*meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a concept or the phenomenon*" (Creswell, 1998 p 51) and to capture "*the essence that all persons*

experience about a phenomenon” (Creswell *et al.*, 2007 p 239). It also suggests that “*it does not make sense to think of objects in the world separately from subjectivity and our perception of them*” and that “*our perception varies according to the context*” (Langdrige, 2007 p4). This approach sits comfortably with my ontological stance of complex realism where the observer is part of the system.

Phenomenological research “*requires us to place our usual understandings in abeyance and have a fresh look at things*” (Crotty, 1998 p80) but approaches vary depending on “*the specific strand of phenomenological philosophy that informs the methodology*” (Langdrige, 2007 p4).

One significant difference to these strands is the relevance of the interpretative stance and whether it is possible to “*transcend your own experience of the world, to see it differently, as another person might*” Langdrige, 2009 p18). This leads to differing approaches to epoché or bracketing, whereby the researcher separates out their preconceptions and prejudgements. The Husserlian transcendental approach believes this to be possible and requires the researcher to step outside of the experience and observe from the outside; Heidegger questioned whether knowledge could exist outside of an interpretative stance and developed an existential approach which considers the observer to be embedded in the experience, here bracketing is considered to be desirable and to be attempted but unachievable; Gadamer expands on this approach to suggest that understanding language requires some anticipation of its meaning and we need to determine which preconceptions make possible, and which hinder, our understanding (Langdrige 2007; Smith *et al.*, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 1998; Gadamer, 1975).

More recent hermeneutic approaches such as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) consider interpretation to be an active part of the researcher’s role and part of the process, since we are unable “*to transcend our historical and cultural positions*” Langdrige (2009 p53). Since this approach is most congruent with my

theoretical perspective that interpretation is a necessity, as complex reality is by its nature unknowable, I chose to use this approach.

3.4. RESEARCH METHODS & DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA)

IPA is a recently developed qualitative research approach which originated in psychology but is now widely used in the social and health sciences (Smith *et al.*, 2009; Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008). IPA is based on Heidegger's proposal that a human being is a "*being in the world*" and that "*the lifeworld of the individual is socially and historically contingent and contextually bound*" (Eatough and Smith, 2008 p180). IPA involves a two stage interpretation process (a double hermeneutic), since it considers the researcher to have an active role in the research process; "*the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world*" (Smith and Osborn, 2008 p53). The researcher's own conceptions affect their ability to enter into, and make sense of, the participant's world (the empathic hermeneutic) but IPA may also involve a questioning hermeneutic that attempts to uncover from the text things that the participant is less aware of.

It also takes an ideographic approach, valuing each case individually rather than seeking to generalise at a group level. For this reason, IPA studies typically involve a small number of participants. For example, Smith and Osborn (2008, p57) recommend three participants as a reasonable sample for students doing IPA for the first time. Sample size also depends on factors such as the rarity of those for whom the research question is relevant, the depth of the intended analysis and other constraints such as time. Since this was to be an exploratory study, where the cases would be relatively inhomogeneous and require detailed analysis to extract common themes, I decided to aim for 5-6 participants (see "selection of participants" below).

IPA is concerned with how individuals construct meaning within their personal and social context (symbolic interactionism) (Smith and Osborn, 2008 p55). Smith

(2009 p34) suggests that experience exists as part of a hierarchy where the unitary experience is contained in a larger context which includes the individual's past experiences. These levels are linked by a common meaning. This emphasis on the importance of context and meaning (or sense making), as well as experience, guided the design of the interview schedule for this research.

3.4.2. Data collection

Eatough and Smith (2008 p187) state that, although there is no a priori requirement for interviews as the data collection method for IPA, this is the most common way of collecting data and that this real time dialogue gives a great deal of flexibility to explore the participants' experience. This kind of approach also seemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of this study.

Smith (2004) also suggests the use of other methods such as reflective diaries as an alternative or supplement to interviews. The use of multiple sources of data is sometimes considered a fundamental characteristic of the qualitative approach, particularly in terms of triangulation (Bryman, 2008 p379), although Seidmann (2006) argues that using a single source of data, and in particular in-depth interviews, may avoid the possible confusion and conflict that may arise if different sources of data are grounded in different epistemological frameworks. Triangulation also suggests that there is a single knowable reality that can be correlated from multiple data sources, which may be considered to be a positivist rather than interpretivist stance.

I therefore chose not to include triangulation in this study, although I did use additional information from sources such as participants' web pages as a way of enriching the descriptions of the participants' experience (see section 3.6).

3.4.3. Semi structured interviews

Seidman (2006) proposes a three interview series for phenomenological research. Although there was not time in this study for three interviews with each participant, the focus on: 1) life history (with the aim of putting the participants'

experiences in context); 2) details of experience (what do they actually do and their direct experience of using this approach); 3) reflection on the meaning; seemed a good structure for eliciting the participants' experiences relating to this research topic and these were used as an outline for the interview schedule (see appendix A).

Eatough and Smith (2008 p189) state that, in IPA *"the interview is an interaction in real-time, a dialogue between that which was prepared in advance and that which is unanticipated"* while Smith and Osborn, (2008 p59) suggest that *"the respondent can be perceived as the experiential expert on the subject and should therefore be allowed the maximum opportunity to tell their own story"*. I therefore chose to take a semi-structured interview approach, focusing on general areas but allowing the questions to evolve, both during each interview, and over the series of interviews. Appendix A shows the interview schedule created for this study. This follows the three areas suggested above and was used as a background guide to ensure similar coverage of each area for each participant, although the wording and order of questions varied (as recommended by Bryman, 2008 p439).

The interview questions were refined prior to the interviews by peer review, discussion with my supervisor and a pilot interview (as recommended by Gillham, 2005). Creswell (1998 p19) states: *"questions change during the process of the research to reflect an increased understanding of the problem"* and I reviewed the questions after the pilot but made only minor changes to the schedule and therefore decided to include the data from the pilot as part of the study. As the data collection progressed and I became more confident, I found that the interviews became less structured and I relied less on the sub questions for each area and allowed the discussion to develop in a more open way.

My initial intention was to conduct the interviews face-to-face, since this seemed to be appropriate for a study relating to "physical interaction". But as I identified candidates, it became clear that logistics meant that I needed to perform at least some of the interviews remotely by phone/Skype and several of the participants

also expressed a preference for this approach. Gillham (2005) suggests that telephone interviews allow easier access, and enable the researcher to keep notes/reflect during the conversation but have the disadvantage of missing non-verbal cues and are generally more time limited. Since I have several years' experience of working in a virtual environment, including providing training and facilitation of meetings via telephone/web, I was personally comfortable with the idea of working in this remote fashion. On reflection, I also realised that since I was interested in their experience rather than in observing how or what they did, remote interviews would be acceptable and might even be advantageous, since it might prevent me trying to analyse their behaviour directly. I therefore left the choice of interview method to the participant.

Each participant was sent an initial outline of the study, followed by a more detailed information sheet (see appendix B) and a copy of the Oxford Brookes research participant consent form which was completed before the interview. Gillham (2005 p104) suggests sending a copy of the interview schedule to participants before a remote interview to provide the respondent with something visual to refer to (although it is important not to send this too far in advance of the interview, since I wanted the response to be spontaneous and not rehearsed). I provided a copy of the schedule to participants before the telephone/Skype interviews. This seemed useful in creating a common understanding of the process and reducing the lead in time for the interviews. For f2f participants, I went through the structure of the interview during the introduction.

Following each interview, participants were offered the option of a copy of the recording or transcript, a summary of the results or a copy of the final MA report, as well as an invitation to contact me if they had any further questions or insights.

Of the six interviews included in the study, three were face to face, one by telephone and two via Skype (one including poor quality video and one just voice). All of the interviews were recorded (Smith and Osborn, 2008, suggest that this is a requirement for IPA). Skype proved the most troublesome medium, mainly due to issues with the participants' connection quality over which I had no control.

3.4.4. Selection of research participants

The participants for this study were selected by a combination of non-probabilistic, purposive and convenience sampling (Bryman, 2008 p185), i.e. they were chosen because they happened to be found during the initial search for candidates and seemed to be potentially rich sources of data relevant to the research question but they are not statistically representative of any population. The initial focus on f2f interviewing had the effect of constraining the sample to the UK, as I was originally looking for participants within easy travelling distance. Since this was an exploratory study and the sample not intended to be representative, this was not considered an issue.

I initially considered limiting the sample to a specific physical intervention but given the exploratory nature of the study and the interest in physical activity in general rather than specific activities, it seemed more appropriate to consider a wider range of cases and for this initial sample to be relatively unconstrained. I also considered restricting the sample to coaches with a particular level of experience but was concerned that this might bias the study if, for example, coach training tends to teach a static dyadic approach as the approved way of providing coaching. In order to ensure that there was equal weight given to coaching skills and physical activities, I aimed to select candidates who had a wide experience in one or more method of working with the body, either demonstrated by their past experience/qualifications or by their teaching of some kind of physical activity/body work alongside their coaching.

The initial candidate list was generated using a combination of online research (searching for websites, researching authors and organisations identified during the literature search etc.), personal recommendations and suggestions arising from adverts on two LinkedIn groups of which I am a member (Association for Coaching and Aikido in Business). This generated an initial shortlist of fifteen possible candidates.

Participants were contacted to ask if they would be interested in being involved in the study. Of those that responded, some were interested but considered they didn't

have adequate experience in either the coaching or body work. This left six participants.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

The focus of IPA is to “*analyse in detail how participants perceive and make sense of things which are happening to them*” (Smith and Osborn, 2008 p67). Typically this involves some kind of thematic analysis of interview data (Smith, 2004) although “*IPA’s distinctiveness is best captured in terms of the approach that it offers, rather than a particular set of ‘analytic steps’*” (Larkin *et al.*, 2006 p117).

Caswell *et al.* (2007) propose that data analysis in phenomenology aims to generate three descriptions: a textual description that describes the experience; a structural description relating to the context in which the phenomenon was experienced and a combined description that attempts to capture the essence of the experience. In IPA, Larkin *et al.* (2006) suggest that, as well as describing the participants’ claims of their experiences of the phenomenon (in terms of their cares and orientation), the analysis also includes the speculative development of meaning of the experiences (contextualised in the culture and physical environment of the participant). These combine to provide an insight into the phenomenon as an interaction between the person and their world. The division of the interview schedule into context, experience and meaning was intended to aid in the development of these different descriptions.

Thematic analysis: Initially, I considered using some kind of template analysis using predefined codes derived from my personal experience. Although Smith (2004) states that there is no “cookbook” of instructions for IPA, he emphasises the idiographic nature of IPA and that each case should be analysed separately until “*some degree of closure or gestalt has been achieved*” before moving on to an analysis of subsequent cases (p41). Once all cases have been analysed then comparisons can be made between the themes. This suggested that I should analyse each interview with no pre-defined themes and allow them to emerge from the analysis.

Transcription: The need to transcribe interviews and to use the transcriptions as the primary data source for analysis seems to be an unquestioned and unexplained assumption in most qualitative analysis. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) mention that this process makes the oral conversation “*amenable to analysis*” (p177), but then go on to highlight the loss of data that inevitably occurs. Other authors (e.g. Creswell, 2007; Gillham, 2005; Biggerstaff and Thompson, 2008; Smith and Osborn, 2004) similarly emphasise that the researcher must attempt to create a meticulously accurate, semantic, verbatim transcription to retain the richness of the original data.

The reliance on transcription seems strange given that current technology makes it simple to work directly with the audio recording. Open source audio software such as Audacity allows the user to easily navigate the audio, timestamp relevant segments, label and comment on identified portions or to export extracts which can then be linked to during analysis. It may be that the use of transcriptions is a throwback to days when interviews were recorded on tape which was cumbersome to navigate.

Despite these reservations, I decided to transcribe the interviews since the exercise gave me an in-depth knowledge of the interviews. But I continued to treat the audio as the primary data source for analysis, and to use the transcription as a secondary source for referencing and comments/coding. During coding, I applied the same labels to the audio track and to the transcription making it simple to refer to the audio in context at any point. Since I decided to do my analysis on computer, I could take a multi-media approach and retain links to audio extracts from all the written material. This allowed me to return to the original data throughout the analysis.

Coding and deriving themes: After transcribing, each account was colour coded to reflect the three areas of the interview (context, experience and meaning). This retained a reference to the original context when text was extracted from the full record.

The analysis process was based on that recommended by several authors including (Creswell, 2007; Gillham, 2005; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Smith and

Osborn, 2004). Although these authors differed in their terminology, they all recommended a similar approach of iterative data reduction, by first identifying and labelling or coding substantive statements in the data, then grouping these into more generic categories and then describing 'superordinate themes' (Smith, 2004) that summarised the data in these categories.

Smith (2004 p45) states that IPA involves multiple levels of analysis. I kept detailed comments with each label to facilitate a more interpretative analysis, including thoughts about alternative interpretations and possible meanings. Eatough and Smith, 2008 p189 state that one of the roles of the researcher is to attempt to create an "*alternative coherent narrative from the messy sense making of the participant*".

Each transcript was re-read several times in parallel with the audio track. I converted the transcript into a table in Microsoft® Word and added comments, provisional coding/labelling of substantive statements/critical incidents and a link to the relevant audio segment. Textual and interpretative labels were distinguished using different fonts. Once this had been reviewed several times, the resulting list of labels was exported into XMind mind mapping software to allow easy clustering into common categories. The contents of these categories were cross-checked back to the original audio to confirm their relevance and reference made to notes in my reflective diary about my experience of the interview and the additional information gleaned from the participants' web presence (see reflexivity section below).

Once all the transcripts had been coded, I took the complete list of categories from all transcriptions and performed a second data reduction to derive overarching superordinate themes which encompassed multiple categories. Appendix C shows examples of the stages of data analysis.

Writing the narrative report: The final step was to expand the themes into a consistent narrative account supported by verbatim extracts from the interviews and in the context of the existing literature. Smith and Osborn (2008) suggest that it is

important at this stage “*to distinguish clearly between what the respondents said and the analyst’s interpretation or account of it*” (p76). Considering the extracts in the light of the literature also triggered new insights and alternative interpretations which were included in the write up. Smith and Osborn (2008 p76) suggest “*this is consonant with the processual, creative feature of qualitative research*”. These narrative accounts are presented in the remaining chapters of this study.

3.6. REFLEXIVITY

King (2006) describes reflexivity as a “*recognition that the involvement of the researcher as an active participant in the research process shapes the nature of the process and the knowledge produced through it*”. This fits well with my belief in complex realism and also with the interpretative nature of the IPA approach. To encourage reflexivity, I maintained a research diary during this study.

Before beginning the study, I listed my pre-existing beliefs relating to the topic as recommended by King (2006 p20). These are shown in appendix D. I returned to this list during the data analysis to be conscious of which were new, emergent themes and which conformed to my previous understanding. Prior to each interview, I re-read these preconceptions (so as to be consciously aware of them before each interview).

Most of the participants had a web presence in terms of blogs etc., although in general these were targeted at advertising to potential clients. Since I had read much of this material when identifying candidates and could not go into the interviews as a “blank canvas”, I decided to actively use this material to note the themes that were apparent to me before each interview. After each interview, I recorded my impressions and the key topics I recalled. I used both of these reflections during the data analysis, in comparison with my evolving interpretation of the material and as an aid to recalling the situation and the “felt sense” of a particular interview.

One major challenge during the analysis, was to put aside my own experience and to strive to be objective and open to the experience of the study participants (although Strauss and Corbin (1990 p42) suggest that personal experience may be

advantageous in increasing sensitivity to the “*subtle nuances and meanings in data and to recognise connections between concepts*”). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009 p242) suggest that in qualitative studies, it is possible to strive for reflexive objectivity (being aware of presuppositions, prejudices and subjectivity), even where pure objectivity (freedom from bias) is unobtainable. This again fits with my theoretical perspective and epistemological beliefs.

3.7. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

3.7.1. Ethical issues

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) provide suggestions on ethical considerations for interviews at each stage of the research process. These include the need for informed consent, confidentiality and consideration of potential consequences to participants.

Informed consent: Participants were sent an information sheet giving detailed information about the purpose of the study and what their participation would involve and asked to sign the standard Oxford Brookes research participant consent form. Prior to the interview, they were reminded that they could choose to refrain from answering any question or to end the interview at any stage.

Confidentiality: The information sheet also outlined how the study would be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Recordings were stored in anonymous files on a password protected computer to which only I had access. During the analysis and presentation of findings all data (transcripts, extracts etc.) were anonymised. Participants were reminded prior to the start of the interview that they should be aware of their responsibility for the confidentiality of their clients' information during any discussions about specific cases.

Consequences: Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that the researcher needs to take into consideration any potential harm to participants, if interviews touch on sensitive subjects and the impact of potential changes in self-understanding. I did not anticipate that this would be an issue for these interviews but the semi-structured

nature allowed such issues to be considered if they did arise. In several of the interviews, there appeared to be a moment of self-discovery for the participants but in all cases this appeared to be considered beneficial and addressing these further enriched the description of their experiences.

3.7.2. Validity, reliability and generalisability

There is much discussion in the literature about the relevance of validity, reliability and generalisability to qualitative research and whether these concepts arise from a fundamental positivist viewpoint (Creswell, 1998, Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, Bryman, 2008, Smith *et al.*, 2009).

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009 p253) suggest that validity needs to be embedded in the research process (in the transparency of the procedures and the degree of checking, questioning and theorising about the findings), in which case external validation becomes secondary. Bryman (2008 p376) distinguishes between external/internal validity and reliability and suggests alternative criteria for evaluating qualitative research in terms of trustworthiness and authenticity. Transparency and coherence are again key to this in terms of clearly specified, research methods, clearly articulated arguments and a reflexive stance.

I therefore spent a significant time prior to gathering and analysing the data clarifying my research approach and reviewed this during the actual process. I also kept a reflective diary and discussed my assumptions and approach with peers and my supervisor (Smith *et al.*, 2009 suggest that this kind of independent audit, even on a mini scale, can help ensure the validity of the research).

Creswell (1998 p207) suggests that the quality of a phenomenological study is mainly related the quality of the researcher's interpretation and in particular their reflection on preconceptions, the research process and the establishment of intersubjective validity via "*back and forth social interactions*". He proposes five questions for accessing the quality of a study and suggests that these should be

addressed in the presentation of the research, so that readers can assess the validity and generalisability. These are shown in table 3.1.

The participants for this study were not chosen to be representative of any population but because they provided potentially rich cases for exploring the research questions. This would suggest that the findings from this study are only relevant to these participants' experience and not generalisable.

Quality Question	Approach for this study
Did the researcher in any way influence the descriptions of the participants' experience?	I used semi-structured interviews and allowed the participants' experience to guide the course of the interviews. Piloting and reviewing the recording of each interview allowed me to reflect on where I might be influencing the outcome and change this behaviour for subsequent interviews.
Does the transcript accurately portray the meaning of the oral description?	Although the interviews were transcribed, the primary data were always considered to be the audio recordings and extracts from the transcripts were linked to the relevant time step in the audio file so that they could be easily accessed. This is discussed in more detail in the data analysis.
Has the researcher explicitly identified alternative conclusions that could have been derived from the analysis?	During the data analysis, I attached notes to the data as I identified themes, explaining why I had chosen a particular interpretation and what the alternatives might have been. In the write up, I included examples of original text and my interpretation and also included outliers where the response of participants appeared to be inconsistent with the general themes.
Is it clear how the structural descriptions relate to the content and connections in the original data?	
Is the structural description generalisable to other situations? Under what constraints?	See the discussion below.

Table 3.1: Addressing validity questions for phenomenological research based on Creswell (1998 p208)

Smith and Osborn (1988) and Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) both distinguish between theoretical (analytical) and empirical (statistical) generalisability. In terms of theoretical generalisability, "*the readers make links between the findings of an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and the claims in the extant literature. The power of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context*" Smith and Osborn (2008 p56). In the conclusions to this study, I make some tentative theoretical generalisations to suggest possible starting points for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following three chapters discuss the findings from this study. I set out to explore the question: “*Why are some coaches choosing to combine physical interventions with their coaching, rather than working in a more conventional manner?*” The broad nature of this question and the exploratory, semi-structured interview approach to the research, meant discussions with the research participant covered a wide range of topics and extended beyond this question, providing some fascinating insights into the experience of the coaches and their understanding of how these approaches worked and their value to coaching. The following chapters discuss the themes that appear to me to be most relevant to the research question but other themes which are not described in detail are discussed briefly in the conclusions (chapter 7). All names used for the participants are pseudonyms and I have chosen to use the participants’ own words as far as possible to better illustrate their experiences and understanding.

4.1. OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS

The key criteria for the selection of participants were that they were working with a physical intervention as part of their coaching approach (section 3.4.4). The approaches of the research participants fell roughly into three groups (although some participants worked with more than one of these areas):

1. Those who had a mainstream coaching practice but who also offered coaching in combination with a physical intervention (a combined approach).
2. Those who were experienced body workers/teachers and also coaches and drew on their skills from their physical interventions in their coaching.
3. Those who explicitly focused on working with the body as a central part of their coaching approach (this group often described themselves as somatic coaches).

This division was based to an extent on how the participants viewed, and advertised, their use of the physical activity (i.e. whether they saw it as an integral component or as an adjunct to the coaching process). The findings from this study suggest that their use of the intervention was similar whichever group they identified with.

Although this variety is not an issue given the methodology for this study (since the participants are not expected to be representative of any specific population), the participants' approaches and backgrounds are described briefly below and summarised in table 4.1. Despite their different approaches, participants had fairly similar interests and backgrounds.

Activity/interest	No. (out of 6)	Notes
Formal coach training	6	
Professional coaches	5	<i>Other participant involved in coaching as a manager</i>
NLP training	4	
Influenced by "inner game"	4	
Providing coach training/supervision	4	
Interest in psychotherapeutic approach	3	<i>NLP psychotherapy, ecopsychology, psychosynthesis, psychology etc.)</i>
Experience in a physical activity	6	<i>Martial arts, bodywork, sports, dance, yoga, hill walking, chi gung, meditation or laughter yoga</i>
Teaching physical activity	6	<i>e.g. martial arts, chi gung, hill walking</i>
Working with coaching in parallel with a physical activity (group 1 above)	5	<i>Walking, massage, laughter therapy</i>
Using their experience in physical activities in their conventional coaching (group 2)	5	
Training in embodied approaches	4	<i>e.g. conscious embodiment or the work of Strozzi-Heckler</i>
Somatic coaches (group 3)	2	

Table 4.1: *summary of activities and interests of participants*

Of the six, five were full time professional coaches and one was involved with coaching team members in his role as a manager, as well as providing some private coaching for friends and aikido students. All of the participants had had formal coach training as well as training in other learning and development approaches such as clean language, MBTI, conflict resolution etc. Four were trained in NLP approaches and three had training or a long term interest in a psychotherapeutic approach (NLP, psychotherapy, ecopsychology, psychosynthesis, psychology etc.).

Two described themselves as somatic coaches and were consciously working with the body in their coaching interventions, considering this a core part of their work. They had studied various somatic approaches including conscious embodiment (Wendy Palmer, 1994) and the work of Richard Strozzi-Heckler (1993). The inner game (Gallwey, 1986), was mentioned by four of the participants as an important influence on their approach.

All of the participants were experienced in some kind of physical activity either as a teacher, practitioner or as a personal hobby. These activities included martial arts (tai chi, aikido and karate), bodywork (massage, Feldenkrais etc.), sports and physical activities such as dance, yoga, hill walking, individual and team sport and other activities that have a physiological component such as chi gung, meditation or laughter yoga. Three of the participants worked with coaching and walking and two worked with other physical interventions (massage and laughter therapy) that they used in conjunction with their coaching.

All six were involved in teaching/training in a physical activity and four were also providing coach training and/or supervision.

Are the approaches the same? One of the participants questioned whether the combined approach would work in the same way as the somatic approach or whether it would just provide a different context for the coaching rather than being used directly by the coach as an integral part of their coaching intervention:

*I think that, well the experience of walking, particularly in nature, will shift a state and therefore put you in a different state, but whether it uses the physiology in the way, integral, in kind of more...as part of the process as M. and I would to be doing, or tend to do...?". **Peter, somatic coach***

This question was relevant to this study since it challenged whether it was appropriate to collate the themes from the interviews or whether they should be treated in a more idiographic manner. On the surface, the interventions described by the participants seemed very different, particularly in terms of the practicalities of how and where the interventions were applied but my analysis of the data and the themes that emerged

seemed to suggest that the coaches' experience of the interventions is very similar, irrespective of their way of working. This is also indicated by the similarity of the backgrounds described above. Somatic coaches appear to consider that the integral or holistic focus is a unique feature of their theoretical approach but the literature review of other coaching approaches (section 2.2.1) suggests that these are also founded on holistic beliefs, although they may be less overt or intentional in their expression of these than in somatic coaching. Similarly, my review of the outdoor learning literature (section 2.3.1) suggested that there are deeper effects to being immersed in the environment than just a change of mental state. This suggested that the integral approach was not unique to somatic coaching and I therefore chose to pool the themes from the participants during my analysis.

4.2. OUTLINE OF THE FINDINGS

The following two chapters discuss the two key superordinate themes that emerged from my analysis along with their associated subthemes. Table 4.2 shows these superordinate themes and subthemes along with a headline summary of the findings.

Superordinate theme	Subthemes	Why use these approaches?
A matter of identity	More than a philosophy Background and belief All of me Not real work?	Because it is who I am Because of what I believe <i>The body has a key role to play</i> <i>Everything is connected</i> <i>We are relational beings</i> Because I am able to do it Because it works for the client
A different way in	Working at a different level Sustainable learning Interrupting patterns The bigger picture Demystifying the magic	Because it gives me more ways in Because it is more memorable and sticks Because it is a tool for disrupting habits Because the environment works for me Because it explains why coaching works

Table 4.2: Summary of superordinate themes and associated answers to the research question.

Chapter 5 discusses the first of the superordinate themes and looks at how in discussing their experience, all the participants expressed that this was driven to a great extent by a need to express their identity in an authentic manner. They chose this kind of approach to a great extent because it reflected who they are and because

working this way allowed them to express this. This was a surprising result for me and will be discussed more in the next chapter.

The second superordinate theme (described in chapter 6) related to the participants' experiences of how using physical interventions enabled them to work with the client at a different level, providing access to additional knowledge and ways of engendering and sustaining change. This was based strongly on their beliefs of holism. What I had not expected here was that this holism extended beyond the individual (the mind/body integration) to include the connection to the surrounding systems (relationships to others and to the environment). For example, in the case of coaching and walking, I anticipated that the additional intervention would relate to the physical act of walking and being in motion, whereas in fact, the participants reported that it was the use of the surrounding environment (space and openness, physical journey etc.) that were as, if not more, important than the physiological effects of walking. This is discussed in detail in chapter 6 along with the other related subthemes.

CHAPTER FIVE

A MATTER OF IDENTITY

Many of the major themes that participants expressed about why they chose to work with a physical intervention related to the coaches' sense of their identity. They saw this as evolving out of their personal background and beliefs and enabling them to use their whole self authentically in their coaching.

5.1. MORE THAN A PHILOSOPHY

One theme that recurred throughout the interviews for all the participants was that working with a physical approach was not simply a choice but an expression of their identity. This was expressed most strongly by Martin, reacting to the suggestion that this was a philosophical belief.

that's an understatement, I think it's not just a belief, I mean that would be an.....erm.....I think, a core aspect of who I am and what I love and what I am doing in the world. Erm.....isis this idea of body mind integration, body mind spirit emotions, to flesh that outerm that's just absolutely fundamental to who I am and what I am about, you know, right from sort of the business angle, of the unique selling point of my business, to sort of what I enjoy doing in my spare time and.... **Martin**

Others expressed this idea in similar terms:

I do what I do because that is my life's journey, into...it's my exp....it's what I am curious about, it's what I think helps me to live a good life. So....it's, it's just driven entirely by my curiosity and wonder and that sort of stuff. **Peter**

Nick and Owen (coaching and walking) talked about this in terms of how working in a non-conventional way allowed them to be more authentic.

I find it easier to just be present with the client and what's going on with her and trust I know how to deal with it. So I think being in an outdoor environment allows me to access more of my perception I think.....I think it enables me to be more connected to myself.And let go of some of the.....higher level things I should be doing. Yes, I think I connect to me rather than the things that I should do **Nick**

Just the fact of walking and feeling the wind on your hands or on your face, or whatever, does definitely bring you more into the totality of yourself, erm away from this sort of brain on legs **Owen**

Chris, who initially described that she had selected her approach to provide a niche for her coaching business, later clarified that this choice, was primarily driven by her

passion for the subject and her belief that laughter and joy were key to people's development.

*That is a fundamental belief that I have. And sometimes we are so out of touch with it, we, we get a bit lost, we don't know where it is, we can't find it (whispering) but it is always there! {Laughing} And er, I think it's, a great part of my identity as a coach is giving people that hope and that remembering, that it is there. **Chris***

One participant did not talk directly in terms of identity. This may be in part because his use of the interventions is still an informal part of his managerial coaching that he uses infrequently, and only with staff with whom he has an established relationship, partly because it is not the accepted or expected approach.

*People within a work scenario, expect to go into a meeting and have a meeting but they don't expect to go and run upstairs with their manager and run back down again. Other people don't seem to do that. It's not part of a normal work environment, is it? **Steve***

But he also described that his reason for introducing these approaches stemmed from wanting to bring what he knew from other areas of his life into the work environment and to work more holistically and authentically rather than compartmentalising his life, skills and knowledge.

As expressed by Martin above, there was also a sense that the participants had to work this way because that is who they are, rather than simply making a choice to use these kinds of interventions. They saw it as a core enabler to connect and work with others while being true to themselves.

This echoes Aquilina's (2011) suggestion that working with the body is a "way of being" for the coach rather than a technique and needs to be embodied and expressed as a lived experience by the coach. It also reflects the ideas from complexity management (Boyatzis, 2006) and integral systems theory (Taylor *et al.*, 2010) which suggest that individuals are complex systems and parts of that system (for example, a particular action or technique) cannot be understood or analysed in isolation from the system. Wright (2012) also suggests that such physical interactions allow the coach to engage more fully in the process (see section 2.2.1) and that by moving and interacting

with the client the coach is able to express more of themselves and to be more authentic.

5.2. BACKGROUND AND BELIEFS

5.2.1. Background

The key influences on the participants and their common interests and background were outlined in the previous chapter. For some participants, particularly those working as somatic coaches, these seemed to be part of a lifelong interest in physical activity, a quest to understand more about embodiment and a growing disillusionment with the educational focus on cognitive knowledge and learning.

*I've always, since a child, had a fascination for....martial arts....not....just in terms of use of energy, not for fighting, you know, my size was never a size for a person to get into fights. And I was naturally good at sports and I was also aware of how my mind got in the way, particularly when playing one to one sports, **Peter***

These experiences of sport are similar to Gallwey's inner game theories (2003).

*by the time I got to university I was really DONE with academia, I thought it was kind of a waste of time and a dead end and a very limited form of knowing and intelligence. I thought, well what else is there? And I discovered the martial arts, and erm aikido particularly but other kinds of physical things as well.....and er... that just opened a whole new world for me, **Martin***

For others, their approach grew out of their long experience of a specific physical activity. For example, Steve had taught martial arts for over 25 years and seen how it led to developmental changes in students, Owen had a deep attachment to his local hills having walked them for more than 20 years, while Nick's interest had evolved in part from his work with outdoor learning

*I got as much fun out of err, working with young people, taking them climbing, walking, environmental, as I did with training the staff, and that started, erm, I would say for me, being interested in how, err, using exercise and movement activities, kind of created err natural moments for helping people develop. **Nick***

The participants also all reflected on their personal experiences of how physical activity and using the body helped them in their own development and growth. In many cases, they perceived this as working at a different level than cognitive reflection, suggesting that this was not simply a case of creating an opportunity for reflection.

if I am struggling with something then I will often..... just go up on the hills for a walk Um, and just find, you know, things pop into my head, oror somewhere, pop into my body, erm and and erm.....um....and you know, really move me on in a way that sitting at the desk doesn't. Owen

This is similar to the gestalt approach and Gendlin's (1982) felt sense, suggesting that physical activity and bodily sensations can surface thoughts (see section 2.2.2).

A second important experience was the influence of other practitioners. In some cases, this was the inspiration for the participant's choice ("*I worked with some people who could do things that I couldn't do*") (Nick). Other participants had begun to craft their own way of working before discovering others were doing similar things.

I was doing aikido and psychology at the same time and I just, I tried to put them together and basically reinvented the wheel. And then realised there were some people in the States who had been doing similar work and went kind of to live with them in the States and apprentice myself to them. Martin

Chris summarised the connection between personal experience and coaching style.

I think everyone who goes into coaching is looking for answers for themselves first and to coach themselves first and foremost. Chris

5.2.2. Beliefs

Three main beliefs about the body and its role in coaching and development were expressed by the participants. These seemed to stem mainly from their personal experience but also relate to their underlying philosophy and ontology.

The body has a key role to play: The participants considered this as the means through which we express ourselves and connect to the rest of the world and our fundamental level of knowing and learning.

And you know we do liveall our experiences come through our body, you know all our life is through, is lived through our body. Peter

We are all primarily physical, I mean before we learn language we have bodies, right? A dog can get a felt, somatic sense of you. A dog can't do maths but a dog has that sense. A baby has that sense, I think it's the most fundamental part of our nature.....and the logical stuff is really useful, I'm not anti kind of head or anti intellect, I think that's just built on top of that. Martin

The sense of physical activity as a primal method of communication and interacting was also described by Chris in terms of laughter.

4-5 months old, we learn to laugh. And it is an inbuilt reflex in us. And why do babies do that? They are not, they are not given jokes. They are not...you know.....But they learn to laugh. And we can relearn this. Chris

Everything is connected (the wider holistic view): Not surprisingly given their NLP and martial arts interest, all the participants believed in the integral connection of mind and body and emotion and the need to work holistically.

And erm.....um, you know, our body minds are connected and it all gets...all our psychological patterns are there in our bodies and our musculature and our mind affects our body and body affects our mind, you know emotions and it is all connected. Peter

But the participants who were working with coaching and walking also emphasised the connection between the individual and the wider environment in which they were embedded. This echoed the integral systems approach described in relation to outdoor learning (section 2.3.1). Taylor *et al.*, (2010) describe a similar concept of open loop connection and exchange of energy with the environment in an integral systems approach to outdoor education: “*all living systems maintain their integrity as a result of exchanging energy with the environment*” (p77). Boyatzis (2006) also suggests that environmental attractors can play an important role in the achievement of coaching objectives (section 2.2.1).

All the participants saw one of the key roles of coaching was to resolve the apparent disconnections in these systems.

It seems to me that there are two really fundamental splitserm...that we are not dealing with very well.....erm.... you know in society. One is individually, this split between the head, and the rest of us., So we value, you know kind of logic and rationality and all of this kind of stuff, erm and you know, irrationality and emotions and intuition and stuff is all a bit, sort of, dodgy or stuff that we know in our body. So there is this sense that within ourselves we split off a lot of our knowing and our wisdom. But then at a bigger scale, we have also done the same thing between ourselves and the earth, Owen

We are relational beings: Following on from the holistic/systems belief described above, was the belief that we are relational beings and designed to connect to and be influenced by others and our wider environment via the body.

It's a neurological link that two people create, but it's not just the brains, it's the, the bodies, the whole neurological system that create that.....loop. You know,

like a baby and err...mother create that loop, it's what our neurological systems are designed to do. So when we start having a conversation, that naturally happens and if the coach.....at least the coach, if not the coach and the other person, has some body awareness then that really facilitates what...what...needs to happen there **Martin**

As human beings we are kind of open loop emotionally. So we kind of, we almost naturally lock on to other people and engage with them emotionally, you know. Whereas cognitively, stuff can go on in our heads on its own, emotionally we are essentially relational beings, **Owen**

5.3. ALL OF ME

One of the main drivers described by the participants for choosing their approach was that it allows them to use all of themselves in the coaching interaction. One aspect of this was the opportunity to share their passions with the client and to model being authentic and accepting of, what motivates and inspires them.

I think the advantage is that I model, that I can connect to things that drive and motivate to me, the passions and er....And gives permission for them to discover what's driving them, Yes what's motivating themerr..... That either they are not connected to or ignoring or frightened of or whatever,.... are conflicted in some way... **Nick**

It also enabled them to work with their own body, as well as the client's. They considered that this provided them with additional sources of information perceived as a felt sense, intuition or physical impulse to take action.

the idea to do something, er, somatic....um, just comes to me in the listening, it's not, um....and usually an idea comes to my head or a feeling comes in my body. Um, I do a lot of erm.....sense.....I find my body picks up a lot of information of the other person **Peter**

This was something that they found themselves doing easily, although they found it difficult to describe how this information arose or how they translated this into action. This seemed similar to Tsoukas' (2003) description of the ineffable nature of tacit knowledge that cannot be described but only manifested (section 2.4.2).

It's like, how do you know what to say when you have a coffee with a friend, how do you know, what dance moves to do while doing a tango with someone. There's a sense of kind of resonance in the body Erm, There's a sense of kind of what wants to happen in terms of what, what I relax into and what causes tension in myself, **Martin**

This experience seemed to be the same for those participants working with physical activities (such as walking) as for the somatic coaches such as Martin.

this is more of a visceral...erm... level, whereI suppose it's more I will feel the impulse to move....you know, for us to get up and walkor I will feel the impulse for us to sit down, without..... it's not that it's not conscious, but, but it's almost not verbal. It's more just, you know, yeah we need to sit down now, or we just need to stop walking and stand and talk for a moment or stand and look at the view. Owen

Several of the participants suggested that their ability to pick up these physical signals via the body was key to their using the physical intervention in their coaching and that this was an innate ability which they naturally and instinctively used rather than a learned skill. This differs from Tsoukas' (2003) idea of tacit knowledge which he proposes is learnt by repeated observation and practice, even if it cannot be taught. Tsoukas suggests that once knowledge become tacit the individual is unaware of what they do and how they do it, so it may be that the participants did at some stage learn these skills but are now unaware of having done so. Martin described this ability as

the idea of kind of tasting another person, which isnot exactly mimic but very subtly kind of try on the movement and posture of someone else, to get a felt sense of it. Martin

This is very similar to the function of mirror neurons described by Goleman and Boyatzis (2008), which allow the individual to gain a subconscious physiological perception of a movement by observing someone perform it. This is one example of how neuroscience may eventually be able to provide scientific evidence for the mechanisms which underlie such anecdotal abilities.

As well as the ability to read others or to “take on their colours” (Owen), the participants believed that the coach needed other additional abilities to work with physical interventions or embodied practices. Firstly, the coach needs to be able to manage the physical intervention without this distracting them from the coaching. For example, in coaching and walking, they need to be able to adapt the route both for changes in weather but also to suit the nature of the conversation.

sometimes....we'll, we will not walk very far at all, because it is a more sort ofbecause the conversation just needs to have that sort of, slowness and that goes in the sort of slowness of movement, so it's important to be able to shorten walks or lengthen them depending on er.... the time and so forth Owen

The participants also believed that it was essential for the physical activity to be an integral part of the coach's identity rather than a learnt tool or trick, suggesting that this created a kind of "synergy" (**Nick**) which made the intervention something more than, for example, just going for a walk with your coach

*I mean there are coaches who go on, kind of, weekend courses about embodiment, and they....they could learn some tricks. And that could be useful and they might get a shift in the perspective that could be good....but I think without a real grounding.....in an embodied practice....erm, and I don't fetishize aikido, I think it could be dance or yoga or even acting actually,it could be something else....drumming, you know....but something, but something physical, preferably, something relational as well, Err, then then, then they wouldn't really have the kind of depth to live it and that's quite apparent. **Martin***

Working through the body, and particularly activities such as walking or massage were considered more conducive to big picture, emergent issues rather than task based or goal orientated activities. The participants suggested that the coach needs some additional coaching skills to enable them to work with these emergent issues.

*the ability to track the process of what the client is going on, at a higher level, and to be able to use the activity that you are engaged in to support that process Yeahso, to do that, err, the person needs to have some established skills in being able to conduct their coaching conversation with a process, physically and unconsciously, so that there is some space for them to go to a higher level, a meta level to that to be able to track where they are and how they can then use the environment **Nick***

The need for these additional skills may explain why the coaches in Harding's (2006) study had difficulties maintaining flow using bodily-kinaesthetic and naturalistic intelligences, when they were unfamiliar with the physical activities (section 2.2.2).

The participants also considered that additional commitment and engagement may be required from the client for these approaches to be effective as coaching.

*There is a sense of it having this greater freedom and expansiveness, but also kind of requiringer a kind of engagement with this as coaching rather than engaging with this as a nice walk out with my coach **Owen***

They were also aware that these approaches would not be suitable for all clients and that it may depend on factors such as age but also on the relationship with the client.

*People are not comfortable in their body will not go into the body. People who are not comfortable with their emotions will not go so well into the emotional side of things. So it's also our development as a coach. If we want to be a whole coach.....You have to learn to be a whole.....to get it in yourself **Peter***

There are some people who I could do it with and there are some people who I'd think... they just wouldn't join in, you know they wouldn't participate. They wouldn't.... they would just be so uncomfortable that it wouldn't work **Steve**

Lawrence (2012) suggested that learner resistance due to embarrassment could be overcome by beginning with small activities (section 2.2.1) and then moving on to more challenging ones. The participants in this study suggested that it might also depend on individuals' preferences (as illustrated above) and that the physical route might not be appropriate for all clients.

5.4. NOT REAL WORK?

Lawrence (2012) also suggested that a belief that it is not real learning may be another cause of learner resistance. The study participants acknowledged that they can also find this an issue for themselves. Working in a way that allows them to use all of themselves, comes naturally and enables them to indulge their passions can seem too easy and occasion a sense of guilt.

I worry....that it can look like it isn't really work or whatever [laughing] cos I have to say when I am working....like this guy who came down last week, this client is a client who I charge more than any of my other clients [both laughing] erm...and so I have to pinch myself when I come back to the house after dropping him of at the station, ok so I got paid....whatever...for spending three hours, sort of, walking around the hills. Erm. So I think there is a bit of me that goes "I have to sort of justify this stuff". **Owen**

This was exacerbated by their perception of what others expect of a professional coach, an image that was reinforced by coach training and coaching organisations and books on coaching. This resulted in some of the participants separating their conventional coaching from their other approaches, despite their holistic beliefs.

I got caught up being involved with people in formal training and delivering more formal coach training, more formal training, and reading books and creating this culture of coaching where I sit down with people one to one in a room and going for a walk was something different and I put all my skills in a box and said this is where they live and err.....they weren't the same skills that I used when I went for a walk with people **Nick**

I have, intentionally I suppose, kept things separable although they are not really separate.....they arewhat is the word? Inseparable, aren't they? Coaching and laughter, I think ratherin my view **Chris**

This was less of an issue for those who identified themselves as primarily somatic coaches. The interviews also stimulated the participants to reflect on why they kept the activities separate. In some cases, this was because they saw the approaches as related to specific environments but wondered whether it would be possible to get more cross over between these.

I'm just wondering if there is some real [laughing] scope here to erm, sort of, erm have more of a cross over or....or be more flexible in my approach. To imagine sort of that although we are actually sitting in this office, that we are actually walking on the hills,I mean, obviously we don't have the same view, and we don't have the same scope for being able to amble along. But if I brought some of the ways that I see what's going on, and some of the, I don't know, the energetic qualities and so forth, that, that could be very interesting Owen

The participants were also aware that business is “*not interested in embodiment, they are interested in results*” (Martin). This led them to market their work in terms that were relevant to business objectives and accessible to people who did not have an understanding (or belief) in the physical approach.

In an executive world, a business world, I would probably be um.....be talking more about helping manage stress or resilience or that sort of stuff, or performance. I still um, might be talking about mind body in that frame but I won't be using somatic as a context, um, so I change my descriptions Peter

I think that is probably the phrase that I use the most...is..., is the one of getting a perspective. Because I think, I think that whereas spacious probably appeals to people like you and me, who sort of work in this area. I think that the...a lot of people in organisations, one of the things that they really sort of yearn for, is being able to see what the hell is going on. And that ability to stand back and have a sense perspective about, and get things into, you know, proportion Owen

These descriptions seemed at first to be incongruous given the emphasis they had put on having to work this way as an expression of who they were (their identity) and their strong beliefs about the importance of these approaches. On reflection and on reanalysing the transcripts, it became apparent that this reframing of the approach was focused on making the approach accessible to people who would otherwise have not been able to accept it (overcoming learner resistance) and that the coach became more open about their approach as the relationship developed.

5.5. SUMMARY

The themes outlined in this chapter highlight how the participants described the way that they choose their approach based on their beliefs and because of their personal experience of these approaches working. They valued the approaches because it allowed them to use all of themselves in the coaching interaction and considered that this openness was an important factor in deepening the rapport with the client, as well as giving them access to additional information through the body. They also found this way of working much more enjoyable, although this gave rise to concerns that it might not be “real work”.

They were prepared to modify their description of the way that they work and to frame it in a way that was acceptable to their clients, even if this was not an accurate description of what they believed was important about the approach. It is also possible that they may be influenced by their concerns about it not being seen as “real work” and unwilling, in some circumstances, to risk exposing themselves given that their approaches are closely tied to their sense of identity, although this was not explicitly stated. It may also be that, if they find themselves having to work in a less authentic way in one area of their coaching, this may influence why they put such a high importance on the times when they are able to work authentically and to be themselves. None of the participants discussed this directly but it is another explanation for their passion for this way of working.

The participants considered that working in this way allowed them to share their passions (which relate in part to their beliefs). It is possible that this might result in the coach influencing the client or being more directive than is normal in conventional coaching, although this is probably not an issue since most of these beliefs relate to allowing the client to be fully themselves and to express their unique identity.

Working at a physical level enabled them to work with emergent, ineffable issues in a similar way to that described by Ventegodt *et al.*, (2004) for health coaching on unknown causes of disease (section 2.2.2). The participants suggested that these

were the issues that tended to emerge when working with the body, especially during activities such as coaching and walking, and that the coach needed to be confident in working at this emergent level. Some participants suggested that opportunity to work with these emergent issues was an important motivation for working with the body but this may also have been an expression of their identity, since they considered these issues to be personally more meaningful and important.

The participants also considered that the coach needed expertise in the physical intervention in a similar manner to that recommended by Palmer (2012 p37) for health coaches. This lack of expertise may also explain the difficulties that Harding's (2006) coaches had in working with bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence.

Researching and evaluating these kind of physical approaches may be challenging for the same reasons as outdoor learning (section 2.3.1). The participants described that they manage the coaching process using their own intuition, bodily felt sense and tacit knowledge. Researchers may need to use some kind of holistic, systems theory to investigate these kinds of approaches, possibly along the lines of the ICT described by Boyatzis (2006).

The emergence of this superordinate theme was a surprising result for me, since my preconceptions about the outcomes for this research (see appendix D) focused on the nature of the intervention and benefits of working in an holistic way with the client. I had not really considered how this approach also allowed the coach to work holistically with themselves, and to express their beliefs and passions, although on reflection I now realise that this is in fact a major reason why I work the way that I do in my coaching and with my aikido students.

CHAPTER SIX

A DIFFERENT WAY IN

The second group of themes that emerged about why the participants choose to work with physical interventions related to the benefits they perceived. These included a different way of engaging with the client, which provided the coach with additional tools, understanding and opportunities. The participants considered that changes that are engendered via the body are more sustainable and go deeper. They also believed that understanding physical processes might help to explain some of the apparent mystery of coaching.

6.1. WORKING AT A DIFFERENT LEVEL

A common theme with all participants was that working through the body provided a different level of access to the client. This was seen as an additional avenue of approach used in conjunction with the conventional cognitive approach. The coaches chose the route that seemed most appropriate to the circumstances.

*sometimes it's easier for the body to influence the mind, than the mind to influence the mind Or it's easier for the body, for the mind to influence the bodyit's like it's a team, we've got a lot of different access points here. For me it's a very holistic thing and I will come and I will open whichever door I feel is the most appropriate... But I do feel that, erm....the....erm....the world, the door of the body is not um, open sufficiently and not sufficiently engaged. **Peter***

The idea that the physical approach was underutilised, and might offer opportunities for accessing issues that resisted other approaches, was a common theme for participants. For example, talking about one of his clients who had been sent for coaching by her organisation, Owen thought that

*the distractions of being outsideerm would, would cause her to just not engage with the coaching, you know, so to have a nice walk on the hills but not to really engage with the coaching but I guess that there is also the possibility that it might give her a different way of engaging. **Owen***

Working through the body also has the advantage that it could be much more immediate since it didn't require a genuine change in conscious belief which can take a long time to achieve. Chris described this in terms of using forced or fake laughter.

Your body doesn't care if it is real or fake or pretend, you know. Your brain knows the difference, of course it does. I'm not feeling like laughing, I am making this sound purposefully, but your body doesn't care, it still releases all the endorphins, it still boosts your blood circulation, it will give you an energy boost, it will help relax your muscles, it will relieve tension in your body **Chris**

The use of a physical activity was also seen to change how the client approached the coaching. For example, with massage and coaching the expectation of opening up on a physical level made it easier for the client to be receptive at other levels.

they are starting to open anyway because they'reaccepting the...they've come to you to be massaged, and that's something, you know, they are expecting an experience which includes them being able toopen up and....in terms of their physical body.....and put themselves into a state where they are are....very open. So I think that can help, therefore, to open the mind as well. **Steve**

In walking and coaching, the physical activity encourages the client to engage with the experience rather than distancing themselves by analysing the insight.

The answer in the training room about "what's going on for you now" can often be or is "well this is what I think about the thought" And that's a comment on the thought, which is further away from what is, their body is.....And that in my view, distances them from their feelings of all, it becomes one academic thing more **Nick**

This engagement of effortless attention is similar to the requirement for the success of the therapeutic approaches described in section 2.3.3 and also similar to Gallwey's (2003) inner game approach which aims to get the analytical Self 1 out of the way to access the natural flow states of Self 2 (section 2.3.2). One of the participants suggested that a major issue with Self 1 is that it prevents the client being present.

I think that Self 2 is probably in the present, Self 1 is in the past or the future,ermwhich is why it becomes such an interference **Owen**

Being present was also seen as an important enabler. The participants suggested that being out in the environment pulled both coach and client into the present moment which in turn deepened the relationship.

The different quality of the engagement was also important in other ways. Steve suggested that the fact that the connection was happening on multiple levels with coaching and massage allowed the coach to be more adaptable in their approach.

I think you can have bigger pauses in it, because there is something else happening. So I think you can stop for a while, on both sides, because there is

a continuing interaction. It is maintaining a connection between you. Because I think within a coaching session if you both stopped for a bit, just staring out the window or whatever, it would be a bit strange. Steve

6.2. CREATING SUSTAINABLE LEARNING

The participants suggested that they experienced the use of physical interventions as resulting in learning that was more persistent, deeper and quicker and easier to achieve. The body was considered key to this, since they considered that if the change/learning was embodied then it became an integral part of the person, whereas if it involved only cognitive understanding then it was more difficult to sustain.

if there is going to be a shift, that shift really needs to be at the level of who someone is, so that's what we could call the ontological level and that's embodied, there's a linguistic element to it as well, you know, the story needs to fit. But the body is really key to that stickiness or else we are just looking at tricks and that's not so lasting. Martin

This is similar to the development of unconscious competence as proposed by Whitmore (2009), whereby new behaviours become ingrained and automatic.

The participants also suggested that engaging more of the person accessed the additional intelligence of the body and produced greater results.

If you are dealing with 10%, i.e. the cognitive, you're going to get 10% of the results, whereas if you are dealing with the sort of fundamental nature of who someone is,and I, I, you know for me that very much rests in the body, then you are going to get better results Martin

if I had just done it in the imagination, there would have been some sensation in the body but for me it's not asstrong as if you fully engage the body. Because there is an intelligence and a memory store here, and erm, that's, um... can more significantly challenge the pattern. Peter

Nick contrasted the way that new ideas seemed to become integrated during the coaching walk with how they were often lost after coaching sessions in the office.

if they are having a great insight or a change of perspective, something notable has happened to them, whilst walking on in this way and involving their body, they seem to have found somewhere to put that thought. Whereas where we sit stationary in an office room, for instance, I notice that sometimes people find somewhere to put that thought and sometimes they don't know what to do with it. And it just hangs around. And I also notice when that happens it er it is usually still hanging around the next time we meet and hasn't really gone anywhere, impactful. Nick

This may be because the walking allows the client time for the kind of subconscious reflective feedback proposed by Moon (2004, see section 2.3.1). Chris suggested

another factor for this retention may be that the physiological effects of the physical intervention continue to affect the client for some time after the coaching session and that this may be one of the reasons changes often happen outside the session.

*It's not just the insights that you get within the session, you know, or whatever happens, the laughter or anything else. It's how that continues to affect you. But if you are laughing, you are releasing the endorphins, and you are. You know, for more than 15 minutes, you know, those endorphins keep releasing for several hours afterwards. **Chris***

The participants all considered that the client's embodied state was a useful source of information for the coach and an opportunity for experiential learning for the client.

*seeingtheir body and how it behaves.....gives out a huge amount of information about their mind and mental state and their response to things as well. **Steve***

These embodied states were seen to reveal psychosomatic patterns that were reflected in the client's general approach to life. These states are often invisible to the client who perceives them as normal because they are what they are used to doing.

*people's embodied state becomes very invisible to them, erm, they get used to it, like always say like an old pair of shoes, you get used to them, habituated to them. **Martin***

The Feldenkrais approach used by Goldman Schuyler (2010, section 2.2.2) also considers that habitual responses become invisible to the individual and seeks to make the client aware of these. Working at a physical level allowed the coach to give the client a physiological experience of these patterns in a way that made them obvious and undeniable. The participants considered this experiential learning to be an important factor in making the embodied approach more memorable.

*you get a clear response and the person gets a clear response and they can't deny that that's just happened to their body, and you....and they are usually fascinated by then the "tealeaf reading" or what that means. So when you engage the body and people have an experience, they can't....., it's, it's there to be seen, they can't say oh, that didn't happen to me" or "I didn't really mean that". **Peter***

The participants' experience suggested that once they were able to make the client aware of the pattern at a physical, experiential level, the client was usually able to recognise this in other areas of their life and translate the learning accordingly.

6.3. INTERRUPTING HABITUAL PATTERNS

One of the most important uses of the physical interventions that the participants identified was as an interruption to habitual patterns of thought or behaviour. Key to this was choosing a physical activity that was gentle enough that it allowed conversation and cognitive thought.

*I think it's about activating the body that you are working with and you have to be in touch with your body. If the experience, is actually too involved then I think the feelings that they had when they talked about the coaching issue can get lost can get lost and swamped by the emotions and generated by what is going on. And I want them to know what feelings they haveand I want them to be connected to the feelingsof the coaching as well as the actual activity **Nick***

but which also provided the coach with the capacity to vary the pace and intensity, both to reflect the rhythm of the current coaching conversation but also to instigate changes in the conversation. Steve suggested that with massage “one could do it in quite a direct way, that speed and pressure changes, as one delves deeper or drives something” although he added that he had not worked in this way to any great extent. The participants who worked with coaching and walking commented that they often controlled the pace and the terrain as a way of reflecting or altering the conversation.

*I will adjust the walk through,....er...to provide... to provide contrast to what they are saying, a lot of the time. So I don't.....some time I will try and mirror it, sometimes I try to contrast it. I definitely use the environment..... **Nick***

In these cases, the coach is working outside of the client's awareness by using the pace to guide/lead the conversation and this may give rise to the same ethical issues as were described for NLP interventions that work below the level of consciousness (section 2.2.1).

Steve suggested that the physical intervention could be used in two ways, either taking the client into their comfort zone (making them more receptive and open) or taking them out of their comfort zone (challenging or disturbing the status quo).

*if you think of a coaching thing as being an “intervention” as it were, then....taking people a bit off guard is something that helps you do that.....um..... so that's more the way I have worked with aikido students, my team that I have managed, whereas, in terms of working with the body during massage and working coaching in with that, it's not so much taking people off guard as.....as.....almost, softening them up a bit. **Steve***

He described an example of taking a client out of their comfort zone.

*One of my team was stuck with creativity. Rather than sort of go “Oh you could have ideas this way, or that way” or something. I decided to sort of stir them up a bit and said “Right, come with me then”and she sort of came across the room and we went out of the door and I said “Right. We are going to run up the stairs”. And we ran up the stairs to the top of the building (laugh) and we ran back down again. And you know, just to stir the..., to stir things up a bit. And to get that memory.....to stir.... **Steve***

Nick and Owen both described using the physical activity to intentionally distract Self 1 or the conscious mind and get people out of their heads and into their bodies.

*I said that we are leaving the path here and we are going in this direction and it involves scrambling over rock, fairly light rock climbing, yeah not enough to need a rope but enough to use your hands and feet and think about the consequences of climbing, which means they couldn't possibly consciously be thinking about their problem at any time but had to concentrate on what they were doing. **Nick***

The interruptions described by the participants match Williams *et al.*'s (2002) three interventions used in outdoor learning: pattern breaking (interrupting habitual patterns of thought or behaviour), excursions (distracting the conscious mind) and shake-ups (taking them out of their comfort zone) (section 2.3.1). Steve's description of “softening up” appears similar to Williams *et al.*'s excursion, although in this case the conscious mind is being encouraged to relax its control over the system rather than being distracted.

The use of interruptions were mainly reported by coaches working with combined interventions rather than by the somatic coaches, although it is not clear from the data why this should be so. It may be that somatic approaches aim to work with and re-educate the body's intelligence within its comfort zone rather than challenging or disrupting patterns or it may simply be that the somatic coaches did not talk about specific techniques but more about their motivation for using the approaches.

6.4. THE BIGGER PICTURE

As mentioned in chapter 4, one of the surprising results for me was that participants working with the body in activities such as coaching and walking used the

connection to the surrounding environment (mediated via the body) as their physical intervention as much (or more so) than the physical action of walking.

there is something here where you're tying in...as well as the physical activity you are tying in, connecting in to the environment as well, you're building the coaching through the environment that you are passing through Yes definitely. For me that a very important and the environment becomes a catalyst..... Nick

This approach is very similar to the theories of environmental psychology discussed in section 2.3.1, although only one participant mentioned this as a direct influence. As well as being a catalyst, they saw nature as being innately curative and as such considered that it acted as an ally in the coaching.

And being there sort of is, is kind of healing, it is kind of curative in some way. And even just being out there for a short period of time.....erm.....makes us be different. And, and I am reminded of I think there's now research around that shows that patients that have a view of greenery from their hospital bed....get better quicker....more quicklyThan people who don't, and....so that you know, I think that that is one of the things that makes being outside and coaching...powerfulis that it's almost that you've got an ally in the form of the environment that you are in Owen

This corresponds with the work of Watson and Vasilieva (2007, section 2.3.1), which suggested that the environmental setting was a key component in the effectiveness of wilderness retreats for sustainable leadership. The environment was also an important component in other approaches such as coaching and massage. Steve described how coming into the massage room automatically began the process of opening up and softening for the client.

the person will give a big sigh "huuh" and they will just feel everything sink into the massage table and they don't have to be tight and tense and hold anything anymore. And I think that happens with the mind at the same time, when they do that, when they stop holding the body they stop holding the mind. Just that moment when they come and they put themselves on the massage table, I think there is that degree of "ok, I don't have to do anything now". Steve

They also reported that they experienced the opposite effect in the office where the environment seemed to constrain clients to take on their corporate cultural expectations and present their working persona rather than responding authentically.

I think that when we are in, the, the kind of created environment, you know kind of square boxes and... And so forth that makes up offices and so forth.....we, we,we..... we more easily take on all the sort of social culturalisations, and

norms and, and erm.....you know, all of that stuff that makes up being a sort ofmember of society and conforming to that and everything **Owen**

The participants described two particular effects of being out in the wider environment.

The first was that it provided a sense of spaciousness and opportunity which were reflected by an expansion of the client's internal sense of space and possibility.

it feels like there's a, there's a bigger physical space. I mean it's kind of physical, emotional, mental. - Possibly spiritual, I'm not quite sure what I mean by that, but certainly the body, feeling, mind level, it's all three of those....are more expanded on the hills..... I think, two things to happen in.... in an office in the city., the awareness ...sort of narrows towards the cognitive, and secondly it narrows in to, to you know, to include not very much in that cognitive space. **Owen**

Chris described a similar effect of the impact of location when talking about the use of clean space (an extension of clean language that works with ideas of psychoactive space and living metaphors and how these can be modelled, Lawley, 2006).

when you go to counselling and stuff {laugh}, and you've got a really meaty problem, you are crying and you are in a terrible state and you are sitting in the same chair..... And the next week you come inand you are sitting in the same chair!! {laugh} and you go "oh, I remember that, Oh! {laugh} With walk and talk coaching you don't have that. **Chris**

Expanding on the idea of spaciousness, Nick described how being outside gave the client a different relationship to time. He explained that clients often came to the conclusion that what they really wanted was more time to themselves and that with coaching and walking he was able to give them that space to be on their own. This was partly due to the longer timescale of the session but also because the landscape supported and held the client in this process rather than requiring the coach to do this.

When they are out of doors they are somewhere acceptable for them to look and to daydream. And if I left the room that's not an acceptable thing, and their daydreams often go to what am I doing.... as opposed to it's okay for me to look at the weather or stuff or just to dream. And I think from my perspective it's the environment, the environment enables them to do their thing. **Nick**

This is similar to the effect of the different levels of connection described by Steve in section 6.1. It may also relate to the effect of distance from everyday demands that were described as a key component of therapeutic approaches in section 2.3.3.

The second effect related to a more metaphorical use of the landscape which enabled the client to recognise parallels between events in their life and the

environment. The participants described two ways of using this. Firstly, it was a way of making the client's concerns more evident by enabling the client to see them reflected in external physical events in a similar way to the use of embodied states mentioned in the previous section. Chris provides a simple example of this.

*we were just talking about, you know, [laugh] you know, just things that happen in life, and about acceptance and things like this, and then this huge heron went straight over our heads. And, and the client looked up and went "Oh, wow, that's just about said it all!!" So, for him, that moment was, you know, er.....just reinforcing what he was learning..... for himself. **Chris***

Secondly, movement through the landscape could be used as a metaphorical journey which could both reflect the client's internal psychological process but also provide opportunities for modifying this process. Owen described "*rising above your problems, sort of seeing your problems from a perspective that I also get from going on the hills*" and suggested that this was something that he frequently used with clients to encourage them see the bigger picture. He questioned whether this was just his own personal representational system but concluded that the prevalence of memorial benches on the hills suggested that there might be

*...a spiritual aspect to rising up, I don't know, being above the, the temporal, and the concrete and perhaps being slightly closer to god or the spirit or whatever, which maybecauses that to be a more universal thing. **Owen***

Similarly, Nick described arranging the route to match the conversation, so that the client finished outlining her problems as they reached the top of the ascent, where the distant views provided a natural break point and transition for the conversation

*.....so mentally, I kind of think we were metaphorically walking off the old states and problems before we started on what she might want from our conversation. **Nick***

These effects described by the participants of spaciousness (sense of vastness and scope but also of connectedness) and metaphor (drawing parallels between the client's concerns and environmental patterns) match the additional benefits of natural environments described by Kaplan and Kaplan (1989, section 2.3.1) This suggests that, in the absence of coaching literature, other disciplines such as environmental

psychology may have a role to play in providing an evidence base for approaches such as coaching and walking.

6.5. DEMYSTIFYING THE MAGIC

The participants believed that the physical, embodied integration at a non-cognitive level could explain some of the apparent mystery of coaching “*things that we normally think are magic and vague, err, actually there’s a very kind of somatic physical sense to them*” (**Martin**). They considered that openly working at a physical level made the process more visible and understandable to the client. Evidence and research to support this was an important issue “*because people do ask for this and also, if you are working in corporations, they need, they need all the evidence.*” (**Chris**).

Martin discussed the anecdotal or experiential evidence for these approaches (people reporting a beneficial experience), which he suggested is plentiful, compared to the lack of published academic research.

*I think you’ve got the personal sense of evidence, which is seeing for oneself that something is true. In that sense I think that somatic, the somatic approach is ideal. If we look at evidence in the narrower sense, of erm, needing, a study needs to have been done at Harvard, Then I well, unfortunately they haven’t done the study yet, so that’s going to take out a lot. Erm but as I said. Any child or dog would know [laugh] so it’s not, it’s not rocket science. **Martin***

Chris also suggested that while being challenged about the evidence for her approach was a beneficial thing, her personal experience formed an important part of her evidence.

*As a professional and as coach it is very good to be challenged though, on “where is the evidence for this?” Because like you are saying, you know, what are the examples? And I am thinking about my own experience and about what people have told me. And I am thinking about the physical things that I can see happening, in the sessions, in the coaching sessions. **Chris***

In the participants’ experience, the relationship between the body and mind was widely acknowledged and part of most people’s personal understanding “*we all know that when we are depressed that there is a different body shape to when we are happy*” (**Peter**). They were aware of the dearth of coaching literature on this topic and concerned that the lack of research evidence in the coaching literature might lead to

these approaches being excluded from the professionalisation of coaching but this concern was outweighed by their belief in their effectiveness. They suggested that there was a lot of research that could be drawn from other disciplines that could be used to provide an evidence base for these approaches, which is also what I found with my literature search (chapter 2).

In some cases, they had tried to get research done on the relevance and effectiveness of these approaches but had found it was difficult and they considered that this may be because funding is targeted to things relevant to business, which generally means conventional coaching. Although they were interested in the idea of research, they did not generally consider it a priority for themselves.

Martin suggested that much of the research that had been done was *"mostly being done by disembodied people, which is quite ironic, So, erm so there are lots of papers on embodiment by people who have never danced"*. This is similar to the participants' belief that the coach needs to have experience of embodiment in order to work with physical interventions (see section 5.3).

6.6. SUMMARY

The themes in this chapter describe the participants' experience of how the physical interventions provide them with additional effective tools and ways in to the client. This was a key reason for them choosing to work this way, since they believed these approaches not only were effective and longer lasting but also allowed them to utilise the wider environment as part of the coaching process, both in terms of working with nature but also in terms of the wider social and cultural context of the individual.

Coaching and walking sessions often took longer than conventional coaching (often being half a day or so). It is possible that some of the benefits that participants reported for these approaches may be due to this longer timeframe and more relaxed approach (for example, being able to give the client space to themselves or to have periods of silence, where it was acceptable for the client to daydream or to integrate what had been discussed). This may be an interesting area for future research. It would

also be interesting to investigate further whether the intervention of “softening up” is the same as those reported for outdoor education by Williams *et al.* (2003) and whether all of these interruptions are also used in some form in conventional coaching, although my impression is that they are much easier to use as distinct interventions in a physical context.

It was also much easier for clients to become aware of patterns of behaviour if these were expressed physically or if the client was able to recognise these patterns metaphorically reflected in their environment. Changing behaviour at a physical level was also seen to create changes at emotional and intellectual levels. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent these representational systems of the environment are individual and to what extent they are universal (as discussed by Owen in section 6.4 above).

The participants found that openly acknowledging the physical components of the coaching made the coaching less mysterious and easier for the client to accept, although this may also have been driven by their belief in the holistic approach and their desire to engage all of their own self in the process, which was described in the previous chapter. This may also influence the beneficial effects that they identify from these approaches and how they interpret these experiences. (Similarly my own interpretation is inevitably influenced by my own experiences of these kinds of approaches, see section 3.6).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1. REVIEW OF THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to explore the experience of coaches working with physical interventions to discover why they were choosing to work this way rather than in a more conventional manner. Motivating this question was a desire to understand whether these kinds of approaches had a relevance to the coaching profession and to investigate whether there was a missing element in the conventional seated dyadic approach to coaching. This was driven by my own experience of seeing developmental changes occur in my aikido students as a result of their physical training, rather than through cognitive reflection, and my own belief in the importance of an holistic approach. I also had the sense from my own coach training that the body has been somehow lost from coaching as it evolved as a profession (compared to the core role of the body in at least one of its “roots”, sports coaching).

Reviewing the coaching literature, I found there was very little research that distinctly looked at working with the body in coaching. Somatic coaching seemed to offer the most overtly integrated approach, since working through the body was considered a fundamental part of such coaching but there was little academic literature to support these approaches. Several other styles of coaching used minor physical interventions but it was not clear whether these were intended to work at an embodied level with the client’s bodily/kinaesthetic intelligence or whether they were just intended as alternative methods of stimulating cognitive reflection. It is also not clear whether embodied intelligence and cognitive reflection are separate things and hence can be treated separately or whether they are part of an integrated system. This was one of the confusions in this study both in the literature review but also in the participants’ descriptions of the interconnectedness of cognitive reflection and the more intuitive,

embodied knowledge. The literature relating to theories of the role of the body in learning and development (tacit knowledge, implicit learning etc.) and the findings from neuroscience suggest that cognition and embodiment exist as part of a single integrated system and separating the effects of one from the other might not be possible (i.e. that cognition is embodied and may not be conscious or rational, even when we consider it is). Since this study was focused on the participants' experience of working with physical interventions, and why they do so, I was mainly interested the intelligences they considered they were targeting (rather than the actual mechanics of what was happening).

Literature from disciplines that have similar goals to coaching (such as outdoor learning) or therapeutic approaches that involve physical activity (such as horticultural therapy) provided evidence for the benefit of approaches that work with the body. They also indicated the importance of taking a systems approach to studying this kind of activity and the need to treat the mind/emotions/body as an holistic system that interacts with the other environmental systems in which it is embedded and exchanges energy with the systems of other individuals as it interacts with them.

Discussions with colleagues and on coaching forums and initial searches for participants suggested that, irrespective of the lack of research, many coaches considered working with the body and at a physical level to be an important enabler and included this in some form in their coaching approach (whether as minor interventions such as empty chair, as an additional intervention or as a key part of their approach). This suggested that the first step in investigating this would be to explore what coaches were currently doing and why they chose to do this.

7.2. REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This was a wide topic and one of the biggest difficulties was constraining the research question to something that was simple and clear enough to encapsulate in this study. The question continued to evolve as the research progressed and it was not

until part way through the analysis that it became clear. Identifying this earlier in the process may have allowed me to target the research and maintain a clearer focus.

Given the focus on the experience of coaches of using physical interventions in their coaching, phenomenology seemed an appropriate methodology for this study. The biggest challenge for me with this approach was to maintain focus on the participants' experience and to refrain from hypothesising on their interpretations or extrapolating from these to try and explain how the interventions might work. Regularly standing back from the analysis and reflecting on what I was doing was important for overcoming this tendency.

I chose to use interpretive phenomenological analysis because this fitted with my interpretivist stance since it considers interpretation (both the empathic and questioning hermeneutic) to be part of the researcher's role. This allowed me the freedom to draw on my own experiences but also required me to reflect on how these were influencing my interpretation. For me, this seemed a much more achievable position for the research than attempting to bracket out my personal experiences and preconceptions. IPA does not have a tightly constrained research approach, which allowed me to develop my own process as my understanding of the method evolved. IPA considers experience as situated within a context that includes the participants' past experiences and this suited my interest in the participants' backgrounds and how this had influenced their choice of approach.

It has been suggested that three participants is a good number for an initial IPA study and, having been through the process of data collection and analysis, I believe that a smaller number of participants for this study would have allowed me to analyse the data in more depth, although this was probably not such an issue, since this study was always intended to be an exploratory overview. Transcribing the interviews myself gave me a deep insight into the material but was also excessively time-consuming given the time constraints of the project and I would probably not do this again. Focusing on the audio recordings as the primary source of data throughout proved very

beneficial, since it allowed me to retain more of the richness of the data than would have been possible focusing only on the written transcription. (It seems to me that the expectation that the researcher will focus on the written transcription may not take into account the capabilities of recent technology).

My previous research experience was with more quantitative studies. I found taking a qualitative approach an interesting experience. I found it disconcerting that there was no “right answer” and it was challenging to ensure that the process and my assumptions and theoretical stance were made explicit in order to increase the validity of the study. It was also interesting having to present the findings as a narrative report rather than the more quantitative, data focused, approaches I was used to. On the other hand, this qualitative narrative approach seemed very appropriate for exploratory questions such as the one for this study, which cannot really be quantified.

7.2.1. Limitations and challenges

The findings for the study are based on the experiences of a small group of participants who were selected by convenience sampling and were restricted to coaches in the UK. Their approaches to working with the body were fairly diverse and, although the themes that emerged from the analysis were treated as representative of the whole group, there were instances where themes were more relevant to those involved in coaching and walking or more specific to those who considered themselves somatic coaches. Since the research aimed to provide an exploratory look at the use of physical interventions and their relevance to coaching, it seemed acceptable to treat all of the themes as generally relevant. It was also not intended to be representative of any particular populations, so I did not consider the restrictions on the selection of participants to be an issue.

I was conscious that I needed to be aware of my personal preconceptions and the use of a reflective diary proved useful for this. I had expected that this would be mainly useful in keeping me aware of how my preconceptions might be influencing my analysis. What I had not anticipated was that I might be drawn particularly to the

themes that were unexpected or new to me (such as the use of the environment). Reflecting on my preliminary results from the analysis, and discussing these with friends and colleagues, highlighted that I was focusing excessively on these themes and that others, which seemed less interesting to me because they fitted with my preconceptions, might be more interesting to other readers or were more representative of the participants' experience. I was then able to revisit the analysis to balance these things out. This suggests that standing back from the analysis, looking at the bigger picture and getting feedback from third parties can help prevent biases being introduced into the findings from this kind of research.

7.3. KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Two main answers emerged from the analysis to answer the question of why coaches chose to combine physical interventions with their coaching rather than working in a more conventional manner.

The first related to the coaches' sense of identity and authenticity. This grew out of their background, which included a long term involvement in physical activity and/or a quest to understand and utilise embodied intelligence in their own lives. It was also grounded in their strongly held beliefs about the holistic nature of existence (in the form of interacting and dependant systems). Working this way allowed them to use their whole selves and to share their passions, which they considered was an important factor in establishing a close relationship with the client and in giving the client permission to access and own their own desires and identity.

The second answer related to the benefits that the participants experienced from working this way. These included having different access points to approach issues as well as a way of making the issues visible to the client who may not notice habitual patterns. The physical activity could also be used to "interrupt" these kinds of patterns and shift the client's focus or to encourage the client to open up and increase their capacity for change. They also found the physical approach beneficial for explaining how coaching may work and demystifying some of the apparent "magic" of

the process. Changes and learning that occurred at a physical level were seen to be deeper and longer lasting than those at a cognitive level.

7.3.1. Implications for coaches

The experiences of the participants suggest that using the body offers the coach a range of additional tools for working with the client even where the issue cannot be clearly stated. It also enables the coach to be authentic and to use all their knowledge and skills, rather than being limited to expected coaching behaviours. Sharing their passions can create a closer bond with the client and is also more enjoyable and rewarding for the coach.

The coach needs additional skills in order to work with the physical intervention in combination with the coaching and these skills need to be embodied. They need to have extensive experience in the physical activity to be able to modify this as the coaching progresses. They also need a sense of their own embodiment and to be able to work with and trust their own intuition and felt sense. These are not skills that can be easily taught but are usually based on long term experience. This suggests that this way of working may not be appropriate for all coaches and needs to be grounded in an in-depth embodied understanding of the physical activity, as well as fluency in working with the kind of emergent coaching issues that tend to arise.

7.3.2. Implications for the coaching profession

The participants involved in this study found that working with physical interventions was very beneficial for their coaching and they considered that this was fundamental to their ability to coach. The lack of academic peer reviewed research on these interventions may mean that these approaches end up being considered fringe activities, as the coaching profession seeks to become more evidence based. Constraining professional coaching to conventional approaches may risk disenfranchising some coaches, as well as ignoring the potential benefits of working this way. A parallel for this may be the medical profession, where alternative health

approaches are not accepted by many mainstream professionals despite the anecdotal and experiential evidence of their benefit to clients. Coach training usually focuses on the conventional dyadic conversational approach and may be detrimental to coaches who would prefer to work in a more emergent, intuitive, embodied way.

7.3.3. Implications for clients

The findings suggest that working at a physical level may provide additional opportunities for change for clients, particularly where they are working with emergent or intangible issues. These approaches may enable change to occur at a tacit level and provide opportunities for implicit learning. They may also provide a different avenue for clients to engage with coaching, when conventional office based approaches are not effective or accepted.

The participants suggested that the client needs to actively engage with the interventions as coaching, rather than simply with the physical activity; otherwise it is possible for them to get “lost” in the open, spacious nature of the approach.

7.3.4. Implications for business

The themes that emerged from this study suggest that including physical approaches in coaching can produce results that are quicker and more sustainable than those from conventional coaching. Habitual patterns and ways of thinking that are reinforced by being in the conventional office environment can be changed by moving into a different environment where there is more space and time to get a perspective and connect with what is important. This can be beneficial for executives seeking to see the bigger picture but also for teams and individuals who need to reconnect with their values and get an experiential understanding of their habitual behaviours.

7.4. WHAT NEXT?

Although this study involves a small non-representative sample of coaches, the participants’ experiences suggest that working through the body with these kinds of physical approaches has relevance for the coaching profession and warrants further

research. The findings suggest several possible avenues for future research. These include:

- How and why do these physical approaches work? To what extent is it possible to separate cognitive and embodied learning? Or are these integral? Can a systems approach provide a more encompassing explanation of the coaching interaction?
- What is happening at an embodied level in a conventional coaching interaction? Is there a physical component and interaction at a subconscious level? Can this explain some of the apparent “magic” of the coaching process?
- How does the coach’s background influence the way that they coach? Is there a bias towards the consultancy, conversational model because coaches frequently come from this kind of background (e.g. counsellors, HR consultants, trainers etc.) and do not have the confidence to work directly with the client at a physical level? Could coaching benefit from drawing in people with more diverse backgrounds?
- Is it possible to teach coaches to work in this way or does it depend on the individual’s personal orientation, embodied experience and beliefs? How can these embodied approaches be included in coach training and coaching models?
- To what extent do the environmental constraints of providing coaching in an office or work environment affect the outcomes and restrict the client’s thinking and focus? How can coaches use the environment more effectively?

The findings from this study suggest that coaches work in this way because of who they are and because they experience its effectiveness. This connection to identity and passion suggests that coaches will continue to work this way irrespective of the availability of academic research or of the approval of coaching bodies. It is up to the coaching profession to widen its perspective to encompass these less understood ways of working and to look for evidence for these approaches outside of the coaching literature. If it fails to do this and creates too narrow a definition of coaching, it risks “throwing the baby out with the bathwater” and losing both the coaches who are working this way and the benefits of this kind of holistic, integrated approach.

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Title: Can working directly with the body aid the achievement of coaching objectives?

- Coaches' experience of using physical activity alongside coaching.

Duration: ~ 1 hour

Schedule:

This schedule is a guide only – actual questions may vary depending on how the discussion develops. Main questions (**in BOLD**) and possible additional questions.

Introduction

A) Context

Can you tell me a bit about what led you to work with this coaching approach?

- a) What importance/meaning/relevance do physical approaches have in your own life?
- b) How does this relate to your personal philosophy/beliefs?

B) Experience

What is your experience of working with physical activity alongside your coaching?

- a) Do you have an example of this approach that is particularly meaningful for you?
- b) Is this example typical or do you find yourself varying your approach?
- c) What other different examples can you recall? Why are these significant?

C) Meaning

How do these experiences inform your identity as a coach?

- a) Why is this kind of approach meaningful to you?
- b) What do you value most about this approach?
- c) What words/images do you now use to describe yourself as a coach/your coaching approach?
- d) How do you position your approach and experience in relation to the wider coaching profession?
- e) How has coaching in this way changed you as a person?

Conclusion

Anything else I have missed or that you would like to add on this topic?

APPENDIX B – PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

2nd April 2012

Dear Participant,

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in this research study!

Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch– my contact details are given at the end of the document.

What is the purpose of the study?

There is currently very limited use made of working directly with the physical body in most approaches to coaching. Although there has been an increasing interest in the importance of intelligences (such as emotional and social) there has been little work on kinesthetic or somatic intelligence as an aid to learning and change.

From my own experience of teaching the Japanese martial art of aikido, I have seen how physical training often leads to developmental changes in students that impact all areas of their lives. I am now interested to see if this has a relevance to coaching.

This exploratory study aims to gather information about **the experience of coaches who are using some kind of physical activity alongside their coaching interventions** and their reasons for doing so.

This research is being carried out through the Business School at Oxford Brookes University and will form the dissertation part of my MA in Coaching & Mentoring Practice which is due for completion in September this year (2012).

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been asked to participate because you are currently working with both coaching and some kind of physical approach, or because you have a background in some kind of physical activity which influences your current practice.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is entirely voluntary; it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will it involve?

The study will involve semi-structured interviews with a small number of participants. These will be recorded and the anonymous transcripts will be analysed to identify recurrent themes about working with the physical body and its impact on coaching.

Participation will involve:

- A 60 minute interview where we will discuss your experience of working with using physical activity as part of, or in parallel to your coaching
- This can be face-to- face (I am located in the south of England near Reading

but am happy to travel to you if you are within a convenient distance). Where this is not practical, interviews can be conducted by phone or Skype. Please let me know if you have a preference.

- I may also ask for some factual information on your background and qualification prior to the session so that we can focus on your experience during the interview
- I am also happy to provide an optional 30 minute follow up to discuss my findings from our initial conversation and the themes emerging from other interviews and you are very welcome to a copy of my dissertation.
- I hope to complete the initial interview process between mid-April to May. Preliminary results should be available at the end of July.

Hopefully this study will provide you with an opportunity to deepen your understanding of your own coaching approach as well as contributing to the research literature in this area and encourage future research into the use of the body in coaching. I am very happy to share the findings of the study with you.

Will what you say in this study be kept confidential?

All information will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). The interviews, analysis and presentation of findings are confidential and anonymous. Interviews will be audio recorded and you are welcome to a copy of the recording

Data will be maintained in accordance with Oxford Brookes University and Data Protection requirements. During the interview, I may ask you to refer to your coaching practice and you should remain aware of your responsibility for the confidentiality of your clients' information.

What should I do if I want to take part?

I hope this will be an enjoyable and interesting experience for you and an opportunity to contribute to this field of research. If you are interested in taking part, once you have read through and are comfortable with the information included here, please read and sign the attached consent form.

If you have any further questions, please let me know.

Thank you again for your interest in my study and I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Trish Matthews

E-mail Trish@whiteoak-aikido.org Phone- 07876658411 Skype – triciamuk

Other contacts:

In the event that you are unhappy with any element of the process and feel unable to speak to me personally please feel free to contact the following:

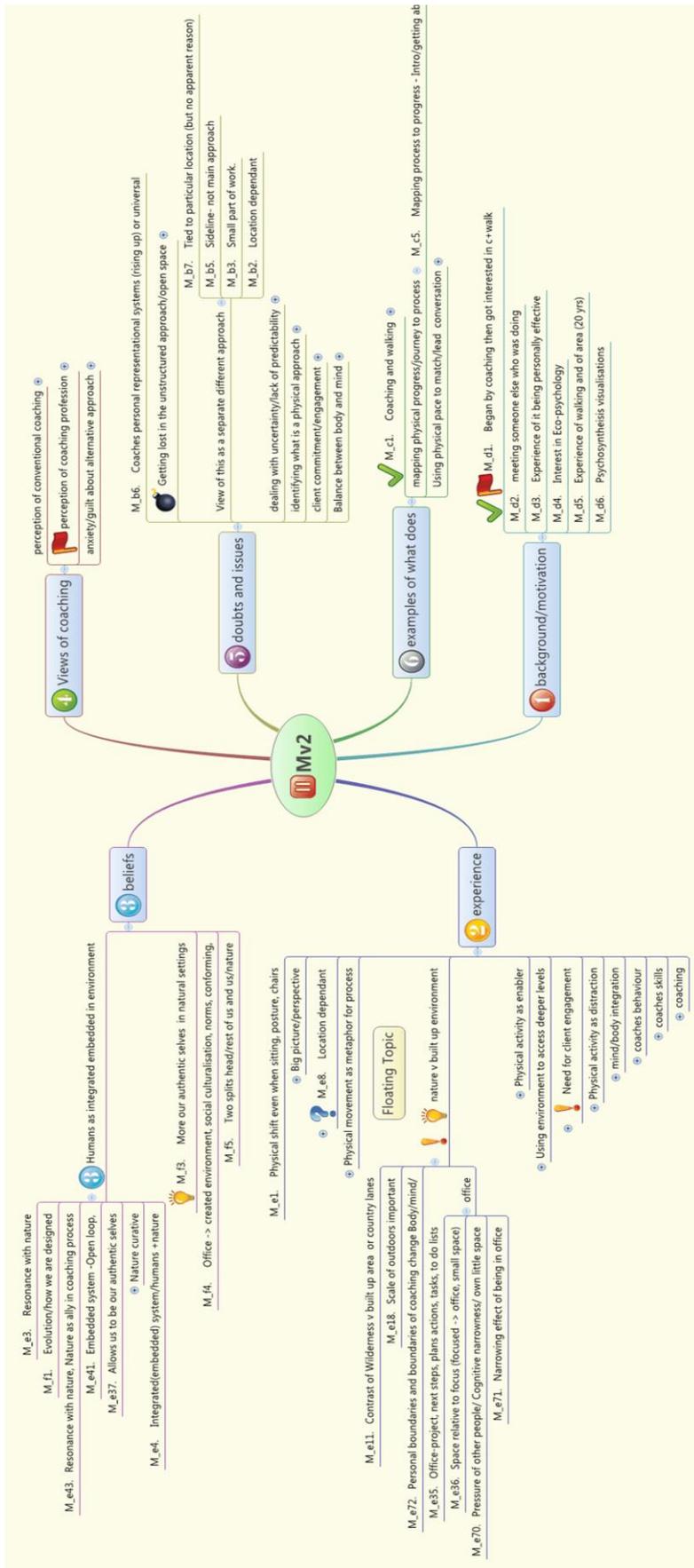
Dr. Samantha Miles (<mailto:svmiles@brookes.ac.uk>) – Ethics Office, Business School, Oxford Brookes University

Dr. Peter Jackson (peter.jackson@brookes.ac.uk) – Dissertation Supervisor, Oxford Brookes University

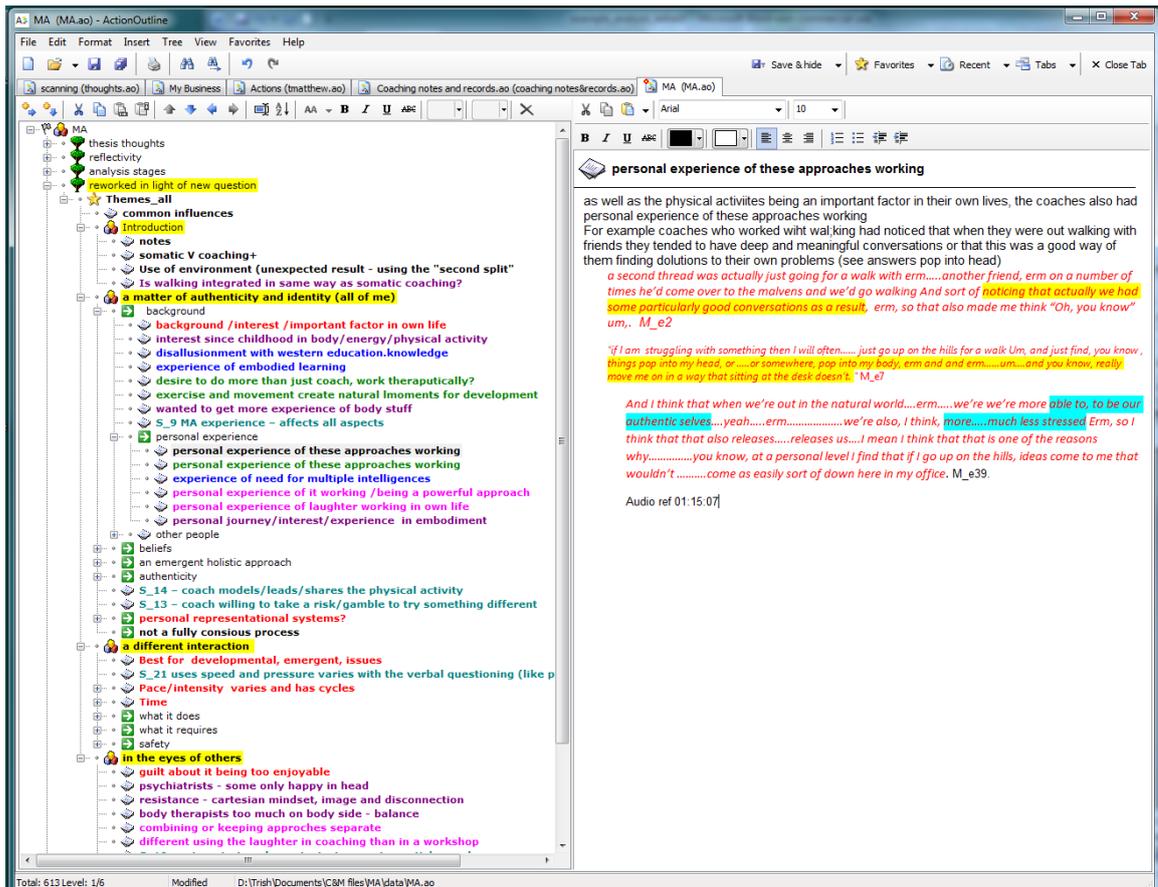
APPENDIX C – ANALYSIS STAGES

transcription	coding	Audio ref
<p>Yeah. Because you mentioned earlier that just for your self that sense of "rising above" Yes, and I think there is something very much abouterm.....[pause]...that letting go as you rise above. And I am curious now as to whether that's, just my personal representational system, or whether that might be something more universal, in terms ofthere's.... wum a lot of people.....erm , over the years, when their partners have died have paid for benches to be put at various places around the hills and I think the most popular sort of bit to have carved in, apart from a person's name, is "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills" and there is that, that, I suppose, spiritual aspect to rising up. I don't know, being above the, the temporal, and the concrete and perhaps being slightly closer to god or the spirit or whatever, which maybecauses that to be a more universal thing. Erm.....that rising above.</p>	<p>M_b6, personal representational systems M_e15. <i>Rising up/metaphor</i> M_e16 Spiritual aspect</p>	<p>9:40</p>
<p>Yes I'm not sure. I'd be... It would be interesting if there is any research on ... erm on that . aboutbut I'm...you know its like....if I think of, er, psychosynthesis in which I trained</p> <p>Yes One of the visualisations, one of the standard psychosynthesis er, visualisation, is where youi climb a mountain to some sort of temple, or place, where you perhaps find the wise old woman or the wise old man, and have a conversation with them and they give you something, and you come back down the mountain.....</p> <p>Yes So there does seem to be that sense of, erm...a different realm, I suppose, with the hills</p>	<p>M_d6, Psychosynthesis visualisations M_e17. Sense of a different realm</p>	<p>10:54</p>
<p>Or Hempstead heath, or something where you've got a bit more..... Yes I mean Hempstead heath certainly, would be a step in the right direction.... Because of the scale Yes, yeah. Um. Ok, Interesting. Well that's good cosas long as this is interesting for you as well I think this is doing its job [both laughing]</p>	<p>M_b7. <i>Tied to location</i> M_e18. Scale of outdoors important</p>	<p>11:45</p>
<p>Well maybe moving on from there, and perhaps this is a good time to move on. Talking about the actual experience of when you are working with a client and walking, is there, is there a particular experience that is meaningful for you, or an example you can share of how it tends to happen? [pause].....Um.....well I mean the, the way.....[pause].....or what we do generally is a combination ofOf walking and</p>		

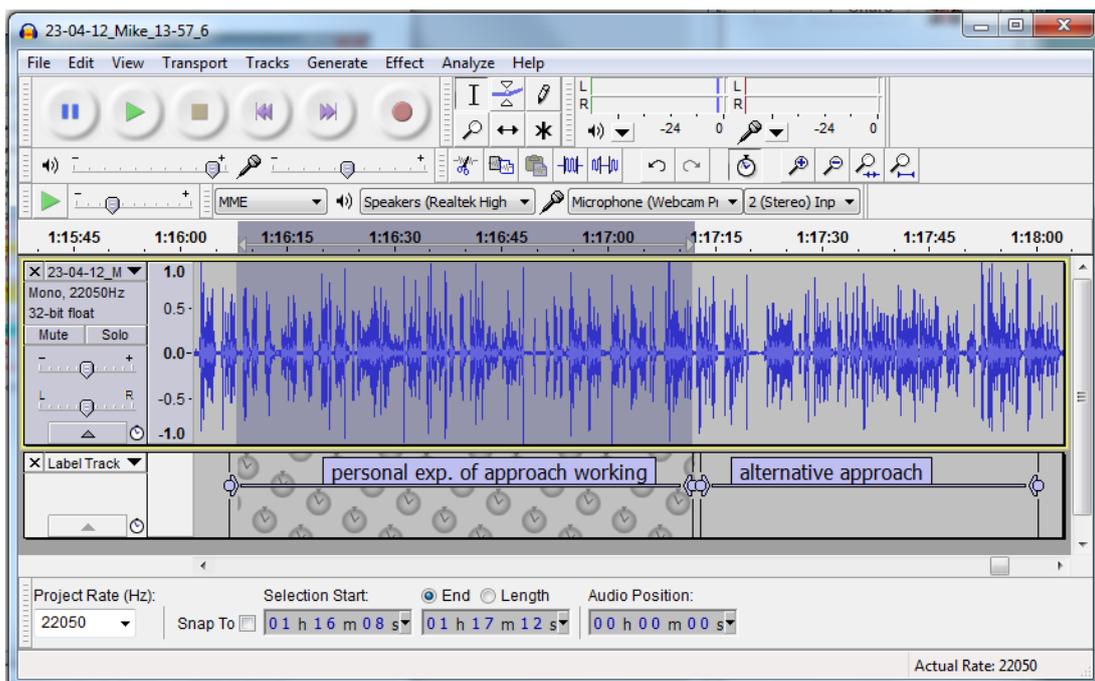
Stage 1: Extract of initial coding. Background colour relates to area of the interview guide (in this case moving from context questions to experience). Fonts refer to textual and interpretive coding (italic). The different highlighting came from the preliminary idiographic review of the text (yellow) and a secondary review to compare with themes emerging from other transcriptions (blue)



Stage 2: Xmind mind mapping software was used to sort coding into themes and categorise. Textural extracts and audio references were included in the notes for the original coding



Stage 3: Action outline used to collate themes into superordinate themes (categories) and to plan the narrative report. Colours refer to coding from different interviews. Audio ref used to link to original recording in audacity



APPENDIX D – PRECONCEPTIONS

The following list of preconceptions was written before the start of the research interviews and I referred back to this at regular intervals during the data collection and analysis to help me be aware of my preconceptions and of how these might influence my approach.

I believe

- *That mind body, emotion, spirit are interconnected and you cannot work with one without working with the others.*
- *That the physical level is the easiest to access (most basic fundamental level)*
- *That working with the body can lead to a subconscious method of self-development and growth that doesn't go through the conscious mind - it's a different level of communication*
- *That cognition alone, even combined with reflection or mindfulness, is not enough to generate sustainable change*
- *That you need to move things into unconscious competence and implicit/tacit knowledge in order for them to be properly integrated and that part of this is getting them into the body rather than the brain*
- *That the non-cognitive parts of the self (body emotion etc.) have a huge part to play in behaviour*
- *that current approaches to coaching are too intellectual and rational and you can't apply waterfall thinking to complex problems*
- *a truly holistic approach to development can work around the rational mind - often this just gets in the way.....*
- *pretence, placebo, stories etc. are as important as truth, reality and logic*
- *that coaching is missing something by not considering bodily, kinaesthetic, somatic intelligence*
- *that this limitation is partly due to the people who become coaches - often have come from a business/consultancy mode or talking therapies where the seated dyad is a typical approach.*
- *that knowing is not the same as doing.*
- *that by trying to become more "evidence based" and "scientific" coaching profession is in danger of trying to fit in the quantitative model while at the same time the natural sciences are becoming "less quantitative as they realise that most things can't be measured*

10th April 2012