RELATIONAL COACHING FOR MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

A Social Constructionist
Action Research Study

Joost van Andel

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A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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In celebration of Gerard, Annie, Ries, Neeltje, Ton, Aleid, Anne Marije, Thijmen, Lise, and all other others.

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INTRODUCTION

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General Introduction

1.1 Making your Way in this Thesis

This thesis is about helping management consultants achieve better results in facilitating (complex) organizational change processes. This help is not so much directed at the content of organizational change or the consultants' expert knowledge. Rather, helping in this thesis is focused on enhancing communication and collaboration with, and among, stakeholders. In other words, the help contributes to the 'how' of management consulting, not to the 'what.' This help is offered by developing a practice named 'Relational Coaching for Management Consultants,' through a social constructionist action research project. In developing this practice, I have offered tailor made coaching centered on management consultants' learning questions with regard to relating with their stakeholders. In this thesis, I argue why this form of helping management consultants is important; I describe how the practice was developed; and I go into the contributions to the participants' consulting practices. In an attempt to make it transferable, I describe the practice conceptually. Furthermore, I discuss its theoretical and practical implications; propose future research topics; and I reflect on my own learning process regarding performing this action research.

In doing the action research, I intended to make a direct contribution to the consulting practices of the participating management consultants. Through this dissertation, I aim to share the developed knowledge, as a resource for scientists and practitioners. Particularly, I hope to make a useful contribution to the fields of management consulting, coaching, organizational change, social construction and action research. Secondly, with this thesis I aim to contribute to a further collaboration between scientific paradigms, and hopefully reduce conflicts resulting from differences in their presumptions. As I will describe in chapter 3, one can be critical about particular research paradigms. However, having critique does not mean that research approaches, or particular methods, should be discarded a priori, or that people must be 'at war' over these differences. In this light, my hope is that the dissertation will serve as a modest contribution to realizing that we can move from 'being right' about our own research orientations, to valuing different contributions from various research orientations. In my view, the world is big enough to benefit from varying research orientations (and so are the challenges that we are facing).

Thesis structure

This thesis consists of three parts. In part I (chapters 1 through 3), I offer a broad introduction of the topic of this study and my orientation to social constructionist action research. In the remainder of this first chapter, I share my story about why this study is personally important to me, and my path to starting it. In chapter 2, I relate the action research study to scholarly literature about organizational change, and articulate why I

consider it theoretically relevant. I also include relevant expert voices in this chapter, in order to address the practical relevance according to professional experts. The central social constructionist orientation to action research is introduced in chapter 3. There, I present the emergence and premises of social construction as a research paradigm and introduce action research as an approach for making direct contributions to a particular context, and sharing the developed knowledge with the wider (scientific) community.

In part II (chapters 4 through 8), I share the story of the action research in which we developed the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants. Chapter 4 introduces the management consulting firm which participated in the project, the prior knowledge bases that I drew from, and the general outline of the action research project. In chapter 5, I describe the first action research cycle (phase one): the tailor-made coaching journeys with management consultants. Both process and outcomes are presented, as well as a first evaluation. Chapter 6 concerns the second action research cycle (phase two): a coaching follow-up, with a reflective journal, which was specifically designed for the particular participants and the purpose of this study. Again, process, outcomes, and evaluation are presented. In chapter 7, the concept of the coaching journey and coaching follow-up are evaluated. Here, I describe this particular consulting firm's experience of the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants as a resource for professional development of their management consultants. Part II concludes with a mixed-method evaluation of the coaching journeys in chapter 8. There, I present a study using open interviews by another researcher (who had not been involved in the core of the action research project), which was performed to generate evaluations by the participating management consultants. Furthermore, a pre-post survey study into the management consultants' emotional intelligence and leadership styles was carried out to evaluate the outcomes of the coaching journeys.

Part III (chapters 9 through 11) extrapolates the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants developed in this research, beyond this particular context. In doing so, I intend to make the developed knowledge actionable and transferable. First, chapter 9 presents a semi-systematic literature review in relation to the developed practice. Then, in chapter 10, I articulate the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants on a conceptual level, thereby making it possible to transfer the developed practice to other (professional service) contexts than the one in which it was developed. Finally, in chapter 11, I discuss the implications for both practice and theory, specify the limitations of this thesis, and offer future research suggestions. Moreover, I share my reflections on my role as an action researcher.

As noted, the study that I present in this thesis is an action research study with a social constructionist orientation. Following Brinkman (2018), this philosophical stance will

not only be motivated in a separate section (in this thesis: its introduction in chapter 3). As Brinkman stresses, the researcher's philosophical commitment influences *everything in the research process:* from deciding on the research theme to the reporting of results. In other words, the social constructionist orientation plays a part in this study's overall design, crafting of methods, generation of data, performing of analyses, and contribution to practice and theory. To some readers, referring to social construction in the various chapters may seem to be repetitive. However, in line with Brinkman's (2018) argument, the reader will find that relating each part of the study to its constructionist orientation will contribute to the overall understanding of this study's design and contributions.

1.2 My Path to Starting this PhD-project

My personal story

As a first part of the first-person action research[1] in this thesis, I will share a personal story about my path to starting this PhD-project. When I started writing the first version in 2019, I met with a form of perfection that was (and still is) familiar to me. I remember thinking that writing a personal story about why I wanted to do this project should not be the hardest part of a dissertation to write. Yet, before I had actually written anything down, two days had passed. As soon as I got an idea of what to write, I criticized it. Of course, this story needs to have relevance to my dissertation, and it needs to be well written. On the other hand, the story is already there. It is about me and what brought me to embark on this PhD journey. It is a story about "why you have a heart connection with this topic" (Dian Marie Hosking, personal communication, 5 March 2019). As I will elaborate on in chapter 3, explicating such a story is relevant from a scientific perspective, as it influences how researchers do their work (see also Johnson & Duberley, 2003). Or, as Professor Sheila McNamee put it: "everybody's research is a personal story. But the personal story is always left out" (Sheila McNamee, personal communication, 5 March 2019). So, knowing that the story is already there and sharing it is legitimate and relevant, where did this criticizing voice come from? And there it was… a pattern that I am so familiar with: holding back, overthinking, and anticipating what others would think about making this story publicly available. This pattern is connected with two familiar positions: 1) finding myself in the middle, in a mediating role, and 2) fearing being an outcast. It is one example of the topics that I have addressed in my personal and professional development over the years. Below, I describe some of the turns that I took in my professional career. They involve two main themes, which are connected in a way that is relevant for my PhD-project: a growing interest in organizational life and facilitating personal transformation. Both are considered from a human interaction perspective.

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1 In section 3.4, I elaborate on the first-person, second-person, and third-person approaches in action research.

Leaving my career in finance?

After graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Finance & Accounting, I started working as a business controller for Siemens in the Netherlands. Over the six years there, I had several positions within the company, while I also obtained a post graduate diploma in business control and a Master of Science degree in Business Administration from Erasmus University Rotterdam. A few months before graduating, I could not keep it together anymore. I was 28 years old and burned out. A large part this was due to doing more than a full-time job, and, on top of that, studying for 25 hours per week. Moreover, although I liked my undergraduate finance classes, I also learned that a professional career in this field really did not match who I am as a person, nor my talents. Instead, I was fascinated with learning about organizational change and social construction during my Master's. In addition, I connected with my people and teaching skills when tutoring high school students within the Anderwijs Association. These developments opened up a different world for me, marking a career shift from 'running the numbers' to working professionally with people and organizations. While not working due to being burned out, I decided to return to my job as soon as I would be recovered and graduate with a major in organizational change, and then resign from Siemens to start lecturing at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences.

This career change turned out great. I loved teaching and facilitating group work, and experienced feeling at home in my new working environment. I learned a lot about teaching and working with people. However, after a few years, I sensed a restlessness: what if this is my job until I retire? I also remembered my father, who had been a high school teacher throughout his entire career, saying: "if you are in education for too long, it is difficult to get out." Driven by this restlessness and the vacant position of commercial controller at Hema's headquarters in Amsterdam, I switched jobs again. I had worked as an intern at the Hema headquarters when I was an undergraduate student, and I knew that (at least in theory) this was a great position in a nice organization. I should have listened to the alarm bells when I had job interviews with Hema's CFO and future team members. The CFO said, "I think you can do this job, but I'm not sure if you are going to be happy in this position." I knew he was right, but I had already made up my mind. I hoped this time it would be different. I accepted a contract for four days a week and stayed with Utrecht University of Applied Sciences as a freelance lecturer for one day a week. When I first met one of my new Hema co-workers, who managed an administrative department, she said, "ah finally, a controller who has social skills." Of course I was proud that she had noticed my social skills within a few minutes, but it also signposted the work environment that I had entered. Within a few months, I admitted and accepted the mistake I had made. On the other hand, this experience also served as some kind of litmus test. It confirmed that my future was in the 'people business.'

Advancing in the 'people business'

In 2007, I found a job within Dreamfactory, a small company in the training and coaching business. During the three years that I worked there, I extended my training experience with in-company training, and I further developed my personal coaching and team coaching skills. I started a three year post graduate training program at Phoenix Opleidingen in Utrecht, followed by participating in several advanced courses. Their training programs center on personal coaching, therapy, and group facilitation. An important part of their program, intertwined with developing one's craftsmanship, is personal development. I can truly say that this has been a deeply transformative experience for me, both at a personal and a professional level. During my time at Dreamfactory, I also continued working with Utrecht University of Applied Sciences and managed multiple teams within a child daycare organization as an interim regional controller and sales administration manager. In 2010, I started my own small company in which I worked as a self-employed personal coach and team coach, communication trainer, therapist, interim manager, and a freelance lecturer. I continued taking advanced courses at Phoenix Opleidingen and obtained two licenses as a complementary therapist[2].

I missed being part of a team and I noticed the increase in my freelance workload at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, so I rejoined them formally in 2015. As a lecturer of several courses within the HR undergraduate program, I started to coordinate the accelerated bachelor program in HR and the university-wide minor program in personal coaching and team coaching[3]. I also joined several co-workers in founding an internal group of team coaches to facilitate the development of teams in the university. A few years later, while preparing my PhD research proposal and applying for funding, I led the team of lecturers of the first-year undergraduate program in the Business Administration department.

Earlier in this personal story, I mention a familiar pattern of holding back, overthinking, and anticipating what others would think. This is one area in which I have experienced personal transformation. Openly reflecting on my past experiences was, at first, something that I tried to escape from during my training at Phoenix Opleidingen. Especially during large group sessions (with approximately 25 people), I experienced the familiar fear of being an outcast and so kept a low profile to prevent others judging me. Learning to include myself in groups, take my place, and share my stories, took quite some time and effort. These and other experiences, including my patterns in dealing with them, now serve as stories to invite my clients to share theirs. One thing that I have learned about facilitating personal transformation through conversation with a coach or thera-

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2 Psychosocial therapist (NVPA) and Registered therapist (RBCZ).
3 Each year, we train over 80 students (fulltime undergraduate students and professionals) with a team of experienced trainer-coaches.

pist, is the importance of the encounter. The encounter in which transformation may take place is more important than all the available professional frameworks. In chapter 4, I introduce Phoenix Opleidingen's learning philosophy and professional frameworks regarding facilitating personal transformation. Here I would like to acknowledge the many good things that participating in their programs has offered me, both personally and professionally. It has brought positive change to important relationships in my personal life. I have also been practicing this craftsmanship in my professional life for quite a few years now. Great moments of pride emerge for both my clients and myself when we look back at our journey in the concluding session. We often talk about how my clients had become stuck in their stories and how we worked on creating new stories. We talk about new possible ways of going around in the world, and acknowledging struggles, moments of truth, and what they will take with them into the future. I always have this same sense of pride during the closing group assessments in the minor coaching program at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. Each time, my colleagues and I are impressed with the students' willingness to dive in, to face and share their stories, and to work together on transformative processes in a way that is not common for them.

Organizational life

The leap from this personal story so far, to doing research with management consultants, may seem big. However, in addition to the connection with personal transformation, this research also has a clear connection with human interactions in organizational life contexts. I present this connection in more detail in chapter 2, where I introduce organizational change as the scholarly context of my research project. In the current chapter, I focus on two personal stories about organizational life and organizational change. The first story concerns problems in communicating and collaborating between co-workers. When we consider organizations as larger structures formed through the interaction of people, it is not hard to see that 'personal' patterns will influence how organizational members construct 'the organization' together. In my career, I have worked for various organizations and, often, the problems in the organizations were related to people not getting along very well. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to witness this happening between two colleagues with whom I worked very closely. Multiple colleagues saw their collaboration problem emerging and growing. When I talked with them, it showed that both were very aware of what was going on and how this affected their mutual responsibilities. Although I, and some other co-workers, intervened in this situation, it was still very hard for them to work together, even though they really wanted to, and they were aware of how they contributed to the problem. Such problems of people who are co-dependent and not able to improve their interactions fascinate me. I realize that this fascination stems from my own personal history. Mark Walsh's metaphor of 'the real organization chart' (Figure 1) illustrates the potential causes of problematic dynamics in organizational life. This metaphor invites a different orientation to organizational

dynamics compared to common organization charts which demonstrate the formal division of labor, power, and communication.

A second story relates to organizational change and its unintended outcomes. It is the story of the research project I carried out with fellow student Erik Breeveld (who is now a close friend), when we were studying for our Master's degree in Business
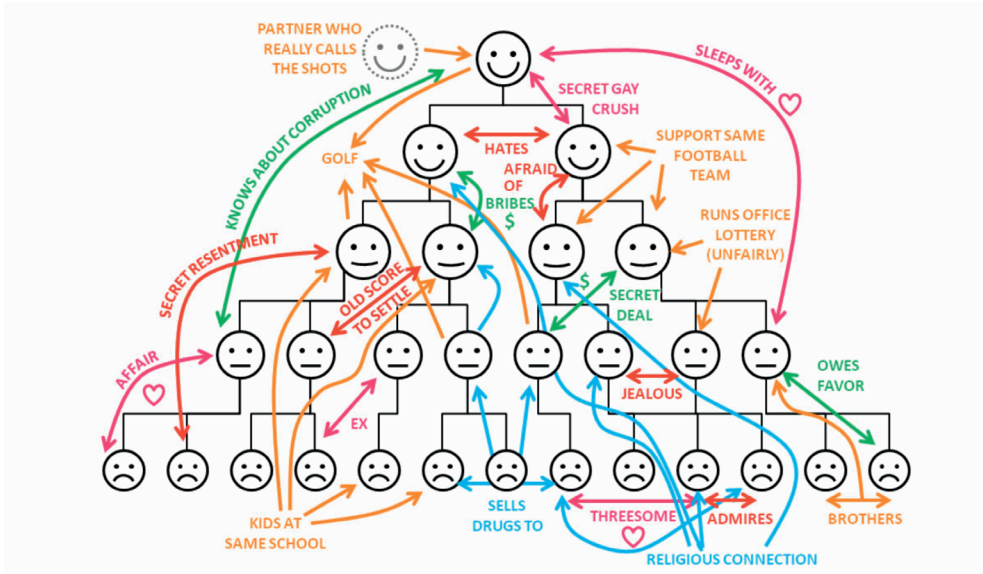
Figure 1: Real Organization Chart (Mark Walsh, Integration Training)

Administration. Our major in organizational change at Erasmus University Rotterdam centered on a more social orientation to change, rather than following the more dominant discourse that is often concerned with planned change and implementing designs 'in' the organization. In our final research project, we facilitated 50 organization members (approximately 50% of the workforce) in reflecting on a major change in the organization's structure and working procedures (Van Andel & Breeveld, 2004). In our conversations with individual employees, many of them expressed that their manage-ment hardly listened to their critical questions or remarks. They saw that the top down implemented 'solutions' created new problems because there were no solutions to 'the real' problems they thought the organization was facing. Our conversations generated an image of an organization that was formally structured in the best way to 'serve the client.' However, many participants described that, in daily practice, a lot of the action was internally focused[4]. We concluded that the strong belief in top-down management

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4 Analysis per context resulted in the following picture. In the *management context*, there was a strong belief in designing proper structures and procedures. Once in place, and in the case of things not going as intended, im-provement was sought in demanding better adherence. People working in the *commercial context* felt a strong responsibility to deliver to the clients' needs, and by that to safeguarding the continuity in client relations. Many

and the focus on structures and procedures led to a growing distance between management and employees. People seemed to flee into their specific tasks and jobs, and withhold critique. This also resulted in individualism rather than collaboration. A lot of human potential seemed to be unused, and the organization had become an unsafe place to work in for many people. In addition to generating and analyzing data, we both considered our research to be an intervention. Many interesting things happened just by taking the time to reflect on the changed organizational structure in conversation with us. For example: when we shared some of our 'rough findings' in our conversation with the department's director, he –apparently shocked, turning pale, and appearing to lose his confidence– asked us "what should I do now?" Most of the research participants talked very openly to us, and they allowed the conversations to take more time than they first 'really had available.' Many participants were grateful for the conversations. Other people (who had not participated yet) literally asked us if they could talk to us too. They wanted to share their stories. This was very valuable for us and underscored the importance of really listening to people and creating a safe environment. While sharing their stories with us, people reconnected with the reasons why they were in this job and offered their (critical) views on how the organization should go on.

Summarizing and looking forward

The described turns in my career, my personal interest in human interaction in the context of organizations and personal transformation, and my educational and professional background in both, culminated in 2016 in the idea to embark on this PhD journey. In general, I think that complex organizational change cannot be designed and implemented a priori but requires, instead, 'building a bridge while walking over it.' This places a great responsibility on the people who collaborate on the change project, and on the management consultants who facilitate their process. I expect that well facilitated change processes contribute to better and more sustainable outcomes. I also anticipate that management consultants who have reflected deeply on the origin of particular difficulties they encounter when working with people in their client organizations, may be capable of performing such facilitation more effectively. Hence, my aim with this project was to develop a practice to facilitate this reflection process for management consultants. As I will explain in chapter 2, where I present complex organizational change as the context of this action research study, there are sufficient arguments for pursuing this aim, including those resulting from the scholarly literature on organiza-

employees experienced the structures and procedures as dogmatic and slowing them down. They did not experience any support from management or the internal organization. In their opinion, the strong focus on managing through procedures had damaging consequences for their clients (and therefore, for their own organization). People experienced that the overall involvement and team spirit had deteriorated. People working in the *project management context* experienced a different relationship with the clients than the people in sales. The project managers' jobs were to deliver on time, according to specifications, and within budget. In their view standard processes were necessary and needed to be implemented top down. However, they expressed doubts about the contribution of the current form in which communication and collaboration was structured (Van Andel & Breeveld, 2004).

tional change and interviews with expert professionals. In chapter 3, I introduce the social constructionist approach to the action research carried out and reported in part II of this thesis.

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CHAPTER 2

Action Research Context:
Helping Management Consultants
Help their Clients

"I find it remarkable that many managers and consultants do not look at themselves very much when they look for causes of difficulty in organizational change. They often place such causes apart from themselves and approach change management problems from a narrowing perspective." (Boonstra, 2000, p. 11[5])

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5 Translated from Dutch.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the context of this action research project: helping management consultants help their clients with organizational change processes. First, I present the scholarly literature that guided my thinking in the early stage of my PhD. I argue why I think this action research project is relevant from a scholarly perspective. Second, I present an interview study with professional experts. There, I consider the practical relevance of my endeavors in relation to these 'expert voices.' Although a doctoral dissertation is typically a scholarly piece of work, the action research project described in this dissertation is a co-creation by people who can be identified as academic scholars and people who can be identified as practitioners. A 'typical dissertation' usually starts with a (systematic) literature review to address the question of academic relevance. However, as this thesis describes a social constructionist action research study, I include both scientific knowledge and professional practice in addressing its relevance (e.g., McNamee & Hosking, 2012; McNamee, 2014). Leaving out the voice of professional practice could suggest that scientific knowledge has more value than practical knowledge, which unnecessarily privileges the voice of scholars. Similar to Hosking and McNamee (2006), I equally value the voices of both scholars and practitioners in this action research.

2.2 Inspiration from the Scholarly Field of Organizational Change

In the previous chapter, where I described my personal story about starting this PhD, I introduced my interest in both complex organizational change and personal transformation. To offer an argument why I think that starting this action research is relevant from a scientific perspective, I present the scholarly literature that has inspired me to embark on this action research project. The presentation below is not intended to be a systematic review of the specific topic of my action research project, but rather to sketch its context and relevance. As noted in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, I offer a semi-systematic literature review in chapter 9, which I will use to articulate the contributions of this PhD research in chapter 10.

When I was preparing the grant application for my PhD, I had orienting conversations with scholars and professionals, and iteratively searched scholarly literature related to facilitating (complex) organizational change. I used the literature from my Master's education, where I majored in Organizational Change Management, and applied a snowballing method to identify related publications. I also hand searched relevant doctoral dissertations and included some publications from the popular press that related to my topic. In the remainder of this section, I address the infamous failure of

70% of change initiatives (e.g., Beer & Nohria, 2000; Boonstra, 2004b; Hicks, 2010), relate this number to possible causes and improvement approaches, and look more in-depth into the possible contributions of therapy and coaching to enhancing the facilitation of more effective organizational change.

Contemporary organizational change initiatives: change modes

It has been duly noted that many organizational change initiatives fail to deliver the expected results (e.g., Beer & Nohria, 2000; Boonstra, 2000, 2002, 2004b; Higgs & Rowland, 2005; Werkman, 2006; Burger, 2008; Hicks, 2010; Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Sioo, 2016; Steyn & Cilliers, 2016), hence wasting effort and money[6]. In the future, organizations will increasingly face the need to change in a rapidly shifting context, and these changes can draw excessively on the resources of the participants in organizations (Van den Heuvel, Freese, Schalk & Van Assen, 2017). It is clear that successful change will become even more important and can bring positive effects for organizations, employees, customers, and society. This being clear, the question arises of how to proceed. Of course, this leaves a wide range of possible directions.

Boonstra (2000, 2002) and Werkman (2006) argue that many organizational change initiatives fail to deliver the desired results because they are too simplistic and do not take into consideration the change process itself. According to Boonstra, isolated explanations of this failing ignore the complexity of organizational change and, instead, focus on finding solutions in (for example) redesigning organizational structures; business process redesign; top-down implementation from a position of power; dealing with fear of the unknown through education, communication and negotiation; and attempts to deliberately influence the conduct of organization members through designing and implementing cultural change. Although academic scholars, for example Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015)[7] and Van den Heuvel et al. (2017)[8], keep contributing possible solutions to isolated problems in organizational change, Boonstra and Werk-

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6 Billions of euros are wasted in the Netherlands alone (Winkelhorst & Kieft, 2013; De Graaf,2016). 2016).

7 In their research paper based on a literature review and expert judgement, Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015) contribute to a roadmap in the change management literature for researchers, and work toward a model that aligns particular change types, based on the scale and duration of change, with change methods (systematic change and change management) in order to achieve the desired outcomes. They argue that "while leadership is critical to implementing change, not following an appropriate method to implement change will mean the desired outcomes will not be achieved" (p. 252). Al-Haddad and Kotnour argue that their model can also assist managers in selecting an implementation method for change.

8 Van den Heuvel et al. (2017) studied the tension between employees' evaluation of the internal context (i.e., engagement, psychological contract fulfillment and trust) and his/her evaluation of the organizational change itself. Their study's results "indicate that the internal context as perceived by the change recipient may be a key determinant for employees' responses to organizational change, and therefore for the success of organizational change" (p. 412). The authors note the contemporary increase in change with respect to technology, business environment, and competition, resulting in excessive change becoming the norm. In this light, the authors stress the importance of "a change conducive internal context which is perceived as such by the individual change recipient" (ibid.) The authors suggest that "careful and constant psychological contract management, which is organized and executed at a very decentral level in the organization" (p. 413), may be key to successful organizational change. Furthermore, they suggest that communicating about the change bi-directionally and individually (as opposed to generally to all stakeholders) may

man argue for a different approach. Boonstra (2000) notes that it is remarkable that managers and consultants do not take a look in the mirror when they search to explain why change initiatives do not yield the desired outcomes. Instead, many consultants have a narrowing view on the problems they encounter and look for causes in the realm of isolated explanations in the division of labor and control; power structures; psychology; and culture. Their dominant mode of change is 'planned change' (consisting of the 'design approach'[9] and the 'develop approach'[10]), a rational approach of analyzing the organizational context, setting goals, developing and implementing a strategy for change, and then, managing the process by feedback and intervention. Such an approach is regulated, necessitating prediction and control. Planned change is a possible and useful mode when problems and feasible solutions are known, or at least knowable (Van Dongen, De Laat & Maas, 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002, 2004b). However, contemporary organizational change processes are typically more complex because of 1) the ambiguous issues they address, 2) the unstable situations in which they occur, and 3) the unpredictable interaction patterns that are involved (Boonstra, 2002). In these so-called third-order changes (Boonstra, 2000, 2002) or N^{th}-order changes (Van Dongen et al., 1996), a different change mode is suggested. This mode is called 'renewal' (Boonstra, 2000, 2002), 'continuously changing' (Boonstra, 2004b), or 'transformation' (Van Dongen et al., 1996) in which actors interact, construct meaning, and create contexts toward an a priori unknowable future (Boonstra, 2000). Everyone who has an involvement in the issue is included, enabling multiple, local realities in different but equal relations (Boonstra, 2004b). A continuous changing process relates to learning as a collective process, focusing on routines, response repertoires, and basic assumptions about social reality and interrelations (ibid.). According to Boonstra (2000, 2004b), an explanation for the disappointing results of most change initiatives is that management and change consultants keep relying on planned change methods (see also Werkman, 2006) in these complex change situations. He questions the utility of managers' and consultants' focus on stability and control when organizations face unknown phenomena in unpredict-

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contribute to an increase in information effectiveness and quality, and to constructive responses to organizational change.

9 When using a 'design approach' (e.g., Boonstra, 2000), top management initiates, manages, and controls organizational changes. Experts play a significant role in the problem analysis and change management. This approach is focused on implementing solutions and is known to rely on structured and formalized decision-making processes. Formal change methods are used in order to reduce complexity. The design approach is useful when organizations face univocal problems, in stable and predictable situations. These *'improvements'* (Boonstra, 2000; 2002), related to known problems within a pre-existing context, are referred to as 'first-order-change' (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000; 2002).

10 A 'develop approach' (e.g., Boonstra, 2000) starts with analyzing problems and areas of possible solutions by all relevant actors and looks into changing organizational structure, culture, and behavior. A consultant facilitates the participants when working on the change initiative, which is often known to have specific phases. If necessary, interventions are made to ensure the change process runs smoothly. A develop approach is useful when the problems are known and there are multiple perspectives on the causes and possible solutions (*'transition'* according to Van Dongen et al., 1996). However, there can be no clear path available upfront (Boonstra, 2000; 2002). This type of change is called 'second-order-change' (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000; 2002). Boonstra warns of the possible risk of 'social engineering' when change consultants 'seduce' others to participate in the solution if a development approach is combined with management setting frameworks upfront.

able contexts. Such situations need to be approached differently, namely by combining organizational change and learning, which is typical for renewal or transformation. According to Boonstra (2000, 2002), in third-order change processes, renewal coincides with learning in an interactive process among participants in which reflection, feedback, and dialogue are important.

Third-order organizational change and social construction

Boonstra (2000, 2004b) concludes that there is a knowledge gap in the area of facilitating third-order-change processes and refers to social construction as a resource that could be useful. Also, Van Dongen et al. (1996), Hosking and McNamee (2006), Homan (2006), Maas (2009) and Gergen (2009, 2015a) stress the importance of a social constructionist approach, which centers relational processes in organizational change. According to Boonstra (2000, 2002), good collaboration between the actors involved in these change processes is fundamental for change to be effective. Boonstra argues that management consultants who facilitate organizational change should primarily focus on creating conditions which invite the possibility of knowledge diffusion, open dialogue, and fostering learning processes. Consequentially, possibilities for improving complex organizational change processes seem to lie in including the support of collaboration, rather than leaning on prediction and control processes of planned change (Boonstra, 2000, 2002; Werkman, 2006). In this respect, Hicks (2010) offers a particular contribution to the field of organizational change which he considers to be an addition to the well-known approaches of expert consulting and process consulting, as articulated by Schein (e.g., 1969, 1990). Hicks developed an alternative orientation to management consulting, grounded in a social constructionist approach. Hicks' idea of co-constructive consulting invites a shift from traditional reifying orientations to organization, knowledge, and relationships, to processual understandings of organizing, knowing, and relating. As the author noted, these three reconstructions "share the idea of moving *upstream*, to focus on the activities of practicing itself, and less on the *downstream* results of practice" (Hicks, 2010, p. 198). Practicing focuses "on the here-and-now, in consideration of pasts and possible futures" (ibid.). Hence, the organization is not considered as being 'out there' and beyond our control, but rather as a "semi-permanent and semi-stable result of upstream activities of organizing" (ibid.). Similarly, issues, problems, and opportunities are considered co-constructions. Knowledge is not precluded, but "the first priority is on practicing, and the useful ideas constructed in the process become the resulting knowledge, which may, or may not, be useful again in some other context" (p. 199). Hicks suggests a focus on knowledge creation through collaboration and co-construction, rather than relying too much on knowledge transfer. A third reconstruction again focuses on the here-and-now relating with others which results in 'the relationship.' In chapter 3, this relational understanding of people is addressed. For now, I note Hicks' statement that particular 'client,' 'consultant,' and 'expert' identities are

optional, and that "people are free to bring whatever ideas, talents, passions or interests they believe to be useful for addressing the issue at hand" (ibid.). Being grounded in social construction, and considering the abovementioned processual reconstructions, it is probably clear that collaboration is fundamental within the co-constructive approach of management consulting. There is no assumption of being able to control outcomes. Hence, by following this approach, in general[11], goals are co-constructed and plans for achieving them possibly include non-standard methods which are influenced by the preferences, styles, and experiences of those involved. Plans and goals are expected to change as the project unfolds (Hicks, 2010).

The role of management consultants in failing change initiatives

Regardless of the change mode or conceptual approach to management consulting, the change process is sometimes negatively influenced by managers and management consultants. Werkman (2006) and Ardon (2009) addressed this topic. When writing their doctoral theses, both worked closely with Boonstra on topics related to his proposed research agenda regarding the dynamics of organizing, change, and learning (Boonstra, 2000). Werkman (2006) analyzed why second-order changes elapsed with difficulties and how this could be improved. One of her conclusions is that management consultants' decisions concerning how to approach and manage change contribute significantly to the failure of these change initiatives. Along with Boonstra, she argues that change managers do not look into their own actions, into the change process itself, or into the interactions among the participants. Again, planned change was found to be the dominant mode of facilitating change. An interesting reflection by Werkman, in the final chapter of her doctoral dissertation (2006), concerns the discrepancy between espoused theories and theories in use, as articulated by Argyris (e.g., 2004), implying that change managers do not deliberately choose their change process approach. Werkman's studies reveal that change is often considered "an activity that can be systematically planned, managed and implemented rather than a process where people create a new future together" (p. 466). She raises the question "how [do] people involved in change processes make choices and why they often make choices that generate little positive results?" (ibid.). Furthermore, the author notes that people higher up in an organization tend to have a more positive perspective on the change process than people lower down in the organization. People higher up are more convinced that they leave room for interaction and differences of opinion than that experienced by people lower down in the organization experience. "The lower the position of an actor in the organisation, the more moderate or negative their perspective on change management is likely to be, the less likely they are to be involved in the process, and the less interactive they will perceive change strategies to be" (ibid.). Werkman doubts whether change managers

11 In his doctoral thesis, Hicks (2010) offers a more detailed summary, comparing expert, process, and co-constructive consulting (p. 205-206).

make these important decisions based on rational consideration because, in her case studies, she identified 23 'fixed beliefs' concerning planned change. In turn, these beliefs seem to drive how actors think and act in circular patterns of interaction[12]. Based on her studies, Werkman concludes that the "change strategy" is a combined outcome of assumptions, beliefs, contexts, and interaction patterns. To me, these are interesting reflections because they suggest that change managers may 'choose' change strategies that may not generate the desired outcomes for the organization. This raises the question: 'what else' may be at play?

Ardon (2009) focused on daily interactions between management, employees, and consultants. He specifically focused on the role that leaders and their advisors play in (un)blocking the change process and how interactions contribute to recurrent problems. Ardon found that both managers and consultants -unintentionally- block change processes by what Argyris refers to as unilateral control (e.g., Argyris, 1990, 2000, 2004). According to Ardon, unilateral control by managers becomes manifest in their perception of (organization) problems; their interactions with people in the environment; their interventions in change processes; their design of the organization; and their change of organization, and stimulates thinking in terms of episodic change (as opposed to continuous change) (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Also, consultants tend to hold 'unilateral control' as a theory in use, by which they might contribute to their clients' problems (Ardon, 2009). 'Unilateral control' prevents the pursuit of 'fundamental solutions', leads

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12 For example:

Using power and implementing change top-down because of negative employee considerations, fearing loss of position and face, and the presumed necessity of powerful leadership.

Not involving employees and, by doing so, avoiding criticism out of fear of assertive employees.

Attempting to reduce uncertainty and rumor by means of informing and persuading employees, which paradoxically creates uncertainty and rumor, resulting in the lost trust in top management (who, in turn, engage in more controlling, informing and rulemaking, leading to even more uncertainty).

Hindering problem solving through centralizing decision making, combined with the inability of top management and staff to spend time on change processes.

Top management initially providing room for employees and middle management's feedback, input and interaction and, later, reducing the possibilities to do so out of fear of conflicting ideas. Such a pattern results in employees and middle management waiting passively or protesting actively, leading to some room to participate after which top management retracts again (Werkman, 2006).

to circular patterns[13], self-fulfilling prophecies, and defensive strategies (or routines)[14]. He also concluded that leaders can un-block change, organizing and learning processes, e.g., by changing their actions when they see how they themselves have contributed to recurring problems or by actively addressing problems that are below the surface (for example by making circularity visible; through self-disclosure and public reflection

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13 Ardon (2009) identified multiple recurring patterns between managers and employees (p. 243-244), and between the interventionist (consultant) and the client system (p. 262). Patterns may start with either role, and are considered self-propelling (i.e., actions stimulating each other), and self-protective (i.e., unilateral control by a manager tends to be pushed back by his or her followers). For example:

Manager initiates change process, employees (act as if they) follow: the more managers consider themselves as subjects who can impose changes upon employees, the more employees (act as if they) follow, the more managers are confirmed in their belief they should impose changes, etcetera.

Manager acts as if he knows answers, employees act as if they don't: the more managers act as if they know the answers (even if they do not), the more employees act as if they don't, the more managers act as if they know the answers, etcetera.

Manager expects resistance and braces himself, employees respond negatively and oppose: the more managers expect employees will show resistance, the more they tend to brace themselves persuade, the more employees respond negatively and develop resistance, the more managers brace themselves, etcetera.

Manager implements control instruments, employees resist management initiatives: the more managers enlarge control, the more employees believe managers are not a positive role model and resist management initiatives, the less management influence, the more managers enlarge control, etcetera.

Manager tries to motivate and inspire employees, employees feel lack of motivation and inspiration: the more managers try to motivate and inspire their employees, the less employees feel responsible for their own motivation and the more they feel dependent on the manager's capability to motivate and inspire, the more managers need to motivate and inspire, etcetera.

Interventionist is present, participants feel less responsible: if the interventionist is present, participants feel less responsible, the interventionist becomes more active (in order to help), participants feel even less responsible, etcetera.

Interventionist participates, manager directs difficult issues to interventionist: the more actively the interventionist participates, the more managers tend to direct difficult issues to the interventionist, the more the interventionist participates, etcetera.

Interventionist acts as a partner-in-business, employees behave critically: the more the interventionist acts as a partner-in-business with the manager, the more employees perceive the interventionist as a partner of management and respond negatively to both, the more the interventionist acts as a partner-in-business with the manager, etcetera.

Interventionist persuades managers to accept outcomes, managers resist them: the more the interventionist thinks managers resist his outcomes, the more he persuades managers, the more they resist these outcomes, the more he persuades them, etcetera.

14 Ardon (2009) identified multiple defensive strategies by managers and his or her followers (p. 245), and by interventionists (consultants) (p. 263), which are activated in case of a threat or embarrassment and result in typical 'games'. For example:

Undergo strategy: if your superior initiates a change process, just undergo the interventions passively and do not make debatable that you don't think this is going to work ('Let's see what happens').

Plan strategy: agree to make a plan and act as if you comply with the plan; this way you contribute change and stay in your comfort zone ('Let's make a plan and put it on the agenda next month').

Blame strategy: if changing does not succeed, blame others and attribute the negative intentions to them ('Employees just don't want to change'; 'Our manager just doesn't want to listen to us').

Assume strategy: keep your negative assumptions about other individuals' intentions and situations private.

Denial strategy: if things become threatening or embarrassing, deny the problem ('In my department there are no problems').

'We' strategy: talk in terms of 'our responsibility' and what 'we should do'; as a consequence, nobody has to feel personally responsible ('We should pay attention to the problems').

Non-intervention strategy: do not confront others' dysfunctional behaviour (e.g., not keeping an appointment), so that others will not confront yours ('I know he is very busy, so I can hardly blame him for not keeping his appointment').

Ignorance strategy: if one observes patterns that are difficult to deal with, e.g., that employees are not really committed, do not inquire ('Please share your concerns frankly in a conversation with a manager').

Distance strategy: in case of blocked changing and learning, neglect one's own role and focus on other parties ('There was a distance between you and your team').

upon a lack of learning; and by inquiring into underlying patterns or confronting defensive strategies).

Following these conclusions, Ardon (2009) notes that while managers talk about conditions and methods for organizational change, they, at the same time, perceive, act, and intervene in a way that blocks organizational change and learning processes. Contrary to the mainstream literature about episodic change (Weick & Quinn, 1999) that focuses on methods and conditions for change, Ardon claims that his study offers an intervention perspective which focuses on daily interaction (and why situations are maintained, regardless of the expressed wish to change). I found two of his future research suggestions particularly interesting. First, Ardon recommends diagnosing recurring problematic patterns in interactive and equal ways, which is in line with the idea of mutual learning. Second, helping managers make the shift from unilateral control toward mutual learning requires incorporating insights from psychological therapy, coaching, and counseling.

Briefly summarizing the foregoing, a picture emerges that organizational change initiatives are at least partly influenced by the way managers and management consultants act in the change process (Boonstra, 2000, 2002, 2004b; Werkman, 2006; Ardon, 2009; Hicks, 2010). The utility of planned change interventions, focusing on stability and control, has been seriously doubted for situations in which organizations face a) known problems with multiple perspectives on causes and solutions or b) unknown phenomena in unpredictable contexts (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002; Werkman, 2006). In these second- or third-order-change situations, an approach called renewal or transformation focuses on interactive processes with participants in which feedback, dialogue, and reflection are fundamental (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002) and organizational change consultants have an important role in facilitating these processes. Hicks' (2010) contribution, a co-constructive approach to management consulting, may be considered a response to a widely expressed call for centering relational processes in organizational change facilitation from a social constructionist orientation. Beyond Hicks' relational approach to management consulting, it has been noted that managers and management consultants themselves are found to (at times) negatively influence the change process unintentionally. Hence, it is about time that managers and management consultants take a look in the mirror[15] (Boonstra, 2000, 2002, 2004b; Werkman, 2006). Ardon (2009) and Werkman (2006) mention the differences between what managers and consultants *say* about change, and what they actually *do*. These authors propose that future studies should include a focus on stakeholder interaction

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15 Boonstra (2004b) distinguishes various change manager and consultant roles (powerful change agent; expert; process manager; facilitator; friendly outsider; and active participant) as a means to define one's role; to combine roles more consciously and deliberately; and to assist in reflecting on and choosing one's position.

among those involved in the change process (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b; Werkman, 2006; Ardon, 2009). In particular, contributions are expected to originate from psychological and sociological theory and practice; a systems dynamics perspective and defensive routines (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b); psychological therapy; coaching and counseling (Ardon, 2009); and learning and reflecting by management consultants (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b; Werkman 2006). The authors explicitly recommend a social constructionist approach (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b; Werkman, 2006), more equal relationships between participants (Ardon, 2009) and action research, rather than traditional orientations (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b).

Organizational change from a therapeutic and coaching perspective

When looking deeper into the literature on organizational change that addresses coaching, therapy, and system dynamics, I found some interesting connections. It appeared to me that, within the field of management consulting, there is limited knowledge about how change consultants handle the relational aspects of their facilitating role in organizational change processes. For example, De Man (2004, 2006) suggests that there is an interplay between conscious behavior and unconscious behavior by people interacting in organizations. According to De Man, this distinction has been really neglected in practice and research, while organizational change processes are affected by tensions resulting from this interplay. The author notes the value of psychotherapeutic knowledge and its current limited use in organizational change. He offers some practical recommendations for change managers, but also concludes that more academic research must shed light on dealing with these tensions. Furthermore, case studies focusing on systems psychodynamics[16] and organizational change (e.g., Nossal, 2007; Steyn & Cilliers, 2016) suggest that management consultants are leaders and, as leaders, they should have more knowledge of how people behave in social relationships. Moeskops (2016) connects organizational change to systems psychodynamics. According to her, the idea that organizations consist of people who develop patterns while relating to one another legitimizes using systems psychodynamics in organizations. In a published interview, Professor Yvonne Burger stresses that, unlike the content of organizational advice, revealing behavioral patterns in organizations is becoming increasingly important in facilitating organizations. "That also means we need to have insight into our own patterns. Only then do we really become of added value and future-proof" (Van Dinteren, 2016, p. 47; see also Burger, 2008). In sum, multiple authors note the importance of management consultants becoming more aware of the 'their own' vulnerability, psychodynamic defense mechanisms, circular patterns, psychodynamic projections, and parallel processes (e.g., Boonstra, 2004b; Nossal, 2007; Ardon, 2009; Moeskops, 2016; Burger, 2008).

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16 System psychodynamics integrates three theory streams known as psychoanalysis; group relations; and open systems theory (Nossal, 2007).

Following the authors presented in this section, it appears that possibilities for improving the facilitation of organizational change by management consultants seems to, at the very least, lie in supporting collaboration, which requires self-awareness. Therefore, I expect that helping management consultants to enhance their self-awareness and relate more consciously with stakeholders may contribute to better organizational change initiative outcomes. As Boonstra (2004b) noted, there is still a lot to be gained in the field of organizational change and learning from (among others) dialoguing, sensemaking, and identity formation. He notes that, in this promising but under-developed field where people interact to make sense out of ambiguous contexts, social construction may be helpful to develop new knowledge and practices in change works. Similarly, Maas (2004) recommends that interim managers' professionalization is a permanent process which starts with the individual interim manager. This requires reflecting on and awareness of their own conduct, and considering oneself in the particular (multiple) context(s). According to Maas, inquiring into oneself and one's particular situation helps to identify problems, imperfections, distortions, and blockages. A more recent study into the interactions between organizational consultants and their clients (Reitsma, 2014) suggests that consultants may benefit from reflecting more with others. Although the studied organizational consultants did consider reflecting with others an important resource for learning, development, and sensemaking of behavior, they tended to reflect mostly by themselves. Reitsma concludes further that highly valued advisors tend to be very reflective, and that highly reflective advisors, more than less reflective advisors, know immediately what did not go well in a conversation. The studied consultants experienced 'reflecting in action' (Schön, 1983) as heavy, difficult, and energy demanding.

In my view, the literature presented in this section supports the academic relevance of conducting the action research which I will report in part II of this thesis. I have checked this conclusion with several professionals: the chair of the internal team coaches in the HRD department of my university; an educator of Phoenix Opleidingen; and with a partner of the management consulting firm who showed interest in my project. In the section 2.3, I present an interview study with relevant professional experts, which I performed to further inquire into the potential practical relevance of my action research project.

2.3 Action Research Relevance according to Professional Experts: An Interview Study

By presenting stories from *professional* experts in this section, I aim to complement the scholarly literature previously presented regarding the relevance of this action research thesis. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, it is common in a social

constructionist action research study to value scientific knowledge equally with professional knowledge. In this section, I will argue the relevance of personal development for management consultants from the perspective of relevant professional experts in a similar vein as presented in the theoretical relevance section: after sketching relevant aspects of their professional practice, I present their views on professional development for management consultants.

To look thoroughly into the relevance of this research topic from a practitioner's perspective, I had conversations with several practitioners who can be recognized as having relevant professional expertise regarding my research topic.

More specifically, I selected experts who:
- are known to:
    o   work where personal transformation meets organizational change, and/or
    o   facilitate organizational change from a social constructionist stance, and/or
    o   facilitate personal transformation from a social constructionist stance;
- push the envelope for organizational change through professional education of practitioners and/or publications in professional (non-scholarly) literature;
- do not (primarily) work in academia.

I used my network contacts, publications in the professional literature, and the internet to identify and contact 10 Dutch experts who met the above criteria. Seven experts accepted my invitation for a conversation in advance of the action research study. Given the relevance of their specific expertise, we explicitly agreed to publish the results stating their names (see appendix 1). Most conversations were face-to-face, one was online. After introducing ourselves, I elaborated on my research to set the context. From there on, we had an open interview, or narrative interview (McNamee & Hosking, 2012), in which I offered space for the experts to tell their story in relation to a broad opening question. My role was to more or less 'get out of the way' of what the experts wanted to say in the specific context (of the interview topic) and encourage a conversation of equals (ibid.). I used two different opening questions which I had also sent by mail, prior to our meeting.
1. Opening question for the organizational change professionals[17]: what, in your experience, is important in relating [with stakeholders] when facilitating complex organizational change, and what is important for the professional development of management consultants who offer this facilitation[18]?

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17 Edu Feltmann, Shirine Moerkerken, Leike van Oss, Marijke Spanjersberg, Stefan Woudenberg.
18 Edited when translating from Dutch to English.

2. Opening question for the therapy professionals[19]: how did a social constructionist orientation influence the way you practice your profession[20]?

After we had finished our conversation, which was audio recorded, I made a summarizing report including quotes (not a full transcript). Sometimes, I included references to, or summarized relevant parts of, their publications that came up during our conversations. Afterwards, I sent these reports to the experts and asked if they wanted to add or change things before considering this as their 'final story.'

In Table 1, I offer an overview of the experts, including background information which I obtained from the conversations, their LinkedIn profiles, and their websites. I also include the key themes of the conversations which I identified after re-reading and coding the reports (open coding and axial coding) and iteratively creating higher order themes ('conversation themes') containing the specific contribution of each expert's story ('topics'). Below Table 1, I elaborate on this summarized information by presenting the professional experts' synthesized stories, related to my opening questions[21]. First, I present the organizational change professionals' stories, followed by the therapy professionals' stories. The stories are presented along the key themes of our conversations. With respect to the organizational change professionals, these themes are: general orientation toward facilitating organizational change; approach to social construction; resources for facilitating organizational change; placing interventions; appreciation of 'resistance'; and personal development for consultants. The therapy professionals' themes are: relational vs entitative therapy approaches (including their approach to social construction, therapy disciplines, and the utility of DSM[22] classifications); resources for practicing therapy; and personal development for consultants who facilitate organizational change.

2.3.1 Synthesized Stories of Organizational Change Professionals

Conversation theme: General orientation to facilitating organizational change

From the conversations with the organizational change experts, I could derive the following five general orientations toward facilitating organizational change. First, Shirine Moerkerken focuses on 'causing change' using functional conflict. She aims to create the

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19 Dorti Been, Justine van Lawick.
20 Edited when translating from Dutch to English.
21 In the conversation with Stefan Woudenberg, I started with the opening question I used for the organizational change professionals. However, given his specific expertise, our conversation also included 'typical' therapeutic themes.
22 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Shirine Moerkerken	Commerce (BA)	Organizational change facilitator	Ambachtsschool voor Organiseren en Veranderen	Book (2015) and book chapter (2019) on intervening from a social constructionist stance	*General orientation to facilitating organizational change*	Causing change using functional conflict
	Business Administration (MSc)	Lecturer	IME Organisatie-adviseurs		*Approach to social construction*	Van Dongen
						Gergen
	Phoenix Opleidingen, professional communication	Author	SIOO	Book on using conflict to cause change (2021)	*Resources for facilitating organizational change*	Consultant's basic problem understanding, and solution contours
			Strange (firm name)			Stakeholders' experiencing urgency
						Trusting good process will yield solutions
						Identify and create good process conditions
						Apply guiding principles when facilitating
						Use language that opens up
						Refrain from intervening too much
						The consultant as the instrument
					Placing interventions	Center collective meaning making and continuing interaction
						Provide holding space without psychologizing
						Do get in the way of interaction to question constructions
						Bear not to know
					Personal development for consultants	Generative personal transformation, contributing to including yourself in the process

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Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Leike van Oss	Homeopathy (Complementary Medicine) Social Psychology (MSc)	Organizational change facilitator Interim manager Educator Keynote speaker Author/ Editor	Ambachtsschool voor Organiseren en Veranderen GITP Organisatievragen SIOO	Handbook on systems thinking for organizational change professionals (2019) Various books on organizational change (2009, 2014, 2016, 2020) Book chapter (2019) and article (2020) on the work of Gregory Bateson Book chapter on the work of Karl Weick (2021)	*General orientation to facilitating organizational change*	Continuous and emergent change; planned change Sensemaking Systems thinking
					Approach to social construction	Van Dongen Berger & Luckman
					Resources for facilitating organizational change	Apply systems intelligence and invite renewed ambiguity Be accepting of the planned change project and create room along the way Distinguish between 'cognitive constructs' and 'lived through' constructs
					Placing interventions	Focus on group level facilitating and intervening Invite different ways to go on (vs articulating unhelpful actions) Assure 'clean collaboration' when consulting in pairs
					Appreciation of 'resistance'	Protective tenacious reactions from the system's 'robust core' Sensemaking responses to 'the new', from 'lived through constructs'
					Personal development for consultants	Awareness: how events relate to the consultant's psychological issues and interaction

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Marijke Spanjersberg	Psychology (MSc)	Organizational change facilitator	Ambachtsschool voor Organiseren en Veranderen	Doctoral dissertation 'Vrede leren in de kerk' (1993)	*General orientation to facilitating organizational change*	Systems thinking
	Theology (PhD)					Conflict
		Lecturer	De Baak	Book on applying systemic therapeutic principles in organizational change work (2015)	*Approach to social construction*	Van Dongen
		Author	SIOO			Gergen
			The Lime Tree		*Resources for facilitating organizational change*	Restore relations
				Article on circular questioning (2013)		Zoom in and out, and address experienced fairness in systems
				Article on looking at change from a non-utopian perspective (2021)		Refrain from utopian thinking
					Placing interventions	Act plurally partisan[23]
						Inquire into stakeholders' paradigms on change
				Article on addressing unsafety from a combined systems and evolutionary psychologist stance (2020)		Practice 'relational introspection'
						Refrain from a simplified, linear approach to organizational constellations
					Appreciation of 'resistance'	Considered as relational possibilities for vitalization
					Personal development for consultants	Personal component translates into relational effect, however: no utopian self-improvement

23 In Dutch: meerzijdig partijdig.

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Edu Feltmann	Psychology and Organizational Psychology (MSc)	Advisor	Erasmus University Rotterdam	Doctoral dissertation 'Adviseren bij Organiseren' (1984)	*General orientation to facilitating organizational change*	Think advising instead of organizational advising
		Organizational change facilitator	IGOP			
	Social Sciences (PhD)	Educator	SIOO	Book on think advising (2010)	*Approach to social construction*	Not explicitly articulated (possibly Van Dongen)
		Lecturer	Universiteit voor Humanistiek		*Resources for facilitating organizational change*	Distinguishing between three levels of thinking and intervening, incl. being 'meta-paradigmatic'
						Think advising conversation, incl. 'forms of play' in a conversation (e.g., regarding listening and responding)
					Placing interventions	Muse loosely, fantasize, create space
						Play with language
						Assure 'empty' self-awareness and have no interest yourself
						Stay out of a client's discourse, but remain close to their text
						Signal one-dimensional approaches of topics in conversations

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Stefan Woudenberg	Slavonic languages and literature (MA)	Consultant	Phoenix Opleidingen		*Therapy disciplines*	Family therapy / systemic therapy
	Business Administration (MBA)	Educator/trainer	Price Waterhouse Coopers			Narrative therapy
		Coach				Psychoanalysis
	Phoenix Opleidingen, professional communication and various advanced courses				*Resources for practicing therapy*	Character styles (incl. polarities)
						Invite to self-inquiry through leading by example
						Working with 'the unsaid'
					General orientation to facilitating organizational change	Learning precedes change
					Approach to social construction	Not explicitly articulated
					Resources for facilitating organizational change	Learning questions about the 'love system' meeting the 'task system'
						Character styles for diagnosing and learning
						Organizational script echoing the request for facilitation
						Personal wounds in life stories affecting interactions
					Placing interventions	Focus on 'the unsaid'
						Lead by example
						Intervene from your systemic position
						Stimulate real encounter (vs 'playing games')
					Appreciation of 'resistance'	Eliciting learning possibilities
					Personal development for consultants	Learn about how life stories influence facilitating organizations and create room to act

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Dorti Been	Social Work (MA)	Social Worker	GGZ Groningen		*Relational vs entitative approach of practicing therapy*	Being the 'knowing expert' vs a conversational partner
	Kensington Consultation Center, summer schools	Psychotherapist	Platform Systeemtherapie Noord Nederland		*Therapy disciplines*	Family therapy / systemic therapy
		Systemic therapist	Postgraduate programs in Psychotherapy			Narrative therapy
		Lecturer and supervisor				Solution focused therapy
			Rhizoom			Psychoanalysis
			Rino		*Resources for practicing therapy*	Circular questioning
						Really listening to vs looking for what you 'already know'
						Using the wider context around the client
						Therapeutic concepts as potentially useful vs 'the truth'
					Utility of DSM classifications	Offering temporal feelings of 'justification' of experienced problems

Table 1: Overview of Professional Experts (*continued*)

Expert	Education	Professional Roles	Relevant Affiliations	Relevant Publications	Conversation Themes	Topics
Justine van Lawick	Clinical Psychology (MSc)	Clinical Psychologist	Katholieke Universiteit Leuven	Handbooks on Systemic practice (2018) and Systemic therapy (2014)	*Relational vs entitative approach of practicing therapy*	Being more interested in the stories people make true rather than 'truth bearing' DSM diagnoses
	Kensington Consultation Center	Psychotherapist	Lorentzhuis		*Approach to social construction*	Gergen
	University of Bedfordshire	Systemic therapist	NVRG	Critical articles on Bert Hellinger's approach of systemic practice (1995, 2005)		Berger & Luckman (constructivism)
		Educator	Rino			Braidotti (post-humanism)
		Author	Business Universiteit Nyenrode		*Therapy disciplines*	Family therapy / systemic therapy
		Researcher				Narrative therapy
						Psychoanalysis
					Resources for practicing therapy	Withness thinking
						Circular questioning
						Appropriate approaches to constellation work
						Maintaining irreverence
					Utility of DSM classifications	Set of agreements offering possibilities to organize information and to communicate
					General orientation to facilitating organizational change	Connections between organizational change work and therapy: both applying systemic thinking
					Personal development for consultants	May contribute to consultants being more with the people, potentially increasing success chances

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conditions that enable organizational members to, collaboratively, create and realize ideas that one organizational member would not come up with alone. Causing change is different from 'creating change' which, in Moerkerken's view, is associated with linear steps toward implementing a 'new situation' that is knowable beforehand. Second, Leike van Oss' approach can be characterized as focusing on continuous and emergent change (as opposed to planned change) using Karl Weick's sensemaking, and a systems orientation. Third, Marijke Spanjersberg combines a systems orientation with working with conflict. Her focus is on restoring relations and making conflicts functional again. She refrains from utopian thinking, and assuming malleability in organization and in personal development. Fourth, the Phoenix Opleidingen orientation, as articulated by Stefan Woudenberg, is focused on learning. Following Hjort et al. (2017), he says: "in order to change, people need to be willing to learn. When you learn, change will follow. Professional development is preceded by personal growth, learning is focused on offering people the possibilities to coincide with their personal stories." Fifth, with his practice of 'Think advising'[24], Edu Feltmann takes a different approach, as he refrains from centering any specific expertise or interest. He merely invites the client to think differently about 'the problem' by challenging the discourse offered by the client. Feltmann positions his practice as being different from offering organizational advice.

Conversation theme: Approach to Social Construction

Three experts (Moerkerken, Van Oss, and Spanjersberg) made explicit references to (their approach to) social construction in our conversations, and Feltmann referred to social construction in his doctoral dissertation (1984) and the book about Think advising (2010). As described in the aggregated therapy professionals' stories (see section 2.3.2), Woudenberg takes a relational approach in his professional practice. Several schools of social construction emerged in the conversations: Van Dongen's approach (Moerkerken, Van Oss and Spanjersberg); Berger and Luckman's approach (Van Oss) and Gergen's approach (Moerkerken and Spanjersberg). Without making full comparisons between these schools (should that even be possible), Van Dongen's approach was criticized for being too abstract (Moerkerken) or too cognitive (Van Oss). Another point of critique was not including yourself as an actor in the interaction process (Moerkerken): "and that makes it a bit creepy because this gives you [the intervenor or consultant] the position to always distantly look at 'the reality that is being socially constructed here' which makes you the person who 'always knows better.' Including yourself [beyond ratio or cognition] as a human being, makes you less frightening for the people you work with" (Shirine Moerkerken, personal communication, 29 July 2020). This is what Hosking and McNamee (2012) refer to as the difference between 'being apart from' and 'being a part of'. According to Van Oss, both social construction and Karl Weick's sensemaking have

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24 In Dutch: Denkadviseren.

been used in a very cognitive way in the Netherlands, for example by Van Dongen et al. (1996). "The focus should be on relating and acting, rather than on cognition. Cognition is created through relating and acting, it's the outcome of both" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020).

Van Oss further positions social construction within the Berger and Luckman (1966) approach which focuses on construction being about understanding the world; how people construct realities; and subsequently relate to 'what has been constructed'. Changing is said to be 'deconstruction', which is not in the social construction realm. Berger and Luckman's approach is often considered constructivist, rather than constructionist (e.g., Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a; McNamee, Rasera & Martins, 2023). Spanjersberg stresses the importance of taking a relational approach. In her view there is often too much emphasis on people's intentions and on 'inner worlds' (privileging an individualist perspective), whereas a systems orientation requires more focus on the effects of peoples' actions, and this is always relational because we talk about the effect on other people. "Given the dominant psychological discourse, we only have limited language to talk about the individual as a relational being. Referring to Gergen's (2009) Relational Being: 'what would remain of an individual's biography if you don't address the relations of the main character'? His perfect illustration of us being relational beings is criticized by, and criticizes, the widespread belief of people being autonomous individuals" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020).

Conversation themes: Resources for facilitating organizational change and Placing interventions

When zooming in on the experts' stories, several resources for facilitating organizational change, and suggestions for placing interventions, can be identified. Both originate from the expert's 'general orientation' to facilitating change, as noted above. The separation between resources and intervention suggestions can be argued as being artificial. By separating them, I distinguish between a conceptual and a practical level. After presenting the resources and intervention suggestions, I will address the experts' views on 'resistance.'

Shirine Moerkerken
Following her critique on Van Dongen's abstract and distant way of applying social constructionist ideas to organizational change, Shirine Moerkerken purposefully translated the 'Rotterdam School' into more practical resources for consultants (Moerkerken, 2015, 2021). Causing change requires the consultant to create conditions that facilitate the transformation process. According to Moerkerken, it is beneficial that consultants have some knowledge about the problem at hand, and some 'philosophical' contours of a solution (but not a clear picture of it). Secondly, consultants need to make sure that partici-

pating organizational members experience the urgency to co-create the solution. Third, consultants should be able to rely on the process and trust that solutions will be created when conditions are right and, fourth, they will identify and create good conditions (for example, experimenting space, stimulating 'the real encounter'). Fifth, consultants should facilitate the process based on guiding principles, realizing that certain actions will contribute to the co-creation of the solution (guiding principles include: eliciting hopes and expectations, including differences, allowing for differences so that conflict and harmony coincide, and realizing that we ourselves are part of the problem at hand). Finally, consultants should use language that opens up (implying the use of poetry-like rather than management language). In her recent work, Moerkerken (2021) elaborates on possibilities to utilize functional conflict (in contrast to dysfunctional conflict) as a resource for causing change. Another resource that emerged in our conversation is the idea of not intervening too much: "some situations may be far from perfect, however, sometimes the outcome can be that there is no better way; and at least we [again] know why we are organizing the way we do" (Shirine Moerkerken, personal communication, 29 July 2020). This also requires the consultant to bear self-criticizing thoughts about his/her contribution to improving the situation. This relates to the idea that the consultants themselves are their most important instrument. Moerkerken personally engages with her clients, so the click needs to be mutual. This influences her intervening. "I bring in 'the whole me' instead of just 'the professional me' and do not leave some parts of me at home because 'that is what consultants are supposed to do'. However, I have learned (while working online due to COVID-19) that I was not really used to including 'me also being a mother' in that relationship, yet" (Shirine Moerkerken, personal communication, 29 July 2020). Her personal transformation as a person, caused by both training at Phoenix Opleidingen and her experience that the consultant is also changed because of their projects, was a driving force to write her first book, stressing that consultants need to include themselves in the consulting process.

Suggestions for placing interventions derived from our conversation include: 1) center the collective meaning making process, and focus on continuing the interaction; 2) provide holding space for the process without psychologizing; 3) do get in the way of interactions to question generally accepted constructions; 4) bear not knowing, and solve the puzzle together with the participating organizational members.

Leike van Oss
Using system intelligence is a first resource in Leike van Oss's change work. This is especially crucial when a consultant facilitates the type of organizational change that has no clear end picture available upfront. "Such change processes are multi-actor, multi-level, and multi-aspect: thus, multi-everything. So, when you only focus on what is happening in the group you work with, you focus too little on the system's complexity both in time

and scope" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, September 2020). In her view, an outcome of social construction is reducing ambiguity and reducing system intelligence[25], for example with respect to the possible long-term effects of our actions. "Bringing back the complexity could, for example, prompt asking useful questions such as what the customer might think about the change process. Or: 'so now we are focusing on this, but what haven't we seen yet'? Or: 'could we maybe take a look at the bigger picture and see how this change process relates to, or is affected, by other issues'?" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020). Systems thinking, including circular thinking, may invite renewed ambiguity and expanding our views which, according to Van Oss, is useful for organizations because we tend to look at organizations from a linear and one-dimensional perspective.

A second resource for change work is not to make planned change 'less planned.' "Most consultants get projects from clients who say, 'this is the change, good luck with [implementing] it'" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020). Her recommendation for those consultants is to first accept the project [as presented] and look for possibilities to create room that contributes to the process, while working with the client organization. "As a consultant you cannot ignore that 'the change' [as presented] is already a construct that has already excluded a good deal of ambiguity for the organization. And you probably know that excluding that ambiguity will lead to future problems, because you cannot 'organize away this ambiguity.' But that doesn't mean that you can always 'show them' at the start. It's more useful to think about how you can help the organization to deal with that when problems emerge" [along the way] (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020). In Van Oss's view, the essence of living systems is that these systems are built in a way that they can adjust to their environment in order to survive. So, changing serves continuity: in the metaphor of organizations as living system, they are both designed and adaptive systems at the same time. "Following Gregory Bateson's 'the difference that makes the difference,' we only see what does not match up with what we already know, meaning that we miss all the information that is the same. Change is seeing the difference at a certain moment and then adjusting. […] All these small adjustments (continuous change) are made to ensure continuity. And that is different from planned change (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020).

A third resource for facilitating organizational change is to discern 'cognitive constructs' and 'lived through constructs.' When starting a process of organizational change, a cognitive construct of the desired reality already exists, offered by management (for

25 This view resonates with Berger and Luckman's (1966) orientation to social construction, which is considered constructi*vist* by other constructi*onists* (e.g., Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a; McNamee et al., 2023). In a constructi*vist* view, a socially constructed reality is experienced as a fixed reality 'out there' which may reduce the room to benefit from ambiguity and system intelligence in organizational change processes.

example). When discussing this cognitive construct, organization members make sense of it using their current frames of reference. "Organization members try to understand what we do not know yet by means of what we do know [current reality]" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020). Although this may seem like a burden, it is actually a blessing in disguise. "By trying to make sense of this new cognitive construct informed by current reality, the change agent is offered a 'streetwise reflection' by the people who do the job and can talk about feasibility." This response is generative as it provides useful information to craft the change process further and to discuss how frames of reference influence making sense of 'the new.'

From our conversation, some practical suggestions for intervening emerged: 1) When facilitating organizational change, do not make it personal but stick to intervening in interactions at group level: so, do not start 'digging into people's heads'; 2) When a consultant experiences something that does not seem to be helping, it does not need explicit reflection in a cognitive way from an outside perspective. Another approach could be suggesting a different way to go on instead of psychologizing. "Or I just do something different, like stop working very hard when I realize that I am" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020); 3) When consulting in pairs, make sure you have a 'clean collaboration' and that you trust each other's way of working.

Marijke Spanjersberg
Marijke Spanjersberg offered resources that relate to both Shirine Moerkerken's and Leike van Oss's orientation to change (conflict, respectively system thinking). The first relates to working with conflict. When there is conflict, Spanjersberg works to restore personal relations. She draws from Van Dongen's concept of functional conflict and also borrows from systemic therapists. "When relationships are troubled, it is not useful to make interventions on the content of the conflict" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). Spanjersberg says she judges very little because judging affects the relationship, "and if I judge, I judge how the system is working, not the individuals. […] So, we de-blame[26] individuals and start looking for ways to get things running again, from a higher level of abstraction" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). She offered an example of how she worked to restore relations by applying an outsider witness conversation which she borrowed from narrative therapy. When relationships are fragile, reducing stress induced by conflicts should precede addressing the conflict. "Our brain simply doesn't work that well when we are stressed. We also wouldn't do that [add more stress] at home, with our families" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020).

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26 In Dutch: 'ontschuldigen'.

Secondly, systems thinking is central to her way of working. "What I have learned from systems thinking is that, when one works with an organization, you need to draw a line for practical purposes and decide who (not) to include. This drawing of a line can be considered as an (un)ethical act because drawing a line discerns, includes and excludes, and that is always an arbitrary line. Looking at the system by + and − 1 (zooming in and out) makes this act a bit more ethical. As one can't look at each level at the same time, one needs to vary between smaller parts and the bigger picture and check who might feel left out. For example, strong coalitions at a particular level may emerge because of a conflict at another level, otherwise the coalition wouldn't be necessary" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). Another aspect of systems thinking is the experienced fairness, a concept from evolutionary psychology. Spanjersberg connects experienced fairness to relations in organizations. If things are not experienced as fair, this puts pressure on the relationships, making it impossible to collaborate (for example, when some people experience being excluded; not getting important information; or experience an imbalance in contributing/receiving). Applying the concept of experienced fairness to organizational change suggests that people's responses to change always make sense, although they may not be useful in the bigger organizational picture. "I focus a lot on the experienced fairness and, very often, people are required to contribute more than they receive in return. In organizational change, the older generation is often asked to sacrifice more than the younger generation[27], which feels unfair" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020).

A third resource offered by Marijke Spanjersberg is looking at change from a non-utopian perspective, drawing on Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (1974). According to these authors, believing that people are autonomous individuals leads us to 'utopian thinking.' "I encounter utopian goals everywhere I go. People who believe that whatever one thinks of is possible [assuming individual malleability of reality] tend not to see what the relational price to pay is when they pursue that malleability" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). Spanjersberg is critical about putting the pressure of pursuing malleability on people, which generates stress. Although a lot may be malleable, the relational price to pay is hardly discussed, or easily stepped over and framed as resistance. In a recent article, Spanjersberg (2020) writes about the tragedy of people who persist in searching unfruitfully for solutions to unsolvable problems; problems which we simply need to learn to live with.

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27 For example: older teachers having to give up their identity as 'historian' and needing to become a 'coach' in a learning process. This can be experienced as very unfair, given that the older generation needs to sacrifice a lot more than the younger generation (coming fresh from university and possibly more interested in didactics than the learning content). So, when older teachers give up a lot, what do they get in return? If this is suddenly called 'resistance', a conflict emerges between older and younger generations of teachers. The same could be said about digitalization in education.

Some practical suggestions for intervening by Spanjersberg are: 1) Act plurally parti-san[28], showing that you 'love everyone [in the system] the same' (this is different from acting neutral); 2) When contracting, explicitly inquire into the paradigms that the stakeholders believe to be effective; 3) Practice relational introspection; 4) Refrain from a linear and simplified application of organizational constellations as she views them as being too mystical, too linear (cause-effect-guilt), and too pretentious in 'telling the truth' from a 'phenomenological viewpoint'.

Stefan Woudenberg
Resources for facilitating organizational change, as offered by Stefan Woudenberg (Phoe-nix Opleidingen), generally focus on offering learning possibilities. Phoenix Opleidingen is more an educational institute for consultants who facilitate change than a consulting firm facilitating organizational change itself. Yet, they are sometimes requested to offer direct consultations to organizations. The first resource relates to educating consultants who facilitate organizational change. "For me, the focus is on what Phoenix refers to as: where the 'love system' and the 'task system' meet[29]. Or put more psychologically: which transference do consultants encounter in the organization they work with? I aim to contribute to the consultant's unraveling of this transference" (Stefan Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020). Through leading by example and sharing his stories, Woudenberg invites consultants to undertake self-inquiry.

A second resource is to look at organizations through the character styles lens, as articulated by Veenbaas, Goudswaard and Verschuren (2006). Phoenix Opleidingen utilizes these character styles, for example through the polarities that are at play in each character style. Each character style centers on one pole that is well-developed and easily shown, and another pole that is less well-developed. Thus, the focus is on learning, on how we have learned to move between both poles, and how we can do this more consciously. The concept of character styles offers useful possibilities to look at people's dynamics rather than looking at 'the organization' as an object. It can serve as a diagnostic tool that also signposts possible learning paths.

Another resource is the transactional analysis concept of organization script (e.g., Veen-baas, Hjort, Broekhuizen and Dirkx, 2019). One often hears a particular organization script echoed in an organization's request for facilitation.

A fourth resource is working with personal wounds in the story that consultants ask guidance about. "This often starts with something the consultant encounters in the

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28 In Dutch: meerzijdig partijdig.
29 Within Phoenix Opleidingen, the 'love system' refers to family systems; the 'task system' refers to organizational systems.

organization and later it shows how this is affected by a 'deep [personal] wound.' This wound creates a deep trance[30] that limits our use of the possible ways we can act [to avoid experiencing the old wound again]. I often work with the wounds of the professional who works with organizations. I offer these consultants a learning opportunity about their personal histories and their dynamics. The more you, I, and the consultants can live with the dynamics of our personal history, the more we can be with the people we work with" (Stefan Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020). The way that Stefan Woudenberg applies the many Phoenix Opleidingen concepts depends on who his client is. When they participate in Phoenix's educational program for facilitating organizations[31], consultants learn about the concepts at both theoretical and practical levels. However, "when I'm working with a team [directly in a client organization] for one day, I avoid using specific character style language, but work with the related polarities. I often start with an introductory round about personal qualities, and talk about the metaphor I asked them to bring. By doing so, a trained listener hears 'the unsaid' and is able to elicit possibilities for growth that people often recognize when I articulate them" (Stefan Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020).

Intervention suggestions from Stefan Woudenberg: 1) listen to 'the unsaid', also when an organization makes a request for facilitation; 2) lead by example; 3) place interventions from ones position in the systemic order; 4) stimulate real encounter versus 'playing games'.

Edu Feltmann
Edu Feltmann's contribution focuses on challenging the discourse offered by the client. 'Think advising' can possibly be useful when clients have not found a satisfactory solution for their situation through their own thinking or with the help from advisors with specific expertise (Feltmann et al., 2010). In these situations, which can center on both business and personal problems, doing more of the same would not be generative. An applicable first resource for advisors, derived from our conversation and Feltmann's publications, is discerning three levels of thinking and intervening: mono-paradigmatic advising (or problem solving) in which the advisor accepts the client's view on reality and looks for solutions within that view; poly-paradigmatic advising (or expanding frames) in which the advisor challenges the client's problem statement by suggesting that different interpretations of realty (in terms of norms, values, interests, and rules of play) could result in different problem statements; and meta-paradigmatic advising (or 'person developing' or 'thinking style developing' advising) in which the advisor focuses on the client him/herself and the way (s)he creates images of reality, regardless of what

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30 According to Veenbaas, Hjort, Broekhuizen and Dirkx (2019), trance is a defense mechanism. It is a narrowing, focusing or fixation of attention, a state in which attention (partly) deviates from what is happening here-and-now.
31 In Dutch: Professionele Begeleiding van Organisaties.

these images are (Feltmann, 1984; Feltmann et al., 2010). Think advising relates to the meta-paradigmatic level of intervening. One possible method Feltmann refers to is Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), more specifically the technique of Reframing: "their [Bandler & Grinder, founders of NLP] surprising finding was that changing the patterns, noticed by the therapist, leads to a process of developing the client's self-image and identity and, ultimately, to redefining the presumed reality" (Feltmann, 1984, p. 220).

A second resource is the think advising conversation itself, which is aimed at de-fixing[32] and may result in generative transformation. Feltmann defines this type of advising as "a psycholinguistic, interactional activity: a conversation in which the thoughts and images about the reality (in the mind) of the client and/or his views about what is needed to be done can change, in this case through the use of wondering (or 'stupid') words by the advisor" (Feltmann et al., 2010, p. 27). Feltmann et al. (2010) articulate five premises and beliefs that inspired the psycholinguistic theory and their discourse-challenging interventions. First, by assuming a postmodern orientation, and viewing advising as a language game, one may focus on what the client is saying, thinking, and interpreting in the moment, and look for ways in which that might be different. Recognizing, 'de-fixing', and changing the influence of a client's dominant discourse is evoked and stimulated in the interaction between the client and think advisor. Second, keep in mind the uncommon ethical-political premise that people wish to articulate and experience human dignity, which is stronger than the need to work in order to be economically self-supporting. Third, this desire for dignity tends to be ignored in organizations and suppressed by the duty to be useful. Fourth, following on from the third, many clients of organizational advisors can be viewed as people looking to regain their dignity, notwithstanding their often pragmatic, businesslike formulated request for help. Finally, the think advisor should not have any specific interest, and should not interfere too much, because this is dysfunctional and humiliating. It is impossible and not necessary for the client and the think advisor to 'fully understand' each other, as they can only offer language to try and describe their thoughts and feelings. Beyond these premises and beliefs, Feltmann et al. (2010) offer various 'forms of play' as resources with respect to listening, analyzing, creating interventions, and responding (see Feltmann et al., 2010, p. 104-165).

Rules of thumb for intervening, according to Feltmann, include: 1) muse loosely, fantasize, create space in robust reasoning and rhetoric rules; 2) play with language[33] to stimulate or invite the client to think differently about 'what is the case.' For example: participating out-of-step in the conversation by intentionally using different words than

32 In Dutch: 'ontstroevend'.
33 Edu Feltmann was inspired by Wittgenstein's concept of language games and how advising can be viewed as a language game. As I understood during our conversation, he transformed this into playing with language as a way of challenging the client's dominant discourse.

expected, considering the offered discourse by the client, or by using the same words differently. "When a think advisor reflects on the vocabulary that the conversational partners have been using over the last 30 minutes, and what words have not been used during that time (which are far more), using words from a different discourse could enliven the conversation. Such playing with language can be very useful in dealing with complex problems" (Edu Feltmann, personal communication, 3 August 2020); 3) Assure an 'empty' self-awareness. Paradoxically, not having an own interest in the conversation, nor caring about the client's story, generates unconditional, respectful, and non-interfering attention for the client; 4) Stay out of the client's discourse, but remain close the client's text to invite the client to de-fix and let go of interpretations that seem self-evident (Feltmann et al. 2010, p. 39). Put differently: it would be best for the advisor to consider him/herself as "an empty, unprogrammed 'lump of meat' which produces text, which arises only in and as a response to the client's text" (Feltmann et al. 2010, p. 54); 5) Signal possible parallels between a 'one-dimensional' focus here-and-now [in the think advising conversation] and a possibly one-dimensional description of the situation there-and-then [the problem situation that is being referred to], by keeping an eye on how the conversations between the conversational partners [e.g., management team] is going. For example, look at the speed, interactions, structure, and focus on emotions, hesitations and doubts in the think advising conversation.

Now that I have presented various resources and intervention suggestions derived from the experts' stories, I will first address some experts' views on 'resistance'. After that, I will summarize the experts' views on (the necessity of) consultants' personal development, which resonate with their abovementioned approaches to facilitating organizational change.

Conversation theme: Appreciation of 'resistance'

In some conversations, 'resistance' emerged as a theme. Van Oss mentioned two situations, which are easily considered as 'resistance' but are, in fact, valuable. First is what she calls tenacious[34] reactions from a system's 'robust core.' According to Van Oss's view, that social construction is intended to offer stability, every organization has a robust core which cannot be easily changed. This robustness is helpful because it gets the work done and offers useful routines. From this perspective, such tenacious reactions to change should be valued as a positive characteristic of organizations rather than a negative byproduct of change or (individual) resistance. "We concluded this because we experienced hardy reactions to planned change." These hardy reactions provide important information about the change process, i.e., that too much is being changed or too little is being changed.

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34 In Dutch: Taaie.

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the streetwise reflection (from people who do the work) on a cognitive construct generates information about how to further the change process. This response, originating from the lived through constructs, about the feasibility should not be regarded as (individual) resistance but as valuable information about making sense of 'the new.' This is a generative step because only putting old cognitions against new cognitions does not bring change if it is not brought in relation to lived through constructions. Van Oss offered a metaphor from her background in homeopathy. "When looking for a medicine to treat a pattern of illness, homeopaths look for something slightly different from what is familiar to the body of the specific patient. Offering something completely different would not be useful because it would not be recognized in the body. Offering more of the same also doesn't work because it would not interfere with the sick-making patterns. Breaking the pattern requires something almost the same but slightly different. Experienced managers know this. You change a lived through construct by replacing it with something slightly different. Not by offering a 'big bang.' Although a 'big bang' does have the effect of waking people up" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020).

Spanjersberg also views 'resistance' as valuable. According to her, it offers possibilities for vitalization. "Resistance is not 'in the individual' but it is relational. It is information for the other about the information that is being exchanged. If resistance is viewed as relational, we can ask what information wants to be heard? Or where would that information go and how is it received? Or where is there more resistance and where less? And can we understand why? By looking at it this way, resistance is not really about the content but about the quality of the relationship" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). Woudenberg brings another approach to resistance. When applying the concept of character styles, experienced resistance could be a useful means of eliciting learning possibilities.

Now that I have sketched relevant aspects of the experts' professional practices, I present their (related) views on personal professional development for management consultants. In addition to the theoretical relevance, the kernel of these views formed an extra motivation for undertaking my action research study.

Conversation theme: Personal development for consultants

In the experts' stories, several connections to the personal development of management consultants emerged. Shirine Moerkerken mentioned that, since the consultant is one's most important instrument, she experienced great benefits from her personal transformation work at Phoenix Opleidingen. She gained more life experience and possibilities to offer 'holding space' for the change process, without psychologizing. Another gain is that she learned to observe more precisely and ask questions rather than

provide answers. According to Leike van Oss, consultants should refrain from using their own psychological issues as a resource when facilitating group work (e.g., their own transference experiences). However, they do need to be quite self-aware. They need to be able to see how certain events at the client organization relate to their own psychological issues and how this influences the interactions. Consultants need to choose their responses deliberately because they are the main instrument. When introducing the focus of my research, Leike van Oss and I talked about 'interaction' and 'relation' and how context is more important in this respect than 'the psychology.' "How my 'inner me' (psychology) defines relations is different from how the context defines relations, and is also different from the interactions that are happening when working with a group. […] What I think is interesting about your research is that it focuses on the least tangible aspect of consulting. Anything we say about it immediately becomes not true or not important because it is so dependent on the context, the local situation, and it is also personal" (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020).

Marijke Spanjersberg sees how the resources that we apply as consultants may originate from our life stories. However, she is not happy with the dominant view of malleability in the self-improvement ideology. "I don't think it's totally wrong, but it's an oversimplified narrative." (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). When, for example, we talk about being assertive, we mean assertive in relation to how assertive others are. "It is relational, and there is always a difference. It is more about how to make these (sometimes difficult) differences productive" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). When educating consultants, she wants to stay away from this 'sloppy psychology.' "I'm very grateful to Paul Watzlawick who said, 'we should embrace our human deficit.' We are not going to be better people through the so-called self-improvement ideology, which is utopian" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). She herself is hesitant to focus on connections between biography and consulting because she would have to work very hard not to step into that 'self-improvement ideology.' However, "through personal coaching, consultants would probably be able to reflect on 'this is what I'm carrying with me, this is what I want to be true to,' yielding both positive and negative things. So of course, there is always a personal component, but that translates into a relational effect" (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). She is therefore interested in relational [social constructionist] oriented resources for professional development rather than mere individualist self-improvement notions. As noted, Stefan Woudenberg offers learning possibilities for consultants with respect to how our life stories influence our facilitation of organizations. Their focus is on personal leadership, unraveling transference processes, and the like, to increase the possibilities to act more effectively as a consultant.

2.3.2 Synthesized Stories of Therapy Professionals

Conversation themes: Relational vs entitative approach to practicing therapy (including Approach to Social Construction, Therapy disciplines, and the Utility of DSM classifications)

All three therapy professionals work, to some extent, from a social constructionist stance. Two professionals (Dorti Been and Justine van Lawick) explicitly mention social construction as their academic orientation, while Stefan Woudenberg more or less does the same without articulating this paradigm: "Wibe Veenbaas [one of our founders] was very inspired by Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Iván Böszörményi-Nagy, who all in their way said that a person is made into 'someone' in relation to others. I tend to say that, when working with people, I focus more on the relationship than 'who or what' the other 'is'" (Stefan Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020). Justine van Lawick discerned various approaches related to social construction, such as constructivism[35] and post-humanism.

Taking a social constructionist approach to practicing therapy was reported to be really different from more entative approaches. When a therapist takes a constructionist approach, they tend to position themselves as a conversational partner rather than the knowing expert, which includes the therapist sharing stories and experiences as well and being affected as well (Dorti Been, personal communication, 14 July 2020). The therapist who works from a constructionist stance is more interested in the stories that people 'make true' than in 'truth bearing DSM diagnoses.' To Van Lawick, the DSM is not 'the truth' but a set of agreements that enables us to organize information and to communicate (Justine van Lawick, personal communication, 21 October 2020). "However, sometimes a DSM diagnosis offers clients a temporal feeling of 'justification' which may contribute to their situation. Following this, not all people should visit a narrative therapist. Some, for example, are better off working with a different (more mainstream) therapist, whatever matches the client situation[36]" (Dorti Been, personal communication, 14 July 2020). In line with the social constructionist orientation, concepts from particular therapeutic disciplines (such as family or systemic therapy, narrative therapy, and psychoanalysis) are not viewed as 'the truth' but as possibly useful resources. "In a specific situation, it can be useful and generative to use a certain therapeutic concept (which in other contexts may be described as universal truth) in a way that relates to the client and could benefit him/her. In that case, it is approached as a narrative, as a

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35 Justine van Lawick considers Berger and Luckman's (1966) version of social construction to be closer to constructivism.

36 For example, Dorti Been herself experienced the psychoanalysis that she underwent earlier in life as beneficial to her self-esteem, although today she would probably not choose this therapy again.

resource for action, which can contribute to a process of moving beyond the 'current situation'" (Dorti Been, personal communication, 14 July 2020).

Conversation theme: Resources for practicing therapy

In the various conversations with the therapy professionals, a wide range of resources for practicing therapy emerged, such as: circular questioning[37] (Been, Van Lawick); Really listening instead of looking for what you already 'know' from your therapeutic background (Been); and 'withness thinking' rather than 'aboutness thinking'[38] (Van Lawick). With respect to family constellations as a resource, Justine van Lawick is critical about Bert Hellinger's approach (see also Van Lawick, 2005) which she considers too normative and not commensurate with a social constructionist approach. In our conversation, she referred to earlier and more appropriate constellation approaches by, for example, Virginia Satir and Iván Böszörményi-Nagy. In general, Justine van Lawick argues that therapists should maintain irreverence (a concept she learned from Gianfranco Cecchin). "Maintaining irreverence keeps you curious and assures an open repertoire. No approach should become an absolute truth, 'a bible'" (Justine van Lawick, personal communication, 21 October 2020). Stefan Woudenberg offered various concepts such as character styles and polarities; inviting self-inquiry through leading by example; and working with 'the unsaid.'

Regarding 'withness thinking', Van Lawick says: "It is also about 'being poised,' being totally ready to work with your client: not going to the files, or your last session's notes. Don't have any expectations or wishes of your own about the client's process. You should not be looking for a plan at all because, as a therapist, you can't get your clients from A to B. You need to be willing to think in a complex way and be all ready. Like a skier who is totally ready to descend but is not thinking: 'first this leg, then that move etc.' He just goes. And that is also the way in which I try to practice therapy. […] It's a challenge, not that easy. I need to be present. You need to be ready and present in the moment to be with the client. When you are 'in your files' you cannot be 'with your client.'" Again, according to Shotter: it is about 'withness' while many therapists stick to 'aboutness.' Van Lawick notes that therapists' training tends to focus on diagnosing and 'aboutness thinking' (i.e., talking about a therapeutic process from an outside perspective, as happening 'over there'), rather than on being involved and on 'withness thinking'[39] (i.e., engaging from within, interacting with the client responsively). In her view, acting from a 'withness' perspective is both powerful and demanding.

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37 See Tomm (1987a, 1987b, 1988); Spanjersberg (2013).
38 See Shotter (2005, 2006, 2016).
39 Further, see section 10.3.

Conversation theme: Personal development for consultants who facilitate organizational change

With respect to the development of management consultants who facilitate organizational change, two of the therapy professionals made explicit connections between therapy and organizational change work. A key element for Stefan Woudenberg in his practice is to offer learning possibilities to consultants to enhance their personal leadership. He focuses on unraveling experiences of (counter) transference as a means to increase a consultant's possibilities for acting more contributively when engaging with the client organization system. Justine van Lawick mentioned that systemic thinking is practiced in both therapy and organization change work. Although her experience is that many professionals prefer ready-made tools rather than looking at parallel processes and multiple inclusions in different contexts, she expects that the personal development of management consultants will contribute to more effective consulting. According to Van Lawick, "bringing the collaborative model from social construction to organizational change probably offers possibilities of doing organizational change differently, generating a better chance of success because they [the consultants] are more 'with the people' with whom they work" (Justine van Lawick, personal communication, 21 October 2020).

2.4 Reflection

From the organizational change literature that inspired me, I concluded that possibilities for improving the facilitation of organizational change by management consultants may lie in supporting collaboration, which requires management consultants to be self-aware. In my view, the results from the interview study with expert practitioners add to this conclusion. In their various approaches, the organizational change experts, namely Shirine Moerkerken, Leike van Oss, Marijke Spanjersberg, Edu Feltmann and Stefan Woudenberg, aim to facilitate the process of organizational change in various ways. As schematically presented in Table 1, they offer various resources for facilitating organizational change and suggestions or rules of thumb for intervening in a way that does not aim to 'take over' but facilitate stakeholders to create solutions collaboratively. The therapy experts Dorti Been and Justine van Lawick, and Stefan Woudenberg, offer resources for practicing therapy that relate to facilitating organizational change processes very well. Both groups of experts share a process orientation to change, a systemic approach, and a focus on language and communication.

With respect to personal development for consultants in the context of their facilitating role in organizational change, most experts explicitly note the possible contribution of personal transformation (as I call it). According to Moerkerken, personal transformation

contributes to 'including yourself in the process.' Van Oss notes that consultants need to be aware of how their psychological issues relate to stakeholder interactions. Spanjersberg argues that, in her experience, there is always a personal component which translates into a relational effect. She warns about an oversimplified self-improvement approach to developing consultants, but welcomes possible contributions that are in line with a social constructionist approach. Van Lawick expects that the personal development of consultants may contribute to the consultant being more 'with the people,' possibly increasing the chance of success. Finally, Woudenberg's view is that consultants' learning about how their life stories influence their organizational facilitation, contributes to creating more room to act, which benefits the client system. In sum, most experts support the idea that my proposed action research project may enhance the reflexivity of management consultants, which in turn may improve their facilitation of organizational change processes.

Now that I have presented the context and motivation for this thesis, I will present the social constructionist approach to the action research study. Then, I will introduce the scientific foundations of doing action research from a constructionist stance. After that, in part II of this dissertation, I depict the actual action research project, its various components, and the methods used.

CHAPTER 3

Introducing the Social Constructionist Approach to this Action Research Study

"What we take to be knowledge does not begin with the lone individual observing and recording the world for what it is. Rather, as we confront the world, our descriptions and explanations emerge from our existence in relationships. It is out of those relationships that we foster our vocabularies, assumptions, and theories about the nature of the world (including ourselves), and the way we go about studying or carrying out research. These relationships also favor certain values, either explicit or implicit. What we take to be knowledge of the world will always carry the values of those traditions that fashion our inquiry and our conclusions." (Gergen, 2015a, p.13)

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce the social constructionist approach to my action research study. Offering this introduction is important because of the differences in practicing research in various traditions and, consequently, in their contributions to theory. Researchers are called to reflect on the nature of their philosophical assumptions, "since there is no aphilosophical space available" (Johnson & Duberley, 2003, p. 9). According to McNamee and Hosking (2012), many researchers fail to realize that a) they have a philosophy, and b) there are a number of different philosophies of science. Gergen (2015a) notes that many scientists are unable to escape their premises and ask critical questions from alternative standpoints. My aim in elaborating on the approach of this study is to provide clarity about the philosophical basis of it, which enables the reader to understand and evaluate its consequences for the use of methods and the research results.

When I was writing this chapter, it appeared to me that the tone in Gergen's work has become milder in recent years. When I had the opportunity to ask him directly about this, he said that in the 1970's, his work was "an attempt to unseat positivism because it was the only game in town" (Kenneth J. Gergen, personal communication, 10 October 2022). According to Gergen, social construction now has acquired a place in the social sciences, although more work needs to be done in some countries, such as the Netherlands and Germany.

Earlier, in June 2019, I attended Gergen's lecture[40] at The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) in Amsterdam. In this lecture, which was initiated by Professor Celeste Wilderom, Gergen spoke about the 'science wars' between scientists who hold different research paradigms (such as social construction and positivism). After Gergen's lecture, Professor Angelique Cramer (psychologist and methodologist) offered her response. This was followed by an interactive and collaborative 'Q & A,' in which Gergen and Cramer responded to questions from the audience. Before attending this lecture, I was in the US as a visiting scholar at the University of New Hampshire. During my time there, I collaborated closely with Professor Sheila McNamee to extend my knowledge of social construction which I had acquired as a Master student in Business Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam. One of the first things I remember being taught there is that research paradigms are incommensurate (Essers, 1995), explaining why 'science wars' occur. However, as Gergen argued in his lecture, although these philosophic differences are principally irresolvable, this does not mean that scientists need to be 'at war.' Instead, as both Gergen and

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40   For more information, see https://nias.knaw.nl/events/constructionism-and-positivism-from-conflict-to-co-creation/.

Cramer proposed, we as scientists could look for the shared aspirations of scientists, and value the different approaches and their contributions to society.

I intend to introduce the social constructionist approach to my action research study which I describe in this dissertation from a collaborative stance. Working with PhD supervisors who hold different orientations to practicing research has been a blessing (sometimes in disguise) with respect to my doctoral education. Although I agree with Essers (and many others) about the (potential) incommensurability of research para- digms (e.g., social construction and positivism), I see that people who perform research from different orientations do not need to be 'at war' when it comes to collaborating and using methods (also see, Gergen, 2015b; Johnson & Duberley, 2003). I hope that the way I depict this in my dissertation may serve as a small contribution to what Gergen so strongly proposed in his lecture, "move from conflict to co-creation" as scientists. The introduction that I offer here is not meant to be a description of 'the best approach to science.' Rather, it is a way to articulate the premises of my particular contribution to the world, and to discuss several critiques by and of social construction. As noted, I expect that this will enable the reader to understand and evaluate my work and its contributions.

Before diving into the details of this introduction, one remark must be made about terminology. In this dissertation, I use the terms 'relational' and 'social construction' as two sides of the same coin. Relational theory and practice, as terms, tend to be used in professional writings or conversations, whereas social construction is an academic term, used by the scientific community (Sheila McNamee, personal communication, 20 December 2022). The professional term 'relational' has its philosophical basis in the academic field of social construction.

3.2 From General Theory to Generative Theory: The Emergence of Social Construction as an Alternative Approach to Research

In this section, I offer a sketch of the influences that gave rise to social construction as a research orientation. Further, I address Gergen's critique of positivism, to which social construction is a response, and his proposed different approach to theory, namely generative theory. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, the tone in early con- structionist publications was more critical due to the early attempts to legitimize its approach (see also Romaioli and McNamee, 2021). These early publications resulted in critique of social construction, which contributed to a further development of the

approach. However, as I describe in section 3.5, some critiques of social construction tend to persist.

Social construction arose from a philosophical basis of postmodernism, critical sociological influences, and the turn to language and the crisis in social psychology (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a). Postmodernism rejects "the notion that social change is a matter of discovering and changing the underlying structures of social life through the application of a grand theory or metanarrative" (Burr, 2015, p. 14). Following Thomas Kuhn's work, Gergen (2015a) argues that even the most exact measurements are only sensible from within a particular paradigm. Important sociological influences on social construction come from Kant, Nietzsche and Marx, who agree that knowledge is at least in part a product of human thought, rather than grounded in an external reality (Burr, 2015). Berger and Luckman (1966) argue that all social phenomena are created and sustained through social practice by human beings together. However, at the same time, people may experience these phenomena as pre-given and fixed (Burr, 2015). According to Gergen (2015a), we need to question taken-for-granted realities critically; ask what has been left out; which descriptions are suppressed; and who is silenced, exploited or erased, because, "no matter how trustworthy the source, one's values inevitably lead to select certain ways of putting things and not others" (Gergen, 2015, p. 15). Out of the language turn and crisis in social psychology grew a focus on the historical and culturally specific character of knowledge, which requires us to look beyond the individual and final descriptions to understand present day psychology and social life (Bur, 2015; Gergen, 1973). Further, a new vision of science and psychology is warranted based on the view that people are "skilled social practitioners who are able to reflect and comment on their own activity" (Burr, 2015, p. 16). This is a radically different approach to psychology than the (until then) known social psychology which had emerged as an empiricist science, serving and paid for by people in power -in government and industry-, and leaving out the 'voice' of ordinary people (Burr, 2015).

Now that I have sketched out some main influences that led to the emergence of social construction, I will present some of Gergen's arguments in more detail in the remainder of this section. These arguments both articulate Gergen's' critique of positivism and lay the groundwork for an alternative approach.

Compared to the contributions to society of the natural sciences, the optimism that the social sciences, by following a positivist model of the natural sciences, would "generate fundamental knowledge of broad applicability" (Gergen, 2020a, p. 3) had largely disappeared. As Gergen (2020a) notes, "neither the voluminous theoretical offerings nor the staggering accumulation of research findings in the social sciences have contributed significantly to societal well-being" (p. 3). Social behavior theories based on positivist

assumptions have been severely challenged. For example, Gergen (1973) argues that social behavior theories are more reflections of contemporary history, as opposed to offering complete explanations, causal relationships, or general principles of human behavior. In this respect, the author stresses the differences between the studied phenomena in the natural and those in the social sciences. The former, being highly stable over time, which allows for broad generalizations, whereas the latter deals with facts that "are largely nonrepeatable and which fluctuate over time" (Gergen, 1973, p. 310). This implies that principles of human interaction cannot be developed over time, and knowledge cannot accumulate in the usual scientific sense because it does not transcend historical boundaries[41]. Attempts to build general laws of social behavior seem misdirected, and the associated belief that taking a similar approach to knowledge generation, as happens in the natural sciences, is unjustified (Gergen, 1973). Gergen's (1978) critique of the discipline's commitment to the traditional positivist paradigm centers on its preeminent concern with observable fact[42]; the demand for its verification to sustain theories[43]; the idea that patterns of human activity are in a constant state of

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41 Gergen (1973) offers two lines of arguments to support this thesis:

1) With respect to the impact of science on social interaction, Gergen *first* argues that scientists unintendedly communicate values when generating and communicating knowledge, resulting in a *prescriptive bias*: knowledge that is intended to be descriptive of 'what is' becomes, when shared, prescriptive of 'what is desirable', inviting anticipated use. *Second*, Gergen argues that informing society about theories reduces the possibility of *testing hypothesis adequately in an uncontaminated way*. "Established principles of behavior become inputs into one's decision making" (Gergen, 1973, p. 313), resulting in knowledge increasing alternatives to action and modifying or dissolving previous patterns of behavior. *Third*, the importance for people to be free and autonomous influences the *long-term validity* of *social psychological theories*. Valid theories offer possibilities for predicting behavior and social control. "Investments in freedom may thus potentiate behavior designed to invalidate the theory" (Gergen, 1973, p. 314).

2) Gergen's (1973) second line of arguments against transhistorical laws in social psychology lie in the observation that observed regularities, and thus theoretical principles, are strongly connected to historical circumstances. From this vantage point, theories based on research findings will probably be invalidated by later findings. The author notes that future research will undoubtedly still find other predictors more useful.

42 Gergen (1978) criticizes the preeminent concern with observable fact. In the traditional positivist orientation, the scientist observes the state of nature, documents the relationship among variables, and builds theoretical statements inductively that describe and explain the studied phenomena. Subsequently, theoretical descriptions and explanations can be formulated and tested against continuing observations. However, Gergen notes that unbiased observation of nature is impossible because one must already "harbor conceptions of 'what there is to be studied' in order to carry out the task of systematic observation" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1347). 'Beginning with the fact' implies starting from an implicit theory, reducing the potential of generative outcomes. Comparing the social sciences with the natural sciences, Gergen notes that, in the latter, starting from preformal theoretical conceptions is less problematic as it is in the former. In the social sciences, theory actively shapes the phenomena that are being studied in two ways: a) social theory may determine the investigatory scanning process by focusing on particular patterns while obscuring others; b) the social scientist may create their subject matter by actively changing its composition, for example through using descriptions and explanatory terms that have the capacity to shape the phenomena that are being studied. The choice of explanation may sustain or alter common patterns. Whereas the scientist, from a traditional perspective, may experience this as violating traditional scientist roles, from the perspective of generative theory, s/he may welcome this as an opportunity to directly alter social action patterns.

43 The goal of verification in the social sciences, to only sustain theories with high predictive validity, is largely chimerical according to Gergen (1978). The author offers three arguments: a) the conceptual categories into which actions are placed appear to be products of social negotiation. As opposed to the natural sciences, the ambiguous and continuously negotiated meaning of social actions places an impediment in the way of theoretical verification; b) related to the previous: the more the relationship between theoretical terms and measurements is an ambiguous one, the more freedom of choice the researcher has with respect to testing any hypothesis. According to Gergen, hypothesis testing has a self-fulfilling character because "with sufficient cultural knowledge it should be possible to generate support for any reasonable hypothesis, along with its antithesis" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1352); c) "If people generally maintain themselves within normally accepted limits of sensibility and avoid acting nonsensically, then any

emergence[44]; and the influence of scientists' values to their work[45]. The author considers these assumptions limit the possibilities of generative theorizing. Following his critique, Gergen (1978) introduces the idea of generative theory as a means to provoke debate, transform social reality, and reorder social conduct. The generative capacity of theory is "the capacity to challenge the guiding assumptions of the culture, to raise fundamental questions regarding contemporary social life, to foster reconsideration of that which is 'taken for granted,' and thereby to furnish new alternatives for social action" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1346). The author's central thesis is that the commitment to traditional positivist assumptions of social psychology limits ones capacity for generative theorizing. More particularly, the questioning of commonly shared assumptions, and the creation of fresh alternatives for action, is limited by: holding on to assumptions of building theory inductively from 'what is known;' requiring verification of theoretical ideas; disregarding the temporal, situated character of social events; and avoiding valuational entanglements. As the author notes, his analysis of the weaknesses in each of the traditional assumptions paves the way to liberate future theorizing (Gergen, 1978). Gergen (1982, 2015a) proposes one should evaluate theory, using the criterion of generativity rather than objectivity. A generative theory "unsettles common assumptions within the culture and thereby opens new vistas for action" (Gergen, 1982, p. 133). The greatest step toward generative theory lies in the development of an alternative metatheory. In this respect, the author articulates the contours of another approach to science: as an alternative offering that is coherent with earlier critique on positivism. This proposed new metatheory is based on Gergen's analyses of earlier work by research groups which he identified as dissident in relation to the positivist approach of the social sciences (i.e., the hermeneutic-interpretative; the dialectic; the critical; and the ethnogenetic

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theory that reflects common conceptions of what is sensible may be supported by at least a portion of the population at some time" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1352). Gergen's point here is that as long a theory makes sense, without any empirical testing, one can assume that its conceptual basis will, on occasion, be put to use in everyday life. According to the author, this seriously questions the demand for resource consuming testing of hypothesis, freeing time to spend on significant intellectual work and realizing the discipline's potential contributions to the history of thought.

44 According to Gergen (1978), unlike the natural sciences, the social sciences are confronted with patterns of human activity that may be in a continuous state of emergence. This places severe restrictions on scientists' efforts in predicting ongoing interactions, and on the possibility of developing a transhistoric quality theory. Although this may seem problematic for theory development in the traditional sense, Gergen (1978) argues that, while considering current social patterns as fragile, temporal and capable of alteration, scientists may be liberated from theorizing about 'what is' to start considering alternatives and operate generatively. Gergen's earlier argument with respect to theory shaping social phenomena further intensifies the invitation for generative theorizing and to consider theoretical vehicles for reaching desired ends.

45 Gergen (1978) argues that the scientist's values are linked to their work, even when they focus on describing 'what is.' Scientist's values are linked to selecting phenomena to study, to labeling phenomena, to interpreting findings, to the amount of evidence required to draw conclusions, and to the manner of applying social theory. As such, scientist's values shape the research practice and theory development, and they may favor some forms of social conduct over others and shape society. The author challenges researchers to "throw off the mask of neutrality and to confront more directly and honestly the valuational implications of his or her work. It would appear far more desirable for the theorist to give self-conscious consideration to matters of value in the development of theory than to stumble upon them some time after dissemination. […] personal values or ideology may properly serve as a major motivational source for generative theorizing. In this way, the theorist becomes a full participant in the culture, fundamentally engaged in the struggle of competing values so central to the human venture" (Gergen, 1978, p. 1355-1356).

movements). He reasoned that broad metatheoretical agreement across these groups may "serve as a metatheoretical base for a unifying alternative to the traditional account of scientific activity" (Gergen, 1982, p. 201). The author identified the following five assumptions, contrasting the traditional perspective, which could evoke agreement within these four 'dissident' groups: a) knowledge is socially constructed; b) social action is fundamentally unprogrammed and capable of infinite variations, and social order is the product of social agreement; c) scientific social knowledge is not cumulative and progressive because actions are multi-interpretable systems of understanding (including science) that undergo change. In other words, it is historical as people's patterns of action change; d) social psychological theory is argued to acquire an agential role in social life; and e) the dichotomy of fact-value is misleading, resulting in the legitimate entering of values, ideologies, or visions of an improved society, into the scientific arena. From the perspective of this new metatheory, theory is given a different role. Instead of developing theories with a high degree of correspondence with existing fact from a belief in cumulative science, research accounts in the proposed new metatheory are now given a function of theoretical vivification. However, the idea is not to abandon empirical work, but rather view traditional research accounts as forms of illustration, inviting others to use theory in interpreting their experience, rather than to accept these accounts as validating a particular theory.

3.3 Social Construction: Central Premises and Implications for Practicing Research

In the previous section, I reflected on the emergence of social construction as an alternative approach to research. In this section, I will present five central premises of social construction, and describe some implications for practicing research from a constructionist approach[46].

In the last few decades, a lot has been written about social construction. Among the different approaches to social construction, authors note commonalities (Pearce, 1992), common rejection of essentialist explanations (Cunliffe, 2008), and a kind of 'family resemblance' (Burr, 2015). However, it is no surprise that there are many ways to define or practice social construction (as noted in section 2.3: different approaches also emerged from the interviews with the professional experts). According to Burr (2015), it would be wrong to suggest the existence of coherent and identifiable types of social construction. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) refer to constructionism as a 'variegated mosaic' of research efforts (disciplines and topics) sharing more or less common motivations and

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46 For a more extensive introduction to social construction, see Burr (2015); Gergen (2015a); McNamee and Hosking (2012).

aspirations. Pearce (1992) uses the metaphor 'camper's guide' and refers to variations in construction as "'camps' irregularly distributed throughout a forest, with no sharp boundaries and considerable overlap in the light and heat cast by their fires" (Pearce, 1992, p. 140). Cunliffe (2008) also identifies a number of different approaches under the broad umbrella of social construction. Given these similarities and variations, this section highlights five features of social construction (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022) that are central in this dissertation, namely: language practices; process orientation; future forming approach; meaning as relational; and centering context. Following the highlighting of these central features, I address the consequences of taking a social constructionist approach to practicing research.

1.   Language practices

A lot of what we take for granted can be found to be socially constructed, and language practices are at the heart of this construction process (Burr, 2015). In social construction, there is a central focus on language practices. Here, I present several important constructionist notions about language practices which have been influenced by the ideas of (among others) Wittgenstein, Foucault, and Derrida.

First, social constructionists consider language to be constitutive rather than representative. This implies a shift in the role of language: language does not describe action, it *is* action (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996). Language provides the basis for thought because it provides us with categories to give meaning to our experience (Burr, 2015). Our very selves become products of language. The concepts that we use do not pre-exist language but are made possible by it (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a; Sampson, 2008). The constitutive view on language contradicts the taken for granted idea that language is nothing more than a clear and pure medium through which thoughts and feelings can be made available, and has two important implications: a) what we take to be a person (having personality, motivations, desires etc.) is not part of some essential human nature, existing separately from whether or not we have language. These things become available to us through language as a way of structuring our experience. And b) what we mean by what it takes to be a person -or any other event in the world- could always have been constructed differently (Burr, 2015). Gergen (2015a) notes that "the ways in which we describe and explain the world are not required by 'what there is'" (p. 8). According to this author, we enter the 'metaphoric soup' when we try to describe 'something that is there.' Language, for constructionists, is not limited to written or spoken text but includes all embodied activity (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). Recognizing the constitutive role of language does not suggest that we should abandon various traditions of truth but to see them as optional (Gergen, 2015a).

Second, we can distinguish between a micro and macro-orientation to the constitutive role of language, and how both are related. Within the micro-orientation, discursive psychologists focus on situated language use and how people actively build defensible identities or legitimize their version of events (Burr, 2015). The speech act theory (Austin, 1962) focuses on what the utterances of individual people *do*, emphasizing the performative nature of language, instead of describing a state of affairs. Language use is considered social action (we *do* things with our word or actions) for example: '*declaring* a war;' '*pronouncing* a couple husband and wife;' or '*promoting* someone to Doctor.' Within another research area in the micro-orientation, ethnomethodologists are interested in 'how ordinary people make sense of everyday life' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). From this perspective, interesting questions would be: what is the function of a person's talk?; what is at stake for them in the interaction?; what are they trying to achieve? and what discursive devices do they use? Within the macro-orientation, deconstructionists are concerned about how language and ideology structures influence the way we treat people, and examine this influence by deconstructing text (Burr, 2015). Deconstructionists look beyond the instances of situated language use, and focus on how the available discourses (including language and social practice) influence or limit us in what we can say or do, and what can be done to us (Burr, 2015). For example, the way that the dominant discourse on mental health or organization influences how we treat 'patients' and participants in organizations. The analytic approach in this discourse is often called 'Foucauldian,' referring to the influence of the work by Michel Foucault (e.g., 1972, 1988). Discourse can be viewed as a representation, story, or statement that creates a particular version of events (Burr 2015). In other words, discourses are "practices which form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, in Burr, 2015, p. 74). So, in a discourse we find reality or truth as it is for us[47]. There is no universal Reality or Truth, rather, there may be a variety of discourses about 'the same,' for example the various discourses around Brexit[48]. Different Brexit discourses claim 'the truth' about the UK and Europe, and how either should proceed. According to Burr (2015), discourse serves to construct the phenomena of the world for us, and different discourses construct phenomena differently. The author refers to Derrida (1976) who said that "objects and events come into existence for us as meaningful entities through their representation in discourse. This is what is meant by the claim that 'there is nothing outside the text'"[49] (Burr, 2015, p. 78). With respect to the Brexit discourses, for example, one can imagine that the 'remainers' construct the European Union differently than the 'leavers,' both camps telling it 'like it is.' It is not hard to see how these different discourses invite different actions.

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47 It is important to note that discourse is a claim to the truth, not a way to a person's 'inner' 'beliefs' or 'opinion' which, if accepted, would indicate an acceptance of essentialism (Burr, 2015).

48 Koller, Kopf and Miglbauer (2019) examined the discourses around the British EU referendum, how they influenced the outcome of the referendum, and all related events including how Brexit has been negotiated in different contexts.

49 Burr (2015) notes that text can be anything that can be 'read' for meaning, which goes far beyond just written and spoken text. Along this vein, the throwing of milkshakes at British right-wing politicians by Brexit protesters is considered text.

Also, in the context of organizational life (or education), it is not hard to imagine how different discourses lead to 'challenges.' Burr (2015) and McNamee et al. (2023) address the recursive relationship between the micro and the macro-orientation to language use. According to Burr (2015), the macro (discourse) shows up in the micro (situated language use), and the meaning of the situated language use in the micro is dependent upon the macro discursive context. McNamee et al. (2023) explain how micro-social interactions (people coordinating their activities) are influenced by, and at the same time maintain, macro-social discourses (beliefs and values). This understanding "is an exercise in both realizing our limits for constructing the world […] and exploring our potentials in creating different realities […]" (p. 11).

Third, and following from the second, it is relevant to consider the disciplinary effects that dominant discourses tend to have. Foucault (e.g., 1988) studied the relationship between discourse, knowledge, and power. In this sense, knowledge refers to a particular construction or version of a phenomenon which has been given the stamp of truth by a society. According to Foucault, power is not something one person possesses, and another does not. Power is an effect of discourse. Being able to set a discourse that allows you to do what you want, is to use power. In this respect, we speak of a dominant discourse. The power that is used by drawing on a dominant discourse invites resistance from other discourses about 'the same object' (Burr, 2015). The author refers to debates where Foucault was attacked on his 'denial of the materiality of events' and how he has been misunderstood in that sense. "Foucault's aim was to draw attention to the way that discourse brings some aspects of our world into view as objects for us and hides other aspects from us" (Mills, in Burr, 2015, p. 101). By accepting knowledge claims from the dominant discourse as Truth, we subjugate ourselves to the influence of its disciplinary power (Gergen, 2015a; see also, McNamee et al., 2023). This can have far-reaching consequences. For example, until 1974, homosexuality was declared a mental disorder by psychiatric experts (e.g., Drescher, 2015; Gergen, 2015a; McNamee et al., 2023). Just imagine how this dominant discourse has affected (and still is affecting[50]) the lives, loves, and happiness of many LGBT people. Such shared representations of the world may have far-reaching consequences for how we treat people, for example drugging or institutionalizing people who are declared to be mentally ill (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a). Through Ordinary Life Therapy, Håkansson (2009) offers an alternative to the 'appropriate' action according to the dominant discourse, by replacing drugs commonly used to treat severe cases, with placement in the homes of ordinary families. In such alternative approaches, the dominant discourse of mental health, in which psychiatrists using the

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50 In the Netherlands, legislation to ban oppressive gay conversion therapy (which is presented as a cure) was not introduced by the government but left in the hands of members of parliament (NOS, 2022). Just recently, the Dutch association of psychiatrists (NVvP) expressed regret for the harm done by psychiatrists in the past to LGBT people through horrific treatments (including conversation therapy, castration and electric shocks) (NOS, 2023).

DSM become production machines for mental illness, gave way to a more collaborative approach (Gergen, 2015a).

Fourth, Wittgenstein (1953) wrote about language and meaning. He replaced the picture metaphor of language, in which words provide an accurate picture of the world, with the metaphor of a game, in which words acquire their meaning through their use in action. In language games, the meaning of words depends on their use in the game (Gergen, 2015a). According to Burr (2015), 'game' is used as a metaphor to stress that "the rules in language are like the rules of the various games we play" (p. 56). As long as we play by the rules of particular language games within a specific form of life, we continue to make sense, for example by 'telling the truth' in court, or by 'properly defending a doctoral thesis' at a university. When we do not play by the rules of a particular language game, we are easily considered as not making sense. For example, when I walked into a busy restaurant in New York City in 2008 and the waiter *greeted* me at the door by asking "how are you?", my (deliberate) response was to pause and say something like "I'm really fine, and how are you today?" She looked at me as if I was a complete idiot. Apparently, to stay within the greeting language game, I should have continued on my way in, and say something like "good morning" or a brief "fine, how are you?" Going into the question of how I was doing was actually an act of not participating in the proposed language game of greeting. Through my response, I proposed a different language game, and performed a form of life, which clearly was uncommon in that particular context. Clearly, the meaning of the words "how are you" is different in various forms of life, or cultural traditions (Gergen, 2015a).

Fifth is the contribution of both structuralism and post structuralism to language practices. Both agree that 1) language is the prime site of construction, and that this construction takes place in interaction, and 2) the denial of humanism. Accepting humanism would imply accepting essentialism because humanism refers to persons as unified, coherent, and rational agents who are the authors of their own experiences and the meaning of those experiences (Burr, 2015). Social construction is anti-essentialist. To understand what people feel and do, both individually and in groups and societies, we need to look into the linguistic space in which they move, rather than 'inside' the individual (Burr, 2015; Sampson, 2008). De Saussure (in Burr, 2015) offered a major structuralist contribution when he noted that the link between the signifier (a word) and the signified (the concept the word refers to) is arbitrary: any word will do as long as we all use it for the same purpose. He says that words do not have any intrinsic meaning; instead, language offers a framework to conceptualize reality. However, according to de Saussure, once a sign has been attached to a signifier, its meaning is fixed. This is where post structuralist writers disagree. Rather than being fixed, meanings are always open to being questioned, and are contestable and temporary (e.g., consider the meaning of the

word 'gay'[51]) (Burr, 2015). According to Burr, language is also a site of variability, disagreement, and potential conflict, where power relations are acted out and contested. Post structuralists view language as the place where identities are: constructed, challenged, and changed. As people may feel trapped, restricted, or oppressed by their identity, reconstruction may be helpful[52]. However, this is not easy as language is embedded in social practices and social structures.

The sixth notion that I address is Gergen's (2015a) metaphor of language structure as "nourishing constraints" (2015a, p. 36), which describes the following paradox. Although we need to create categories, labels, distinctions (in which we use words indexically[53]), and we need to adhere to language conventions (such as the metaphors we use, or the way we construct a 'proper' narrative of events) in order to communicate, they also function as a prison. The author notes that language is viewed as a system of differences (e.g., Derrida, 1997). Each word is distinct from all other words. Often, meaning is defined in terms of binaries, for example 'white' vs. 'not-white.' Meaning then depends on differentiating between the presence of a word (for example using the word 'white') and an absence of a word (not using the word 'black'). Gergen argues that, since we make sense by speaking in terms of presences, the absences get marginalized because the presence makes sense as it is related to the absence (Gergen, 2015a). For example, as long as the Dutch Railways (NS) addresses its customers as "ladies and gentlemen" (presence), passengers who do not identify themselves as either male or female may feel marginalized. Gergen (2015a) also notes that the Western world, according to Derrida, has the tendency to value one side over the other (for example rational over emotional). Given the earlier noted constitutive role of language in social construction, the idea that language divides up is important as the categories we create impose consequences on what we socially construct. For example, Gergen (2008) argues that the psychological-social is a dichotomy that quickly found its way into academia and our daily language. Psychological phenomena as thoughts and motives, and social phenomena like groups and social institutions, have been socially constructed as separate entities. Burr (2015) says that once we have divided up the world this way, it will leave us conceptualizing these phenomena separately, leading us to "a particular understanding of human beings, their experience and their potentialities" (Burr, 2015, p. 57). Realizing that common constructions of 'the real and the good', which emerge from language conventions,

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51 For example, the word 'gay' has different meanings. In the past it used to (only) mean happy, joyful and now it also means homosexual (Burr, 2015). More recently, the word gay is being used to say that something is unacceptable: "that is so gay" (Urban Dictionary, 2013).

52 An example of this is how the Dutch Railways (NS) no longer addresses their customers by saying 'dames en heren' (ladies and gentlemen) but by 'beste reizigers' (dear travelers). NS wants everybody to feel welcome, and changing to the gender-neutral term 'beste reizigers' is focused on actively including people who identify themselves as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (NOS, 2017).

53 E.g., using the word 'car' for practical purposes rather than picturing them exactly, thus referring to Garfinkel's ethnomethodological work (Gergen 2015a).

everyday conversations, and social institutions (which embed our traditions of speech, and have power to which we surrender, such as courts of law) (Gergen (2015a), positions us to reflect on possibly marginalizing or oppressing language practices. Such realizations may invite conversations of change.

2.   Process orientation

Social constructionists are interested in the social processes in which people construct 'the real and the good,' rather than focusing on entities, structurers, or pre-defined outcomes (e.g., Burr, 2015; Cushman, 1990; Gergen, 2009, 2015a; Sampson, 2008). Focusing on process does not imply ignoring goals or desired results, but to 'holding them lightly' and trusting the unfolding interaction process (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). According to the authors, desired outcomes are noted and acknowledged, but constructionists do not presume that 'the right method' will lead to 'the right outcomes.'

By assuming a process orientation, social construction differs from mainstream psychology (Burr, 2015). By taking this orientation, social construction is anti-essentialist: constructionists deny that essences inside people make them what they are (Burr, 2015). McNamee and Hosking (2012), for example, are not interested in examining individuals and their private properties such as mind and motives, which "[…] are not 'mind stuff' but are made in words and deeds […]" (p. 36). Furthermore, social constructionists question realism: there is no such thing as an objective fact (Burr, 2015; Gergen 2015a). Instead of assuming a realist origin, constructionists acknowledge the social origin of the real and the good. Put differently, there is a shift from 'observing the world for what is it is,' to 'constructing the world for what it becomes for us, through participating in relationships' (Gergen, 2015a). Hence, and as noted earlier, the ways in which we have constructed particular phenomena are optional, i.e., things could have been constructed differently (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a). To be sure, social construction should not be looked at as bringing forward the new Truth. Constructionists recognize that all scientific traditions, including the empiricist tradition, can be useful. However, constructionists do not take research outcomes as universal Truths (Gergen, 2015a).

As argued by McNamee and Hosking (2012), taking a relational approach implies a shift from a realist ontology that 'entifies', to a focus on relational processes and co-construction. Unlike a realist ontology, which assumes self-existing entities and knowledge, social construction assumes and gives ontology to relational processes as they (re)construct local realities (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In this approach, relational processes are seen as "(a) inter-actions, that are (b) multiple and often simultaneous and (c) local in both a cultural and historical sense" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 37). Inter-action is used "(a) to signal a performance (b) that involves a coming together (c) of 'whoever and whatever' that (re)constructs person-world relations as (d) relational

realities" (p. 38). Given that relational processes are given ontology, the individual is not the agent of reality construction. All "entity characteristics" are "(a) byproducts of relational interchange and are (b) multiple and variable […] and (c) performed rather than possessed in local-cultural-historic networks of ongoing forms of relating" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 41).

These interactions are assumed to be contributing continuously to the process of reality construction, which may be referred to as an ontology of becoming, instead of being (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Within a relational constructionist stance, the focus is on how ongoing relational processes (re)construct local ontologies as forms of life. In the ongoing processes of construction, local realities are constructed that may have stabilizing effects. Once an interaction is considered "real and good" (Gergen, 1994 in McNamee & Hosking 2012, p. 39), claims of other possible meanings may face difficulties to gain support (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; see also Gergen, 2020a). Relational processes may generate both stability and change (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Stabilizing effects, however, should not be mistaken for a universal Truth. Put differently, people actively maintain macro-social discourses (realities, moral orders) through coordinating their activities in micro-social interactions in which they develop interactive patterns and rituals, which lead to standards and expectations (McNamee, 2014; McNamee et al., 2023). Figure 2 shows that, once in place, standards and expectations generate a moral order which we use in assessing our own and others' actions.
The aforementioned stabilizing effects which may be generated in relational processes
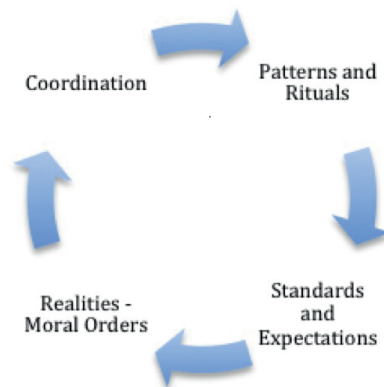
Figure 2: The Construction of Worldviews (McNamee, 2014)

are particularly relevant in the context of organizational change. In this sense, Hosking and Bass (2001) suggest replacing the traditional (Lewinian) glacier metaphor of organizational change with a whirlpools metaphor. According to the authors, Kurt Lewin considers organizations as stable entities (having boundaries and characteristics)

which, in order to change, need to unfreeze-change-refreeze in a planned fashion. By proposing the whirlpool metaphor, Hosking and Bass acknowledge the relational, pro-cessual character of organizations where people ongoingly co-ordinate their actions. The way an act is supplemented results in the particular way the process continues. As Hosking and Bass (2001) argue, consultants do not 'inject missing energy to foster change, the energy is already there.' In other words: change is from within, which is defined as how the process goes on, and it is more about releasing than adding energy because stability is achieved and maintained actively (ibid.).

3. Future forming approach

Social construction has a typical future forming orientation. Although social construc-tion grew out of criticism, it should be viewed as an invitation to dialogue (Gergen, 2015a). As the author noted, starting to speak together brings the potential to create new and more promising ways of being. This is represented by the shift from 'what is' to 'what could be' (Gergen, 2015a, 2015b). McNamee and Hosking (2012) refer to this as a shift in interest from a modernist focus on objective knowledge to a focus on "the very *practice* of postmodernism as it might open different possibilities, as a *performance* that literally puts into action […] new relational resources" (p. 35). The authors' future forming orientation comes from their aim to broaden our resources for social life and create another 'territory,' and not to "say things in a different […] way about the 'same' (modernist) territory" (p. 35). McNamee and Hosking (2012) are interested in exploring other sorts of life that can become possible through transforming inquiries, which could open up new possible ways of being human and new possibilities of "going on together" (Wittgenstein, 1953).

Taking a future forming approach does not imply that talk about the past is ignored (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). However, according to the authors, the issue of narration is important. The past is a story which can be told in many ways, and there are many stories to tell. Focusing on the future prevents the reification of (particular) stories of the past which make them 'real,' and leaves less room for creating futures. The authors argue that a future oriented approach may help to coordinate different worldviews and co-create a desirable shared future.

One example of constructionist resources for social life is dialogical practices (see the next sub-section 'meaning as relational'). Gergen (2015a) notes that, from a con-structionist standpoint, creating a desirable world together ('the real and the good'), simultaneously produces an alternative world: the less desirable. Dialogue may serve as a resource to reduce conflict *between* groups, similar to being a source of inspiration *within* groups. According to Gergen (2015a) transformative dialogues may contribute to inventing new ways of going on together and bringing about new and more promising

futures (e.g., Herzig & Chasin, 2005). Other examples of resources that are coherent with social construction are design thinking (e.g., Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022) and action research (e.g., Gergen, 2015b). In section 3.4, I go into more detail about action research from a relational perspective.

4.   Meaning as relational

Meaning is constructed in relation, which is in contrast with an individualist assumption. The latter considers meaning as the possession of individuals and turns our attention to entities and objects, rather than what people do together (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). According to social constructionists, however, meaning making is beyond the control of the individual (Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2015a; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). Adopting a relational view means a shift from individual rationality to communal rationality (Gergen & Tatchenkery, 1996); and to what people do as participants in, and as co-producers of communities (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). The emphasis is on "what people do together and what sort of social worlds emerge though their interactions" (McNamee et al., 2023, p. 115). This suggests that "what we take to be the truth about the world importantly depends on the social relationships of which we are a part" (Gergen, 2015, p. 3). As noted (e.g., McNamee & Hosking, 2012; McNamee, 2014), meaning is a byproduct of people coordinating their activities (see Figure 2), a clear challenge to the traditional notions of expert knowledge and professional neutrality (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). In this view, meaning (or reality or truth) is a local, cultural, and historical way of understanding (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This relational view of meaning centers our focus "on the participants engaged in the immediate moment and the wide array of both common and diverse voices, relations, communities, and experiences that each brings to the current context" (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022, p. 34). This also brings us back to Wittgenstein's language games (in which words acquire meaning through their use) and forms of life (in which we create and sustain values, meaning, and truths through trusted patterns) (Gergen, 2015a).

I find the social constructionist view of self and relationship particularly interesting. When constructionists talk about relational, they do so from a dialogic, as opposed to a monologic, orientation (Sampson, 2008). In a monologic approach, relationships may be considered as actively formed through a coming together of two self-contained individuals (Sampson, 2008). In order to maintain this container metaphor, the self requires boundary maintenance, and a serviceable other (Sampson, 2008). In contrast with this dominant monologic view, Sampson (2008) offers a dialogic account of human nature. The dialogic turn "transforms the dominant project of the Western world, its self-celebratory, other-suppressing stance, into a necessary celebration of the other" (p. 98). According to Sampson, if we are conversational, dialogic beings, we cannot be understood

by probing inside for personal and private processes. Rather than inside the individual, all that is central to being human, and human life, occurs between people. Sampson (2008) draws on Bakhtin (among others) when he notes that meaning (including that of self) is an ongoing accomplishment, rooted in social process. "Neither meaning, nor self is a precondition for social interaction; rather, these emerge from and are sustained by conversations between people" (p. 99). According to Bakhtin, "life by itself is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree… In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life […]. He invests his entire life in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life […]" (Bakhtin, in Gergen, 2009, p. 251). In this respect, Shotter (e.g., 1995) speaks of 'joint action' when he refers to people interacting. "When people interact, it's rather like a dance in which they are constantly moving together, subtly responding to each other's rhythm and posture. The dance is constructed between them and cannot be seen as the result of either person's prior intentions. Likewise, when we interact our talk and behaviour is a joint effort or dialogue, not the product of internal states or forces" (Burr, 2015, p. 161). Gergen (2009, 2015a), also proposes a relational view of the person. The dialogic understanding of meaning and self implies a different understanding of dialogue than 'just having a conversation.' "Dialogue is a special kind of interaction where participants are open to redefine themselves in a continuous and fluid manner, while together they create preferred futures. In a dialogical conversation, the existence of *the other* is recognized and celebrated, because participants realize it is the very process of interaction that grants them with a sense of who they are" (McNamee et al., 2023).

This central feature, that meaning is constructed in relation, has direct implications for how we practice research. Acknowledging the social and processual character of 'the real and the good' implies that 'typically hard' subject-object relations in research are no longer assumed to be how things 'really are' or how they should be[54]. Instead, and as opposed to being a 'serviceable other' (Sampson, 2008) to the researcher, a social constructionist orientation recognizes 'the object' as a co-researcher. As scientists, we may actively look for ways to construct softer self-other differentiations and replace 'power over' with 'power to' (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). As I describe in section 3.4, this approach is particularly coherent with doing action research.

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54 McNamee and Hosking (2012) speak about self (scientist) and other (a separate and knowable object) as constructions. Self (subject) and other (object) can be spoken of as harder and softer differentiations. Subject-object in this case mean various things. First, within the empiricist approaches, there is an active-passive binary that is reflected in "talk of an active and responsible agent who relates to other(s) as a passive and available object on which can be acted" (p. 25). Second is "the assumption of bounded entities and entity characteristics" (p. 25) that are relatively static and 'out of process'. Third, only the subject is seen as active and "actively builds his or her own individual knowledge" (p. 25) about the object that is free from 'biases'. Fourth, "subjects are assumed actively to use their knowledge to achieve 'power over' other as object" (p. 26). Fifth, "relations are reduced to instrumentalities as defined by and for the knowing object" [and his or her] "pursuit of the supposedly rational and value-free purposes of constructing generalizable knowledge that is free from individual bias" (p. 26).

5. Centering of context

In a social constructionist approach, knowledge is historically and culturally specific (Burr, 2015). According to Gergen, "constructions gain their significance from their social utility" (Gergen, 2015a, p. 10). He proposes to replace the idea of one universal Truth (always and for all people) by the idea of multiple truths, as useful ways of communication for various people at various times. Earlier, when I described the process orientation of social construction, I noted that adopting a social constructionist stance includes a shift from an 'entifying' realist ontology, to focusing on relational processes and co-construction of local-cultural realities (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). With respect to this centering of context, McNamee and Hosking (2012) state that relational processes construct knowledge [or truth, reality] that is local, as in contrast to narratives of general knowledge; cultural, as in within particular traditions or forms of life; and historical, as they supplement prior acts (or texts) and are available for possible supplementation or (dis)crediting. In my view, such centering of context is coherent with doing action research. This is because, instead of uncovering universal Truths, research in a social constructionist approach is more about creating possibilities [the future forming approach] in a way that attends to the traditions, communities and situated practices of the participants (Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022). The authors are interested in exploring what other social life becomes possible when we adopt, and act from, a relational stance and recognize "meaningful action as always emerging in context, within relational processes" (p.34).

Implications of adopting a social constructionist stance for practicing research
Now that I have described the emergence and central premises of the social constructionist approach, I expect that it will come as no surprise that adopting a constructionist stance influences how we do research. In the remainder of this section, I will briefly describe some key influences. However, I would first like to emphasize that all forms of research can be accepted (Gergen, 2015b; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). According to McNamee and Hosking (2012), multiple research traditions co-exist, each opening different possibilities[55]. I do not wish to argue that traditional (or modernist, positivist) approaches are wrong and must be replaced by a social constructionist approach. Such an argument would, in itself, reflect a modernist stance. My point with this chapter is that, *if* we adopt a stance of social construction, it becomes clear that our aims and research practices will be different than in a more positivist tradition (Burr, 2015, Gergen, 2015a).

With respect to the aims of constructionist research practices, it has been noted that there is no intention of getting closer to Truth, Reality, or finding a way to come to a

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55 In this respect, Hassard (1991) notes the different images that emerge from research within different paradigms, concluding that applying a poly-paradigm methodology and a spirit of pluralism can contribute to a greater democracy in organizational analysis.

fuller understanding or more accurate model of the world (Gergen, 2015a). Given the constitutive role of language, research may lead to (technical) accomplishments, but it does not improve our descriptions and explanations of reality (Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996). Rather, a common intention is to create more desirable futures and possibilities (Gergen, 2015b; Camargo-Borges & McNamee, 2022).

With respect to method, Gergen and Tatchenkery (1996) describe the shift from empirical method to social construction. From a postmodern stance, the authors note that methods no longer have an elevated status of generating a more reliable understanding of a phenomenon. Since our understanding of phenomena is theory-laden, they state that one can only set up a study and select methods after having committed to a theoretical perspective. In other words: the use of specific research methods makes sense within the context of a particular research tradition. McNamee and Hosking (2012) address differences between (post)positivist and constructionist traditions and their orientation to the question of method. In general, "to the constructionist, a method is a resource for engagement" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 58), which clearly contrasts with the idea that an educated use of method will discover Truth or Reality. The authors make five important points regarding method. First, the authors argue that there is no method that 'is' constructionist or 'not' constructionist. Social construction is a metatheory and, as such, it provides a general orientation. Basically, anything that positive science would call a method can be used. Second, methods have no meaning in and of themselves, so it is more important *how* we practice any method. Constructionist assumptions guide our questions and how we try to answer them, what we count as fact, and what we recognize as rigor[56]. Researchers need to 'craft' the methods they use,

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56 Rigor often comes with standards related to research quality. Burr (2015) and Gergen (2015a), among others, discuss related theoretical assumptions from a constructionist orientation:
Objectivity and value-freedom. According to Burr (2015), constructionists argue that objectivity and revealing the Truth without bias is impossible, because we must encounter the world from some perspective. For constructionists, 'to be objective' is to adhere to a discourse through which a vision of human life is constructed. Facts cannot be impartial because they are always a product of someone asking a particular question, which is derived from often implicit assumptions about the world. In the words of Nelson Goodman (Gergen, 2015a): "If I ask about the world, you can offer to tell me how it is under one or more frames of reference; but if I insist that you tell me how it is apart from all frames, what can you say?" (p. 4). This is why any truth-claim about people should be looked at as a political act (Burr, 2015). Gergen (e.g., 2015a) notes that scientists have values, because they participate in social traditions. These values will enter into the research at any point. Claiming value-neutrality and political objectivity is misleading, therefore researchers should elaborate on their values and politics and provide critical reflection, to sustain the community's trust (Gergen, 2015a).
Researcher and researched. According to constructionists, mainstream psychology gives researchers more voice than the research participants. The latter passively answer the questions of the former, who then de-contextualizes the experiences, interprets them and constructs a Truth from a more powerful position (Burr, 2015). For example, in traditional research, converting experiences to numbers is argued to be the most neutral language of description (Gergen, 2015a). However, as this author argues, the language of numbers disregards what is held most valuable and significant about people, and numbers are not more adequate 'pictures of the world' than words or art. For constructionists, statistics can be valuable for some purposes, but when, where and for whom they are valuable should be carefully considered (Gergen, 2015a). Constructionists call for a more democratic relationship between researchers and participants, resulting in acknowledgment of their accounts (Burr, 2015). Gergen (2015a) questions the presumed stability of social phenomena within traditional research. Constructionists are more focused on creating social change with people, than making predictions about them.

given the constructionist approach. Third, the question of method is not the concern of just the researcher and his/her research community; all decisions should be made within a relational context. This includes the decisions about the research that need to be made in advance. This means giving up the position of 'knowing inquirer' and giving space to local traditions, language, and forms of communication. Fourth, to be able to be relationally responsive in the moment, researchers need to lean away from (purely following) design and methods, and let go of (the illusion) of control. 'Typically,' this suggests that, for example, the use of statistics gives way to thick descriptions, narratives, discourse, or ethnography (see also Burr, 2015; Gergen 2015a). It is important "to craft a process that opens up to multiplicity, to ongoing-developing-changing realities and relations to other(ness) - including possible changes in self and your positions on particular issues" (p. 47). Fifth is the emphasis that we need to retain humility when we think, talk and write about relational processes as they go in many other forms than conceptual language. Relating is embodied and includes the construction and use of artifacts. "Relating is much more than just conceptual language; it is live and ongoing" (Shotter, 2010a in McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 47).

Now that I have described the implications of adopting a social constructionist stance for practicing research, I will zoom in on the future forming approach through action research, which is central in this dissertation. Action research is a particular way of making concrete contributions to the world, and can be characterized as future forming research (Gergen, 2015b).

3.4 Future Forming through Action Research

Although social scientists are said to be reaching a state of reflective pragmatism[57], in which all forms of research can be accepted, the vast share of research practices remain

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Reflexivity is important in constructionist research and, apart from acknowledging the validity of the participant's accounts as mentioned above, it is important to explicitly acknowledge personal and political values that inform the research. The researcher can do this by setting the research within a political agenda or by exploring how the researcher's own history and biography may have shaped the research (Burr, 2015). In this respect, Gergen (2015a) proposes that, instead of dictating how research should be carried out or what it should be about, researchers should deliberate on what they wishes to accomplish; what the social utility of this accomplishment is; for whom this accomplishment is valuable (or not); what the research methods and their implicit values are; and how and to whom the results will be communicated (p. 68).
Reliability and validity are important criteria to judge research quality in the social sciences from a positivist, empiricist orientation (Burr, 2015). Since constructionist research is not about objective fact or discovering the Truth, these traditional criteria are less appropriate to evaluate the quality of constructionist research. Instead, according to Burr (2015), the trustworthiness of such research can be enhanced by, for example, providing in-depth information about the analytic steps, member checking, utility and audit trail (Burr, 2015; see also Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Gergen (2015a) notes that, as phenomena which are selected for study are socially constructed (as opposed to 'really existing out there'), constructionist researchers are less focused on rigorous methods or valid measurements, and more interested in the way that certain constructions are more beneficial to some people than to others.
57 According to Gergen (2015b), this state of reflective pragmatism is based on two widely shared assumptions in the social sciences:

dedicated to (traditionally) revealing, illuminating, understanding, or reflecting, in order to describe 'what is the case' (Gergen, 2015b, 2020a). Now that all research practices can be legitimated in their own terms, the question about the value of a particular study is moving away from issues of philosophical grounding, to social utility. Put differently, what does the research ultimately contribute to the world? Compared to traditional ways of doing research, "constructionist ideas invite new departures" (Gergen, 2015a, p. 78), such as action research, in which the focus is not on describing 'what is' but to pursuing the possibilities of 'what could be'[58]. Participants engage in social change, driven by particular goals or ideals. According to Gergen, (2015b), action research is particularly promising with respect to making direct contributions to the world and a return to optimism in the social sciences. In this respect, the author draws a parallel with the natural sciences. He suggests that the significance of the natural sciences was not derived "from their claims to superiority in matters of truth" (p. 307) but from their contributions to daily life affairs (e.g., curing diseases, harnessing energy, creating better building materials). In Gergen's (2015b) view, the social sciences have been too focused on making truth statements, leaving the concern for active contributions to society in a position of secondary importance. The author calls to reverse this preoccupation with truth statements and start making actual contributions. Put differently, it is time "to undertake research as a form of social action, with the words following after" (Gergen, 2015b, p. 307).

In the remainder of this section, I first present some general characterizations of action research in the light of this particular study[59], in part based on the PhD action research workshop I participated in at Nyenrode Business Universiteit in 2020. Following this, I briefly offer some resources for doing action research from a social constructionist orientation.

A particular form of research

According to Reason and Bradbury (2008) "action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing[60] in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in partici-

1) *Whatever exists makes no necessary requirements on representation (e.g., utterances, markings, movements, signals, or graphics)*, pointing out that there are many different ways to describe or otherwise represent whatever is before us; 2) *Following this, what stands as objective truth can be established within a research tradition*. With the understanding that the relationship between world and word is negotiable, broad accord exists that useful agreements can be reached on the character of what exists. "[…] while the naming of the real cannot be justified through the act of reference, it is this very sedimentation of social understandings that permits the communities of science to achieve what we ordinarily view as progress." (Gergen, 2015b, p. 289).

58 Ideas about future forming research resonate with, for example, the Aristotelian concept of achieving knowledge through praxis (ongoing action), and the Socratic concepts of knowledge embedded in the active accomplishment of a goal (episteme), and the craft-like ability to make or perform (techne) (Gergen, 2015b; see also Brinkman, 2018).

59 For a more extensive introduction in Action Research, I refer to Coghlan and Shani (2018); Reason and Bradbury (2008).

60 According to Coghlan and Shani (2018, p. 29-30) the realm of practical knowing orients to the everyday concerns of human living; is comfortable with a social constructionist orientation; attends to the uniqueness of each situation; and is values driven.

pation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (p. 4). Action research is different from conventional academic research with respect to understanding the very nature of inquiry, and is "not simply [offering] methodological niceties" (ibid). The origins of action research are broad and not linked to mainstream academic research in the Western world (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). As a result, action research has inhabited the margins of academia for many years (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) and has been deemed unscientific by, or at odds with, particular scientific traditions such as positivism (Coghlan, 2011; Herr & Anderson, 2015; Van der Zouwen, 2018). Differences between traditional forms of research, and more action or change oriented forms, are recognized (e.g., Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Coghlan, 2011; McNamee 2014; Coghlan & Shani, 2018). Notwithstanding these differences, Coghlan (2011) argues that "action research is genuinely scientific in its emphasis on collaborative inquiry in-action and cogenerated actionable knowledge" (p. 79).

In action research, participants typically engage in more or less systematic cycles of action and reflection, in order to work toward practical outcomes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). According to Coghlan and Shani (2018), these cycles may vary in time span: the entire project as one circle may consist of smaller circles of distinct project phases, which in turn may have circles of specific incidents within them. Action research recognizes a first-person (inquiring into the own life of the researcher), a second-person (addressing questions of mutual interest with others, resulting in practical knowledge, useful in the participants' daily lives) and a third-person approach (creating a wider impact beyond the direct participants, through sharing new forms of understandings and actionable theory) (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Brannick & Coghlan, 2005; Coghlan & Shani, 2018).

A family of approaches in multiple disciplines

Action research is considered a family of approaches with varying purposes (Reason & Bradbury, 2008), many faces and multiple traditions (Herr & Anderson, 2015), comprising multiple modalities (Coghlan & Shani, 2018). According to Coghlan (2011), second-person action research can be carried out with both groups and individuals. While honoring and valuing these different orientations, Reason and Bradbury (2008) conclude that "there can never be one 'right way' of doing action research" (p. 7). Also, when applying identified action research modalities (e.g., Coghlan, 2011) the author suggests "do what you do, don't get tied up in these labels" (David Coghlan, personal communication, 19 November 2020). There are many fields in which action research[61] is applied, such as organizational development (e.g., Coghlan, 2015; Gravesteijn & Wilderom, 2018; Jonkers, 2022), HR (e.g., Beukema, 2013), therapy (e.g., Simon, 2016; Ness, 2020), and

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61 In some fields, such as education, nursing and social work (Herr & Anderson, 2015) and systemic therapy (Simon, 2012, 2018), the term practitioner or praction research has become popular.

leadership (e.g., Shotter, 2010b; Hersted, 2020). Referring to the cyclical way of working in therapy, Simon (2016) argues that systemic practice is a form of transformative action research because practitioners set "a context with people, move on to try some kind of talk or another activity, then pause and review with our partners if this is working and decide how to move on – and then repeat this process at intervals" (p. 178). Shotter (2010b) offers an example of situated dialogic action research with individuals, in which a consultant facilitates a senior manager in orienting to specific challenges in his organizational context. In this kind of inquiry, which could be characterized as a particular form of a coaching conversation in which language practices are central, the focus is on a co-creation of a new kind of sensemaking in which the interlocutors move from the realm of abstractions to the realm of actual experiences and people responding to each other's utterances. Shotter notes that in this inquiry, new possibilities for action emerge through different ways of relating to the unfolding challenging situation, rather than through different conceptual knowledge, theories, or models.

Core components of action research

According to Coghlan and Shani (2018), action research has four core components: action, research, collaboration, and reflexivity. First, in order to be relevant, action research addresses real organization issues such as solving problems or exploiting possibilities. The action researcher, who needs access and whose role needs to be clear and contracted, is actively working to make change possible and contribute to desired organizational outcomes (as opposed to the distant observing in traditional research). This is what Gergen (2015b) refers to as future forming, and what McNamee and Hosking (2012) call the transformative aspects of inquiry (when inquiry turns into intended intervention or change work). Second, in addition to addressing real organizational issues, research contributes to practical knowing through a rigorous scientific process. Being research in action, action research rejects the traditional distinction between theory and practice. In what Coghlan and Shani (2018) call the dissertation project, the action researcher studies the change s/he facilitates in the core (action) project. Action research draws on many ways of knowing, so a variety of (traditional) research methods may be used, as long as the action researcher realizes that using data collecting tools is an intervention in itself. Moreover, data generation and analyses are inextricably linked. Third, action research is collaborative. Fundamentally different from traditional forms, action research is carried out with people, not on or for them. Research participants are considered co-researchers and are involved in addressing issues, and in planning, talking, and evaluating actions (see also, Boonstra, 2004b; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Gergen, 2015a, 2015b). According to Coghlan and Shani (2018), the collaborative aspect of action research requires particular skills such as collaborating authentically with organization members and designing processes which enhance the inquiry process. Action researchers treat people as persons, "and not as mere data points or research

subjects" (p. 48). In this respect, McNamee and Hosking (2012) stress the importance of (different but) equal relations, giving power to, instead of having power over, those who participate according to their local rationality. Beukema (2013) distinguishes between practice-oriented research (from a researcher's perspective) and practice-driven research[62] (from a more equal perspective). Fourth, action research is reflexive, meaning that it requires a constant examination and evaluation of what is going on, to decide what needs to happen next. Action research builds on the past, takes place in the present in order to contribute to shaping the future. Being an emerging process that cannot be predetermined, the diverse [future forming] ambitions of action research are quite different "from traditional research models which look to the past in order to predict and control the future" (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 696). In order to develop a holistic understanding and to recognize complexities, the action researcher needs to have a broad understanding of how the organization system works and its business context (Coghlan & Shani, 2018).

Action research and theory

By now it will be clear that action research relates to theory in a different manner than more traditional forms of research. To summarize: action research projects are situation specific, address real organization issues, and yield practical knowing, as opposed to research starting from an identified gap in theory and resulting in propositional knowing (which is common in positivist research). However, as many authors note, through a third-person approach, action researchers seek to contribute to extrapolating results from the local, to more general situations (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Brannick & Coghlan, 2005; Coghlan & Shani, 2018). In other words, instead of contributing to a traditional accumulation of (universal) knowledge, action research makes a contribution to a range of future possibilities (Gergen & Gergen, 2008) and actionable theory (Coghlan & Shani, 2018). According to the latter authors, the transferability of the produced knowledge is enhanced through a robust scientific process in action research. Beyond sharing practices and results through action research narratives with the wider community, additional possibilities for accumulating knowledge lie in acknowledging the action researcher's drawing from preceding research practices and their outcomes (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Coghlan & Shani, 2018; Bradbury, Glenzer, Ku, Columbia, Kjellström, Aragón, Warwick, Traeger, Apgar, Friedman, Hsia, Lifvergren & Gray, 2019).

To conclude this introduction to action research in the context of social constructionist academic research, let us zoom out again to the bigger picture of multiple forms of research. Reason and Bradbury (2008) aim to bring back scholarship and practice. The authors seek to change the relationship between knowledge and practice, and provide another model for the social sciences in the 21st century. From a rather critical stance,

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62 In Dutch: praktijkgericht onderzoek versus praktijkgedreven onderzoek.

they offer this model as an alternative to an "'ivory tower' positivist model of science, research and practice" (p. 8). Their aim is in line with Gergen's (2015b) call for more future forming research now that, from a state of reflective pragmatism, all forms of research can be accepted.

Resources for doing action research from a social constructionist orientation

As noted, action research resonates very well with social construction (e.g., Coghlan 2011; Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Bradbury, 2020). In the fore-word of Hersted, Ness and Frimann's (2020) volume, Action Research in a Relational Perspective, Gergen (2020b) articulates two important developments in understanding the relation between social construction and action research. First, and in line with the feature of process orientation (as described in section 3.3), adopting a constructionist approach invites "a shift in focus from what is achieved by action research to the social process by which it is achieved" (p. xiv). According to the author, this is not to abandon the concern with outcomes. Rather, a second shift is from goals which lie outside the "enclave of researchers" themselves (creating change of, or for others) toward outcomes within the group of researchers themselves. In the latter, the participants (e.g., thera-pists, healthcare workers, and managers) "develop their relational capabilities, boost their leadership skills, enhance their collective competence and learn to make more effective decisions" (p. xiv). According to the author, the practices explored in Hersted et al.'s (2020) volume especially offer valuable alternatives to "standard operating proce-dures" which "are insensitive to the complexities and shifts in local circumstances" and "illustrate the potentials of learning, creating, and building resources from within the local conditions" (Gergen, 2020b, p. xiv-xv).

When reflecting on the assembled action research practices in Hersted et al. (2020), Hersted and Ness (2020) conclude that, although there is no one best way to work with action research, there are some common threads (p. 198-199), which may be useful when doing action research from a constructionist stance. These common threads reso-nate well with McNamee and Hosking's (2012) orienting themes for crafting "a process that invites and appreciates equal participation in a potentially transformative inquiry" (p. 73-77), and may be considered as extending them.

Common threads characterizing social constructionist action research practices (Hersted & Ness, 2020):

- Learning and knowledge building are understood as relational and situated activities
- A focus on learning and knowledge building through active engagement in dialogically based reflexive processes in small groups
- A processual approach to learning and knowledge with a focus on emergence and complexity (in contrast to a more linear view)
- An ambition to create change in the hope of creating better social worlds
- The development of a reflexive practice and (critical) self-reflexivity among both researchers and co-researchers
- Positioning and recognizing participants as co-researchers (in contrast to being positioned as informants, object, respondents, or target groups)
- Awareness of the crucial need for multivocality and dialogue
- Recognizing multiple forms of knowledge
- The unfolding and recognition of multiple realities, cultures, world views, life-forms, and values
- A suspension of certainty
- Careful and relationally-responsive listening
- A focus on enabling and exploring what is in happening in-the-moment here-and-now
- A commitment to appreciating rather than judging and concluding
- Attempts to work with minimal structures to offer space for the emergence for the unexpected
- Paying special attention to the constitutive force of language
- The questioning and challenging of taken-for-granted assumptions and actions through the de-construction and re-organization of discourse
- Experimenting with new actions for change, and evaluating these actions
- The questioning and challenging of Truths with a capital T which are often monopolized
- A critical-reflexive orientation toward one's own practices, use of discourse and taken-for-granted assumptions as a researcher
- A focus on research, knowledge development and learning as co-creation
- A commitment to 'withness thinking' as opposed to 'aboutness thinking'
- A productive orientation to co-creating new social realities while critically and reflexively paying attention to power, relationships, dialogue, tensions and negotiation

3.5 Persisting Critiques of Social Construction

It is clear that social construction challenges the idea of universal Truth and Reality. It has adopted a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge. However, "you cannot challenge traditional beliefs in Truth, objectivity, rationality, individual minds and moral principles without paying a price" (Gergen, 2015a, p. 218). Consequently, it is no surprise that social construction has, in itself, become a target of critique. As the author noted, constructionist ideas have met with critical questions. For example, do constructionists deny the material world and real-life problems? Or, do constructionists deny the importance of personal experience and other mental states? Don't constructionist proposals deconstruct themselves? Does constructionism have a moral position, or does it advocate moral relativism? If all that we find real and good is socially constructed, what is there worth doing, or can we do as we please? These and other critiques have been the topics of longstanding debates. Gergen (2015a), and Romaioli and McNamee (2021) offer an overview of these critical academic conversations and the arguments between parties. I find the question addressed by the latter authors particularly interesting: why do the same critiques persist over decades, even after being sufficiently responded to? (e.g., Stam, 2001, 2002; McNamee, 2003; Gergen, 2001, 2011). Romaioli and McNamee argue that most objections originate from common misunderstood aspects of social construction. In general, the authors note that social construction is not interested in a discourse about right or wrong, or how some theories would be truer than others. "Rather, the constructionist aim is to engage in dialogue among differing (and yes, often competing) perspectives for the purposes of forging new forms of life that assist us in confronting our world. […] the critical question is what form of life is useful in this moment, in this context, and for these people" (p. 317) (see also McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

With respect to the earlier noted persistence of the same critiques, Romaioli and McNamee (2021) distinguish between two different levels of discourse. At the level of theory, social construction could be read as a theory about the world. At the second-level of discourse (the meta-theoretical level) however, the focus is on human interaction, and the ability of people to engage in self-reflexivity and "comment on the implications of a given theory and decide if its explanation of human behavior is useful or not" (p. 318). According to the authors, many critiques of social construction operate at the level of theory. However, the philosophical stance of social construction and, for example, the assumption that meaning emerges in relation, operates at the level of meta-theory. At this level of discourse, the focus shifts from truth as a criterion, to utility. Below, I briefly present persisting common critiques of social construction, and summarize a constructionist response, as articulated by Romaioli and McNamee (2021).

First, critics claim that social construction denies the existence of reality and objective facts such as death or gravity. In addition to acknowledging that such examples typically originate from the realm of the natural sciences, constructionist meta-theory does not include pure ontological statements. "What exists, exists" (p. 318). What we have come to know as real is the by-product of our negotiations with others and the environment. When we define reality, we are bound to cultural (scientific) traditions, which allow us to know reality through its systems of norms, signs, shared symbols, and negotiated agreements. Reality is only knowable through the cultural tradition in which it is created. "It is not possible to assess competing traditions objectively" (p. 319). Furthermore, social construction does acknowledge that the world sets constraints to what we (can) construct. However, they "are always perceived, managed, and channeled through cultural/historical constructions and can never appear as they *really* are" (p. 320). In this response, the authors note that whatever there is, has become something for us depending on the traditions or relations we take part in.

Second, social construction is criticized for claiming that there is no Truth (which claim would be a Truth statement itself), and for leaving the world in chaos by challenging the idea of truth. According to the authors, this criticism is partially justified by the way initial constructionist contributions made their point. See also section 3.2, in which I sketch the emergence of social construction as a research orientation. According to Romaioli and McNamee (2021), social constructionists later acknowledged that constructionist arguments are, themselves, also social constructions. This, as the authors argue, has resulted in a shift from "early arguments for social construction [which] *sounded* like arguments for Truth" (p. 321) to "a pragmatic sensitivity by which we are invited to consider our [constructionist] ideas in the light of their potential implications for people's lives" (ibid.) With respect to the criticism that constructionists would leave the world in chaos by challenging the idea of one ultimate and objective truth, the authors argue that "truth always seems to emerge as such within specific criteria, which belong to a given community" (p. 322). Following this, the constructionist position is to acknowledge local truths and respect diversity. In line with the earlier noted feature of process orientation, constructionists suggest to recognize multiple worldviews and focus on the process of co-ordinating the consequential multiplicity. Also, according to the authors, there is no need to dismiss realism as, within particular traditions, "there can be clear distinctions of what is considered true or false" (ibid.) Here, the authors make it clear that social constructionist ideas are, themselves, also social constructions, rather than absolute Truths. This leaves room for particular communities to discern between true or false in their cultural tradition.

Third, social construction is criticized for reducing all phenomena to the discourse about them, and neglecting relevant aspects that cannot be put to words. In response to this

criticism (and as earlier noted in section 3.3), constructionists consider language to be constitutive, rather than representative. In other words: language is action, it does not just describe action. Relevant language from a constructionist stance "includes purely textual aspects (spoken or written words), para-verbal aspects (gestures and prosodies), and metalinguistic aspects (social practices and relational implications)" (p. 323). In this respect, the authors also note the importance of how to use research methods. Referring to McNamee and Hosking (2012), they note that, for constructionists, no method is more or less true than others. Bearing in mind the constitutive role of language (which includes practicing research methods), researchers should shift from looking for what is 'true,' 'valid,' or 'right,' to focusing on the potential implications for the research participants and/or society as a whole, by doing research in a particular way. As it is impossible (according to the constructionist stance) to describe reality *as it really is*, it is important to critically assess the particular forms of life that may be invited through stating particular realities (perhaps supported by research data). Here, the authors respond by stating that language creates reality rather than describing reality *as it is*. Language is considered to include actions and the use of research methods, inviting researchers to reflect on what they may create, rather than what they can prove.

Fourth, the psychological disciplines accuse social construction of neglecting essential aspects of human nature (such as subjectivity and intention) by only studying discourse. This would foster the 'death of the subject,' or leave them with an 'empty person.' According to Romaioli and McNamee (2021), the psychological branches were primarily centered, until recently, on objective, empirical variables such as behavior and personality traits. These were assumed to be the only variables guaranteeing the use of the natural science method which was followed. At the earlier described level of theory, social construction may seem to underestimate these aspects. As the authors note, at a meta-theoretical level, social construction does not propose a model of personhood, neither does it consider some aspects of human nature to be more essential than others. However, for constructionists, each model has its value within a particular cultural tradition, and critical analyses of these ideas may elicit both their beneficial effects and their limiting influences on people's lives. This being said, social construction "does not intend to lessen the value of [psychologies'] conquests or of the actual relevance that key aspects such as 'subjectivity' may have had in enriching reflections in psychology" (p. 325). Considered from a utility perspective, "every construction is, at the same time, a possibility and a constraint" (ibid.) This response addresses the position that social construction does not propose a model of personhood, implying that every model may be useful. However, although a specific model may be useful in a particular situation, it may, at the same time, limit the space for other options.

Fifth, social constructionist ideas have been considered as undermining scientific undertakings and taking away Science's position for making truth statements and guiding people in dealing with problems, ultimately generating confusion and disarray. The authors respond to this critique by noting that social construction does not consider each form of knowledge as good as another. "If every form of knowledge can be understood as a social construction, then a given social construction may be more or less suitable in a specific context or moment" (p. 326). The authors note that the validity of a particular form of knowledge should be assessed on its pragmatic consequences. On the one hand, this follows pragmatism: 'what is true is what works.' On the other hand, constructionists are interested in assessing the consequences of knowledge, once shared, regardless of whether such consequences had initially been expected by scientists. Here the authors respond that, although each form of knowledge can be considered a social construction, not every form of knowledge may be desirable in a specific situation. In addition to being pragmatic, the consequences of sharing knowledge should be assessed.

Sixth, social construction is said to contribute to a moral erosion of society resulting from its relativism, which reduces the importance of shared values. Everything and anything would be justifiable (in the extreme: including murder) and nothing would remain to strive for. Constructionists do not consider everything is as good as everything else. Social construction does not claim that there is no Truth, it claims there are multiple (local) truths which must be considered in context. Early constructionist studies may be regarded as 'deconstructionist' as they intended to show how phenomena and events which are taken for granted, are ultimately forms of social construction (e.g., mental illness). Showing how a 'given phenomenon' is a social construction was an attempt to liberate minorities from oppressive powers. This was not to downplay a particular phenomenon by saying 'it is just a social construction,' rather the aim was to co-create a more viable and socially just reality. According to Romaioli and McNamee (2021), social construction does not aim to unravel the true nature of phenomena. Rather, the interest is in how "the knowledge we create about phenomena and reality, [and] on how these forms of knowledge are shaped by social/material dynamics, and on how we constantly negotiate meanings, which allow us to live in one specific way rather than another" (p. 328). When shared, the social constructionist form of relativism may help people to confront difference by attempting to understand, instead of persuading or working toward agreement. As meaning is constructed in relationships which are embedded in local, cultural, and historical traditions, we are invited to engage with respect and curiosity, and change our interactions from debate to dialogue, and attend to the process of relating itself. Here, the authors' point is that, instead of universal or single truths, there are multiple, local truths to be considered in a context. The idea is not to abandon particular taken-for-granted knowledge, but to realize that we are

constantly negotiating meaning which could inspire us to collectively strive for better futures through understanding rather than agreeing.

In reflection, Romaioli and McNamee (2021) note that the social constructionist contributions may seem contradictory and paradoxical at first. This is because, at a level of theory, social construction provides specific forms of intelligibility, while at the level of meta-theory, the focus is on understanding the possibility of theorizing itself. The latter introduces an element of reflexivity and suggests that every form of knowledge is a social construction, including social constructionist ideas themselves. In this respect, Gergen (2015a) offers an umbrella metaphor (p. 29). At a general level (the umbrella itself), Gergen's social constructionist proposals (2015a, p. 8-13) can be considered from a meta-perspective: from a reflective pragmatism level, all forms of life (or scientific disciplines) may be useful, depending on the particular contexts. These forms of life may offer useful practices but may also be criticized for privileging some voices over others. When placed under the umbrella, social constructionist ideas can be considered a form of life (a coherent scientific discipline) which can be put to work to forge more promising futures, for example in leadership, therapy, and organizational life (Gergen, 2015a). Romaioli and McNamee (2021) conclude that the main and persistent critiques emerge within the level of theory, which is often understood within realist metatheoretical premises. "However, if we engage constructionist ideas on a metatheoretical level, shifting the linguistic game from 'affirming what is true' to 'considering what can be useful in the here and now,' it becomes perhaps easier to comprehend that" (p. 330) social construction as a cultural and scientific enterprise is complementary rather than oppositional to realist perspectives. Instead of denying reality, social construction claims that developing theories and performing research cannot take place in a neutral manner. Resulting from this claim, social scientists should engage in reflexivity about the taken for granted ideas they bring to the study, for which alternative perspectives may be available, and about which worldviews will be legitimized through their study as well as how this may influence people's lives. Social constructionist discourses may serve as resources for reflecting critically on our research activities, and on how we contribute to constructing particular forms of life. The latter addresses the question of generativity, and prompts the invitation to contribute to solving shared problems.

3.6 Reflection

In this chapter, I have introduced the theoretical background of the social constructionist approach to my action research study. I have described how the social constructionist research orientation emerged from a critical analysis of the dominant positivist approach in the 1970's. Following this, I elaborated on five central features of social con-

struction: language practices; process orientation; future forming approach; meaning as relational; and centering context. I have addressed some implications for performing research from a constructionist stance. I have also introduced action research and its main components, elaborated on its relationship with theory, and presented resources for doing action research from a social constructionist perspective. I have referred to what Gergen (2015b) calls a state of reflective pragmatism in which all forms of research can be accepted. Although this may be agreed to at some level, social construction has been criticized for decades. This chapter started with presenting the critiques of positivism which contributed to the emergence of social construction. I deemed it appropriate to also include the persisting critiques of social construction itself, accompanied by a constructionist response.

This chapter concludes part I of this dissertation in which I have introduced the scope of this dissertation, presented the scientific and practical relevance of my study, and articulated the premises of social constructionist action research. In part II, I present the action research itself, and its components. First, I introduce the participating organization, their rationale for participating, and the knowledge bases which I have used. Following this, I present the offered coaching, comprising two action research cycles. Furthermore, I present how we have evaluated the coaching, both at the individual level of participating management consultants, and at the level of the coaching concept. Finally, in part III, I present this action research's contribution to theory using the results of a semi-systematic review of relevant scholarly literature.

PART II

THE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

Setting up the Action Research Project

"Beforehand, we often do not know where exactly we are going, let alone how we will get there."   (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 13 March 2018)

4.1 Introduction

In chapter 2, I noted that possibilities for improving the facilitation of organizational change by management consultants may lie in supporting collaboration between stakeholders in the client organization, which requires self-awareness. As noted by Boonstra (2000, 2002, 2004b) and Werkman (2006), managers and management consultants should take a look in the mirror more often, and reflect on their facilitating role. Through this action research project, I intend to help management consultants reflect and develop. Furthermore, by describing this practice, I intend to offer a resource for other practitioners who wish to facilitate management consultants along a similar vein, and to contribute to academic progress. This endeavor may be considered as a response to earlier calls for studies with a focus on interaction (Boonstra, 2000, 2004b; Werkman, 2006; Ardon, 2009); psychological and sociological theory and practice, defensive routines from a systems dynamics perspective (Boonstra, 2000); psychological therapy, coaching, and counseling (Ardon, 2009); and learning and reflecting by management consultants (Boonstra, 2000; Werkman 2006).

The results from the interview study with professional experts, as described in section 2.3, support the relevance of personal transformation for management consultants in order to engage in facilitating organizational change more effectively. According to some of the interviewed experts, consultants need to learn to include themselves in the process (Shirine Moerkerken, personal communication, 29 July 2020) and should be aware of their psychological issues influencing stakeholder interaction (Leike van Oss, personal communication, 16 September 2020). A relational approach to professional development should recognize that personal components translate into a relational effect. Acknowledging this should prevent stepping into an oversimplified self-improvement approach (Marijke Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). Relational resources for developing management consultants may contribute to seeing how their life stories influence their facilitating work and create more room to act (Stefan Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020). If consultants can be more 'with the people', this may possibly increase the chance of success (Justine van Lawick, personal communication, 21 October 2020).

In part II of this dissertation, I describe the action research project and its various components. By performing this action research project, I aim to collect management consultants' stories about the difficulties they experience in stakeholder interactions, and offer an opportunity for personal development around their personal questions related to these stories. In a similar vein as Shotter's (2010b) action research study with a senior manager, my study centers on how experienced management consultants relate to challenging situations. According to Shotter, managers' actions in these situations

are informed by a response to the local circumstances as well as by past experiences. To prevent the fallacy of reification, he was interested in how we can look at our actions in a new and different way, rather than following the "tendencies to act in certain ways in response to previous actions of others [which] is intrinsically present in all our everyday encounters" (2010b, p. 275). De-reifying such reifications may possibly result in more fruitful ways of responding to local circumstances.

In the current chapter, I introduce the consulting firm with which I collaborated, I describe the general outline of the project, and I present the knowledge bases I drew from as an action researcher. The next chapters (5 through 8) detail the main components of the action research project more specifically.

4.2 Introducing the Management Consulting Firm

The management consulting firm which participated in this project is a fast-growing, Amsterdam based company. Growing from around 45 consultants in 2018, to approximately 120 in April 2023, the firm's core business is to consult with clients in various industries and help them realize organizational change. Their general approach is to realize change collaboratively with their clients, based on trust and connecting as starting points (company website, May 2022). The firm's key drivers relate to self-awareness, supporting others, and contributing to the environment. In describing these key drivers, the firm explicates their views on management consulting, on helping clients, and on the demands this places on management consultants. The firm's core values are: centering people and human relationships; being to the point; thinking and acting freely; integrity; craftmanship; and creating and learning from acting and experiencing (company website, May 2022).

When I first met up with one of the consulting firm's partners, we discussed the character of the organizational change processes which they facilitate. Being external management consultants, they facilitate complex organizational change processes. The partner characterized their change projects as: "…beforehand, we often do not know where exactly we are going, let alone how we will get there" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 13 March 2018). They facilitate change processes which require good collaboration with and among stakeholders, with an important role for management consultants regarding the facilitation of knowledge diffusion, dialogue, and learning. This suggests that their consultants do not assume pure expert roles, but also offer process consultation (e.g., Schein, 1969, 1990), or possibly a form of co-constructive consulting (Hicks, 2010). Our conversation suggests that some of their projects can be

identified as third-order-change processes, or at least second-order-change (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002).

The firm recognizes various management consultant maturity levels: junior consultants; consultants; senior consultants; managing consultants; and partners. They deliberately invest in the professional and personal development of their consultants, being convinced that this contributes to helping their clients grow. Junior consultants typically start in a traineeship consisting of acquiring consulting experience in client projects and sharpening their consulting skills through various internal training programs in their 'firm university' (for example in advisory skills and writing). More experienced consultants shape their development path, including their personal development, together with their mentor.

4.3 Project Outline: Designing a Tailor-made Development Opportunity

When preparing the action research project, I had multiple conversations with the consulting firm's partner who was responsible for the firm's HR policy. He was interested in the project because he saw possibilities for further, tailor-made development of their experienced management consultants, which is in alignment with their business strategy. The partner was familiar with my professional coaching background (which I describe in section 4.4) because he, and some other partners, had been trained in the same institution as me (Phoenix Opleidingen in Utrecht, the Netherlands). To some extent, he knew what he could expect from collaborating with me. Although we had not signed a formal contract as client and service provider, I considered this firm partner to be my client (in addition to the participating management consultants). We collaboratively looked at how the project could be shaped and positioned in a way that was useful for both the company's consultants and me as an action researcher writing a PhD dissertation. During the execution of the project, we continued having conversations at key moments, in which we exchanged process updates, looked back, and discussed next steps. After the project was completed, we had an evaluating conversation, together with one of the participants (see chapter 7).

One of our conversations (August 2019) focused on shaping and positioning the project within the consulting firm. We discussed the possible contributions the project could make to the firm's key drivers (as noted in section 4.2), and our initial thoughts on project design. We discussed: related ambitions; possible coaching outcomes in general; method; inclusion criteria; privacy; and the use of time, (organizational) resources, and support. With respect to the inclusion criteria, we discussed offering this coaching

opportunity to management consultants who had at least three years of experience. Since junior consultants (young university graduates) have just started to make their way in management consulting, they are not expected to manage complex consulting projects yet. Rather, they gain experience while working at the client organizations, often together with more experienced colleagues. As they continue to develop, they may move toward doing second-order or third-order change projects (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002), which are the central contexts in this dissertation. As noted in section 4.2, the firm offers junior consultants a traineeship which already includes various training programs for professional development. In this context, we considered offering tailor-made coaching from a Phoenix Opleidingen vantage point as premature. In general, we shared the opinion that junior consultants would probably benefit more from practical consulting knowledge; reflecting within training programs; and peer coaching[63]. As an action researcher, I was looking for candidates who had experienced that their communicating and collaborating actions as a person, may sometime negatively influence their consulting work. In other words: I was looking to contribute to developing management consultants with personal learning questions which go beyond expert knowledge or typical practical consulting skills. The partner and I expected that such learning questions would emerge from the consultant's accumulated lived experience from doing complex projects. We also did not include the firm's partners, because they already had resources in place for their personal development needs. The outcome of these deliberations was that we decided to offer the coaching opportunity to the following three maturity levels of experienced management consultants within the firm: consultants, senior consultants, and managing consultants.

As schematically shown in Figure 3, the action research project consists of several components in which a variety of scientific methods are used. Figure 3 is not intended to be a conceptual model, but rather outlines the generation of data across the whole action research study. In phase one, we completed 12 coaching journeys. Over the course of 13 months, I had 117 coaching conversations with the participating management consultants, following the learning questions they brought to the coaching. In chapter 5, I describe how phase one was set up and executed, and I present the outcomes. Phase two consisted of a pre-structured follow-up of the coaching. Six out of the 12 management consultants from phase one participated, and they reflected on utilizing their phase one's learnings, using a reflective journal as a tool. This phase, which was concluded with another coaching conversation, is described in chapter 6. After phases one and two were completed, I had an evaluating conversation with the firm partner and a senior management consultant. This evaluation was focused on the utility of the offered coaching concept as a resource for management consultants (see chapter 7). In chapter 8, I present a mixed-method evaluation of the coaching journeys. There, I first

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63 In Dutch: intervisie.

evaluate both the outcomes and process of the coaching journeys through an interview study with the coachees and an independent interviewer. Secondly, I report the results of a quantitative study into the coaching outcomes, using surveys measuring both emotional intelligence and leadership styles.
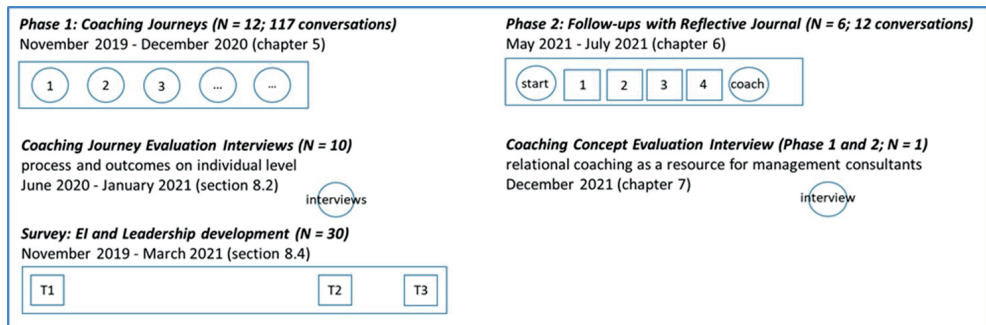
Figure 3: Action Research Outline: Main Components and Data Generation

Before going into the details of the various action research components in the following chapters, I will first describe the resources that I drew on as a coach and action researcher.

4.4 Action Researcher's Knowledge Bases

How do I describe my knowledge bases in a doctoral dissertation? This was a challenging question when I was writing my thesis. Roughly speaking, I can identify two areas of the knowledge and experience that I brought to this action research project: 'business' and 'people.' In the business area, I draw on my academic background and practical experience in both Business Administration and Finance & Accounting. This includes working in various finance positions in large corporations (Siemens and Hema) and offering interim management, coaching, and training services, from both my own small company and Dreamfactory. In the people area, I draw on the knowledge and skills which I have acquired through my professional training as a coach and therapist at Phoenix Opleidingen, and my professional experiences in this field. I further draw on relational theory as introduced in chapter 3. In addition, I bring two decades of teaching experience in higher education (Utrecht University of Applied Sciences). The challenge of describing my knowledge bases especially concerns the knowledge and skills acquired through Phoenix Opleidingen, which were central to the coaching I offered in this action research project. How does one introduce a knowledge base as theirs in a doctoral thesis, and do justice to its extensive, rich and varied character? In order to do

this, I went through the literature and other course materials, and had a conversation with Wibe Veenbaas (one of the founders) in July 2019.

Introducing Phoenix Opleidingen's Knowledge Base
Phoenix Opleidingen is a well-known, privately owned, Dutch educational institute for 'people who work with people' (e.g., coaches, therapists, trainers, teachers, and consultants). Founded by Wibe Veenbaas and Piet Weisfelt more than 30 years ago, Phoenix Opleidingen offers various (foundational and advanced) educational programs for the professional facilitation of personal and organizational development. Their programs have several accreditations[64] for the continued education of therapists, coaches, and counselors. I have participated in multiple programs offered by (among others) Phoenix Opleidingen[65], resulting in a license as a registered psychosocial therapist[66]. Moreover, as part of my doctoral education, I participated in various programs based on social construction[67].

In the remainder of this section, I describe this knowledge base, by presenting Phoenix Opleidingen's learning philosophy and introducing their professional concepts and frameworks. In their extensive and encyclopedic work, Veenbaas et al. (2019) describe concepts, definitions, and models which are foundational for their educational programs and counseling services. Beyond this more theoretical approach, Veenbaas, Baarspul-Schippers, Reinalda and Ten Klooster (2002) offer practical resources for working with clients (such as exercises). In a way, both publications summarize and organize resources from Phoenix Opleidingen's textbooks, articles, and course materials. The institute's learning philosophy, 'Windows on learning[68]' has been crafted and developed over many years and was recently articulated by Veenbaas et al. (2019). According to

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64 E.g., Stichting Keurmerk Beroepscholingen (SKB).

65 In Dutch:
- Professionele Communicatie - Driejarige post-bachelor Registeropleiding tot begeleider voor mens en organisatie incl. Transactionele Analyse, Systemisch Werken en NLP Practitioner (2010, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht & Stichting Post Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs Nederland)
- Vervolgopleiding Het Helende Verhaal - Therapeutisch werken met verhalen incl. NLP Master Practitioner (2010, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding Systemisch Werken (2011, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding Diagnostiek als Venster incl. DSM IV (2011, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding Professionele Begeleiding - Meesterschap in Coaching en Therapie (2012, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding De Maskermaker - vervolg Systemisch Werken incl. lichaamswerk (2013, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding De Trainersopleiding (2016, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)
- Vervolgopleiding Masterclass: de Bewegingen van de Ziel (2022, Phoenix Opleidingen, Utrecht)

66 Licensed Psychosocial Therapist (NVPA: Dutch Association of Psychosocial Therapists and Social Workers); Registered Therapist (RBCZ: Register of Complementary Care Professionals).

67 For example: Relational Constructionism: Inquiry and the Arts of Transformative Change, 2019; and Dialogic and Collaborative Practices in Challenging Times, 2021.

68 In Dutch: Vensters op leren.

the authors, their learning philosophy enfolds and carries the multicolored professional frameworks that are taught and practiced by Phoenix Opleidingen.

4.4.1 Windows on Learning: Phoenix Opleidingen's Learning Philosophy

As noted, Veenbaas et al. (2019) articulated the foundational learning philosophy which underpins learning and working with clients from Phoenix Opleidingen's point of view. In this section, I summarize Veenbaas et al. (2019, p. 31-82) who describe their learning philosophy in the following six Windows on learning.

1. *A context for learning*[69]. Learning at identity level (or identifying level, in process terms) requires a context which embeds the process and invites people to feel 'at home' and share their stories around life questions.
2. *A place in the order: being life's pupil*[70]. The greatest master is life itself. Life invites us to grow and learn. We are meant to learn, which will never stop. Facilitating this learning as counselors[71], requires us to be aware of where we are coming from. This concerns 'the universal laws of life,' 'our unique life path,' and 'what we inherit from our system of origin.'
3. *The Way of man and the foundations of Phoenix Opleidingen*[72]. The Way of man involves important themes of life. These themes demand learning to move between polarities from different angles: autonomy, wholeness, identity, integration, and meaning.
4. *The encounter as a learning landscape: a mirror*[73]. Learning experiences that stick occur within relationships. Learning themes emerge and form in the encounter. The other's learning process is a mirror for us as counselors. Within the encounter, we are at stake too. Seeing 'from the heart' allows us to see without judging and without hurry. Transformation processes require time.
5. *Being moved in the movement: the counselor as the instrument*[74]. Counseling within the learning landscape of the encounter means working from one's lived experience. Knowing about their own transformation processes, the counselor understands what change requires, and knows about temptations, vulnerabilities, and hopes that come along. Being human in this respect goes beyond perfection or working hard. Being able to use what happens in the field of resonance between counselor and client, as a resource for connection and development, reflects the mastership in this profession.

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69 In Dutch: Een context voor leren.
70 In Dutch: Plek in de ordening: leerling van het leven.
71 In this chapter, I use counseling as a general term for people who work professionally with people. This includes coaches, therapists, trainers, and so on.
72 In Dutch: De weg van de mens en de grondslagen.
73 In Dutch: De ontmoeting als leerlandschap: een spiegel.
74 In Dutch: In de beweging bewogen: de begeleider als instrument.

6. *Ethics as a guidance and as a consequence*[75] The ethical guidance for counselors is constituted by the values they feel connected to and bear responsibility for. This is inseparably connected to reflecting on actions and weighing decisions. Ethics also relates to handling dilemmas in life and dealing with questions for which there is no conclusive answer.

Now that I have briefly introduced Phoenix Opleidingen's Windows on learning, I will elaborate on them further.

1. A context for learning

According to Veenbaas et al. (2019), creating and offering a context for growth and development is pivotal in the counseling profession. This context emerges from inter-acting and the relationship, and serves as a means for clients to share their stories and continue their journey from a broader perspective. The counselor offers a space for the encounter because learning requires both craftsmanship and connection. Referring to Buber (2003), the authors stress the importance of the encounter for a deep learning experience, which goes beyond knowledge and insight. The counselor, drawing on their lived experiences, invites the client to also become more aware of their talents and capabilities and how to deal with limitations and dark sides, fleeing, and learning. Veenbaas et al. (2019) articulate the following principles of a meaningful learning process:

- Learning is a natural process and a part of living. Often, the impulse to learn and develop comes from within the person, and sometimes through what life demands from them. Drawing on Erik Erikson's developmental psychology, the authors note that human beings learn, grow, and change during the course of their whole lives. They call this the existential basis of learning processes. Counselors follow this natural learning movement and facilitate the client's process.
- The context plays an important role in motivation, depth, and meaning. As counselors, we create a context in which the learning is embedded. In the encounter, we offer context and are, at the same time, the context. In the interaction between client and counselor, the client experiments and learns. According to Veenbaas et al. (2019), counselors are the most credible facilitators around their own specific lived experiences. They also note that what emerges from the interaction between client and counselor is connected to previous experiences. By that, it provides access to learning and creating new possibilities. Professional frameworks (which I briefly introduce in section 4.4.2) serve to articulate and guide the learning process at hand. The learning context itself, as offered by the counselor, is closely connected to the counselor's personal background and how he or she creates a learning environment from that basis. This personal background serves as solid ground to stand on and at the same time calls for the counselor to look beyond their personal values and truths.

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75 In Dutch: Ethiek als richtsnoer en consequentie.

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- Tradition, norms, and values are recurring and provide access to new perspectives. Learning takes place in traditions that are passed on from generation to generation. A force field of relating to self, others, and larger structures is at play in the questions that clients bring up. Counselors and clients look at how these forces relate to the questions. At the same time, the counselor reflects on how their own background and traditions influence their handling of the client's question. As (family) traditions, norms, and values are passed on over generations, lived patterns influence our life stories and counseling questions. By facing these patterns and becoming aware of our life stories, the clients can create new possibilities for living their lives. Veenbaas et al. (2019) recognize that the professional counselors, and Phoenix Opleidingen as an educational institution, are part of such larger stories and are indebted to sources of inspiration and expertise from people like Carl Jung; Emmanuel Levinas; Eric Berne; Martin Buber; and many others.

- Safe attachment in the counselor-client relationship is a prerequisite for learning. In the interaction process between counselor and client, the encounter is a foundational principle. Many learning questions at play concern the identity level and are essentially relational themes embodied in contact. This requires counselors to not only offer professional frameworks, but also context and bedding. The relationship between counselor and client develops. In the beginning, and during hard times, the counselor offers a holding space, whereas autonomy is strengthened further in the process, combined with specific personal and professional feedback. At a deeper level, the counselor also takes on a parent function (in terms of transactional analysis, see Stewart & Joines, 2006). The more freely a counselor can move in the stories of their own parent system, the more they can contribute to their client's development process. As the client-counselor relationship develops, the dynamics between the counselor and client changes and the process of transference can serve as an important resource for development. According to Veenbaas et al. (2019), working actively with transference in the field of resonance between client and counselor may serve as a lever in learning about performing patterns and opening the field of potential.

- The recurring dynamics between inside and outside (of both client and counselor) form the basis of an integrated learning process. Acquiring new knowledge, skills, and behavior requires a learning process that includes both a cognitive understanding of and embodiment in life itself. A learning experience comes about in relation to our inner world and in the interaction with the outside world. In the interaction with the client, the counselor serves as a mirror for the client to increase their awareness. At the same time, the client is a mirror for the counselor. This interaction is where interventions are created. Learning comprises insight, experience, and task. All that we can understand and experience can be meaningfully practiced in the outside world. The counselor provides specific assignments that are inviting and support the client's learning process.

- Learning at identity level covers various dimensions. Relational realities are multi-layered, implying that the clients' learning questions concern multiple dimensions. It is important to learn to relate to the issue at play and to whom this issue relates. In working with the client, the counselor focuses on the themes a client is struggling with and the possible origins of this struggle. In this collaborative inquiry, the client and counselor look for the specific background and core of the client's learning question. Eliciting the specific backgrounds of the client's struggle provides a perspective for a useful response. Counselors who are aware of their own personal learning experiences at identity level are expected to stand firmly and be able to work with these various dimensions when a client asks for their help.

- Everything that we exclude remains part of the connecting pattern, and allows us to re-enter a forgotten area of learning. Here, Veenbaas et al. (2019) were inspired by Gregory Bateson. According to Veenbaas et al. (2019), learning is inherent to living and takes place from a recurring pattern and a field of relations. As people can only consciously overview in parts, our true knowing is said to be beyond our full consciousness. Following Gregory Bateson, the authors note that our self is not an individual one, but more of a node in networks. As persons, we are always in relation with other people and with our natural environment. Everything that we exclude remains connected at a different level. "Excluding, denying, and ignoring only exist in language, not in experience" (Veenbaas et al., 2019, p. 43). This is an important premise for counselors. The untold stories may be a starting point for a new perspective of wholeness, and a learning process about including what has been excluded.

2. A place in the order: being life's pupil

A carrying principle in counseling is, according to Veenbaas et al. (2019), to be aware that as people we, at times, have influence; at times we have to follow the current; only have a modest place; or even have no say at all. As a counselor, we have to weigh to what extent we have influence, the same could be said about our clients. This is of special importance when we are confronted with larger issues of life, which prompt searching for our place in the whole, and seeking for meaning and coherence. Often resistance is alternated with attempts to find acceptance and peace. Resistance commonly results in increased powerlessness whereas following the current and, from there, looking for possibilities to influence, offers a new perspective. Assuming our place in the whole is an accepting move, honoring life itself. This is because, in the basis, everything is connected, where respecting and entrusting this positively affects the whole. The authors articulate three dimensions for working from this principle of wholeness and order:

A. The order of life itself. People are capable of sensemaking and reflecting on own existence. There is an order we can fall back on: the order of life itself, which includes the seasons that come and go, birth and death, day and night, etc. Contrary to ancient traditions of peoples elsewhere, in the Western world we seem to have lost our

connection with such orders and our place in it. Where the seasons' rhythm results in germination, blossom, harvest, and the return to essence, this rhythm can also be seen in people's lives and learning. Connecting with this principle as counselors may help to create a context for transition for their clients and their learning questions.

B. Being life's pupil. When working with the principle of order and wholeness, counselors may work with related dynamics, for example fate and response to fate. Every new phase in life comes with challenges. As a counselor, we look at 'what can be learned here?' Is this a transition moment in life? From this perspective, the counselor and client can look at the client's question and its origin, learning process, and goals. Every phase in life comes with challenges, including dilemmas and sometimes the urge to flee. New questions and recurring themes make us grow in our own way. In this respect, as human beings, the client and counselor are just the same, making all of us life's pupils. Sometimes the counselor is a guide in the process, and sometimes s/he is 'just' present as a witness.

C. The order in our system of origin. When people are born, they enter an existing order: time, culture, country, family system. People learn to become 'themselves' in continuous interaction with these contexts. Knowing 'your place in the order' is about relating to parents; siblings; partner; friends; your own life path; and the whole we are all part of. People are connected with their histories and the story that brought them into being. They experience being a part of a whole. From our place in the order, we respond to fate. Counselors know that this place is unique and at balance with the whole. Counselors create their interventions by knowing that every small story is in relation with a larger story.

How to work generatively as a counselor and contribute to the clients' learning is different every time. An important question for the counselor is: how do I facilitate a particular client's learning process from my own lived experience? According to Veenbaas et al. (2019), counselors are at their best at 'places they have traveled themselves, got lost, and found their way home again'. While working with the client and their learning process, the counselor serves both as a witness, acknowledging where the client is in his/her process, and as a guide, encouraging them to take the next step. He/she also refers back to the overarching element in the order and articulate what the client's learning process is about. The counselors' poise and trust in their approach emerge from professional knowledge and skills; inner compass; and the order described above.

In the greater whole, we only exist in relation to others. Life does not follow our laws and our influence is limited. If we focus one-sidedly on progress, or cause and effect, we run the risk of losing our sense of belonging, as being part of a larger whole. Setting course to the order helps to assume our place in relation to others; to our environment; and to life itself. As a counselor, we 'travel' between the 'smaller stories' which occur

in the encounter, and the 'larger stories' or the larger structures in life. As the larger stories arrange the smaller ones, the small stories provide access to the larger stories and wholeness.

3.The Way of man and the foundations of Phoenix Opleidingen
According to Veenbaas et al. (2019) we, as human beings, all embark on a 'universal journey'. A journey starting with being born and, by being given a name, we are identified as an individual person. On our life path, we develop self-reliance by trial and error. Later in life, our return awaits: a reconnection with our origins, this time more consciously and able to see and integrate duality in ourselves, others, and the world. Within the 'universal journey,' we all encounter our personal struggles that we find our specific answers to. The learning path toward transformation, in the view of the authors, takes the shape of a 'classic hero's journey': a personal metaphoric learning curve, which includes phases such as innocence and hopeful expectations; facing hardship; experiencing loss and hopelessness; finding new ways and resources; and moving toward integration. The often experienced issues concern relating to one's personal history; to realizing how one's identity was built; and to struggling with the 'old systemic laws.' Becoming aware of dominant patterns in one's life offers the possibility of doing things differently.

Veenbaas et al. (2019) draw on Erik Eriksons' developmental psychology, including phases in life, and related developmental tasks. His work inspired the counseling foundations of Phoenix Opleidingen, which serve as guidelines for working with people: autonomy; wholeness; identity; integration; and meaning making. Building autonomy concerns our ability to shape our existence while relating to others. In this aspect, people often experience fear of losing both themselves and the relationship. Wholeness includes brokenness: old wounds open up during the personal transformation process. While people get hurt as they go about their lives, working toward wholeness focuses on learning how to integrate what is broken, rather than striving for perfection. Identity concerns the experience of being 'one and the same' in varying times and contexts. This deals with two polarities: identification with the other and experiencing distinction. We learn to see where we come from and who we became from there. The realization of being one's self is related to one's place in the whole. Integration deals with the dynamics of 'inside' and 'outside.' While working with the counselor who serves as a strong outside, clients learn to mirror and integrate their 'inner experiences.' Integration helps us to act responsibly: handling dilemma's with 'inner' and 'outer' involvement. People make meaning of what they encounter on their life paths. This search is what makes us human. In our life stories we need to acknowledge what is at play, including mourning about 'what could not be.'

4. The encounter as a learning landscape: a mirror

The encounter itself is both the learning landscape and the workspace for counseling. It generates conditions for the impact of the learning process. The encounter offers a space to gain discoveries and new experiences; to play or experiment; to deal with pain; to be nurtured; and to make sense of experiences. As the saying goes: 'a real encounter leaves its marks,' this is a mutual process. Veenbaas et al. (2019) note that, the more a counselor lives 'in their own life story', the better they can travel along with their clients. The counselor who is well aware of their own recurring patterns and how these affect the interaction, can work fruitfully with their clients. This does require reflexivity 'with a mild smile.' Here the authors articulate:

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- The encounter is at the root of being human, and the basis of counseling work. When clients, in the encounter, experience being of significance as a human being, this provides a basis to explore possibilities to gain access to lost pieces of their life story. This requires counselors to be present, to include their emotions, and protective mechanisms. By doing so, the counselors are able to work with their clients with an open heart, and utilize what Veenbaas et al. refer to as 'internal boundary' (in Shotter's (e.g., 2010b) words: moments in which we are 'struck', 'moved' or 'arrested'). This invites the client to be fully present as well. When the counselor is less present themselves, this may invite the client to only show anticipated parts of themselves. A living encounter based on openness and presence, with respect to what is happening here-and-now, contributes to a space for growth (regarding this, McNamee (2015b, 2015c) speaks of 'radical presence'). In that space, people may become aware of what is recurring from previous experiences, and which different forward paths become possible.
- The encounter offers a space for developing new self-knowledge and exploring. The mystery of the saying 'the encounter is the mother of all interventions,' lies in the reciprocity of really connecting with the other. In a sense, the counselor takes part in the existence of the client when they allow themselves to be moved by the client's story. In this respect, Shotter (e.g., 2005, 2006) speaks of 'withness thinking'. Such an intimate interaction is significant for both client and counselor. Although this may be tense and confronting, it also nourishes and invites transparency and authenticity. This encounter encompasses more than two people relating to each other. It is the move of a triad: a third space which encompasses the client, the counselor, and the worlds from which both originate. This triad is encompassed by the even larger order of life itself, which provides narratives, archetypical images, and symbols to relate to.
- Meaning making from a mutual perspective where the heart serves as a sense of participating, and giving and receiving is balanced. Through the 'eyes of one's heart,' the counselor sees what really matters. This offers possibilities for connecting with

the client's stories and the longing; love and hate; wounds; and the struggles these stories speak of. The counselor accepts the client for who they are, and respects and tunes in to how they have made sense of their life so far. The counselor listens 'beyond what is said,' which requires pausing time, empathy, and compassion. Focusing on both the client and on yourself maintains a balance in giving and receiving. In giving, there is more control over your emotions while receiving makes you vulnerable and open to being confronted with your own issues and incapacities. This may seem to worsen the counselor's position, but by accepting yourself and your life story, you remain well suited for this work. Regarding the counselor, this demands returning to oneself and returning home, to the origins of the counselor's life lessons and life story. The path back home starts when we realize that we have hidden ourselves. Veenbaas et al. (2019) stress that it is important to be willing to regularly meet oneself. Not only do we need professional instruments to work with but, as human beings, we are the instrument. In acknowledging and reflecting on our patterns (for example getting out of contact; fighting; striving for perfection, etc.), such patterns become our allies which may prompt a free space to meet our clients.

5. Being moved in the movement: the counselor as the instrument
In parallel processes between the client and counselor, every moment may be a moment of learning. Counselors play an important role in these processes. The way counselors inspire, how they are moved in the interaction, and the way they act, makes them the instrument through:

- Embodying, inspiring, and shaping the learning themes they are working with. Learning requires getting into motion. Being able to invite the client when their motion and their lust for life stops, requires the ability to observe subtle phenomena in the interaction and what these could possibly mean. By making relational themes accessible at the level of both cognition and experience, the counselor offers a frame of reference for new learning experiences. In the field of resonance between client and counselor, the counselor is the instrument-in-the-encounter.
- Shaping the encounter context in which learning can emerge. Clients adapt to the way counselors lead. In areas in which the counselor's own learning movement stops, the learning context becomes poorer. In areas in which the counselor shuts off, the context of the encounter diminishes. When the counselor demonstrates being personally 'at home' in the professional concepts they work with, and when the counselor uses their lived experience, they invite the client and offer a bedding for learning. Learning as a counselor, about one's own opening up and shutting off, leaving and returning, is both crucial and challenging in being part of, and maintaining, the learning context. Veenbaas et al. (2019) compare the counselors' craft to the ancient alchemists and their endless patience in looking for transformation: what is this client's learning about and how to facilitate this? The counselor does not only

use 'factual information' but also relies on what can be sensed in the interaction, in the encounter.

- Being a pivot point when learning stops. When the counselor flees from what they experience(d) themselves, or when they exclude particular issues, the client instinctively knows that it is better not to share such parts of their story. This unintendedly and unconsciously makes the client stick to old patterns which limit their freedom of movement. Fortunately, as a counselor, we can also be pivotal in reopening the field of potential. By becoming aware of one's own blockages, what they tell you, you learn to use your transference and how to work with the client. Sometimes referring the client to another counselor may be beneficial. Everything we offer our clients to learn also applies to ourselves. Counselors learn to entrust themselves to 'not knowing' and remaining empty-handed.

- Considering signs of (counter) transference as learning opportunities, and utilizing them. In every interaction, we tend to 'scan' who the other is and we check how their energy reminds us of previous life experiences, previous relations, and 'early back home.' We unconsciously conclude: familiar or unfamiliar; safe or unsafe; comfortable or tense. A process of transference may be useful when intervening. Instead of remaining out of the (counter) transference, we can utilize it as a resource through connecting with feelings evoked in the interaction, reflecting on what this means to you, and to what this possibly tells you about yourself and the client. Which message may be read about the blockages and possible invitations, as a resource in continuing the client's learning on this particular issue? Interventions originating from such instances cannot be prefabricated, they emerge within the very moment and out of integrated craftsmanship. Using whatever one experiences in such interactive moments, such as resistance or a desire to leave and the like, the counselor, with the intention to 'walk the same path as their client' and to know from within, searches 'internally' in their own life story how to connect to these particular phenomena and related responses. Once in that place, the counselor is able to return to the client to fully stand by the them and 'lead the way' using the language of 'old' tendencies and 'new' possibilities. Such interventions, which are large and small at the same time, originate from the counselor and client who move each other in the encounter.

6. Ethics as a guidance and as a consequence

Ethics serves as guidance for how (not) to act and the responsibility you bear for this. This concerns the way a counselor handles dilemmas and questions for which one does not have conclusive answers. Ethics relate to our values, the basis from which we work with people, and what we encounter in doing so. By being reflexive, we take a look in the mirror, and invite others to do the same. On doing so, we are vulnerable and try to make sense of what we encounter. We question ourselves. Could I have done this differently, given the circumstances? To what extent does my responsibility extend? While

remaining life's pupils, we reflect on our good intentions while we cannot prevent getting our hands dirty. Ethics and ecology are connected: we weigh the consequences of our actions for ourselves, for our clients, and for our environment. This requires working from a multiple partisan[76] perspective. Veenbaas et al. (2019) offer some concepts they consider useful for reflecting on ethics.

- In their work, counselors encounter questions about good and evil. Our actions affect the morale of clients with implications for themselves, their lives, and the people they relate with. In this matter, people, as well as counselors, tend to remain loyal to what Veenbaas et al. (2019) refer to as 'group conscience[77].' This group conscience is formed in our first living environment (often the family we grew up in) and provides us with a world view, including conceptions of right and wrong. When we are being loyal to this group conscience in our actions, we feel innocent. Disloyalty brings discomfort and feelings of guilt. Self-reflexivity helps counselors to look beyond these 'old laws,' including the feelings that come with this. In order to maintain freedom of movement around our particular norms and values when working with clients, counselors need 'an outside' to relate to, such as supervision. In realizing that their actions can make a difference, counselors are aware that their attitude matters.
- The existential dimension centers on how we, as human beings, relate to existence itself; to how we deal with fate; and to the meaning and meaninglessness of our existence. People look for a balance in handling dilemmas as we deliberate between different fields of relations, while encountering universal questions as human beings. In this, we reflect on our loyalty to ourselves; to people in our lives; to our ancestors; to who and what comes after us; and to what is larger than us.
- When looking for answers, we inquire into our fields of relations and how we relate to significant others, especially when we are dealing with big dilemmas. We are always fully aware of what moves us when working with people. The question is, which events from the past are influencing our current actions, and to whom or to what we are being loyal to in doing so? This also happens when we learn and develop. Often when we need to make a decision, there is fear at play about the possible consequences in one or more fields of relationships. Fear of being left alone, losing our place, or falling out of grace.
- Guilt and innocence from a wider perspective. In every system (e.g., the family we grew up in; the current system we live in; our work; and our place in society) there is always a dynamic of guilt and innocence at play. The more we reflect on the way our conscience works, the more we become aware that our actions and the actions of the people we work with are influenced by these dynamics. This sheds a different light on guilt and innocence. In ethical reflection, we need to look beyond our own morale. Guilt and innocence do not exist on their own, they acquire meaning

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76 In Dutch: meervoudig of meerzijdig partijdig.
77 In Dutch: groepsgeweten.

in relation to something or someone. For example, as children of our parents and ancestors; as a peoples; as a race; as inhabitants of our planet and all existing life. Within all these relationships, we experience guilt and innocence which transcends our individual perspective by far. Our conscience and sense of good and bad develop continuously while we relate to all the smaller and large wholes we are connected to, which requires counselors to continuously reflect on 'ourselves and our embeddedness.'

- The relationship as an appeal. Veenbaas et al. (2019) suggest that, when encountering dilemmas which do not have clear and conclusive answers, we still need to act and bear responsibility for those actions. Referring to Emmanuel Levinas, the authors say that we can only help others, when empathizing with the other, from our own fragility. "Being affected means being called for, when experiencing an appeal, we somehow cannot escape" (Veenbaas et.al., 2019, p. 78). How the counselor responds to the other's appeal however, is his/her responsibility. In this respect, the authors refer to Martin Buber who noted that, in every encounter between you and I, something larger is present in relation to which we can understand one another.

- Ethics from the heart. According to the authors, working ethically is rooted in the heart; there are no universal laws. Rather, what is considered ethical depends on the situation and the people involved. A humanizing approach is anchored in compassion. This way of working is embedded in a way that offers a place for everything, a way which silences our judgements. Compassion allows us to experience beyond our judgments; to be part of; and to relate to the client's and our own experiences. This serves us by creating a platform to acknowledge 'what is,' even if this is something we would like to be far away from. We realize the importance of looking mildly at the way we all go through life, and what it takes to create space between yourself and your personal history, and to experience freedom of movement in the present. Counseling, as a 'craft of the heart,' is based on the relating of one human being with another, and the influence of the ethical appeal of the other.

As counselors, we offer a space for learning. Learning about making our way, carried by a context; finding destination and, in the meantime, getting lost and going through depths which may turn out to be turning points. Then, we return to where we originated from, renewed. We gain more clarity and authenticity, enriched by the many experiences we integrated while going through the learning process. The 'Windows on learning' I have summarized here articulate the learning philosophy of Phoenix Opleidingen which has been crafted over many years. These windows enfold and carry the multicolored professional frameworks, which are taught and employed by Phoenix Opleidingen.

4.4.2 Phoenix Opleidingen's Professional Frameworks

In addition to their learning philosophy, Veenbaas et al. (2019, p. 85-837) also offer an overview of the many frameworks available for counselors, including concepts, models, and processes. These frameworks are conceptualized from a wide range of schools of thought, such as systemic practice, transactional analysis, neurolinguistic programing, voice dialogue, gestalt therapy, phenomenology, and many others. They have been inspired by, for example, Gregory Bateson, Ivan Böszörményi-Nagy, Martin Buber, Milton Erickson, Bert Hellinger, Emmanuel Levinas, Rumi, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. When referring to their recent publication (Veenbaas, et al., 2019) in our conversation, Wibe Veenbaas mentioned their quest of how to write about their various sources of inspiration, in a way that is practically useful for practitioners. This resulted in generating language, to help clients and practitioners to really grasp and practically apply these sometimes abstract ideas (Wibe Veenbaas, personal communication, 1 July 2019). In their educational programs, Phoenix Opleidingen teaches from a wide range of publications on these frameworks: for example on systemic practice and character styles (Veenbaas & Goudswaard, 2005; Veenbaas et al., 2006); family relations (Weisfelt, 2005); transactional analysis (Stewart & Joines, 2006); neurolinguistic programing (O'Connor & Seymour, 2006); contracting (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 1999); narratives and metaphors (Veenbaas, 2005; Goudswaard & Veenbaas, 2012); leadership (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 2006; Hjort, Veenbaas, Broekhuizen & Coerts, 2017); and psychopathology, diagnostics, and therapy (Weisfelt, 2000; American Psychiatric Association, 2001; Frances & First, 2008). It goes beyond the purpose of this thesis to summarize all the frameworks. However, in chapters 5 and 6, I will elaborate on the eclectic use of the Phoenix Opleidingen frameworks in which I have been trained, and which are regarded highly by many.

Utilizing the frameworks in practice
In both phases of the action research project (coaching journeys and coaching follow-up), I used these frameworks as heuristic devices (see also Hoffman, 2012), rather than 'imposing' any method, model, or truth on the coachees. Coherent with the relational approach introduced in chapter 3, the frameworks served as resources, and lenses, for collaboratively making sense of the management consultants' stories. The frameworks offered both language for conversations and understanding 'what was going on;' and served as signposts for related developmental options and re-storying. This approach resonates with what Miller and Strong (2008) refer to as constructionist-oriented therapy, which considers "client's problems as socially constructed realities and that solving the problems involves developing alternative orientations to client's lives" (p. 611). This is different from therapy based on the medical model, which treats client's problems as disease-like, and caused by underlying biomedical and psychological conditions. In the latter approach, diagnosing and prescribing treatment often includes medication, which is focused on 'curing' the problem, by relying on DSM categories (Miller & Strong,

2008). These different orientations to therapy translate into what is considered as evidence; as validated treatment; as ethical rules; and as standards and therapy education. Critics of the evidence-based movement in medicine (often constructionists) stress that the medical therapy approach is privileged by treating therapy in a similar way to doses of medication. From a constructionist vantage point, "therapy is not about using interventions designed to treat client's diagnosed disorders. Instead, it is an interactional process of 'working up' definitions of social reality that makes sense to clients and therapists, and that point to practical actions clients might take in changing their lives" (Miller & Strong, 2008, p. 617-618; see also McNamee et al., 2023). Following Tomm (1988), and acknowledging that articulating and answering questions becomes an intervention rather than an attempt to gather information, inquiry may have a therapeutic effect and therapy may become a collaborative inquiry (see also Hosking, 2004; Hosking & McNamee, 2006). While therapists who lean toward the medical model answer clients' questions with clinical wisdom, constructionist-oriented practitioners treat questions as invitations to shared inquiry (Heron, 1996 in: Miller & Strong, 2008) and use qualitative research methods collaboratively as a therapeutic method.

4.5 Reflection

In this chapter, I have introduced the management consulting firm which participated in the action research study. I have noted that their experienced management consultants facilitate complex organization change which can be characterized as second-order or third-order change (Van Dongen et al. 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002), and that participating in the action research resonates with their key drivers and their views on management consulting. Furthermore, I have explained the collaborative decision by the firm partner and myself to invite consultants, senior consultants, and managing consultants to participate in the action research project (meaning that the junior and partner levels were not included). Finally, I have offered the general outline of the whole action research project and its components, as well as introduced my knowledge bases as an action researcher. In the next chapter, I describe the first action research cycle: the 12 completed coaching journeys.

CHAPTER 5
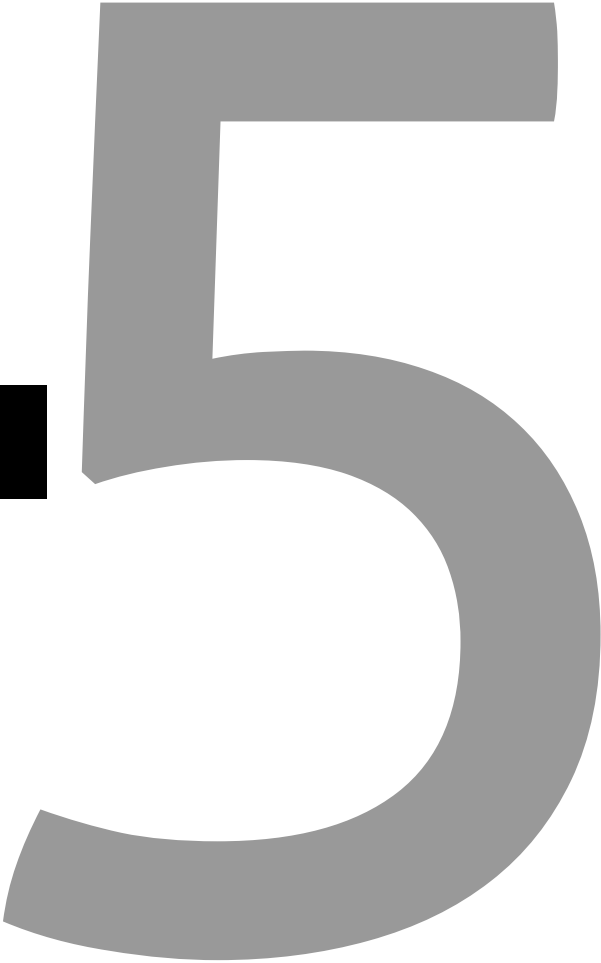
Action Research Phase 1: 12 Tailor-made Coaching Journeys

"From a distant perspective, these may seem small things. But when you look at my personal context, they are really big steps."   (full journey story consultant 11)

5.1 Introduction

I engaged in this action research project with the intention to make a direct contribution to the development of management consultants. As described in chapter 4, I wanted to use my professional background to offer a tailor-made coaching journey for management consultants. In the current chapter, I describe the first phase of this process and its outcomes. In addition to making a direct contribution to the consulting practice of the participating management consultants, I was interested in their stories with a more general purpose. By collecting, analyzing, and summarizing their stories, about difficulties they experience in stakeholder interactions, my intention is to offer 'generative metaphors' to other consultants, for example to management consultants who have not participated in this project, but may find themselves dealing with similar challenges and questions. I intend to present these stories in a way that shows the transformation that the participating management consultants experienced, and the effects on their consulting practice. I also describe how they experienced working with me as their coach, including the experienced impact of COVID-19 related lockdowns on our collaboration.

In chapter 3, I noted that action research usually starts with real organization issues, rather than questions that purely originate from a (theoretical) research interest. Nonetheless, I had several guiding research interests myself as well which emerged from combining my academic background with professional experience. In general, I was interested in how personal coaching, informed by the therapeutic knowledgebase described in chapter 4, could contribute to reflecting on the management consultants' experiences with stakeholder interaction and related learning questions. Furthermore, I was interested in possible transformations related to those questions and experiences, and how we could co-create different ways to go on, in dealing with their challenges. As argued in chapter 2, I expected that this may have a positive effect on their management consulting practice, for example, ultimately improving the success rate of organizational change initiatives.

Before I describe how phase one of this action research was performed and the outcomes, I first present how I used narrative inquiry and analysis in general.

Transforming narrative interviews

In this section, I elaborate on how narrative inquiry and analysis informed my thinking in the first phase of the action research project. Narrative inquiry is a way of conducting case-centered research, of which narrative analysis is a component (Riessman, 2008). According to this author, what various approaches of narrative analysis have in common is that they analyze text in a storied form. However, there are various perspectives to it,

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and narrative scholars draw insights from many traditions. In this respect, Kim (2016) argues that narrative inquiry cannot exist in a vacuum. Theories at a 'macro-level' (research paradigm, e.g., social construction) influence the use of 'meso-level' theories (research methodology, e.g., narrative inquiry) and 'micro-level' theories (specific research discipline, e.g., coaching and therapy). In other words, we cannot make sense of the told stories, without theories. However, "theories are to be used, not to dictate to us or shape our stories" (Kim, 2016, p. 77). McNamee and Hosking (2012) note that methods do not have meaning in themselves. As methods are neither free standing, nor necessarily attached to one specific research orientation, the social constructionist's central question is how to practice any particular method. The social constructionist orientation guides our questions; how we try to answer them; what we count as fact; what we recognize as rigor; and the language tools we employ. In general, the authors suggest moving away from 'design and methods' in order to create room for being relationally responsive in the moment. This invites conversation, dialogue, in which we let go (the illusion of) control. Following the assumption of the co-constructed nature of relational realities, a form of narrative inquiry relates well to the constructionist approach. Such a constructionist way of working with narratives is different from a modernist approach[78], which assumes that narratives have certain characteristics, and are individual texts which need to be collected, made sense of, and spoken about by the expert researcher (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In contrast, and following the constructionist idea of viewing language as creating reality, therapists (McNamee & Shawver, 2004), and coaches (e.g., Stelter, 2019) focus on their clients' discourse, and "how particular discursive moves constrain or potentiate different forms of action and, consequently, different realities" (McNamee & Shawver, 2004, p. 255).

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78 Gergen and Kaye (1992) also distinguish between a modern and postmodern approach with respect to working with narratives in a therapeutic context.

A *modern* approach would mean offering a different, 'better', science-based narrative to replace the client's narrative. Therapists would offer 'real insight' into experienced problems and alternative reality that holds promising futures and is likely to suggest alternative lines of action. However: the excessive concern with the individual and blindness to cultural conditions may result in pathologizing deviant behavior. In the modern approach, the client's narrative is replaced by an a-priori, science based, static, de-contextualized, and 'better' narrative "created before the client's entry into therapy and the contours over which he or she has no control" (p. 171). This approach puts the therapist or coach in an all-knowing position, leaving the client in an inferior position. Varying with the specific school of therapy or coaching, a relatively closed understanding of what a fully functioning or good individual is, is privileged, while cutting away from particular, cultural, and historical circumstances, and insensitively "failing to register the particularities of the client's living conditions" (p.172).

Working with narratives in a *postmodern* view, as argued by the authors, poses challenges to modernist therapy with regard to, for example, narratives of pathology and cure, and the status of the therapist's authority. Gergen and Kaye (1992) offer suggestions for therapeutic moves from a postmodern stance, which invite a multiplicity of accounts of reality recognizing the historical and cultural situatedness of each. Accounts of truth are within differing conversations, and no conversation is privileged. The postmodern practitioner invites a multiplicity of self-accounts, but does not commit to one. Narrative constructions remain fluid, open to shifting circumstances. The question of personal identity shifts, in this view, from product (e.g., a specific narrative) to process (e.g., the creation of narratives). The authors argue for a more processual approach to generating meaning in dialogue and include narratives and narrative thinking in this. In other words, they reject a focus on narrative reconstruction or replacement by the therapist.

According to McNamee and Hosking (2012), narratives emerge within local rationalities and as co-constructions, where the inquirer is a part of, rather than apart from the narrative. In this view, narrative interviews are relatively unstructured. The interviewer leaves space for the other to tell their story in relation to some broad question. Or as Riessman (2008) notes: researchers do not *find* narratives; they participate in their creation. The author emphasizes that the interpretation process already begins during the conversation. That is why the author recommends that the researcher should be the same person as the interviewer (and not separate these roles). As a consequence of their participation in narrative creation, researchers need to consciously and critically think how they constitute narrative text. McNamee and Hosking follow Riesman (1993), who notes that in such interviews, narratives are constructed twice. First by selecting and punctuating from their lived experience, and second by talking about it in the interview. The process of construction continues when a text is transcribed and analyzed, and even every time when someone reads the resulting narrative. As a consequence, relying only on text, constructed from single interviews, is limiting (although careful transcription is important). "We must not reify our 'holy' transcripts of these conversations" (Riessman, 2008, p. 26).

In a social constructionist approach, the modernist "distinction between inquiry (finding out) and change work (intervening) becomes blurred" (Hosking & McNamee, 2006, p. 148)[79]. Inquiry and intervention can be deliberately interwoven, for example in narrative therapy in which working with narratives is used to develop 'power to go on' in a local context (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Following this, the coaching conversations in the first phase of the action research project may be considered as narrative interviews with an emphasis on transformation. "Therapists such as Milton Erickson and Frank Farelley, along with NLP practitioners, have shown how questions, body language, juxtapositions, … may have transformative effects – even when 'the interviewee' thinks that 'the interviewer' is 'just finding out' about them" (Hosking, 2004, p. 271; Hosking & McNamee, 2006, p. 151). Riessman (2005) also refers to the transformative effect of storytelling. According to her, narratives do not mirror, but refract the past. Storytellers choose to connect events and make them meaningful for others, which is influenced by imagination and strategic interest. In the context of my action research project, this interest is influenced by the management consultant's professional practice and the related coaching questions they bring to the conversations.

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79 I experienced this strict modernist distinction when I participated in two PhD courses about (organizational) ethnography. My research was criticized for making the 'respondents' dependent on me, and for me playing a too active role in the field. It was suggested that I should let others do the coaching, and that I should study the effects. At these moments, I became more and more aware and confident that my project was more 'at home' in the field of action research, where studying the intervention one performs is central (Coghlan & Shani, 2018). According to Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016), action research is suitable for studying "an unfolding series of actions that are taking place over time in a certain group, organization or other community […] understanding the process of change, development or improvement of some actual problem […] in order to learn from it […]" (p. 166).

The dialogic-performative approach of narrative analyses (Riessman, 2005, 2008) is useful in inquiries into relationships, for example in psychotherapy settings, and in studies of identity construction. Although the dialogic-performative analyses of narrative do not abandon 'what is said' (thematic analyses) and 'how it is said' (structural analysis), the interest shifts to storytelling as a process of co-construction, where the teller and listener create meaning collaboratively. Question and answer exchanges may focus on the stories of personal experience organized around the storyteller's world. Storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. 'Truths' of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past, but in the shifting connections they forge among the past, present, and future. They offer storytellers a way to re-imagine their lives (Riessman, 2005).

Narrative study relies on extended accounts that are preserved and treated analytically as units, rather than fragmented into thematic categories which is customary for other forms of qualitative analyses, such as grounded theory (Riessman, 2008). In a narrative study, attention goes to how and why a particular event is storied; or to what a narrator accomplishes by developing the story *that* way; and the effects on the reader or listener. Of interest is who elicits the story; for what purpose; and how the audience affects what is told. "In narrative study, particularities and context come to the fore" (Riessman, 2008, p. 13). However, narrative analysis does invite the reader to go beyond the surface of a text. Generalization in narrative inquiry is more about making conceptual inferences about a social process, rather than about generalizing from a sample to an entire population. In this respect, I draw on Erlandson et al. (1993), who argue that generalization across contexts is impossible in naturalistic research. However, according to these authors, knowledge generated in one context may be transferable to another. The basis for transferring knowledge is not to select isolated variables that are equivalent across contexts. Instead, naturalistic researchers attempt to describe the studied context in detail. Erlandson et al. suggest two strategies to facilitate transferability: 1) thick descriptions of data in the studied context, to allow judgement of transferability; and 2) purposive sampling (in contrast to random sampling in traditional research) to offer an adequate description of the specific information from and about the 'sending context'. I address the transferability of this specific action research project in part III of the dissertation.

Let us return to the particularities of phase one of this action research. Following Riessman (2008), the interpretation of generated narratives took place largely during the coaching conversations. In these conversations, we collaboratively focused on analyzing 'what was said' and 'how,' and how this related to the coachees' coaching questions. While doing so, the specific expertise of both the management consultant (e.g., their personal lived experiences, and their specific knowledge and experience from their

consulting context) and of myself (e.g., coaching / therapeutic knowledge and experience; and business experience) were equally important when analyzing the narratives together, and the real time co-construction of new specific ways to go on with experienced challenges. Regarding the 'formal' analysis, I chose to perform a relatively simple collaborative analysis, from the perspective of looking back on the completed coaching journeys. Using the words of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard[80], we lived the coaching journeys forwards, but could only understand them backwards. In my view, this sensemaking afterwards offers a useful analysis of the common threads of both process and outcomes of each coaching journey, in a relatively comparable and transferable way. Resulting from the decision to make sense of the coaching journey backwards, the analysis was not so much on the level of the separate data sources (e.g., written reflections, notes, and audio recordings) but on the level of the coaching journey as a whole. In the analysis, the literature related to my coaching and therapeutic training, as introduced in section 4.4, served as the 'micro-level' theories (Kim, 2016). In appendix 6, I present examples of the outcomes of these analyses in a conversation form, which is consistent with the approach of narrative interviewing. The specific steps of how we performed the collaborative analysis are described in section 5.3.

5.2 Inviting Management Consultants' Personal Learning Questions

Following the conversations with the consulting firm partner to set up the project as described in chapter 4, I wrote an offer to invite management consultants (appendix 2). In this offer, I described what the coaching might bring them in general terms (e.g., increased self-awareness about engaging in relational processes; increased reflection skills; and resources for 'going on together' in complex change processes, possibly resulting in better project results that contribute to the performance of their client organizations). I suggested, in general terms, what the journey would be like (tailor-made; offering maximum opportunity to contribute to the management consultant's coaching questions; possibly 8-10 one-on-one sessions of one hour; personal intake; confidentiality; optional site-visits; and a co-researcher role). The conditions for participation were, in addition to consulting experience, being curious and motivated to enhance interactions with stakeholders; voluntary participation and manager support; willingness and room to invest time and effort to attend coaching sessions; willingness to share written reflections after each session; and allowing audio recording. I also provided some professional background information about myself, and information about

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80 According to Kierkegaard, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards" (e.g., Hjort et al., 2017, p. 129).

my PhD research. In addition to assuring confidentiality, the research was submitted for approval by the Ethical Committee of the University of Twente.

The consulting firm's partner sent the invitation to all the consultants within the firm, presenting this opportunity and noting how it was in alignment with the firm's beliefs and core values. He collected management consultants' applications which he forwarded to me. I confirmed their application (appendix 3), and invited them to write me a letter in which they would introduce themselves and describe their coaching goals and what coaching may yield for their consulting practice. During the intake sessions, we acquainted ourselves; we discussed my offer in relation to my PhD project, and their letters; and we talked about whether or not we both experienced a 'go' to continue on this journey. At the end of these first sessions, I introduced the survey study on coaching outcomes (see chapter 8). Both the consultants and researcher signed informed consent forms (appendix 4) and we scheduled the second session.

A total of 13 management consultants applied. All the intake sessions resulted in a 'go.' Shortly before our second session, one senior consultant called me to withdraw. She did not really have a pressing coaching question, and felt that she had sufficient resources to deal with her current project. After inquiring into her experience of our intake session (which she experienced as a good conversation) and checking whether time resources played a role (which was the case), I offered her the opportunity to continue the coaching journey later.

Consequently, 12 Management consultants continued (and completed) their coaching journey with me. At the start of the coaching journeys in November 2019, the group included six consultants; four senior consultants; and two managing consultants. Over the course of the coaching engagement, some of the consultants and senior consultants were promoted to senior or managing consultant. All the participating management consultants hold a university degree (Master or PhD). On average, they had seven years of working experience, of which four were in management consulting.

Initial coaching questions and contracting

In their initial letters, written prior to the intake sessions, the management consultants stated their goals and associated benefits for their consulting profession. I have summarized them below[81]:

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81 To enable the reader to keep track of the developments of each participant, I assigned numbers to each consultant and used these consequently throughout the whole dissertation (incl. appendices).

Consultant 1	To be more effective in the political arena, while keeping focused on the content of my work. To get clarity from the firm partners about whether or not I fit in, in the consulting world.
Consultant 2	To become more aware of my strengths and relate them to my consulting projects. To make a deliberate choice between continuing my consulting career in either expert roles (centering content, expert-knowledge, and analysis) or process roles (focusing on change work, coaching, and intervening). The latter seems more challenging, but is also more demanding as I experience difficulties in acknowledging and expressing my feelings, and in connecting with people, being open and vulnerable 'on the spot.' By achieving these goals, I hope to have more impact as a management consultant, and help people more.
Consultant 3	To become more effective in interacting with people, and collaborating in a consulting context which is very demanding in terms of coordinating activities; accepting other ways of working; and compromising (versus working more solitarily). This will contribute to a peace of mind; the working atmosphere; and productivity. For me personally, this would mean less negative energy and more available energy to put in my work.
Consultant 4	To become more self-aware and deliberate with respect to expressing my views and advising, and to refrain from judging. Balancing what to address (and how), and what not to address. And really being able to 'let go' when I decide not to address something. This is important to relate to a great variety of stakeholders, and be effective as a management consultant.
Consultant 5	To balance relativizing and acknowledging other people's perspectives; and trusting my intuition and feelings. I'm curious about what keeps me from working more energetically and trusting my feelings instead of following rationalized thoughts. I will be more effective as a management consultant, when I'm more visible and communicate more clearly about what I expect from others, and what I stand for.
Consultant 6	To improve my reflecting and communication skills, and become more self-aware in the ways I act and interact. It is important to make more use of my social skills in my new role, in which I collaborate more intensively, both internally with colleagues and externally with clients. In this respect, connecting with others and positioning myself is important, for example with respect to the content of the consulting work.
Consultant 7	To act more professionally, especially in conversations which I experience as complicated. When I get tense; feel the need to do my best; or when I think something is difficult, I tend to act more 'girly' and less of an adult woman. I want to learn to have more well-structured and powerful conversations when these situations occur.

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Consultant 8[82] To acquire practical tools for leaving room and responsibility when I'm facilitating organizational change. Currently, I experience too much responsibility for the end result. Furthermore, I want to learn about dealing with perfectionism related to expectations that I have with respect to myself and my client. How to lower the bar and accept that, sometimes less is more? This would make me a more effective management consultant because I would be more at ease, act more powerfully and leave more ownership with the client.

Consultant 9 To learn to say 'no' more and deal with leadership. I tend to be a pleaser and say 'yes' too quickly to things that don't match my abilities and interests. I want to be a good consultant who achieves results, without pleasing others.

Consultant 10 To become more aware of specific interaction patterns and make changes to become a better, more critical consultant, and enhance my collaborating relationships. More specifically, please others less, by taking over responsibilities, or adapting to other peoples' schedules. This would leave more room for others to take on their responsibilities. Furthermore, I tend to collaborate better with men than I do with women. This is related to my own assumptions, judgements, and behavioral patterns.

Consultant 11 To keep more of a professional distance, as opposed to jumping in too fast. I also want to experience more equality in conversations and relationships, to prevent being played around in political sensitive contexts. More confidence to engage in discussions and arguments is welcome. This would contribute to being more powerful, both internally in the consulting firm, and within my client organizations.

Consultant 12 To learn to deal with impatience and being strict with myself and others. I like to do things well and I'm action oriented. But sometimes, this bothers me. Then, I ask for help too late and get stuck with a problem. Other people have trouble understanding me in such situations. Learning to show my insecurities more, and focusing less on results when interacting with others, will probably make me more affective as a management consultant.

Consultant 13 To deal with the contradiction which I experience between 'centering on being human, and family values' on the one hand and 'career, getting results, and status' on the other. I experience I am more effective when working from the first 'mode,' and want to look into that, in order to build sustainable relations as a consultant, and be more effective.

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82 This consultant withdrew before the second session.

I deliberately focused on contracting in the orienting phase even though contracting is a cyclical and dynamic process (Veenbaas et al., 2019) which also requires attention during the process. Several contract types can be distinguished in this respect. First, the 'relationship contract' arranges how the coach and coachee relate to each other, including mutual expectations. This contract (which is often not consciously expressed) is leading, and serves as a bedding for the second contract, the 'content contract,' which is focused on what the coachee's learning process entails. The third contract type, the 'hidden contract,' is a part of the relationship contract, of which there is limited or no awareness. This hidden contract may influence (constrain) the process on realizing the content contract (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 1999; Veenbaas et al., 2019). However, the hidden contract can also point to what the learning process is all about, and as such may be a resource instead of a burden. This way, using the hidden contract may serve as an impetus for learning (Veenbaas et al., 2019). For example, in our first conversation, I experienced an appeal by consultant 10 to work really hard and convince her that I am a great coach. I acknowledged and expressed this in our conversation, which elicited her tendency to strive for perfection and control. Addressing this turned out to have a positive effect on our collaboration and its outcomes.

According to Veenbaas and Weisfelt (1999), the 'first content contract' (in the orienting phase) is often limited in scope; relates to a specific goal and situation; and invites the client to take action toward solving the problematic situation. Over time, the client will often see parallels with other contexts. The 'second content contract' will include these connections. The client's problem will be considered in terms of their whole personal and professional life so far. This second content contract has a wider scope which is focused on script change; is articulated specifically, related to a broader goal with respect to various roles in life; and invites the client to take concrete steps to change their script. In the process of moving from the first to the second contract, the relationship contract also often develops with growing trust, and the coach and coachee agree more on what needs to be learned, and how they will work together. Moving from the first to the second contract often goes naturally, but sometimes the coachee's may experience this as, for example, going from a 'business contract' to a 'therapeutic contract' (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 1999). By being aware of the possible differences between the first and second contract, I did not consider the management consultants' initial goals as set in stone, but more as invitations for further collaborative exploring.

5.3 The Unfolding of 12 Coaching Journeys

In total, we completed 12 coaching journeys (117 conversations of one hour), over a period of 13 months. On average, each journey consisted of approximately 10 conversa-

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tions, varying between 5 and 14. Due to COVID-19, we had to transfer from face-to-face meetings to online sessions in March 2020. By that time, 10 coaching journeys had been started (amounting to 40 face-to-face conversations). Two journeys were executed fully online, because they started during the pandemic.

Creating a path while walking it

There was no blueprint or predeveloped path. Instead, we crafted each journey, guided by the coaching questions; responding to what emerged during the conversations; and what happened in the consultants' relevant contexts between sessions. We collaborated as equal conversational partners, recognizing the specific expertise of both coachee and coach. As described by Veenbaas and Weisfelt (1999), the coaching questions developed over time, often expanding to relevant contexts such as life stories; previous (professional) experiences; growing up; and so on. The extent to which this happened varied per management consultant. Although some coach sessions (or even large parts of a whole journey), focused on personal themes, outside the management consulting context, we always looked for how certain issues or experiences influenced their consulting performance. Often, acknowledging how previous life experiences affected their consulting performance, resulted in an increase in awareness, and yielded different insights about possible ways to go on.

As noted in section 4.4, I was trained by Phoenix Opleidingen. Their learning philosophy is foundational for the way I practice coaching and therapy. Many professional frameworks, such as script, character styles, drivers and stoppers, systemic practice, transference (Veenbaas et al., 2019), proved to be useful in the coaching journeys. As noted, I have used these frameworks as heuristic devices; resources for sensemaking; and signposts for developmental options. In general, we collaboratively searched during the coaching journeys how the management consultants' narratives around their coaching question could limit their stakeholder interactions, and how we could generate room for doing things differently. The aim was to see how different narratives may be useful in dealing with the issues around their coaching questions. Coherent with a constructionist approach, this collaborative re-storying of social realities, in a way that makes sense to both coachee and coach, often resulted in actions which made their life and consulting practices easier (e.g., Miller & Strong, 2008; McNamee et al., 2023). My specific actions and offered suggestions were emergent and tailor-made to fit the specific situation. Practically speaking, we started the coaching sessions by looking back at the previous one(s) and addressing what stood out as important for both of us. The consultant's written reflections also informed me about how they had processed the previous session(s) and what had happened in the meantime. After setting the topic for the day's session, we continued our conversation. At the end of the session, we discussed the takeaways. I often suggested 'homework assignments' for in between sessions. These assignments,

which we crafted based on the conversation, were aimed at supporting the developmental steps that the management consultants were making at that time.

We regularly evaluated the process; discussed the progress we were making with respect to the coaching questions; and whether or not we wanted to change something. When one of us got the impression that we were approaching the end of our journey, we agreed to discuss the overall progress in the following meeting. From there, we either planned our final session; agreed to have some more sessions; or even recontacted the coaching question.

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Rounding up and looking back: collaboratively analyzing the coaching journey
In the final session of each coaching journey, we rounded up. We conducted a collaborative analysis of both the process and results. We performed a good deal of this collaborative analysis during the last session, and finished it in the following weeks and months. The collaborative analysis consisted of the following six steps, resulting in 12 narratives describing each coaching journey.
1. Agenda setting for the final session;
2. Discussing the outcomes and process of the whole coaching journey in our final session;
3. The management consultant's 'final reflection', to be written after our final session;
4. Evaluation interview with the management consultant, by another researcher;
5. Articulating the common thread of our analysis in a narrative, summarizing the relevant details from all the generated data;
6. Submitting the written narrative to the management consultant, for comments, rewriting, or approval.

Below, I elaborate on these steps.
1. In order to look back at the process and its outcomes, I proposed the following agenda for the final sessions. I sent this proposal in advance, offering them a possibility to prepare.
    - A first, spontaneous reflection on the whole coaching journey;
    - Addressing important themes in our conversations, according to both of us;
    - Evaluating our collaboration process (added during final session: transferring to online coaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic);
    - The developments we had both experienced around the coaching questions, between their initial letter and today;
    - Our thoughts about the future, with respect to the addressed important themes;
    - Invitation to write a 'final' reflection about the whole coaching journey;
    - The second and third survey (see section 8.4);

- Invitation to an independent evaluation with another researcher (see section 8.2);
- Follow-up possibilities.

This approach is consistent with the way I normally evaluate the coaching/therapeutic journeys with my clients. Veenbaas et al. (2019) suggest that the client and coach/therapist should evaluate the journey together by looking at the initial questions and the outcomes, and at the way both collaborated in the process. This includes applying learnings in other contexts and a future pace, and then saying goodbye. The topics in the last four bullets were added, given the specific research setting of the coaching.

2. During the final session I asked if the management consultants wanted to add to the proposed agenda. Then we started our collaborative analysis. The focus of our analysis was on their personal transformation, in the context of relating to stakeholders in their consulting practice. This included both external stakeholders (client organization), and internal stakeholders (consulting firm). We often included the contexts of their personal lives.

3. I invited the management consultants to write a 'final' reflection about the whole journey. Although we had discussed the red thread in our final session, talking about this could prompt new insights or refractions of what had happened. This is in line with McNamee and Hoksing's (2012) notion about blurring the distinction between intervention and its evaluation. To facilitate this overall reflection, I suggested 'the hero's journey' format, which is used by Phoenix Opleidingen in their 'metaphorical learning curve' concept (Goudswaard & Veenbaas, 2012; Veenbaas et al., 2019). Gergen (2015a) refers to this as the 'heroic saga narrative.' I offered the consultants a description of this concept by Veenbaas et al. (2019), and sent them a TED-X video about the hero's journey (Winkler, 2012).

4. The independent evaluation interviews by another researcher are described in section 8.2. Although this evaluation has its own specific place in this dissertation, these interview reports did contribute to writing the narratives about the 12 coaching journeys.

5. Based on steps one to four, I wrote 12 narratives about the coaching journeys from start to finish. These stories are written in the form of an evaluating conversation between the management consultant and me. Although we did engage in evaluating conversations (as noted above), they did not actually take place in this exact form or shape. The narratives are constructed in a way that reflects the process and content of the coaching conversations, using quotes from and excerpts of the various data sources listed below (these quotes and excerpts are traceable through footnotes). The stories were co-created by the management consultant and me, using the following data sources:

- The consultants' initial letter, written at the start of the journey;

- The consultants' reflections on the coaching sessions;
- My notes of the sessions, both written and those from my memory (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 2011);
- My own personal reflections on the sessions and my professional reflections on what happened in and between the sessions, using my professional expertise and related concepts;
- Each consultant's overall 'final' reflection on their journey, written after the evaluating session;
- Automatically generated transcripts[83], to navigate the audio recordings of each coaching conversation, and listening to specific parts of the sessions for details of what we had talked about and how we had talked about it (non-verbal communication) and/or to generate illustrative quotes;
- Reports of the interview evaluations with the management consultants, by an independent researcher (who had not been involved in the coaching).

I began writing using the evaluation conversations I had had with each management consultant as a starting point. In the final session, we collaboratively addressed the key outcomes and reflections about the process. The 'final' written reflection and the interview reports by another researcher offered similar data at this stage. I selected from the various data sources per session, to include specific examples of important insights or themes of transformation. Illustrative parts of the actual conversations in these specific sessions are presented in the dissertation in the form of flashbacks. These illustrations are indicated, for example, by 'I remember that we talked about;' 'in session three you said;' or 'now that I reflect on this.' The particular sources are indicated through footnotes, which can be used to trace to the original document or session recording.

Temporally, the 12 stories reflect on our process and what we co-created in it. Due to the deliberate writing process, all the stories have a similar general structure. In practice, coaching conversations and (written) reflections tend to be messier instead of a straight line from A to B. The aim of writing these stories this way was to elicit key points in the transformation process in a more structured fashion. This had several purposes.

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83 I used Amberscript (https://www.amberscript.com) to automatically generate transcripts of each session. These transcripts were used to *navigate the audio recordings* during the analysis of specific details of particular parts of the conversations. This was helpful as, according to Riessman (2008) translating dynamic talk into linear transcript is not easy and is time consuming. "Representing 'what happened' in an interview is a 'fixation' of action into written form" (Riessman, 2009, p. 50). According to this author, transcripts are by definition incomplete, partial, and selective. Meaning is constituted in very different ways, with alternative transcriptions of the same stretch. Since the analysis was done on the level of the whole coaching journey, and from a backward-looking perspective, the collaborative analysis in the final conversation was more informing than the literal content of the automatically generated transcripts of isolated sessions (which also had limited accuracy, e.g., with respect to grammar and writing errors). Nowhere was the analysis based solely on these automatically generated transcripts. From a methodological perspective, the sole use of transcripts is also problematic as the relational constructionist stance considers language as constitutive and *not* as a "direct and unambiguous route to meaning" (Riessman, 2005, p. 2).

First, writing these stories served as a way to analyze all the generated data in more detail and coherence; and to show how we used the various types of data together. This serves audit trail purposes, (Erlandson et al., 1993). Second, they offered a way for the management consultant and me to check whether or not we had covered all the relevant aspects of the coaching, and its common threads. Third, it made the coaching journeys more or less comparable and transferable, for dissertation writing purposes. I believe that presenting the stories this way has also made them accessible and useful for readers who were not involved in this research (for example, other scientists, consultants, and coaches/therapists). Fourth, the stories offer a way for others to see how we worked together. Fifth, they turned out to be useful summaries for the management consultants to refresh their memories after some time.

6. After I had written these narratives, I sent them to the management consultants for two purposes (see appendix 5). First, I asked them if they recognized our journey in it. This is referred to as member checking (e.g., Erlandson et al., 1993; Burr, 2015). Did this story reflect the common thread and relevant details, and did it reflect our collaboration in their view? I Invited them to let me know whether they had missed or did not recognize certain things. This step resulted in 12 stories which we derived from the collaborative analysis of the coaching journeys. Second, although the publications are anonymous, and we had already signed consent forms with respect to publishing quotes, I explicitly asked additional consent to publish these particular texts. Although I have tried to write without revealing personal information that directly leads to individual people, I asked for additional consent because I realize that I cannot guarantee full anonymity. Since I anticipated that people close to them (for example colleagues, friends, and relatives), may recognize them, I wanted them to have a say in this. I invited them to say 'no' to publication, or to suggest changes before publication.

The 12 coachees responded to these member checks as follows. Six management consultants explicitly responded in positive wordings such as: "nice reflection of our conversations"; "I recognized the common thread of our journey"; "so great to read this, I recognize everything"; "great story, nice to read this"; "great writing, I recognize our conversations and the reflection of our whole journey"; and "great to read this back". Four consultants had no comments. One consultant did not respond. One consultant who said to trust the process of analyzing and writing indicated, however, not to have meant to say particular things in a certain way or did not remember having said everything in the way that I had written it down. This was also influenced by the English translation, and by the passing of 10 months between the final session with this consultant and the completion of this specific narrative. Following on from these member checks, we made adjustments to four out of 12 stories (a few small adjustments to three stories; and some

more major adjustments to one story). In addition to the previously given consent by all 12 management consultants[84] with respect to quotes, seven management consultants[85] agreed to publishing the final versions of the full story. Before final publication, my co-supervisor, Dr. Josje Dikkers, performed an extra check on the anonymity of the individual management consultants and the consulting firm, and on the quotes that could possibly be harmful to individual management consultants[86].

Thematic analysis of narratives

Narrative inquiry is typically case-centered, focusing on context-dependent narrative details (Riessman, 2008). Rather than offering abstract rules or propositions, "cases reveal facets, each attracting different readers who can decide the meaning of the case, and interrogate actors' and narrators' interpretations […]" (p. 194). Notwithstanding that summarizing and generalizing from case studies is often undesirable (Riessman, 2008), I did find inspiration in the thematic analysis literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012) to look for common themes in the 12 full journey stories. The aim of the analysis was to offer a view on the possible results of coaching management consultants and how the participants experienced the process. Hence, I do not propose typical themes that are representative of management consultants in general.

I first coded the 12 full journey stories deductively. In this step, I used the codes in the table below which also informed the abovementioned agenda for the final coaching sessions and that are closely related to my professional training at Phoenix Opleidingen (e.g., Veenbaas et al., 2019).

During this initial deductive coding, I created tables in which I summarized relevant parts of each management consultants' full journey story, and collected illustrative quotes, while referencing the original data source (e.g., audio recordings of sessions, coachee's written reflections, coaches' notes). As not all the coachees had agreed to the publication of their full stories, these detailed tables are not included in this thesis[87]. Following the initial deductive coding of the full journey stories, I collapsed the collected data in the tables. This enabled me to search for themes across the whole data set of all the management consultants within the reorganized extracted data. I searched for themes inductively and iteratively, which I will present in the following sections. In the process, some of the initial codes turned out to be overlapping, and these codes were merged into others (e.g., particularities about how we started up and finished the coaching). To illustrate the themes, some of these quotes are included as examples in

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84 As noted, consultant 8 did not continue the coaching journey, resulting in including 12 management consultants (1-7 and 9-13) in the analysis.
85 Management consultants 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 13.
86 This check was performed on the quotes in chapter 5 and 6, and on the full coaching journey stories in appendix 6.
87 For members of the dissertation graduation committee, these tables are available upon request.

Codes for initial deductive coding of full journey stories
Coaching content:

Coaching content:
- Coachee's specific context at the start of the coaching journey
- Coachee's initial goal(s) for the coaching
- Coach goal(s) related to the second contract
- Coaching outcomes in general terms
- Specific coaching outcomes around key topics in the coaching journey
- Experienced effect of coaching outcomes on consulting practice
- Coachee's thoughts about taking coaching outcomes into the future

Coaching process:
- Coachee's general experience of the coaching process
- Specific things in the coaching process that the coachee 'liked'
- Specific things in the coaching process that the coachee 'did not like so much'
- Particularities about how we started up the coaching
- Particularities about how we finished the coaching
- Experience of working online due to the COVID-19 pandemic

sections 5.4 and 5.5. In these sections, I present the key themes within various aspects of the coaching's *content* (contracting, outcomes, effects on consulting practice, and future thoughts) and within various aspects of the coaching *process* (experience of the coaching, specific things that did or did not work for the coachees, and the experiences of transferring to online coaching). These elements were derived from all 12 coaching journey stories through thematic analysis. On presenting the results of the thematic analysis, I have tried to balance offering an overview of the individual personal trans-formations (case-centered), and common themes across cases. In addition, appendix 6 offers five full journey stories of the management consultants who had also participated in the coaching follow-up (which I describe in chapter 6). These full stories offer a more detailed and case-centered view of both coaching content and process per individual management consultant.

5.4 Coaching Journeys: Contracting, Outcomes, Effects on Consulting Practice, and Future Thoughts

In this section, I intend to offer a view on the transformations that we co-created fol-lowing the initial coaching questions, which I have summarized in section 5.2. I note elements of each consultants' context at the start of our journey; topics related to the second contract (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 1999); coaching outcomes and their application in consulting practice; and future thoughts with respect to their development.

Consultants' context at the start of the coaching journey

Below, I list the summarized descriptions of their particular situation, which the consultants mentioned in their response to my invitation or in our first session. For vivification purposes, I have added some excerpts from the consultants' full journey stories[88].

Consultant 1	Questioning the personal fit, after changing career path to management consulting.
Consultant 2	Experiencing difficulties in putting the learnings from previous client organization settings into practice in the next project.
Consultant 3	Consulting in a large client organization, and in collaboration with consulting firm colleagues (both for the first time).
Consultant 4	Recently being promoted to managing consultant which generated stories to reflect on.
Consultant 5	Valuing the personal development opportunities offered by the firm, which regard learning different than the familiar 'knowledge gathering.'
Consultant 6	Experiencing difficulties and doubts about performing in a new role within the consulting firm.
Consultant 7	Struggling with positioning in business meetings.
Consultant 9	Already looking for a coach when the coaching offer came along.
Consultant 10	Being interested in this action research project and curious whether this could be an opportunity for further development.
Consultant 11	Received feedback in the annual performance review that further professional development should focus more on personal development rather than gaining more expert-knowledge.
Consultant 12	Was already reflecting on job and performance, and looking for change, when coaching offer came along.
Consultant 13	Being offered a promotion to managing consultant, which posed challenges in relating to others.

"I found myself struggling with my new role in our firm. It felt like a roller-coaster, 'just doing it,' but then I started doubting if I was doing things well and whether or not I really wanted this. Being able to talk to an external coach who doesn't know our internal 'firm dynamics' seemed useful to look at the way I position myself toward colleagues and clients." (full journey story consultant 6)

"I remember it was fall 2019 and I had just had my annual performance review. I received feedback that further professional development should focus more on personal development than on gaining more expertise. My personal development

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had to be about being more visible and sharing what I really think about things. This really got to me because I'd known for years that I tend to sense what others think and then adapt my views too much. [...] They were right that I had to take some steps. Both in my professional and my private context. I became afraid of doing this just by myself, and possibly not being successful. Then the opportunity of working with you came along."   (full journey story consultant 11)

"Before I started this coaching, I was offered a challenge. My clients were happy with my work and that made me happy. The challenge involved taking on a more lead- ing role in the consulting firm. This involved sales, leading others and being a good example to others. The biggest challenge though, was dealing with myself. The way I related with others, as what had been useful for a long time, appeared to have side effects that I wanted to get rid of."   (full journey story consultant 13)

Second contract

As noted in section 5.2, I considered the initial coaching questions as invitations for further exploring. This often resulted in a second contract which focused on 'deeper' learning, i.e., going beyond the immediate context of the initial coaching question. In retrospect, the following themes (analyzed across cases) played a role in the second contracts.

• Although not always mentioned explicitly, the learning of many of the consultants focused on developed patterns in their lives, and how they affect the experienced difficulties in their consulting practice.

"You triggered me earlier, when you talked about patterns and how they may have emerged. I am sensitive to hierarchy. Maybe this is related to how things worked in my former profession. On the one hand, I rebel against hierarchy (when someone says I must do something), on the other hand, I'm a pleaser [...]."
                                                          (full journey story consultant 1)

• Becoming aware of parallels between acting in their families and in organizations.

"It was pretty confronting to see some parallels between how I act in this organiza- tion and my family. This was a new perspective for me."
                                                          (full journey story consultant 3)

• Starting to look behind the goals the consultant had set. Why are they important?

"After that first session, I also started to reflect on my goals for this coaching, and more specifically why these goals were important to me. For example, why do I 'have'

to take a certain position? Why do I 'need' to acquire certain knowledge? What do I really need to do, compared to what I think that I should do? I feel like I may slow down a bit and change patterns that may not help me."

(full journey story consultant 6)

- Started to address the question also from a personal perspective, rather than strictly business.

"So, at first, I was looking for how to get rid of my typical ways of acting. I learned pretty quickly that this is not something I could just address purely business wise. We talked about who I am, and why I do what I do. Separating business from private turned out to be impossible."   (full journey story consultant 7)

- Became interested in how certain experiences in consulting practice relate to the consultant's life story.
- Going from 'wanting to get rid of what bothered the consultant,' toward 'understanding the personal life story and how the consultant could relate to that.'

"The way I started the coaching, and articulated what bothered me, also changed from a kind of black and white orientation toward understanding important drivers in my life and possible ways to balance them. […] Pretty soon my initial, more formal coaching question, transformed into 'looking at the mess in my thinking and feelings' that I sometimes experienced. [...] So in that sense, a goal in the coaching would be learning how to deal with patterns and feelings rather than wanting to change them. The critical me would now say that I don't do this well enough, haha… But we have been reflecting in a way that is meaningful, this will help me."

(full journey story consultant 13)

Outcomes

In general (and analyzed across cases), the outcomes of the coaching journey can be articulated in the following terms:
- More acceptance toward specific phenomena in management consulting (e.g., organization politics);
- Increased awareness of and reflecting abilities about the performance of patterns, their origins, and effects;
- More self-assured in their new role within the management consulting firm;
- Changed orientation to the way they see themselves as professionals (less focus on 'what they should be,' more acceptance of 'who they are');
- Generated a broader repertoire of professional conduct, related to situations experienced as challenging;

- Actively experimenting with doing things differently.

Below, as examples of these general outcomes, I summarize the outcomes more specifically per management consultant (case-centered) and offer illustrative excerpts of the full journey stories.

Consultant 1	Insights about family narratives of dealing with hardship and survival, and how certain values and skills in that context may affect certain ways of acting, and beliefs about soft skills in the consulting context. Some beliefs may have limited this consultant, for example in doing process interventions in the client organization and expressing her needs for support in the consulting firm. With her increased awareness, this consultant started to do things differently as a management consultant, for example by starting to apply intuition and soft skills which she does utilize more often in other contexts. An important realization for this consultant was that it's not about either content or process. In contrary: achieving certain results (content) requires being attentive to communication and collaboration (process). *"[...] as soon as I know that I'm talking to people with a good set of brains, I tend to focus on ratio and content above anything else. We talked about this a lot, and I have become more aware of how I act around these 'floaty things.' […] Illustrative was the very interesting difference between a colleague and me. She focuses a lot on process and I focus a lot on content. Without being aware of doing this, I shifted my focus from content to process, as I learned later. [...] I set aside my irritations and the things that I found important. [...] And the best part for me is that it worked out, without me getting irritated! I just took the time and asked: 'okay tell me, what do you need from me'? Looking back, this is a good example of what I wanted to learn more of: be mild when someone struggles. Letting go of my irritated feelings and looking for what is behind a recurring question. So instead of being annoyed, I became more curious about why someone keeps bringing up something."* (full journey story consultant 1)
Consultant 2	Important insights about the symbiotic character style (Veenbaas et al., 2006) which this consultant identifies with. For example, the benefit of adapting easily, which comes with the experienced challenge of working autonomously. Related to this is the perfectionism she experiences, and her reluctance to share semi-finished work with others for feedback because feedback is experienced as criticism and judging. These topics relate to past experiences in both the professional context and private life, for example being raised to not take too much risk, to which the consultant rebelled. However, in the consulting context she could use some more rebelling sometimes because she tended to take 'the backseat' rather than 'the driver's seat'. This old strategy helped her to prevent being rejected and outperform expectations. At the same time, it resulted in missing challenges. The consultant has now become more open toward others and takes up more space in conversations. *"For me, this felt like having identified two key issues that bothered me when acting as a consultant. This offered clarity, and talking about them gave me confidence that things would get better. […] I experience more trust in myself and my actions. This also makes it easier to involve people earlier than I used to do. And when people give me feedback on my work, it feels more like working collaboratively in the right direction rather than me failing. Also, I see that I don't need to choose between content and process in my consulting work. It's about combining them! To strike a balance and learning to play with both. This takes courage and if there is one thing that I've built this last year, it is courage and confidence to keep experimenting and learning."* (full journey story consultant 2)

Consultant 3	Changes about the way this consultant relates to her father, following from insights into her upbringing and her response to that. Investing more effort in the working relationships with her clients. Insights about how the experienced difficulties in the consulting practice (such as working too solitary sometimes) relate to previous experiences in childhood (such as learning to be independent at a young age) and seeing room for different approaches and experimenting with them. Insights about 'typical' ways of engaging in conversation, where they originate from, and how this affects present conversations.
	"Starting with my relationship with my father, and the role I took in my family, being very independent at a young age. This really touched me. First, I was scared that too little of the relationship with my father would remain [...] But this turned out differently… I chose to act differently than I used to, and this has had a great positive influence on our relationship. […] You helped me by seeing the child perspective and the adult perspective here. I now experience more space to maneuver. […] I reflected on the tendency that I mainly trust myself over others. Doing so, I connected to the story that as a child (from five years on) I had been home alone pretty often as both my parents were out, working. I became independent at a young age: cooking, doing small tasks and not being a burden to my mother. […] When wanting to help others, it's very relevant to accept that my way isn't the only way and that some things are beyond my control. [And the other way round] if I want control and be independent. But then, how can others help me? Do I even let them help me or do I want to decide just by myself? […] Connecting [with others] more actively is something that I can [now] do earlier than I used to. Creating a basis of doing things together more by focusing on things like: 'how do you feel about this;' 'does this work for you;' 'how do you feel about the way that we collaborate;' 'what are your expectations;' and 'how can I be of help to you in this project'? And: 'are we still on the right path'? Also: more mutual feedback and checking assumptions actively. With respect to a specific client with whom collaborating wasn't easy, I've learned to actively ask for what I need, to be able to do my work. This was especially difficult when this didn't match her way of working." (full journey story consultant 3)

Consultant 4	First, the insights about the different demands related to his changed position within the consulting firm, and the typically more strategic/tactical consulting projects for his clients that come along with this. For example, relating to others differently: delegating and coaching others more, and controlling less. This relates to dealing with his experiences of perfectionism and conformism; accepting imperfections; seeing good intentions. Insights about the experienced suggestion of being criticized and how this relates to previous experiences in childhood. Second, insights about his development as a management consultant in general. For example: the tendency to experience more calmness with his clients, compared to internal firm affairs; having strong opinions which sometimes result in a right or wrong approach; and his development from expert consulting to taking a systems approach when facilitating change processes. Third, an insight that sometimes the role offered by the client may not be what is beneficial for the organization from a systems perspective, and the demands that dealing with this puts on the consultant.
	"I connected the dots later on… You know, when I was about five or six years old, I had a schoolteacher who could really give you a hard time, publicly in class. She would silence the whole group and publicly shame the child that hadn't followed the rules. Yet, she was inconsistent in doing so, which felt unsafe. Hence, children would act socially appropriately in order to avoid this kind of behavior, as did I. Even now when I can't read other people, I sometimes get unsettled. Then I see that strict schoolteacher's face again, so to speak. I learned this can be referred to as transference. I need to intervene in a way that is beneficial to the system as a whole. Also, I need to be aware about what I say and do in these situations. That is why I have participated in various personal development programs… The more aware I am of both my own patterns and those of others, the freer I become of these patterns, and the more effective I can operate in these contexts." (full journey story consultant 4)

Consultant 5	Dealing with family matters, past and present, and patterns around these. Increased awareness of how typical patterns in communicating and collaborating in the consulting context (such as holding back; not reaching out; and withdrawing) originate from previous experiences (fearing being rejected personally), and family life. Insights and resources for doing things differently. A key insight was the unproductive pattern of not sharing her work because of perfectionism, as a way to deal with insecurity and because having learned to do things on her own. In response, co-workers usually applied tighter deadlines or emphasized the importance of things. In her last performance review, this was considered as having improved.
	"For me, it involved shame and sadness about things that happened in my family. At the same time, things started to improve too. With respect to an issue with my mother, you suggested taking a more 'we're in this together' approach, rather than looking at it as 'her against me and holding on to our own stories as single truths.' I learned to recognize a pattern of holding back and started to change that into the direction of sharing my thoughts and needs more. The communication with both my parents and my brother improved. Things that needed to be said, were being talked about. Also, my parents said that things have changed. I was really happy about them saying that because they did so spontaneously. I'm trying to be more personal in the way I communicate. For example, addressing things that seem unclear or difficult to handle. That's no solution to the problem at hand, but talking about it may contribute to finding one. And that's really different from me making things big and withdrawing, which may cause others to experience me as distant and hard to follow. […] Withdrawing was a fallback solution when I had too much going on. It became clear that these patterns I'm doing at work, originate from my family life." (full journey story consultant 5)

Consultant 6	Insights about repeating communication patterns which she developed in relation to her father, when in conversation with consulting firm partners and clients. She became aware of 'not being that little girl' anymore. This consultant learned that underneath perfectionism and high expectations about herself, she 'just' wants to feel okay about what she does and the way she does it. When she is in situations where she experiences her limiting thoughts; feels attacked by other people's requests; or feels being tested, she now feels more room for dealing with things differently. In a more useful way. Previously, she tended to please others; downplay things; and then ended up feeling frustrated at home in the evening. Using what we had learned in the coaching, we prepared particular (client) conversations that she could have.
	"I'm more and more aware now of how I tend to repeat communication patterns that I'm familiar with in the context of my personal life, and it was helpful to get some guidance on how I could go on. It was very interesting that when I talked to my father about these coaching sessions recently, he also said that I have changed. That was really great to hear because the transference; pleasing; and making myself smaller when interacting with some partners and clients, was very related to my father. I always felt the need to prove myself; make my father proud; grasp opportunities; and work hard. Now, I address conflicts more and indicate my boundaries.[…] I'm acknowledging that it's okay that all conversational partners bring their different backgrounds and knowledge bases to the conversation. That I don't need to equal theirs before making useful contributions." (full journey story consultant 6)

| Consultant 7 | This consultant changed the way she looked at herself, from judging herself for doing things 'wrong', toward understanding the history and background of her typical ways of acting. She also learned that she seems to be the only one who labels her 'typical ways of acting' as problematic. The consultant changed her approach from 'realizing predefined goals' to valuing the learning process itself and what emerges from that. For example, she learned that life changing events in her personal history (such as the death of her mother at a young age), forced her to grow up fast. Realizing that her initial goal for the coaching was 'disconnected,' this consultant developed ways to transform 'coping mechanisms' into connecting more sincerely with others and her experienced limitations. A key insight was that the discomfort she experienced in difficult situations was not a result of 'typical ways of acting', rather, her actions at certain times did not match her feelings. She learned to slow down and reflect on her needs and be milder rather than judging herself, which in turn resulted in room to not do her 'typical things' and seeing different ways to go on. This was a liberating experience for her.

"To me it turned out to be more about the process than its outcomes. I mean, at the beginning, my goal was to learn about how I tend to position myself and about the question why I experience difficulties in this from time to time. Looking back, I was clearly judging myself for doing things wrong and wanted to fix that. Somewhere halfway, this changed to understanding the history and background of my typical ways of acting and patterns. We talked about how certain ways became familiar to me and seemed to have become a protecting mechanism. [...] I learned to appreciate that my actions have a function and that I didn't need to judge so hard. I learned that my typical ways of acting weren't causing the discomfort I tended to feel, but that these typical roles didn't really match my specific feelings at certain times. Disconnecting from my feelings would result in disconnecting from the people I am talking to and, with that, to ineffective relational leading. At that time, I felt liberated from the urge to 'solve this.' Our coaching sessions have offered me resources to slow down and reflect, which has made me step out of judging mode into learning mode. Right now, I can connect better to why I tend to do things in a certain way. Not doing my 'typical things' has become a possibility." (full journey story consultant 7) |
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| Consultant 9 | For this consultant, getting some things off her chest offered relief. She was able to relate things she was up against in her work, to her life story. For example, insights about acting differently among new people compared to people she was familiar with. When meeting new people, she experienced a need to prove herself, insecurity, and perfectionism. Other insights were about making herself smaller at work (both in client organizations and the consulting firm); about transference as a lens to look at related patterns; and about how childhood experiences of seeing her parents arguing may have resulted in pleasing others, and experiencing difficulties in standing up for oneself and engaging in conflict. She said that, as a consultant, she tended to lean on expert knowledge too much.

"We did look at possible reasons why I show little leadership at work, despite my experience. We talked about how my mother is the dominant person at home and my father is quieter. Then we looked at the way I act, being more dominant at home and more humble at work. And how that may be related to how I experience specific people. We looked at patterns in interactions and relationships. You mentioned 'transference' as a lens for looking at interactions that keep worrying me. [...] So, in general, I feel like I am more aware, and keep asking myself 'do I need to act like this? No, that's not necessary.' So that has been really helpful. I find myself thinking 'they pay good money to hire me, so they expect me to have the expert knowledge,' while I'm searching for how to handle things as well. And I know that my added value is to think processes over while they have their hands full dealing with their daily business." (full journey story consultant 9) |

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Consultant 10	This consultant summarized her gains in two key points: First, accepting herself and learning to be mild about herself. This relates to the psychopathic character style (Veenbaas et al., 2006) she identified with, and to the related resource of using her strengths. Using strengths connected to stories of suppressing anxious feelings. The flipside of this turned out to be permitting herself to show vulnerability, also toward co-workers. Second, acknowledging that everything in collaboration that 'is about the other', is also 'about her', especially when she finds herself judging others. Often when she judged others, this was about herself. As a result of these insights, the consultant started experimenting with finding a new balance between strength and vulnerability in her professional role. The consultant was moved by my open expression of how I experienced our first conversation: experiencing an appeal to convince her that I am a perfect coach. This elicited the theme of expectations and high standards. A related insight was that her tendency to prefer working with men over working with women, connects to family patterns. Concepts like transference and projection helped to make sense of this. This tendency was later nuanced into a preference of working with men or women with a certain working style: being strong (which she most often experiences among men). Eliciting beliefs about being strong, offering help, controlling the situation, and asking for help contributed to deciding more deliberately on engaging in collaboration. This consultant expanded her repertoire based on the concept of character styles and suggested alternative possibilities to go on. For example: how to deliberately act differently from taking over, when co-workers do not meet her norms/quality standards.

"Now that I look back, I experience feeling at ease, looking more mildly at myself. I have learned a lot, and gained new perspectives to look at myself and my actions. I continue to reflect in a positive manner. On a daily level, I experience that having a broader range of possibilities to act is useful for me and the people around me. At the same time, it's good to realize that the old way can still be a useful and effective way to act. Although I didn't like the word psychopathic character style, reading this book you suggested made me feel at ease. [...] Another thing that our conversations yielded was your suggested alternative possibilities to act that I hadn't thought of. For example: expressing my feelings or talking about the reflex that I have instead of acting from that reflex. Often it was about opening up about my vulnerability. First, I judged myself for not knowing those new perspectives or not (immediately) understanding them or if I was a bit scared of them. Now I look at them more as opportunities. And some one-liners are really helpful. For example, 'the fact that you learn new things doesn't imply that the old ways are less useful.' It was interesting to reflect on things that had happened in my family (without blaming or judging) and how I related to that. For example, I didn't want my father to worry about me (because he was already working really hard) or hear me complain (because my chronically ill father also didn't complain). Also, I didn't want to be a burden to my mother because she is not that strong. Working hard in school, getting good results and satisfied teachers kind of got 'addictive.' Your remark at the end of our first session stayed with me for some time. During the following days I had some evaluating conversations with colleagues, and I decided to bring this up. Very interesting because some feel positively invited by my speed, energy and ambition, while others feel scared or pressured by that. Someone said: 'when I'm in a meeting with you, I feel like I can never do good enough. I'm not as good as you are, work less hours and feel that I cannot meet your expectations. [...] It was confronting to learn that I have this effect on people. [...] Also, I experience pressure about this myself. I mean, when people see me as the norm and look up to me, I feel like I can't make any mistakes and expectations are high." (full journey story consultant 10) |

| Consultant 11 | This consultant described three main outcomes of the coaching: reconnecting with himself; regaining his authenticity; and accepting his experienced anger, restlessness, and masochistic character style tendencies (Veenbaas et al., 2006). He feels he has reached a new level of awareness about how his youth influenced him: going beyond cognitive knowing to really acknowledging, experiencing and articulating his experiences; his typical ways of coping; and his needs. He acknowledged his fears of failing; to do wrong; and being rejected, and sees how these relate to his youth. To this consultant, these insights come with both 'love and hate' as he now needs to navigate different possibilities to act. He acknowledged his anger and victim patterns, which he has been able to let go and not identify with them, which offers peace of mind. This has enabled him to bring what is important to him into a conversation, as he does so with more confidence now. Both in professional contexts and his private life. He said that, earlier, he would have probably added confusion to his relationships, in situations where people would sense things that he did not express.

"We really dove into my youth, how I related with my parents and brother, and the neglected hurt. I knew that as a kid I mediated between my parents and my brother, I knew that I became some kind of 'surrogate partner' for my mother and I knew that I was working too hard to meet my manipulative father's high expectations. When writing my story titled 'running away from myself' I experienced a tipping point: I felt irritation toward my parents and myself that I tended to be influenced so much. [...] You asked me to write a letter to my parents and bring it to the following session. While reading the letter out loud, I got emotional and for the first time really connected to the neglected anger and grief about all this. [...] You offered me great feedback and invited me to rewrite the closing paragraph. I changed this from retroactively fighting my parents to making sense of what happened, to thinking about the way I want to connect with them from now on. The letter writing to my parents helped me to create space and to do something different than my typical coping mechanism. Right now, I can see and acknowledge feelings more easily and find words to talk about what I'm experiencing more easily. [...] By not expressing things, what I used to be pretty good at, I was adding confusion to the relationship. Because people sense things, even if I don't talk about it explicitly. [...] . I experience that I've made progress here. I'm being more direct and clearer now about how I see things, about what I need. This helped me to be more in connection with what I'm feeling and then act on it and talk about it. I used to be pretty good at looking at myself as a victim and feel angry about everything and everyone without bringing that into the conversation. When that happened, I was not a nice person to be with. Also, in my private life. Then I stopped doing the things that I really liked to do, for example, making the extra effort for a nice wine & dine, which I really like. And then I'd mentally blame others for the things that I denied myself. Which is ridiculous of course. [...] I mean now I do welcome the fear and anger more and I do use 'the observer' to reflect on it. But there is also the doubt about: am I going to put effort into my parents and what happened back then, or am I going to continue reflecting in the here-and-now? I know that these things have happened, but I cannot change anything about that." (full journey story consultant 11) |

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Consultant 12	The journey made this consultant look even more at herself, generating tension, but sharing this resulted in relief. She said she has become more self-aware and, when reflecting, utilizes what she learned in the coaching. Key outcomes were: acknowledging that personal development is lifework; trusting her 'internal compass' more; acknowledging that not everybody has to like her; sharing not-finalized thoughts and ideas with others; and engaging in 'tough conversations' more, instead of saving it all up. This consultant acknowledged that she places too much importance on how others see her. This point of view used to be her starting point to act from. Not expressing what she wanted to say, and saving things up instead, is something that she used to do in both her professional and her personal life. Instead of just continuing to do this, she learned to have more 'tough conversations.' Another important insight concerned making her role too big, or assuming more responsibilities than she 'should'. This appeared to be a pattern in her life: doing things well all the time, not being a burden to people, not letting people down, caring too much about how others see her. *"[Having'] tough conversions is how I refer to conversations in which I share my thoughts and feelings about something with another person, and in doing so open myself up and allow myself to be vulnerable while feeling insecure about what the other person thinks of me. Continuing this will be lifework I guess: engaging in such a conversation when I see or experience something that I know needs to be addressed, but that I can also easily walk away from. I'm happy that I took this next step now, in a process going from insight to action, which had been going on for a while now. It's about feeling too much responsibility; wanting to do things well all the time; not wanting to let people down or be a burden; needing people to look at me in a positive way etc. I'm making my role too big at the client's organization. One example is that, for me, it's hardly bearable that my client hates parts of my well-balanced report, probably because it affects 'her baby' self-managing teams. I do think, like you suggested, that relying more on my internal compass, instead of working toward everybody liking me, is a good thing to do. Tough conversations… "* (full journey story consultant 12)

Consultant 13	This consultant learned to balance his ambitions and his urge to please others. He has learned to acknowledge his feelings; listen to them more; and act more deliberately in challenging situations. These insights have offered peace of mind, but also challenged him to deal with things differently. The concepts of typical drivers such as 'please others' and 'be perfect' (Stewart & Joines, 2006) and the masochist character styles (Veenbaas et al., 2006), helped him to make sense of his coaching question, in relation to previous experiences in life. In addition, these insights and concepts offered various practical resources. For example: he learned to give more room to his ambitions, knowing that his 'please others' driver gives him credits and opportunities to repair things if needed. This is more of a 'both and' approach, compared to the way he positioned his challenges at first: 'which one to choose?' Furthermore, he learned to consider different perspectives on challenging situations (seeing doubt or 'things not feeling right' as a resource; seeing 'difficult communication' more neutrally, as a dynamic between two people, rather than looking for who's right and who's wrong). Beyond looking at typical patterns and alternative actions, he gained more awareness about how these patterns have been beneficial to his management consulting career (instead of only being things 'to get rid of'). For example, abilities related to 'pleasing others' resulted in 'a great network' and 'people liking him, and granting him a lot'. Furthermore, he has learned to actively expand his repertoire of stories related to 'what kind of management consultant he is.' He used to answer this with expertise; content; and executed projects. Now he adds stories about 'who he is as a person'. He has become milder about things and has realized that judging the way he used to be back then is no use.

"In a way, we sorted out the mess in my thinking and feelings. From our conversations, I got clarity about what drives me and what I learned about this when growing up. I learned to bring harmony, to make sure that people like me. At the same time, I'm ambitious. The coaching helped me to escape my standard ways of thinking and get clarity about what I should do: stop setting myself back and include my needs in the way I work. Orienting toward all stakes (including mine) will lead to better outcomes. I feel relieved and have experienced the energy to face new challenges. These insights [about balancing ambitions and the urge to please others] *have offered me peace of mind, but at the same time have also posed a challenge in dealing with things differently. In a way I have learned to switch on another 'antenna.' One that helps me to reflect on situations and see how a familiar coping mechanism (being nice to people) can sometimes be ineffective in my job. The ability to reflect on this offers me the possibility to act more deliberately in these situations. I learned to acknowledge my feelings and listen to them more. And I learned to check what made me feel this way and how I could do things differently. Shortly after we finished the coaching, I realized that you also helped me to live less inside my head. [...] Just following a driver like 'pleasing others,' reduces the possible ways to act. Instead, subtitling my thoughts to others, allows other people to help me. [...] Also, testing my assumptions is something I need to do more of. This gain suddenly hit me, after some of the conversations I had last week. [...] I experience more clarity and acceleration about how I look at these things. A colleague told me they liked the way that I subtitled my feelings. In sharing reflections about growing up; school; and sports, we saw how you and I both learned how to prevent becoming an outcast. 'Please others': as long as people liked me. And this is really something, because when I'm being more ambitious, it's very possible that not everyone will like me…. This is really important. I have been thinking a lot about where this 'please others' came from. And I think this is an important story about that. I realize that I can make things very hard for myself, and I've heard your invitation to look more mildly at this. Right now, I can really feel that: this is just the way things went back then and it's no use being judgmental about it here and now. [...] Seeing this makes it easier to deal with my need to make others like me. Back then, I needed it, nowadays I can choose whether or not I want to use this resource or do something else. Especially when I'm in a setting in which I need to confront people, for example my peers. I can really use what I'm taking away from the coaching to prepare for and participate in my new leadership context."* (full journey story consultant 13) |

Effect of learnings on consulting practice

Below, I summarize how the consultants used their learnings in their consulting practice (analyzed across cases). As one consultant noted, "from a distant perspective, these may seem small things. But when you look at my personal context, they are really big steps" (full journey story consultant 11).

Themes within the effects of coaching learnings on consulting practice

- Changing communication and collaboration
- Experienced relief and more room for maneuvering in conversations
- Enriched process interventions
- Changed (internal) leadership
- Continued developing

- Consultants started to communicate and collaborate differently. For example, by: using soft skills and intuition more; being clearer about expectations, boundaries, and views; clarifying or subtitling their actions; trusting and following their experienced feelings more; being more open and vulnerable, and sharing feelings; standing up for oneself; confronting others more. One consultant noted that it was only at the end of the coaching process that he began to change certain things in his newly started consulting projects. He expected that it might take some time to observe concrete effects (results in the consulting context). However, this consultant did receive positive feedback from an internal co-worker about clear communication. Some of the other consultants reported that the changes they made had been noticed by others (i.e., managers, co-workers). People around them experienced them as being more inviting than controlling, which contributed to the work atmosphere. Co-workers experienced more room. One consultant said that she allowed herself to work less hard. Sometimes it was challenging to persist in a new approach, especially when some changes were questioned at times. Moreover, the consultants had become successful 'the old way' and sometimes felt naked in 'the new way.'

"Umm instead of focusing only on facts, I'm trying to be more personal in the way I communicate. For example, addressing things that seem unclear or difficult to handle. That's no solution to the problem at hand but talking about it may contribute to finding one. And that's really different from me making things too big and withdrawing, which may cause others to experience me as distant and hard to follow. [In this year's performance review] they said that I tend to create my own limits, my own glass ceiling. Important themes in the performance review related to the things you and I discussed, such as taking more space and initiative. Happily, my managing consultant also said that he had seen me developing around awareness

and the way I think and act. He invited me to become more visible."
<div align="right">(full journey story consultant 5)</div>

"Pretty soon after we started, I started doing things differently, more autonomously, and this was noted. For example, when I independently made a decision and acted on it, a colleague indicated feeling passed over. Although I had thought this through before I acted, I do remember feeling unsettled in a way that fits a pattern that I've become aware of. [...] People used to experience me as being flexible and coopera-tive. Then saying that something was a problem for me, that I wanted to address, was pretty challenging. So, for me it's a nice thing to hear my colleagues say that I'm becoming a bit bolder or unpolished instead of ever-adapting. This is something that is being appreciated."
<div align="right">(full journey story consultant 6)</div>

"I've had a great annual performance review. They said that I've shown progress on all development themes from last year's review, which was two months before we started our coaching sessions. The most important issue last year was authenticity. So, I'm really happy with all of this. [...] And I'm also experiencing a difference at home. My wife said that I'm clearer about what I think of certain things."
<div align="right">(full journey story consultant 11)</div>

"On top of this internal [consulting firm] *use of my learnings, I can also use this when working with my clients. For example, to include more confronting ways of advising. Specifically, when someone poses a problem to which I often respond by being ac-cepting, understanding, and offering my advice. Another possibility to add to that is to be more challenging or confronting when communicating with clients. In general, I think that I (and my clients too) may benefit from experimenting a bit more in com-municating. [...] I already experience more room to do this in the projects I started for some new client organizations. And people in the client organization appreciate this."*
<div align="right">(full journey story consultant 13)</div>

- Consultants experienced relief and more room 'in themselves,' for maneuvering with people. Both in the client organization and internally in the consulting firm. For example, by using the concept of transference in difficult communication patterns, one consultant could 'liberate' herself, and generate more room in conversations, and experience more room to take more initiative. Another consultant reported do-ing 'the work' in the here-and-now more actively. This consultant said that he is able to make connections between patterns adopted from his earlier life and things that happen here-and-now. Resulting from this awareness, he is able to move forward more deliberately.

"I experience more peace of mind during conversations with clients, firm partners and other people who I hold in high regard. In addition, I experience a helping belief which I can feel now: 'I need you, but you also need me.'"

(full journey story consultant 11)

- Consultants enriched their process interventions. According to some consultants, expert knowledge used to be considered more important within the consulting firm. Instead of solely relying on controlling situations through expert knowledge, the consultants added to their process interventions. Sometimes this can be challenging as expert knowledge feels 'safe.'

"In one session [in their client organization], *my colleague and I met with quite a bit of resistance among the people we worked with. After expressing the options of a) just go on; or b) stop for today, I went for c) saying something like: 'I realize that we're losing you here in the process, I'm not really sure how we can do things better for our next meeting. So, let's talk a bit about what we can do differently to make the next meeting more useful for you.' This was pretty intense but really effective. For me, this is about showing courage, not expecting myself to know everything and be open about that. Also: letting go of the perfect picture and involving others in 'how to proceed.' This was totally unprepared, and I was thinking and acting at that very moment, not knowing where this would take us. By being honest about what I didn't know, I felt I was being taken more seriously and we were able to take a next step. Afterwards, the people with whom I worked also labeled this moment as positive. Also, when talking with my managing consultant about these situations, I experienced trust about the way I approach things and felt I was being trusted with more autonomy and responsibility."*   (full journey story consultant 2)

"I found out that content and expert-knowledge give me confidence while my role as a consultant is often about the process. I need to balance my urge to close that knowledge gap. In my current role, I'm far from an expert on the subject. Normally I tend to work hard on that but now I've started asking the people that I work with to explain the things I don't understand. This never turned out to be a problem."

(full journey story consultant 9)

- Consultants changed the ways they lead (internally). They reported that they coach others more and control less. One consultant (in his role as mentor) was explicitly complimented on his developmental coaching by his mentee. Another example was about making clear statements in a consultant's performance review (a challenging thing to do for this managing consultant). However, the consultant really appreciated this clarity.

"The greatest compliment I received was from one of my mentees who is also being coached by you. You told me that this mentee really appreciated the way that I'm coaching and mentoring her by inviting deeper conversations. This was great feedback and great that it came to me through you, our mutual coach."

(full journey story consultant 11)

"I had to have a difficult performance evaluation conversation with a consultant, in which I had to make myself very clear. To me, this was very challenging, but the consultant was happy with it. It was really about finding a new balance for both drivers ['please others' and 'be perfect']. *A new balance that fits me better in my leading role."*
(full journey story consultant 13)

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• Consultants continued developing. For example, by actively experimenting with what they had learned; by talking about unproductive patterns with their managers/mentors and by planning a follow-up coach session with me (two consultants requested one, in addition to my follow-up offer, as described in chapter 6).

"Also, I have included things like holding back and my drivers in my performance evaluation with my mentor. While I was being critical about not being 'there' yet, he appreciated this very much."
(full journey story consultant 13)

Future thoughts about applying learnings

When being asked to share their future thoughts about the gains from their coaching journeys, some found this easier to do than others. Without looking too far ahead, the following two key themes emerged:

• Deliberate application of lessons-learnt in the consulting practice. This included: seeing the value of using soft skills and asking their colleagues for help or feedback about using them; balancing content and process actively; working 'in the moment' more; paying attention to, and responding to 'what is not being said;' being open and honest more in the client organization; taking their experienced feelings more seriously; looking to balance power and vulnerability.

"So now that I'm more okay with using soft skills, because it is necessary to get results, I want to apply them more deliberately in the consulting context when working at the client organization. It would be nice if my next project needs me to use these skills more. And that someone from my firm or client organization offers me feedback on when I do use them. Maybe an interim management role would fit, stepping out of my comfort zone."
(full journey story consultant 1)

"Yes, 'just do it' was something I would advise others in my situation. But in my case, I tended to sabotage myself because of being afraid of being exposed as someone who is incompetent. However, I have been more successful in some projects with guarding my boundaries, discussing the work process and accepting help. All that offered relief. You asked me what I had done differently there in these situations. Basically, I told myself 'to hell with them, I'm just going to do this.'"

(full journey story consultant 5)

"In my professional context, being open and honest was not common yet, and so I tended to rely on coping mechanisms more. Over the last few weeks, I have deliberately started to tell people that things are not going well in a specific project. I had to do this really because I always get the feedback that I seem to have everything under control and that I'll manage…. I do think that this [opening up] *may become easier after some time."*

(full journey story consultant 7)

- Continue to experiment and develop. Some consultants explicitly mentioned to consider learning as a lifetime task while others showed this in their responses. For example, one consultant mentioned her next step to use her learnings to direct and facilitate others more in the aspired direction of facilitating organizational change. Consequent responses included: combining awareness with discipline; continued experimenting with interacting with others; acknowledging that there is no way back and that awareness will keep growing; anticipating new coaching questions to emerge; embarking on an intensive leadership development program; planning a follow-up session with me to ensure development; and bringing their learnings to the talks with their mentor.

"This is important for me as a consultant because if I want to facilitate organizational change, it is important to facilitate the process and the people concerned, and to connect to what's important to them. This requires conversation and being open in the conversation."

(full journey story consultant 2)

"The clarity gained through our conversations from the second part [of the coaching journey] *offered useful resources for the future. Using the hero's journey metaphor, integration and transformation may still take more time. But, during the coaching, I certainly walked a large part of that path… Our conversations offered me insights which I can use while continuing on this path. And that's fine because it's all about the journey."*

(full journey story consultant 4)

"I'm more self-aware about my typical ways of acting. I can deal with this more easily because I know how to create room for doing things differently. I have gained

resources to do conversations differently and trust my approach more. Knowing that I can reflect, I can start experimenting."   (full journey story consultant 6)

"Well, first of all, there is no way back. Something about my personal development has been set in motion. And I expect that in the near future, my awareness will keep growing, like it did during our sessions. A question then is 'how do I keep a powerful position as a consultant while allowing more vulnerability?' And how does this all re-late to the needs or expectations of my clients and conversational partners? I mean, what does a CFO care about my feelings? This will all generate new questions I think."
                    (full journey story consultant 10)

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"Given my new leading role in the consulting firm, I will be in more situations that require me not to 'please others.' So, the coaching will help me with this. And I'm go-ing to continue talking about these things with my mentor inside the firm."
                    (full journey story consultant 13)

5.5 Coaching Journeys: Process Reflections

In this section, I offer a view of our collaboration as experienced by the management consultants. First, I present themes related to their general experience of our collabora-tion, to be followed by themes about what they particularly did and did not appreciate. Finally, I present themes related to the consultants' experience of transferring to online coaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Themes within the coaching process reflections	
General experience	• Personal click • Tailor-made journey • Pleasant conversations • Combining business and personal development • Intensive process • Internal versus external coach • Deliberate decision to engage
Useful specifics	• General communication style • Positioning in the conversation • Applying personal resources • Process facilitation in general
Less useful specifics	• Context-related resistance • Physical location • Process facilitation in general • Online coaching
Upside and downside effects of online coaching	• Saving on travelling time • Missing time to reflect and relax • Different non-verbal communication • Coaching process remained effective • Existing relationship helped • Comfort from being at home • Coaching outcomes were still good • Working online affected coaching question • Practical issues

General experience

When I inquired into the consultants' general experience of the coaching process, our collaborative reflection resulted in the following themes:

• Personal click. Many consultants considered the personal click we had was important and contributed to the process.

"I liked talking to you. After all, we're human, haha. This made it easy. Also, and not to be mean in any way, I was really probing and testing you in our first session. Looking whether or not you were a pushover, If you had skills, were perceptive and sharp. You know, that is what people do." (full journey story consultant 7)

"We both experienced a click, and I became curious about what this journey could offer." (full journey story consultant 10)

"In the last few years, I've talked with various psychologists and coaches. I've really appreciated your style of working and experienced a personal click."

(full journey story consultant 11)

- Tailor-made journey. All the coaching journeys were tailor-made. This was mostly experienced as pleasant, generating room to explore, and useful. Some consultants also found this surprising and tense in the beginning, thinking: would they say 'the right things'? Some consultants who did not have a pressing question, still came up with a lot while sharing their stories.

"The tone was set in this first session. You told me about how you tend to share your experiences in a conversation as a way of intervening. When I asked you to share your experiences with me so far, this really hit me. You told me that I invited you to work very hard, to do things really well… And you asked me if I get that feedback more often and I said 'no' convincingly. But when I expressed this 'no,' I realized that this wasn't really true. […] I often hear that I set the bar high. And the fact that I reach that level easily myself can scare others off sometimes. […] Being confronted about what I seem to express unintentionally, started me thinking. [Now] *I ask others more deliberately how they see me, how they experience working with me. I take a more critical look at my actions and the way I position myself with others. It was valuable to bring those reflections to our sessions, together with reflecting on important experiences I had had in my life so far."*

(full journey story consultant 10)

"I remember you saying there was no fixed plan for the coaching and that we would go with the flow. On the one hand, that felt good, because we would talk about my needs. At the same time, this was tensionfull. What was I expected to do? Would I say the right things? […] You then said things like 'the story is already there' and 'just say it in an ugly way.' I don't know how you did it, but looking back: the story was already there indeed."

(full journey story consultant 12)

- Pleasant conversations. The conversations were experienced as pleasant, safe, and free from judgment. There was trust and room to influence the process. Interactions were experienced as effective, and the conversations set things in motion and stimulated curiosity.

"I remember believing that you could help me with my coaching question. Our first conversation was open, and you were also open about your experiences and insecurities. This invited me to be open too and talk about my coaching question. What helped me in the sessions was you being open about yourself, and not putting right or wrong labels on what I said. Instead, without judging you added to what I said.

You shared how you interpret what I said, or the way it affected you."
(full journey story consultant 2)

"Our conversations have been open and free from judgement from the start. In our first session, you noted that my energy level had dropped. To me, this was because we addressed themes that I had experienced before, but hadn't been able to put in words." (full journey story consultant 6)

"We both decided to continue this coaching after our initial session. For me, the most important condition to say 'yes' was trust. […] This trust grew from the start. And once I feel trust, and experience that someone is really listening, I tend to share a lot. So, there were some things that we talked about that I have also talked to my boyfriend about, but more superficially. In the conversations with you, I shared more in depth." (full journey story consultant 9)

- Combining business and personal development. To many consultants, the coaching combined personal development and applying related insights to their management consulting practice. They valued that we looked collaboratively for ways to do this, and included the involved stakeholders' interests when doing so. To some, this 'looking in the mirror' focus was different than expected and intensive but was, however, not considered psychologizing.

"What helped was that you and I thought of a way [to deal with a particular matter] *that worked for both me and my colleague. I think that I wasn't an easy coachee for you by asking 'just tell me what to do."'* (full journey story consultant 1)

"So, when I talked about things that happened with my client and what I experienced as difficult, you gave your view and we translated that into things that trigger me. That was really about how I relate to stakeholders in the client organization, which reflection is useful for me." (full journey story consultant 4)

"In my experience, the possible trap of coaching is to problematize and psychologize everything. Like holding the DSM in your hands and working toward the 10 steps of … whatever. But of course, I knew that my struggles relate to something, and in our sessions, I think that we were really working on this. You really helped me to look at this more mildly. I also recognize this in the feedback I get in various situations."
(full journey story consultant 7)

"You and I also looked at practical things I could do, apart from the 'deeper reflections' that we had had." (full journey story consultant 13)

- Intensive process. The process the consultants engaged in was considered intensive, for example because of 'living through' the experiences we talked about. Sometimes the learning was even unsettling when the consultants deliberately changed things they had done for so long, which had also generated success. Resistance was used as a resource to address matters of importance and to continue generatively.

"In a way it has been intensive. I'm not really used to reflecting in such short cycles. So, when I look back, sometimes the intervals between sessions were a bit short. On the other hand, it forced me to dive in and seriously engage, which is different from planning a coaching session when it suits you in the moment."
(full journey story consultant 4)

"This felt like having arrived at some sort of plateau in my development: having gained new insights and specific things to experiment with but having no context at hand to put things to practice. Apparently, it was hard for me to accept not being able to make progress when I wanted to. I finished that written reflection by asking myself: it seems that I've become a little stuck in this, the question is how bad this really is. I also talked about that session with my boyfriend. He said: 'okay…, and why are you dissatisfied with this'? To me, that eighth session was a turning point. I went from 'feeling stuck with respect to my coaching question' to 'maybe this is the essence of my coaching question.' That is all about being mild toward myself and my learning process."
(full journey story consultant 7)

"If I open up to showing vulnerability, can I still work hard; deliver good results; manage crises; and lead? This worry was very concrete when I received an email from my mentor that said: 'don't lose all your qualities while learning.' Slowly, I was able to look mildly at myself. Yes, I'm allowed to learn, feel less at ease, and be afraid. And from that I can also look mildly at others. The others may learn too. I can help them but also need to give them space."
(full journey story consultant 10)

- Internal versus external coach. It was considered positive that I was an external coach, offering a fresh perspective on things yet still familiar with their context, because I worked with many consultants and talked with the partner level consultants. The confidentiality was appreciated, as was the fact that I did not have a stake in their work, or have a position in the consulting firm.

"And since you are an external coach, it was easier for me to talk about how I feel, and you brought a fresh perspective. Because you also talked to other people from our firm, you know the context and I feel safe to express my feelings. This is because

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I will not be influenced after revealing my true thoughts as may have happened otherwise."   (full journey story consultant 6)

"What has really helped is that I experienced you as non-judging in our conversations. This really created a space for exploring my questions. Of course, this is related to how you engaged with me in the sessions. [...] Although I do feel free to talk about these things with people within our consulting firm, I tend to adjust to projected opinions. So, it's more valuable this way, being able to explore my coaching question more freely. If I were to talk about these things with someone in the firm, I would expect to be offered an analysis of how they see me and my development. And that of course includes their opinions and judgments. Precisely that influences my thinking, and the judgments I hold myself, in such a way that I tend to conform to others' expectations. So, what I really value from our conversations is that I can really focus on my explorations."   (full journey story consultant 13)

- Deliberate decision to engage. For some, it was a new experience to be at the center of this individual attention. Really wanting this coaching was important. This also meant talking about things they found important, in an open and honest way. This required the consultants to show courage and trust the process we were engaged in.

"The awareness of being coached and that these sessions only work when I talk about things that matter."   (full journey story consultant 5)

"So, I worked hard during this journey... I really felt something had switched on! Hard to say what that is exactly but the coaching gave me something extra, when there was so much already happening in my life. I experienced that our conversations work although I don't really know how or why... and that gives me trust; courage; and the will to continue."   (full journey story consultant 12)

Specific useful things about the coaching

When being asked what the management consultants liked about our collaboration, the following themes showed up:

- General communication: listening very well; offering clarifying summaries; asking questions (inquiring and non-judging; sometimes provocative); checking the interpretation of the stories in a sensemaking way; structuring the conversation (e.g., by steering, analyzing together, mirroring); communicate deliberately (sometimes being silent, sometimes sharing personal stories, not being tricked into saying something).

"Also, the way that you listen and summarize is very helpful. You offered me room to talk freely but also interrupted me to check by summarizing briefly. This helped me to stay focused on what I wanted to say and get an idea of what others make of my stories."   (full journey story consultant 3)

- Positioning myself in conversation: being honest in interactions; being empathetic; being sharp and perceptive; being firm; refraining from judging; showing confidence in the process we were engaged in (which offered them confidence too).

"I have also experienced you as really empathetic. I remember at least two sessions in which I was not in a good place, you responded in a way that was helpful by offering space and addressing the situation we had at hand."
                                               (full journey story consultant 6)

"What really helped is you being honest and not judging. That gave me confidence."
                                               (full journey story consultant 10)

"You seem very relaxed, unbiased and not digging for stuff. Your questions about the things I said really helped the process further. Very subtly. The confidence you showed in the process made me gain confidence too. Especially when you said things like 'why don't you say it in an ugly way,' when I was really trying to say things very well and precisely."   (full journey story consultant 12)

- Using my personal resources: offering personal examples from my own, personal, lived experience, so that conversations turned to sharing stories around a topic; using my own practical experience in organizations to relate to stories; using professional coaching/therapy expertise.

"What I also liked is that when I shared my stories, you offered stories from your experience or a theoretical concept to make sense of my experiences. You also did this when I didn't know how to go on. This helped to continue the conversations, so it was never really uncomfortable. It gave me trust that my experiences aren't weird and that there is knowledge available to reinterpret them without you selling me your personal truth."   (full journey story consultant 2)

"I remember that I checked out your website before we met, to see what you do. As our coaching process clearly focused on the work that I do with client organizations, you could help me to relate what I encounter with my clients to my personal processes. That is of great value, especially because I did not start with a pressing question. So, talking about these situations together helped me to see what relates to me as a

person, which offered me useful insights. For example, about the way I do things and why; and how certain situations affect me in how I relate to others."
(full journey story consultant 4)

"What helped me to talk was you sharing things about yourself from the start. That gave me the impression that I would feel understood. I often tend to feel misunderstood. So even though your life story is different from mine, I experienced a common ground."
(full journey story consultant 5)

- Facilitating the developmental process: offering a welcoming context; offering consultants space to influence the process; providing supportive homework assignments (e.g., letter writing; making an art piece; deliberate observation; having conversations with someone with aspired skills); requesting written session reflections (which helped in deliberately working on the process, and reflecting on 'what was set in motion'); inviting deeper reflection (e.g., on cases that were storied at a more practical level); offering resources for sensemaking and reframing (e.g., language; theoretical concepts; practical quotes/one liners; different perspectives; challenging conclusions); offering resources to do things differently (practical forms of action related to a deeper learning outcome); looking back at previous sessions and checking if things needed attention; leaving ownership with the consultants (never telling them what they should do).

"I did like your suggestion to have a conversation with someone who I think is very skilled in process interventions or soft skills. It turned out to be a nice conversation for both of us. I tend to not ask too much for myself or impose on others. Learning that this was also a useful conversation for her turned this into asking time for both of us, not just time for me."
(full journey story consultant 1)

"The homework assignments that you offered helped me to put what we had talked about into practice. Although this sometimes felt unsettling, it was also liberating."
(full journey story consultant 6)

"Yes, so I had to get used to this, like 'okay so this is what we are doing.' At the beginning, I did test you a little because I would never say: 'here it is… my heart and soul.' For me this was related to 1) not knowing you yet and 2) previous experiences with 'mentors' that I didn't really confide in because, in my opinion, they had only 'read the same self-help book' as I had …. I've also had totally different experiences with the more traditionally trained experts. For example, cognitive behavioral therapy and psychoanalysis are really different. I experienced those as just offering tricks by experts who seem to know how to 'fix people.' Talking to you was really different. We

had a more mature collaboration; our process was future oriented. In our conversations, it wasn't about right or wrong. We were looking at the effects of actions and exploring alternatives, which has been very helpful. This was more about the journey than reaching the destination. You know, these traditional experts don't reveal anything about themselves. So, you have no idea who these people are. So that explains why this stood out in your way of working. Besides that, I really think that you are well trained and good in what you do, I personally liked the way you worked with me."

(full journey story consultant 7)

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"We talked about questions like 'okay so how could these things have possibly emerged in your life?' So, the inviting questions you asked really helped me to get to the bottom of things. [...] It was not that you immediately asked me, in our first meeting, whether the things I was talking about had to do with the way I was raised. That is what I meant by 'we built it up.' These conversations and the way you asked questions felt natural and pleasant. Not too much or too little. And not like a psychiatrist or something." (full journey story consultant 9)

"Also, this offered a context in which 'all is welcome.' Also writing reflective reports on each session helped. That offered something to hold on to and really helped to work on the process with deliberation. It was not only about our sessions, but things were set in motion, and writing helped to reflect on all that."

(full journey story consultant 10)

"Combining both conversation and offering practical things I could do, worked really well for me. For example, when you said, 'why don't you actively check your needs a couple of times each day.' I'm not really used to doing that and this helped me to hold on to things that I could easily forget after leaving the conversation. Another thing was 'creating the observer' [reflecting position]." (full journey story consultant 11)

"You didn't tell me what to do, but were more of a guide. A guide who asked me big, but refreshing questions about what drove me and why. And what is in my way and why. You typically left the ownership of my coaching questions and finding answers to them with me. I really liked that and the way you did that: pleasant and indirect by giving examples of your own and asking questions. I never got the impression that you already knew upfront how I should deal with things."

(full journey story consultant 13)

Specific less useful things about the coaching

When being asked what they valued less about the coaching, half of the consultants could not really think of anything. Based on the contribution of the other six consultants, the following themes showed up:

- Experiencing resistance: one consultant experienced resistance due to feeling frustrated about her specific project.

"It's more that in the first sessions I was thinking 'I'm not going to get much out of this because we have to talk about work, and I don't really like my current project'. […] So the way we've dealt with this context and started with the more personal stories first was no problem at all. It would have been different if you had said 'no we have to talk about all the stuff in the project that you don't like'."

(full journey story consultant 2)

- Physical location: one consultant experienced the workplace at my university as less comfortable.

"In the beginning, we worked on location at your university. This was a bit uncomfortable at first, to talk about such personal things. But that's also about me, being in an unfamiliar situation. But this changed quickly, the physical location became less important."   (full journey story consultant 3)

- Facilitating the developmental process: unclear interaction; using the written reflections (according to a consultant I could have been more strict when they had not prepared a written reflection; writing felt like a 'have to', and I had not given some writings the expected attention); using certain 'positive' phrases which triggered negative feelings; downsides of the tailor-made approach; my specific offer did not match their needs at first; two sessions were less generative.

"I do remember asking for clarity sometimes when I didn't understand what you were saying. But that offered the possibility for clearing things up."

(full journey story consultant 5)

"And you could be a bit stricter regarding homework when I hadn't written my reflections about our sessions. I think this happened twice. Writing is important because it is useful for reflection. Summarizing sessions and writing down important learnings kind of forced me to reflect, in a positive way."   (full journey story consultant 3)

"Well, if I really must say something…. It was a pretty unstructured process. Although that is the power and beauty of it, I can also be a really structured person. It was

sometimes hard for me to see if we were 'on the right track.' But that's more about me than you now, isn't it?" (full journey story consultant 4)

"As if my examples or insights have value [in your view]*: the phrase 'this is a good example' could imply that the other examples were not. It sometimes felt as if you were steering me toward a specific path to pursue, one that is 'good'… and that another path would not be. That kind of wording triggers me… It also offered me more awareness that these relatively minor things can have this kind of impact. I got triggered, and so could other people. Thus, from now on, I'm going to ask more clarification to prevent me from interpreting too much."*
(full journey story consultant 4)

"Well, in general, it has been useful, but it also took us a while to get it going. I mean, you were clearly used to working with specific coaching questions, like some of my colleagues who work with you had. I primarily wanted to have some reflection on how I act and how I could be more effective. The process that accompanied the more specific coaching questions was having sessions every two or three weeks, which was too much for me as we discussed. In my experience, you tended to focus more on the personal stories, my upbringing for example, than on the client context, while the latter is more what I wanted. Later you did connect to that, which helped me a lot. […] Your experience with organizations was really helpful there. And we did zoom into the things that I wrote in my starting letter and my first written reflection. In that respect each session has had its yields and I could connect the insights from the sessions with my professional practice pretty well."
(full journey story consultant 4)

"Uhm there was one session in which we talked a lot about different things which gave me a bit of a restless feeling. I remember writing about that in my reflections, namely thinking 'what are we talking about,' 'which track are we on'? Although this was not really an obstruction, that conversation just contributed a bit less than the others. The following session we talked about our focus, and I remember thinking 'ah I'm back again.'" (full journey story consultant 10)

"At one time in one of the earlier sessions [it felt like we] were not in the same conversation. But you expressed this, which was helpful. After that we could continue in a good way. […] It was about iterating around two drivers a couple of times: 'be perfect' and 'be the best,' and which one is more appropriate for my stories. […] I also noted that preparing our sessions myself was also important and helpful in order to get as much as possible out of it." (full journey story consultant 13)

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- Working online: online coaching, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Uhm, haha, the only thing I can come up with now is related to the online sessions."
(full journey story consultant 6)

Experience of online coaching (due to the COVID-19 pandemic)

The coaching journeys started with face-to-face meetings in November 2019. In March 2020, we were faced with the COVID-19 pandemic, and we went into lockdown. By that time, 10 out of 12 coaching journeys were under way, comprising 40 sessions so far. My first response was to call each management consultant to discuss how we should go on. The outcome of these calls was that we postponed the sessions for several weeks. We all preferred to meet face-to-face, and anticipated only a short lockdown. Once it became clear that working online would continue, we decided to transfer to online coaching. When evaluating the coaching journeys, we also discussed the transfer to online sessions. It turned out that online coaching had both upside and downside effects. I identified the following themes concerning online coaching, derived from our evaluations.

- Saving on traveling time. An advantage of working online is that we saved travelling time. We could work more efficiently. However, this was not always experienced as positive.

"To me it has was not a problem, it even saved traveling time. It was great we had met in real life prior to that. Otherwise, it would have been different I think and I'm not sure how open I would have been. So, the combination worked out fine."
(full journey story consultant 1)

- Time to reflect and relax. Multiple consultants mentioned that they missed the benefits of traveling to my university. This liminal space between the (intensive) sessions and business meetings was used to reflect and relax. After transferring to online coaching, one consultant deliberately scheduled 30 minutes free time before and after the sessions.

"The coaching was pretty intense, and I realized that I shouldn't have three online calls with clients after our sessions. I mean, I was really touched personally, when talking about growing up and relating to parents and family members. These were emotional and important topics that use more energy."
(full journey story consultant 3)

"When we met face-to-face, there was more time to relax a bit when traveling to Utrecht and reflect. After we continued online, all my meetings were planned so efficiently, back-to-back, that this down time had disappeared."
(full journey story consultant 6)

- Non-verbal communication. The non-verbal communication in the face-to-face meetings was experienced differently to that in the online meetings. This was considered both positive and negative. Positive was that facial expressions were clearer; however, other body language was less notable.

  "I'd say the impact was limited. I think this is because we had already met face-to-face a few times, which gave me trust. However, things really are different online. It's more difficult to sense how the other is doing."   (full journey story consultant 6)

- Effect on process effectivity. In general, online coaching worked out 'surprisingly well' for some consultants, others experienced this as 'no obstruction' or 'not impossible.' One consultant mentioned that people probably got used to working online really fast, because there was no other way. However, multiple consultants still preferred meeting face-to-face. One consultant experienced less small talk when starting the conversation (this consultant had had no face-to-face meetings with me before).

  "This was not an obstruction. It was great we had met physically before, otherwise it would have been a bit weird, I think. To be honest, I do think that the whole journey would have been less successful if we had only worked online."
  (full journey story consultant 10)

  "In my experience, this didn't have a bad influence on the quality. Although I really prefer to meet people, in no way has this stopped me sharing things during our conversations. So, to be honest, I'm pretty surprised, in a good way, about how well this worked online."
  (full journey story consultant 13)

- Existing relationship. We had already had multiple face-to-face meetings, which resulted in a trusting relationship. According to many consultants, this is the reason why the effects of transferring to online coaching were limited. However, two consultants, with whom I had only worked online, also experienced our conversations as good, and did not have any bad experiences working online.

  "We had already established a trusting relationship, so the atmosphere wasn't really different. We did pretty well and got a lot out of it. However, I still think that working face-to-face is better. Working 'through screens' is pretty exhausting and less natural."
  (full journey story consultant 2)

  "What helped was that we had met face-to-face a few times. So, switching to online coaching didn't bother me really. As a matter of fact, I experienced this more intimately as we were both at home. On the other hand, online working in general

was not really great. Missing the body language or sensing how somebody is doing was hard. Also, the internet connection was sometimes bad…. All was compensated by being able to work at home instead of both of our less inspirational offices… I purposively planned 30 minutes free time before and after our sessions to prevent getting stressed by back-to-back meetings. So, although it's a bit sad that we didn't finish this in person, for me, and to talk about things it turned out fine."

<div align="right">(full journey story consultant 7)</div>

- Personal space. A benefit from being coached at home was being in our personal space which was different from 'uninspiring offices.' This added to having more intimate conversations.
- Effect on outcomes. The outcomes were still good.

"At first, I hated working online until I experienced that it's not impossible. I remember thinking: what will remain of our journey when doing it online? So, was it different? Yes. But I think we got all that was possible out of it. I don't think we missed things that would have come up if we'd met physically." (full journey story consultant 11)

- Effect on coaching question. One consultant explicitly mentioned that working online as a consultant had an effect on her coaching question. In the new working circumstances, she experienced less coaching question related difficulties, compared to working face-to-face.

"I wasn't running into the problems I experienced at the start of the coaching. I was thinking: is this just because of working online or am I handling things differently because of the coaching? I mean, we did go pretty deep in previous sessions. […] I think both indeed." (full journey story consultant 9)

- Practical issues. Online coaching resulted in practical challenges, such as bad internet connections and making sure one had a suitable workplace, especially when living with others in a small house.

5.6 Reflection

In this chapter, I have presented both the process and the outcomes of phase one of the action research project. During 117 coaching conversations, the 12 management consultants and I addressed narratives related to challenging consulting situations. We talked about their stories; reflected on them using various concepts for sensemaking; and collaboratively looked for different ways to go on, to benefit the stakeholder

interactions in their consulting practice. Although I aimed to design a process that invites a consultant to reflect rather than search for 'common interaction issues' in management consulting, I offered an analysis of the consultants' stories to illustrate the possible outcomes of coaching. When analyzing, I balanced a case-centered approach with cross-case analysis, using thematic analysis. Analyzed across cases, the coaching outcomes included increased acceptance toward specific phenomena in management consulting; increased awareness and reflecting abilities; increased self-assurance; increased self-acceptance; a broader repertoire of professional conduct; and more active experimenting. These outcomes generated the following generic effects in their consulting practice: the consultants started to communicate and collaborate differently; they experienced more maneuvering space; they enriched their process interventions; they changed their leadership; and they continued developing. When looking into the future, the consultants expect to continue to apply their learnings to their consulting practice and to continue experimenting and developing.

The general experience of the coaching was that it was an intensive process that benefited from a deliberate decision to engage. It was considered safe and effective to work with an external coach who knew the consulting firm. Furthermore, many of the consultants experienced a personal click with me; the tailor-made journey had pros and cons; conversations were mostly experienced as pleasant; and we maintained an effective combination of a business and a personal focus. More particularly, my communication and the use of personal resources was appreciated. Most of the consultants were happy about the way I facilitated their developmental process. Sometimes the communication was unclear or triggered negative feelings. Also, the physical location of the face-to-face meetings and working online was not always experienced as beneficial. With respect to working online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several effects were identified (e.g., saving on traveling time, but also missing the time to reflect and relax; the existing relationship helped the process; and being in one's own personal space offers comfort).

During our final sessions, two consultants requested a follow-up session, to be planned a few months later. They wanted to increase the chance of maintaining their coaching outcomes. Among other arguments, this inspired me in shaping the second phase of the action research project. In phase two, I invited all the management consultants who had participated in phase one to participate in a coaching follow-up. This follow-up focused on maintaining and possibly intensifying their developments around stakeholder interaction. This follow-up was designed to focus on a particular topic to be contracted in a start-up conversation; to use a reflective journal as a tool to reflect on related learning incidents; and to engage in a coaching session afterwards. I present phase two in chapter 6.

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Action Research Phase 2: 6 Coaching Follow-ups with a Reflective Journal

"I also experienced a growing difference between my initial reflex and my more deliberate response after pausing. I've been learning to think in that very moment of what may be a useful response that I feel OK about myself too. I really liked these moments of awareness in the conversations. Seeing myself do something or feeling it. And then explicitly subtitle what just happened and what my response to that is."

(summary coaching conversation consultant 10)

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the second phase of my action research project: a follow-up of the coaching, which was offered to the management consultants who had participated in phase one. As described in chapter 5, we started with coaching questions related to challenging situations experienced by the consultants in their interactions with various (internal and external) stakeholders. In general, the coaching generated outcomes in terms of: acceptance of typical consulting phenomena; increased self-awareness and self-assurance; a change in orientation to their profession in relation to who they are as a person; generating a broader repertoire of professional conduct; and experimenting actively by changing communication and collaboration.

In my initial plans for this action research project, I was interested in offering a follow-up by means of shadowing (e.g., Wolcott, 2003; Gill, 2011; Czarniawska, 2018), to be complemented with other ethnographic methods. I wanted to act as a 'living shadow' of two or three management consultants and see how they utilized their coaching learnings, while working with their clients. As suggested by McNamee and Hosking (2012), ethnographic methods should be crafted. This could result in a form of 'collaborative ethnography' (Lassiter, 2005) or 'relational ethnography' (Simon, 2013). According to Simon (2013), relational ethnography may be transformative. Regarding the follow-up, the idea was to continue having coaching conversations based on 'real time' observations and experiences, which could possibly contribute to perpetuating or deepening the coaching outcomes, and their application in consulting practice. However, for various reasons, we changed the shadowing approach into a diary study. Given its time consuming character, shadowing would have limited the number of consultants that could participate in the follow-up, and was also expected to be intrusive for the involved people. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic had dramatically changed the way people in organizations work (at that time), which meant that observing consultants facilitating groups of stakeholders in their client organizations would not really have been possible. A dear friend and colleague, Dr. Celiane Camargo-Borges, suggested that switching to a diary study could be useful. Actually, working with a reflective journal (diary) turned out to have some advantages. Instead of only two or three, I could invite all the management consultants to participate in this follow-up; it would still be possible to study their applications of what they had learnt to their current consulting context; and this approach was easier to negotiate and carry out. Furthermore, the COVID-19 measures were not expected to affect this study design. A diary study would fit an action research approach well. As noted in the previous chapter, two management consultants had already asked for a follow-up, so I expected this offer to be useful for the management consultants. I discussed my plans with one of them, who confirmed that it would meet the consultants' needs.

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Similar to the coaching conversations in phase one, the follow-up was intended to make a direct contribution to the participants' consulting practice. In addition, as a researcher I was interested in how the management consultants utilized what they had learned in the previous coaching sessions in practice, and how they would experience reflecting with a journal as a tool. The first topic (utilization of the learnings in practice) may shed some light on the effects of enhanced reflection, communication, and collaboration on the results generated in their management consulting practice (as described in chapter 2).

In this chapter, I will describe how the coaching follow-up was set up and carried out, its outcomes, and our evaluations of the journal as a reflection tool for developing management consultants. Before that, I elaborate on how diary studies, in general, informed my thinking in phase two of this action research project.

Diary study methodology

In addition to narrative inquiry (see section 5.1), I used a diary study approach for designing the follow-up of the coaching journeys.

In general, research diaries allow researchers to define a broad focus while the participants can describe events and their everyday lived experience in their own terms (McLeod, 2011). According to this author, diaries have the potential to get much closer to the everyday lived experiences compared to interviews. Rather than just one office-based interview to describe an experience, diary writing offers the opportunity to write about the experience as soon as (or shortly after) it happens. Other benefits of diary methods are that they facilitate examining ongoing experiences, and investigating social and psychological processes within everyday situations (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003), recording data in natural settings, as well as minimizing the delay between the event and its recording (Krishnamurty, 2008, in Rose, 2020). Coherent with this study's general relational orientation, diary methods transfer agency from the researcher to the participants, which makes them co-researchers (Dörnyei, 2007, in Rose, 2020). An interesting possible 'disadvantage' of diary methods (from a modernist perspective) is articulated by Wheeler and Reis (1991, p. 349): "[...] Respondents probably begin to observe their own behaviors in new ways. Paying closer attention to previously subliminal events may yield different perspectives on the same behaviors, and in some cases may even facilitate behavioral change." The authors note this 'disadvantage' because self-recording events in a diary implies a drastic departure from common practice in psychological science. However, in this coaching follow-up, the reflective journal was intended to serve as a tool to reflect on with stakeholder interactions in the management consultants' consulting practice, and to do things differently when considered useful. This intended effect comes close to the example that Wheeler and Reiss (1991) offer to

depict the 'disadvantage' of self-recording events: "a person who becomes aware of how few and unsatisfying the interactions are with his or her spouse might try to improve the relationship" (p. 349).

The term 'diary' is used as an umbrella term to refer to studies that use data collection instruments in which participants record their own thoughts and behaviors, related to a research topic or event being investigated (Rose, 2020). To prevent 'dear diary' associations by the participating management consultants, and inspired by Hall (2008), I used the term 'reflective journal.' This relates well to Rose's (2020) description of journals, which are placed along the spectrum of diaries (highly personalized and little structure imposed by the researcher) and logs (very constrained by the researcher and used to collect very specific information).

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Although diary studies have been given relatively little attention in research methodology books (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015, in Rose, 2020), the literature does offer some methodological suggestions and practical recommendations about using diary methods in research. First, multiple diary designs can be used. Interval contingent designs record behaviors, feelings, or thoughts over a long period at predetermined time intervals (Wheeler & Reis, 1991; Rose, 2020). When using a signal contingent design, the timing of the journal entries is randomized and prompted by a signal given to the participants (Wheeler & Reis, 1991; Rose, 2020). When using a variable-scheduled design, the journal entry is scheduled, using various pre-determined times (Rose, 2020). The most useful one for this follow-up study was the event contingent design. The participants were asked to complete a journal entry only after they had experienced or completed the specific event that was being studied (Wheeler & Reis, 1991; Rose, 2020). Events contingent designs "minimize the time between the event and the report, thus avoiding the problems of other retrospective data collection methods, but adds structure to a research project more so than a narrative account" (Rose, 2015, p. 428, in: Rose, 2020).

Second, Hall's (2008) diary study in the field of education, which was carried out to understand how the classroom was socially constructed, consisted of interviewing students and teachers after a four week diary writing period. With respect to designing the study, the author actively discussed voluntariness and confidentiality with the research participants, because of possible 'dear diary' associations related to the term 'diary.' Furthermore, to balance 'collecting participant's own thoughts' and 'yielding interesting data,' Hall transformed 'open diaries' to 'focused journals' after a relatively unguided start. With respect to using the generated data and dealing with "problems of perception and articulacy" (p. 116), Hall articulated the following conceptual assumptions in relation to using diary data: 1) assume that participants tell the truth. The honest and open relationship between participants and researcher supports this claim; 2) recognize

that the data is partial, presenting perceptions rather than reality; and 3) realize that participants think they are telling the truth, as this is the basis on which reality is socially constructed. How we behave depends on what we consider the world to be.

Third, scholarly publications by several other authors generated the following practical recommendations for using diary methods:

- Assure participant commitment and dedication (Bolger et al., 2003);
- Provide preparation of and support to the participants before, during and after the diary keeping period (Duke, 2012);
- The choice of format should be given to the participants (Duke, 2012);
- Use a simple recording tool to minimize a participant's time investment (Duke, 2012);
- Negotiate when the diary should be kept (Duke, 2012);
- Foster ownership of the diary on the people that fill it (Mshelia, Lê, Mirzoev, Amon, Kessy, Baine & Huss, 2016);
- The purpose of the diary keeping must be clear and shared between the researchers and participants from the beginning (Mshelia et al., 2016);
- Diaries should be allowed to evolve (Mshelia et al., 2016);
- Being aware that recording their reflection and learning processes are challenging for busy practitioners (Mshelia et al., 2016);
- Diaries on their own are not sufficient to capture reflection and learning. (Oral) discussion supports reflection, leading to learning and a translation to practical use (Mshelia et al., 2016);
- Integrate diary use with the existing structure of the activities being explored (Rose, 2020);
- Reduce the time commitment for participants, for example by using guiding questions (Rose, 2020);
- Enhance the journal entries through training (Rose, 2020).

It appears that the use of diaries in action research publications is limited (e.g., Mshelia et al., 2016). Mshelia et al. used diaries to both record activities around decentralizing public health systems in Ghana, Tanzania, and Uganda; and to encourage reflection and learning by the involved regional healthcare management teams. In addition to the beforementioned practical recommendations, the authors conclude that there is no best way for practitioners to keep a diary. Beyond offering tools, the focus needs to be on ensuring that the process is locally owned and that it complements reflection and learning in the specific practice setting. Two interesting publications by Shepherd (2004, 2006) were useful for setting up this coaching follow-up for the management consultants. This author piloted and used a learning journal during his first-person action research project focused on improving his professional practice as a management

advisor. He engaged in double-loop reflection[89] and acknowledged the benefits of writing to understand and manage changes better in his organization. Shepherd (2004) constructed a sense-making framework to understand the learning incidents he had recorded in his journal; and stressed the importance of reflective dialogues to understand events better. His framework (2004, 2006) consisted of the following six reflective questions, related to learning incidents:

- How do I feel about this?
- What do I think about this?
- What have I learned from this?
- What action will I take as a result of my lessons learned?
- What have I learned from what I've done?
- What have I done with what I've learned?

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I conclude this overview of inspirations from diary studies by noting Robertson, Le Sueur and Terblanche's (2021) work. These authors propose that reflective tools may contribute to making reflection less 'awkward' in leadership development and showing that reflection is learnt behavior. The authors articulate several responsibilities to enable reflective practice for both the participants (be present when reflecting; make sure there is time and place to think; be courageous when reflecting, as it may be uncomfortable) and facilitators (create a safe learning environment; assure diverse worldviews when composing a team; design reflection into the management development programs; and offer tools to stimulate reflection, such as journals). In addition to facilitating the participating management consultants' reflection process, the reflective journal, which was developed, applied and evaluated in this study, may be useful, thereby responding to the author's call for future studies of the use and efficacy of various reflection tools. As such, this reflective journal might serve as a possible tool for leadership development in the particular context of management consulting.

6.2 Setting up and Executing the Coaching Follow-up

When phase one of the action research project neared its completion, I had a conversation with the consulting firm partner with whom I had briefly reflected on phase one, and discussed the follow-up in phase two. At that time, the plan was still to shadow two or three management consultants. After we had switched to the diary approach, I used

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89 "This double-loop reflection is similar to Argyris and Schön's (1974) 'double-loop learning' which, in practice settings, involves subjecting situations to critical scrutiny, and questioning the role of the framing and learning systems which underlie the actual goals and strategies. This process is distinct from 'single-loop learning' where goals, values and strategies are simply taken for granted and implemented rather than being questioned, and where the emphasis is on techniques and making those techniques more efficient (Usher & Bryant, 1989, pp. 87–88)" (Shepherd, 2006, p. 339).

the various practical recommendations and insights noted in section 6.1 to design the coaching follow-up. Similar to phase one, I wrote an offer with the purpose of inviting the management consultants to participate (see appendix 7). I sent the offer directly to 11 management consultants who had participated in phase one[90]. In the offer, I described what the coaching follow-up would look like (a relatively short journey consisting of a startup session; four weeks of keeping a reflecting journal; optional site-visits; and a coaching session afterwards) and what could be in it for them (perpetuating or deepening previous learnings in their current, possibly different, client context; and possibly changed insights because professionals keep developing).

The conditions for participating were: having participated in phase one and being interested in a follow-up; wanting to participate for themselves; being willing to keep a journal; having a current consulting project in which relations are important; and allowing me to use the journals, session recordings, and notes as research data. Similar to phase one, we signed a consent form (see appendix 8) and submitted the research for approval by the Ethical Committee of the University of Twente.

In total, six out of the 11 management consultants signed up for the follow-up. Of the remaining five: (as noted) two had already had a follow-up; one consultant considered the follow-up to be too time-consuming; two others did not respond. The six participating management consultants represented the same seniority levels as in phase one: consultant; senior consultant; and managing consultant. On average, they started the follow-up approximately 9 months after finishing their phase one coaching journey, starting with a startup session, followed by four weeks of keeping a reflective journal, and one coaching session afterwards.

During each (online) startup session, the agenda was to: catch up; discuss the follow-up design, address practicalities and expectations; discuss the reflective journal I had prepared for them; contract their focus for the follow-up; and to plan the ultimate coaching session. In order to discuss their focus during the coaching follow-up, we reflected on their present views on the outcomes of the earlier coaching. We talked about whether or not their insights had changed; and how they had used their learnings in their current consulting practice and the yields. We then discussed their particular focus for the follow-up, the outcomes they hoped to achieve, and possibly interesting situations or events (i.e., 'learning incidents' in terms of Shepherd (2004)). With respect to practical matters, I asked if they could think of obstacles to keeping the journal; what would be helpful in dealing with them; what I could do to facilitate keeping the journal; and if they had other things to discuss before starting.

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90 By this time, one of the 12 management consultants who had participated in phase one had left the consulting firm.

I designed a reflective journal (see appendix 9) that aligned with the coaching journeys in phase one of the action research project, and which took into consideration what I had learned from studying the diary study literature discussed above. The reflective journal consisted of: an introductory section including some practical guidelines; a section with guiding questions for reflecting on their previous coaching journey and preparing the follow-up[91]; a partly structured format for making journey entries over four weeks, including guiding questions (Shepherd, 2004, 2006); a section including guiding questions to prepare the coaching session after the journal keeping period; and a section including guiding questions about the follow-up as a whole, to be answered after the coaching session.

The agenda for the coaching session (which was a 1.5 hour face-to-face meeting) included: the experience of keeping the journal; discussing how they kept their focus; coaching around learning incidents; collaborative analysis of the results from four weeks of journal keeping, including how these relate to the previous coaching journey, and the emergence of (new) coaching questions; how the reflective journal had functioned as a reflecting tool (including suggestions for improvement and alignment with the previous coaching journeys). In order to prepare for the coaching session, I read the journals that I had received.

Data analysis: collaborative and thematic analysis

During the follow-up, we generated the following data: the management consultants' written entries in the reflective journal; the audio recordings of both the startup and coaching sessions; and my notes of both sessions. Each follow-up was analyzed collaboratively in the coaching session, during which we talked about the journal entries and related experiences. This was followed by my written summary of both sessions (based on the audio recordings and the automatically generated transcripts[92], and my notes) which was submitted for approval by the management consultants. Similar to phase one, the purpose of this member checking (Erlandson et al., 1993) was to verify whether the management consultant agreed to the common thread of the summary. Furthermore, I asked them if they would like to change or remove things before publishing anonymized quotes or excerpts (see appendix 10). Five consultants responded: three had no or no material comments; one asked to rephrase one sentence; and one proposed some changes and preferred to leave some parts out.

After processing the results of the member checks, I derived themes from the approved summaries and the entries in the reflective journals, by using thematic analysis (Braun &

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91 To invite them to start thinking about this, these questions were also discussed in the startup session.
92 Automatically generated transcripts were used in the same way as when analyzing the coaching journeys (see chapter 5).

Clarke, 2006, 2012). Again, the intention was to offer illustrations of possible outcomes of the designed follow-up process rather than presenting themes that are representative of a larger population of management consultants. As with the thematic analysis of the coaching journey stories in chapter 5, I started with deductive coding of the approved summaries and journal entries. I used the codes in the table below, which align with the coaching journey prior to this follow-up. The codes indicated by '(beforehand)' were used to analyze summaries of the *startup sessions*, whereas the codes indicated by '(afterwards)' were used to analyze the *ultimate coaching sessions* after they had occurred.

Codes for initial deductive coding of approved summaries

Follow-up content:
- Reflections on the coaching outcomes from the prior coaching journey (beforehand)
- Reasons for the management consultant to participate in the follow-up (beforehand)
- Perceived alignment between coaching journey and follow-up (beforehand)
- Coachee's reflection focus for the follow-up (beforehand)
- Actual outcomes of the follow-up (afterwards)
- Reflections on the development around topics in the coachee's initial letter to me (written at the start of the prior coaching journey) (afterwards)

Follow-up process:
- First impression of the offered reflective journal (beforehand)
- Expectations about the process of keeping the reflective journal (beforehand)
- Expected obstacles to keeping the reflective journal (beforehand)
- Experience of using the reflective journal (afterwards)
- Experience of the way the reflective journal was structured (afterwards)
- Recommendations for improving the reflective journal (afterwards)
- Experience of follow-up in general (afterwards)

During the initial deductive coding, I created a table in which I summarized relevant parts of each management consultants' approved summary and reflective journal. I also collected illustrative quotes, while referencing the original data source (e.g., audio recordings of sessions, coachee's reflective journal, coaches' notes). Following the initial deductive coding, I collapsed the data that I had collected in the table. This enabled me to search for themes across the whole data set within the reorganized extracted data concerning all the management consultants. I searched for themes inductively and iteratively and present them in sections 6.3 through 6.5. In the process, some initial codes turned out to be overlapping. In that case, these codes were merged into others (e.g., first impression of the offered reflective journal). Some of these quotes are included to illustrate the themes. In the following sections, I present the key themes within various aspects of the *startup session* of the follow-up and within various aspects of the *coaching session* of the follow-up.

In the following three sections, I present the results from the startup sessions, and the results from the whole follow-up and reflective journal improvement suggestions. Similar to the analysis in chapter 5, I balanced case-centered and cross case analysis.

6.3 Results from the Startup Sessions

Reflecting on the coaching journey outcomes

In the startup sessions, the coachees and I looked back at the outcomes from the coaching journeys, which we had finished 9 months previously (on average). The following themes emerged from these reflections[93]:

- Consultants had started to think and act differently about important topics related to the coaching questions that we had addressed. For example: changed beliefs and actions about asking for help; expressing annoyances; and expressing thoughts and observations.
- Consultants had experienced 'deep general realizations.' For example: about basically being the same person at work and in their personal life; that one can change 'the autopilot' [of typical ways of acting]; deep realization about the effect of how they treated themselves on others; seeing the difference between one's intentions and the actual effect of one's actions on others; being 'oneself' more versus over-adapting.
- Increased awareness of, and improvements around, persistent patterns that were experienced as bothersome.
- Being happy with the coaching as it offered new areas and new perspectives to develop.
- Improved leadership. For example: standing stronger; indicating boundaries more; being milder and less self-judging; and expressing important issues in collaboration.

"I think letting go of perfection and asking for help when I need it. Earlier, asking for help in general was not easy. Right now, this is easier, also because the project context is different. For me, asking for help in this context is not 'a sign of weakness,' it's more like practical assistance. [...] Addressing something when I experience it is bothering me, but this can still be improved… I think the most important is being myself more and speaking my mind sooner. And in doing so, worry less about what others may think about that."   (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 2)

"Everything is connected. I am the same person at work as I am in my private life. [...] Becoming aware of patterns meant going from passive to active and seeing the

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93 In some sections of this chapter, I present themes and illustrative quotes as groups of themes (rather than offering quotes per theme). I chose this to avoid repetition when the quotations illustrated multiple themes.

options to influence my autopilot."
          (General reflection on previous journey in reflective journal, Consultant 3)

"You have been very clear about this withdrawing that I do. People don't address this very often, so this is important to me. [...] I do experience more awareness in the moment that it happens. And then I deliberately tell myself 'just do it.' And often that turns out fine. Also, I had a good experience when I addressed the work quality of two junior consultants that did a job for me. Earlier, I would have had more difficulties in addressing this, but now I planned a meeting to reflect together on what had hap-pened."   (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 5)

"I'm still happy about our sessions. It was special because we dug deep but in a useful way. It really offered something new. And that's really something because I really found new areas in which I can develop. Maybe some blind spots turned less blind, not that there are easy solutions now."
                              (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 7)

"I feel like I'm standing stronger, better able to indicate my boundaries and also express them."
          (General reflection on previous journey in reflective journal, Consultant 9)

"On a more abstract level, what stuck was new insights about myself. For ex-ample, new perspectives on the large responsibilities that I tend to assume. More importantly, out of these insights, I grew a milder way of looking at myself; less strict or self-judging. Also, I have become more aware that the way I treat myself influences the way that I treat others. And that there may be a difference between my intentions and the effect my actions have on others."
                              (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 10)

Reasons to participate in the follow-up

I derived the following themes from discussing the management consultants' reasons to participate in the follow-up:

- A desire to keep developing. It appeared to be useful to look at certain things again, with smaller and more specific learning goals. Some previously experienced problems had disappeared while some others still needed attention. Also, putting previous learnings to practice was not always easy.
- Being in a different context compared to the previous coaching sessions. The work-ing contexts of all the participating management consultants had changed since the start of the coaching journeys. They had changed client organizations, consulting projects, and/or roles. Some considered these changed contexts as making things

harder or more challenging, while others experienced this as a good place to really experiment with doing things differently. In general, looking at applying their learnings from the earlier coaching in their changed contexts was important.

- Having positive expectations of the offered follow-up. The previous coaching was experienced as helpful, and some consultants expressed positive expectations of this follow-up. Keeping a reflective journal was considered as a good way to thoroughly give attention to current questions, and to prevent the reflecting from sliding.

"I'm now on a challenging project that I like. I've been on this project for six months now. I know the organization and the people know me. So, this is a great context to experiment and learn. Given this, my coaching question or reflecting question is different. In order to be an effective management consultant, I'd now like to finetune smaller, more specific things that I encounter."
(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 2)

"I'm interested in the way I apply what I've learned during the coaching, in my current consulting context. This is really a different setting and many of the problems I experienced have disappeared now. But I do experience some of the same issues in my current project. […] Right now I tend to do this [naming issues] *a bit late. So being more aware sooner offers me the possibility to act sooner. This will make things easier for me. I don't think I would have reflected on these things so actively if I'd done this just by myself."* (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 3)

"I realize that this is not easy. So, this is about knowing what to do and really doing it. […] When my mentor and I look into specific situations, the outcome is always 'just do it.'" (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 5)

"The sessions of the earlier part kind of settled and I'm in a different project context now. The demands of my current project offer a new perspective on what I've learned. On the one hand, my current project is really focused on content and expert-knowledge which appeals to my ratio. Leaning on these skills and expertise I can 'check the box' more easily when it comes to being taken seriously and feeling comfortable (my previous coaching question). On the other hand, this comes with new dynamics that seem interesting to look into in this follow-up."
(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 7)

"Well, since we finished our previous sessions, a lot has changed really. So, it feels good to do something again. I feel the pressure from the responsibilities that I have in the client organization. In the earlier sessions, my focus was really on awareness. Being aware of the way I act, and the way others act. I'm using that and I experi-

ence that I do things differently than before. So, I'm curious about the effect [of this follow-up]." (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 9)

"In general, I'm a person who reflects pretty much but I've also experienced that I can let it slide. So, this is an interesting opportunity to reflect on a daily basis in a more intensive manner. I really like the structure that you offered in this follow-up. Also, just like I experienced in our previous coaching sessions, I expect that focusing my attention will contribute to discovering new things."
(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 10)

Focus for follow-up

The focus which the consultants brought to the coaching follow-up, concern the following topics:
- Deliberately reflecting on typical feedback and persistent patterns; and moving forward in a useful way;
- Leadership goals or questions, related to both their client organizations and the consulting firm;
- Collaboration goals or questions, related to both their client organizations and the consulting firm;
- Expressing negative experiences, doubts, and needs;
- Goals and questions around maintaining their own workability.

"From the moment that I started in this firm, the feedback has always been 'show yourself more;' 'be more active.' So, although I do recognize things, […] this has been improved and it's also about who I am. I'm not the most vocal person who is always the first one to speak… But does one need to be like that to be effective? I don't think so. So, I want to look into this, just to notice differences and see if others recognize that. But also, the way I handle negative emotions that I experience. I tend to not show negative emotions and, instead, get rid of such situations by making a joke. This is something I noticed myself that's worthwhile looking into. […] With respect to the focus and writing in my journal, I expect that it's not just 'writing down what happened' but things will also change because I'm more aware and experiment with new things. Hopefully, some of those will stick."
(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 2)

"One focus for this follow-up is involving the people with whom I'm working more. Both at the client organization and in the consulting firm. This was a topic in the previous coaching, and in my current project this is more important than ever […]. I tend to make these struggles bigger than necessary. Often, when I address such issues, things go well. Second, and related to involving people, is managing expecta-

tions more explicitly. This would help me in dealing with the stress that I experience about the question 'is this what the client wants'? I realize that I tend to think that I know what the client wants, but I'm not really sure. I think I find it hard to ask these things. To me it seems that they want me to be that advisor who knows it all. […] Sometimes I feel unsure about giving advice given my relative limited experience and the short time that I've been in the client organization. This is about the way I position myself and respond, and about the struggles that I experience when interacting with the client. Recently, the client asked me directly for advice and what I would do if I was in his position. I told him my opinion, but I would not easily do this proactively. This is related to the high expectations I have of myself and being unsure when doing things for the first time. I have realized that, given my limited experience, it's sometimes difficult to decide whether something I'm working on is of good quality or not. Then my fear of rejection shows up. I've experienced that asking for feedback proactively helps me in dealing with this insecurity."

<div align="right">(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 3)</div>

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"I think [Knowing what to do but not doing it] *happens in various contexts…. When I'm thinking about this, I realize that it is related to withdrawing which I do in both my working life and my private life. […] It's also that I tend to respond late because I need time to digest when things happen. I find this very annoying because, for example, my mailbox runs full of emails. I see them, but I need to think things over and respond later. Sometimes it outgrows me meaning that I simply forget or need to prioritize. And then I remind myself to respond on less effective moments (like when I'm running). Changing this would bring me a lot, such as peace of mind; having a clear overview; and be more trustworthy toward others."*

<div align="right">(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 5)</div>

"So, this is about my sense of responsibility and also about balancing energy… Now my project context demands different things from me. The recurring theme here is respecting my boundaries. […] I'm doing that [disconnecting] *again now. But in a way I'm seeing a different perspective now. Noticing this is what I gained from our previous coaching sessions. So, this seems like a good focus and my current project offers a good environment for it because, although my role is about expert-knowledge, I need to relate to various stakeholders. This is why political skills and connecting are important."*

<div align="right">(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 7)</div>

"I'm in a leading role now and it's important that I stand firm and am clear about my responsibilities. Especially in a 'working online context' with people that I haven't physically met yet. I'm looking at my leadership in a broad fashion: toward both my teams and my principal. But also, internally in our consulting firm because I have four

mentees. [...] I'm already getting the feedback that I should be a bit more strict [in the client organization]. *This is about coordinating activities; and keeping people to agreements and deadlines. This is something that I need to learn and something that I find difficult. I want to make good agreements and keep people to it. But I don't want people to dislike me. [...] Being strict is part of my role, but it's hard to do. It's also about guarding my boundaries and blowing the whistle on time. [...] For example, to be promoted* [to a higher consultant maturity level] *requires following a specific training. However, given my current situation, I don't have the room to do that now. So, I had to address this. Looking back, I was really happy with the way I handled this because 'the old me' would just do the training and neglect my boundaries. To me, when I guard my boundaries, it really is about me feeling that I let people down."*

(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 9)

"Two things come up. First is that I'm about to start on a new project that is about a complex administrative issue in a field that is familiar to me. I will manage two consulting firm colleagues on this project. My challenges are a) to refrain from pleasing the executive board or taking over their responsibilities; also, because taking ownership is a problem in that client organization; and b) training my colleagues so that the project does not depend solely on me. The second is that I'm doing a project for a client, together with one of the partners of the consulting firm. Although we do like each other and collaborate really well, somehow, we can still be in each other's way from time to time. Being 'the boss,' means he is in the leading position, but I have more room to spend time with the client and offer attention. Although we have made good agreements on roles and responsibilities, I do tend to make myself smaller than necessary. So, this is about respecting the difference in positions but not making myself too small."

(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 10)

Expectations about keeping the reflective journal

We discussed various topics with respect to their views on the journal and possible obstacles to keeping it for four weeks.

- Useful tool. The reflective journal was considered to be a useful tool for reflecting. Seeing that the journal had a descriptive orientation, one consultant thought of adding grades to see if she experienced progress.

"The reflective journal seems like a nice tool to reflect and write about things that occur [...] It looks like a lot but that is also because this is a readymade format for four weeks. So, it's more [about knowing] *what I want to write, about things that happened. The reflecting questions seem useful and it's a clear format."*

(Summary startup conversation, Consultant 5)

"I went through the reflective journal structure that you sent. It looks like a practical resource. I think I should just experience it. I saw that the journal is pretty descriptive. So, I may add grading my days on some themes to see if I see a pattern or development."   (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 10)

- Doubts about daily entries. With respect to possible obstacles, the common response was that all the management consultants had busy schedules and that it may not be possible to make daily entries. In my response, I said that the journal was intended as a tool for them, not as something they must keep for me.

"Maybe that one project may stop, but then I will have still reflected on it for some weeks, and there is the second project. Maybe vacations but I don't expect to leave soon. That's it, I think. Daily writing in the journal may be a challenge."
                           (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 3)

"I already answered the general reflecting questions in the journal. To be honest, I'm not sure if I'll be able to keep the journal on a daily basis, given my current project that is pretty demanding as is my family life. I expect that once it's in my system, it'll be fine."   (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 9)

- Appointments with themselves. Many consultants said that they would include journal writing in their schedule. On top of that, most said that they would send their journals to me on a weekly basis. This would serve as 'a stick,' and possibly be useful for addressing questions along the way.

"I will contact you should it be too much. But for now, this reflection feels like a good intervention. And yes, sending my first week seems like a good thing. Just to check in."
                           (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 7)

"For me, I think sharing the first week's entries and talking about how I'm using the journal or if I'm missing things seems fine. I'll send the first week and then we'll see if we need to address things or just continue."
                           (Summary startup conversation, Consultant 10)

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6.4 Results from the Coaching Follow-ups

Follow-up outcomes

Analyzed across cases, the general outcomes of the follow-up (combining both reflections through keeping the journal and the coaching session afterwards), can be articulated in the following terms:

- Continued experimenting and getting different outcomes;
- Extending awareness; acknowledging where challenging situations meet typical personal backgrounds;
- Sometimes experiencing frustration when some key patterns or issues seemed to persist.

Below, as examples of these general outcomes, I summarize the outcomes more specifically per management consultant (case-centered analysis).

- Consultant 2 continued reflecting on typical parent – child communication patterns (e.g., Stewart & Joines, 2006); and experimenting with doing things differently. Being aware of doing 'the same' patterns at work as she had developed 'at home,' felt annoying. At the same time, increased awareness also generated signposts for how she could change. Important themes in this respect include using rebelling thoughts as a resource; the permission 'just do it' to deal with the 'be perfect' driver (ibid.); subtitling more of what is going on in interactions; dealing with her 'inner critic;' and leading herself in checking assumptions (instead of guessing, from a desire to be accepted). This generated different experiences and often better interaction outcomes, both within the consulting firm and when working for client organizations. This consultant went from 'looking for fixes for many challenging situations,' to 'acknowledging a few deeper key issues.'

"What I encountered a lot was the parent-child relationship. I was already aware of this in my private life context, but I've started to recognize this in professional settings too. I also see the parallels. As a child you listen to the parent too, you know. When I talked about this with my managing consultant, she said that I tend to take the child position too. I tend to do as I'm told. I wasn't really happy that this pattern showed up there too, really annoying. This awareness and my reflection on it helped me to have more adult-adult conversations. A more adult response means talking about the way we talk and what I would like to be different. Experiencing this equality more made me feel more powerful. Although this is not 'fully automated' yet, I did have some nice [different] *experiences. For example, collaboration with my managing consultant. […] My goal was to put myself first and say what I need. Practicing* [in a training] *was hard, but when I had the real conversation later, it went great. The managing consultant said, 'of course you can tell me what you need, and I want to support*

you'[…]. Putting myself first is something I find hard to do due to family values like 'just act normal;' 'blend in;' and 'just conform.' Also, my mother often treats me like a child still [...] in our conversations we continue the parent-child talks. All of this makes it hard for me to put myself first. My job requires me to do so but that's really out of my comfort zone.

Yes, I think 'everything is there' but I'm holding myself back by thinking about what others may think. When it comes to taking the lead, it's more about showing guts. I also got this feedback from my mentor when we talked about my role in the advisory group.

It's nice to see that we talked about many different things. I experienced this as a clear picture of where I stand right now. These different themes appear to be connected and I see a clear common thread. So, it's great to know that I'm congruent as a person haha. A person who finds some things difficult at times. First, I was really looking for meaning in the way I acted. Since our first session, this has changed into deeper reflection and awareness about where things originate from. In a way, this awareness makes it easier to do things differently. This is different from just fighting symptoms, that doesn't include 'deeper change'."

<div align="right">(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 2)</div>

- Consultant 3 experienced that she performed 'the same pattern' in various contexts. She had not encountered 'shocking new things,' but rather an enhanced ability of recognizing what she had learned earlier; doing things differently; and getting better outcomes. She extended her awareness about opening up to people and about how fear could keep her from doing that. She actually became more open and connected on a more personal level with people in client organizations. She generated new insights about her tendency to save others and what she could do to feel less responsible. She extended her insights about a difficult collaboration situation in a client organization, which made her feel tense. We analyzed this case together and concluded that the outcome was that 'the right' person took ownership of important responsibilities and started to act in the way the consultant desired, although she would not accept the consultant's suggestions at first. The consultant concluded that she does not have to be perfect to be able to deal with difficult situations, because future challenging situations may come with future resources for dealing with them. In hindsight, she could have used the optional site-visit by me to use my observations of the abovementioned difficult collaboration. We looked at how she could keep reflecting in a balanced way, to keep her gains from the coaching and the follow-up (not too much and not too little).

"I read a book by Susan Jeffers about fear: 'Feel the fear and do it anyway'. The book really helped me realize that I can't expect to never experience fear or tension [...] Often my fears don't become reality. And this is also related to involving people more and earlier. Showing that I don't keep things from them means less unexpected situations for others, resulting in less unexpected situations for me. This makes my work more stable and relaxed. I think this has really improved because of the things that I've learned and also because of the different client context I'm in right now. [...] Jefferson wrote that our basic fear is about not being able to deal with things. This is interesting because on the one hand I do experience fear of failing, while on the other hand I'm confident that I'll be all right.

This person [in the client organization] *took up her responsibility in this matter and started to act. Looking back, I was really happy that she claimed this because now things have started to happen… And in the end, this is what I want as a consultant: that people can do it, independent of me [...]. I had to get used to letting that go and not have a role in that specific matter and not be needed… And for me this was also about letting go. […] Another thing that has really changed is that I'm more open and connect on a personal level too, whereas earlier I thought that I had to be 'professional.' I recently talked to my client about our good collaboration, and he said that he was inspired by it as this was different than the way he had experienced collaboration in his organization."*

<div align="right">(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 3)</div>

"By taking more leadership in the process (sharing information/feelings/doubts in time and involving others), I create more space to work in my own way: less stress; more overview; fewer surprises; better planning. Being able to do my work well."

<div align="right">(Final reflection section in reflective journal, Consultant 3)</div>

- Consultant 5 did not write in her reflective journal all four weeks. She realized that something was not going well if she was unable to create room to do this. At the same time, the follow-up did generate results. Specifically, this consultant experienced both gains and stepping into 'familiar traps' with respect to a pattern she was focused on. She extended her awareness about how the pattern works and how it affects her (feeling bad when comparing herself to others) and how this affects others (feeling not being taken seriously by her). Although she saw progress, there is still 'work to be done.' From the coaching session, she learned that she contributes to her own problems through striving for perfection, and that a good conversation may help to solve things.

"I stepped into my own trap because I wanted to improve my communication and be clear about my thoughts… But I was hesitant about talking with my managing consultant about the tiredness I was experiencing. I wanted to handle this by myself and find my own solution, while sometimes just talking about it may be a solution in itself. In a training last week, I learned that, although I talk about things that I don't like, I don't really say how it affects me. […] I don't want to be that complaining person with a tough life.

However I also had some good conversations. For example, with a peer with whom I collaborate intensively. […] And although in the consulting context this is something to still work on, I do see progress. Especially on 'smaller tasks' I do more of 'just do it' and experience that things turn out fine."

<div align="right">(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 5)</div>

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- Consultant 7 experienced struggles with her workability in relation to personal circumstances as well. She did not finish writing the reflective journal the way she wanted. However, in choosing this, she respected her boundaries which contributed to balancing her energy. In the coaching session, we decided not to make up for those four weeks, but instead have a session that would contribute to her current needs with respect to her workability. This consultant decided to keep working on connecting with her feelings, challenging as this may be. In her final reflection afterwards, she mentioned that she realized that the pattern is persistent, and that she is happy with the progress: her next step is about connecting body and mind.

"I have decided to continue developing in this area of 'easily disconnecting with my feelings'. This feels like my next step. […] I think I will not really get rid of this pattern that I'm doing but I hope to learn to look at it more mildly. Just like you said: 'oh there I go, I'm doing it again, I need to do something different.' I did gain a lot from our conversations: I'm able to reflect and make interventions [on her actions]. *But doing 'the right' thing when bigger issues are at play,' is still difficult."*

<div align="right">*(*Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 7)</div>

- Consultant 9 used the word 'awareness' a lot in her reflections and her communication with others: 'to be aware of one's actions and those of others'. This consultant experienced that her communication and leadership in the client organization have improved, both in the team she manages and with her principal. Dealing with her team members' different levels of working proactively and autonomously is a challenge because she wants to delegate more, and focus more on process than on content. In her experience, the urge to 'please others' has been curbed, but this could

improve even more. She experienced being challenged in dealing with resistance and in dealing with a pushy principal in the client organization.

"Well, I do see that I'm more conscious of the way I communicate in the client organization. I experience that I'm maturing in my role. The dynamics of the way I collaborate with people in the client organization have changed. People accept me as a leader more. I've become more autonomous and [I experience] a great sense of responsibility and this influences my role as a leader.

There is a great variety in people dynamics. Some are really pro-active and some really aren't. Some don't think about solutions themselves; don't talk to one another; only see problems; and drop their problems on my desk. This frustrates me from time to time. [Standing firm means] *that I can handle resistance after having made tough decisions that have consequences. Also, with respect to my program director who can be really pushy… I need to have good arguments to make it clear that sometimes things don't go the way he want them to. […] Pleasing others is still a factor. However, I do experience things are improving. I used to please others a lot more in the* [consulting] *firm than I do nowadays. And, this is also changing in the client organization. After some time, 'being seen as a nice person' becomes less important."*

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 9)

• Consultant 10 became more aware of smaller, daily learning incidents which she may have overlooked if she had only reflected on a weekly basis. When communicating, she has learned to be more reflective in the moment and act deliberately. This follow-up resulted in extended insights about patterns of controlling and letting go and related insecurities; patterns of thinking that she is on her own and needs to fix everything herself; and patterns of positioning herself. She has become more aware of her part in challenging communication and what belongs 'to others.' In the application in her consulting practice, she learned to be clearer about expectations when delegating work; the importance of clear contracting when accepting a project; and extending her communication repertoire in a personal way (versus 'cheap tricks'). Emerging new questions concerned striking a balance between ensuring good quality consulting services to the client and facilitating learning on the job by consultants. She experienced a clear connection with the previous coaching sessions and that talking with someone about common themes in one's reflections adds to just reflecting by yourself.

"I also experienced a growing difference between my initial reflex and my more deliberate response after pausing. I've been learning to think in that very moment of what may be a useful response that I feel OK about myself too. I really liked these moments

of awareness in the conversations. Seeing myself do something or feeling it. And then explicitly subtitle what just happened and what my response to that is.

When it comes to delegating work, I should be clearer about my expectations upfront. I learned this as I was disappointed about their work, and I realized that I might have been expecting too much. […] Having a clear contract with my clients helps me to delegate parts of it to my coworkers. And I recognize my tendency to please the client by thinking 'they are really busy, and I think this or that is probably the case,' while in fact they need to get more clarity themselves before giving me the project.

When I finished writing in my journal, I looked back at my initial focus about 'positioning myself' for these 4 weeks. I remembered thinking 'sometimes I should also just claim the position that I have, instead of telling myself that I still need to grow there.' I can just decide that I am a good sparring partner for an executive. Thinking that I need to grow first, also keeps me in a place that I don't need to be. And I'm not saying that there is nothing left to learn.

So, when balancing learning opportunities and assuring quality of results, I may want to offer more space for others to learn [...] At the same time the client pays a lot of money for our services and I'm responsible for the work of my co-workers. [...] Maybe it's about the guts to let go, accepting the possibility that things may go wrong. [...] Maybe my question should be about other ways [than letting things go wrong] *to facilitate their learning and development. Maybe I need to address this more explicitly but on the other hand: they are grown up people… However, our conversations right now are more practical and focused on distributing the work… It could be something like 'I have been correcting some of your work the last few weeks, I have given you feedback on that, but I don't see much change. And: 'what do you need to make this improvement or am I even clear about what I'm asking of you?' [...] However, when I reflect om my collaboration with the firm partners, it also often happened that we weren't on the same page about the specifics of the deliverables or that their views had changed. So, in a way it's also part of the deal. [...] I think we should offer our consultants the guidance that we agreed upon. I noticed that not everyone gives this the proper attention. In my view, you can't develop professionals without guiding them.*

[My mother] *texted me to cancel and I became angry and sad at the same time. I thought 'well get lost then.' Then later that hour I recognized 'oh wait this is when it happens, this is what triggers me so much into thinking now I'll just do it myself.'"*

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

6.5 Improving the Reflective Journal as a Tool

Here I present the results of evaluating the reflective journal as a reflection tool and present the consultants' improvement suggestions.

Experience of working with the reflective journal

When we evaluated the reflective journal as a tool, we identified the following topics:

- Time. Given the busy schedules, it was a challenge to write on a daily basis. This is interesting because the idea was to use an event contingent design (Wheeler & Reis, 1991; Rose, 2020), which means only making a journal entry after experiencing or completing a specific event. Possibly the preformatted journal structure contributed to making daily entries. One consultant changed to weekly reflections; another consultant changed to writing only when she considered something was noteworthy.

  "Eh, from time to time I had to push myself to write. When I started, I was pretty strict and kept looking for something I could write about every day. But later, I was more accepting if I hadn't experienced something noteworthy at times. In general, it was useful to take a daily moment to reflect."
  (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 2)

  It was a challenge to record my reflections on a daily basis as part of a routine. I also spent more time on writing than I anticipated."
  (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

- Initial focus. At least two consultants said they had become less strict in keeping to their initial focus. They didn't want to leave out other useful reflections. One consultant explicitly mentioned that reflecting on both positive and negative experiences was useful.

  "As time passed, I became less strict with respect to the focus that I had chosen. I didn't want to leave out useful reflections beyond the initial focus."
  (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

- How to write. One consultant said they had 'just written their reflections, without trying to make sense before writing.' This was helpful when rereading the journal entries later. Other consultants said they wrote in a way that would be understandable for me, or at least struggled with the level of detail when writing. One of them changed this later, acknowledging that she primarily reflects for herself, and that I would ask if things were unclear to me.

"I really just wrote what came up and turned off 'the perfectionist' and tried not to fully understand everything when I wrote it. And I think this is useful for working with a reflective journal. Because when I re-read entries later, I was happy with the way I wrote because it was to the point. So, I chose not to think everything through before writing. Not looking for an explanation first."

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 2)

"If it was just for me, I would have written less extensively, but I wanted you to also understand what happened. I would have made shorter sentences, used bullets etc."

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 3)

- Ownership and evolving journal format. When asked, the journal did help to take ownership of personal development, although it was not always nice to be so aware of things that 'wouldn't go away.' With respect to changing the offered format, one consultant changed to *only* reflecting weekly; another consultant *added* weekly summaries.

"As you already know, I didn't write on a daily basis. But I did reflect weekly on meaningful situations. It was really too much to combine this with the busy days, and I don't open my laptop in the evenings nowadays. As I didn't write every day, it was sometimes hard to remember the details of some interactions and write them up later. If I were to do this again, I would schedule half an hour journaling in my schedule, each day."   (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 9)

- Facilitation of reflecting. In general, the journal was experienced as facilitating the consultants' reflection process. It served as 'a stick.' Just asking for open reflections would have generated less. One consultant said that 'having a coach' stimulated her to write down her reflections. The way the journal was structured contributed to deeper reflections and writing in a way that would still be understandable later. As each day had its own place in the journal, this lowered the bar for (at least) one consultant with respect to how much to write. The filled journal became pretty large which meant this structure was not really user-friendly as it required a lot of scrolling. It was useful to repeat the general reflecting questions that were discussed in the startup conversation, in the first section of the journal. According to multiple consultants, the six reflecting questions on learning incidents by Shepherd (2004; 2006) helped in collecting their thoughts and in inspiring reflecting, but they were not answered literally (the latter was experienced as a struggle for one consultant). Two consultants expressed their preference for talking over writing when reflecting (for example, to get feedback). Multiple consultants used both columns in the

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journal (distinguishing between interaction in the client organization and in other contexts). Working with two columns was not useful for one consultant.

"If you had asked me to just openly reflect for four weeks and send a weekly story, then you would have received useless stories. I would have probably done it 'on the side' and felt obliged to write something for you, instead of experiencing it as useful for myself. The way you split the week up into separate days helped me to reflect on a daily basis and to also think one entry would be enough. In the beginning, I was pretty strict on the focus I chose, and later I also wrote about things that may not have been directly related."   (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 2)

"The startup session was great as we had already been through the reflecting questions in the first section of the journal. Still, on top of that, it was effective to think and write about these questions when I really started using the journal."
                                            (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 3)

"For me, the separate columns for client organization and internal consulting firm/ private life looked funny. You could leave that out. However, it does invite you to apply the development focus to different contexts."
                                            (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 7)

"'Why do I need a coach to do this?' It's because this made me do it more deliberately. [...] It's not that the coaching sessions with you are on top of my mind every day. But still, it makes me think about things that I would have given less attention to before. Right now, I'm more conscious about them. And really having the conversation about it with you and writing things up [helps]. These are things that I normally don't really talk about. Also, you really go into things and ask me critical questions. I mean, nobody asks me why I do what I do…"
                                            (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 9)

"The added value of the way the journal was structured was that it contributed to deeper reflection compared to just an empty space. This way, the reflections will be understandable later in time.[…] The format itself wasn't really user-friendly because you had to scroll a lot through the document and delete empty spaces. That's more aesthetics though."   (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

- Requirements for effective use. Several requirements for effective use were identified. First, having a coaching journey (as the consultants had had), because this is a useful tool for a next step. Second, being able to reflect. Third, experiencing the room for doing this and having ownership. Fourth, being well introduced to work-

ing with it. Fifth, and in general, the focus on interaction is useful for management consultants, and it is good for them to realize that this coaching engagement starts differently from a situation in which people experience becoming stuck in life, and have pressing coaching questions.

Suggestions for improving the (use of) Reflective Journal

Following the evaluation, the following improvement suggestions were noted.

- Improve the user-friendliness for example by 1) changing the format or deleting (repetitions of) Shepherd's (2004, 2006) reflection questions; 2) offering a paper version to write in; 3) offering an app to talk into; 4) adding hyperlinks to the document (less scrolling) or switching to PowerPoint;
- Expand the journal by splitting up the recording space for learning incidents and reflections about them (to include triggers; feelings; intentions for similar future situations);
- Ensure there are more clear goals when working with the journal;
- Strongly recommend talking to the coach during the four weeks of journal keeping.

"The six reflective questions seemed practical and useful but when I started to really use the journal, they didn't really help me. Also, in the journal I missed a block to write about what caused or triggered a certain interaction. And room to write about how I felt about what happened in the interaction. And that feeling would be interesting to reflect on. And room for 'how would I do this differently next time'?"

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 5)

"That [having a startup session] *has helped. Also talking to someone during the four-week period of diary keeping could work. Whether that's you or a colleague or friend. To talk about what you've written down. You have mentioned this but maybe recommending this a bit more strongly would be useful. [...] I could have talked to you sooner about how the journal didn't work for me, but I didn't. Yes, I do think this is part of the pattern that I'm doing."*

(Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 7)

"Maybe changing to PowerPoint instead of Word might help, or adding a table of contents with hyperlinks."   (Summary coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

6.6 Reflection

In this chapter, I have presented phase two of the action research project. Here, I designed a follow-up process of the coaching journeys, presented the outcomes as

illustrations of possible results, and described the participants' experiences of the process. I have described how I set up and carried out a diary study, in which six of the 12 initially coached management consultants participated in the coaching follow-up. The participants recorded learning incidents related to their particular foci and we had a coaching session on their key reflections about their interactions with stakeholders, and their outcomes. After thematically analyzing their journal entries and our coaching conversation afterwards, the outcomes of the follow-up can be categorized as: continued experimenting which generated different outcomes compared to typical familiar ways of acting; extended self-awareness, including acknowledgment of challenging situations intersecting with typical personal backgrounds; and experienced frustration about persisting patterns despite continued efforts to change. We evaluated working with the reflective journal. Although the coachees experienced the reflective journal as a useful tool which facilitated their reflection process, some consultants preferred to reflect in a conversation. These participants found keeping the journal as time consuming. Some consultants left their initial focus, and some adapted the format to meet their needs. We discussed the requirements for effective use (e.g., having participated in a coaching journey prior to keeping the journal) and identified improvement possibilities (e.g., user-friendliness of the tool; having clearer goals; and strongly recommending having contact with the coach during the journal keeping period).

In chapter 7, I will present the evaluation of the whole action research project and the developed coaching practice. This evaluation took place in a conversation with the consulting firm partner with whom I collaborated in setting up the action research project, and with a senior consultant who participated as a coachee in both phases of the project.

CHAPTER 7

Tailor-made Coaching as a Resource for Developing Management Consultants: Evaluation of the Coaching Concept

"I do think that we, by far, are leaning on the personal competencies of our management consultants. Where others find their basis in a certain method or a corporate label, we need to earn our position in the client organization."
(Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021)

7.1 Introduction

In December 2021, I had a face-to-face meeting with the consulting firm partner and a senior management consultant, to evaluate the offered coaching's concept[94]. When planning this meeting, I invited the consulting firm partner and the coaching participants. The selection resulted from pragmatically checking their availability in their schedules. The consulting firm partner had been involved from the start of the action research project, and the senior consultant was one of the participants in both project phases (coaching journey and coaching follow-up). I was interested in their views about the coaching, in relation to the firm's other resources for developing management consultants. We evaluated the concept of the coaching, beyond the individual management consultants' personal experiences. The latter is included in chapters 5 and 6, and is also addressed separately in chapter 8. In the invitation to this meeting, I mentioned the key topics of my interest (their general reflection on the process and outcomes of the coaching; and their views on its place among other resources for development), and I invited them to bring their own topics. After we had set a date for the conversation, I prepared the following topics to start off the conversation: general reflection on the project and on both phases; positioning the offered coaching in relation to executive coaching[95]; placing individual coaching in their 'development assortment'; zooming out to other firms in the industry; and opportunities for improvement. The conversation was audio recorded and I made a report afterwards, which I submitted for member checking (Erlandson et al., 1993). In the remainder of this chapter, I present the outcomes of our evaluation along three main themes which resulted from my analysis: 1) the firm's strategic orientation to management consulting; 2) learning in their 'firm university'; and 3) the contribution of tailor-made coaching for consultants.

7.2 Strategic Orientation to Management Consulting and Consultants' Competencies

During the evaluation, it appeared to me that this firm invests greatly in their consultants' development, possibly more than other consulting firms. The firm's partner confirmed this and explained that this is related to the different strategic orientations that firms have regarding management consulting. He generally distinguished between two orientations to practicing consulting, each having consequences for the required compe-

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94 By using the word 'concept', I do not refer to a theoretical construct but to a concise description of how we worked in the coaching journey and the coaching follow-up.
95 This topic resulted from the semi-systematic literature review (see chapter 9) that I had started working on by that time.

tencies. First, and relatively common, is the 'method-driven' orientation to consulting[96]. According to the partner, consulting firms in this area (for example McKinsey or Accenture) mainly position themselves as experts. They tend to have a standard approach to consulting in each acquired project. Without judging this as good or bad, method driven firms intentionally create a knowledge gap; run the consulting process; and tell their clients what to do. These firms create a position of authority through their expert knowledge. This approach prompts a specific interaction between the consultants and the people with whom they work: the actors and their spectators, so to speak. One can imagine that, in this approach, it is less important what people in the client organization think of the management consultants' ways of interacting since their rational expertise is considered more important.

"We choose a different interaction" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021). The particular consulting firm which is central in this study takes a different approach. They come in with a "clean sheet and build a relationship in order to create something collaboratively" (ibid.). Their orientation strongly differs from that of the more 'method driven firms'. Equality is necessary and real collaboration with the stakeholders in the client organization requires the management consultants to engage with them on a personal level. Contrary to the 'method driven' approach, their more 'relational' approach[97] relies heavily on the personal competencies that the management consultant brings to the project. According to this firm's partner, the consultants' personal skills are a means for effective consulting. He expects that the interest in coaching management consultants is less in 'method driven' firms. According to the partner, this firm's 'relational' approach to management consulting is rather unique, although it resonates with "the old EY [Ernst & Young] culture." However, "I do think that we, by far, are leaning on the personal competencies of our management consultants. Where others find their basis in a certain method or a corporate label, we need to earn our position in the client organization" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021).

A small example of how these two orientations may be experienced in practice, was offered by the senior consultant (and recognized by the partner). "In my experience, you can easily identify [these] typical groups of consultants in the client organizations

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96 In terms of Boonstra (2004b), applying standardized experiences and techniques of models, products and rules in organizational change turns a consulting firm "into a service factory and the applying consultant into a service provider who uses instruments, rather than an actor in changing and learning who uses methods by design" (p. 470).
97 This approach comes close to the co-constructive approach, possibly the co-manager approach, of consulting, as articulated by Hicks (2010). As this author summarized, the difference between both is the extent to which the focus remains 'up-stream' (where day-to-day practice is guided by acknowledging the socially constructed character of issues and possibilities), rather than 'down-stream' (where 'the organization' is being reified or treated as a tangible object of improvement efforts). In the co-constructive approach, plans and goals are expected to change as the project unfolds; whereas the co-manager approach assumes that good plans lead to good results, while considering change controllable and manageable.

as they walk through the office building. They don't really blend in. [Contrary,] people of the client organization often assume that we are 'one of them.' I see that happens with my colleagues too, we sort of become an organization member" (Senior management consultant, personal communication, 16 December 2021).

7.3 Learning in the 'Firm University'

It became clear to me that the firm's investments in developing consultants are of key importance for the firm to be effective. Their vision of the 'firm university' is that each management consultant in their respective ranks (from junior consultant to partner) is offered certain developmental resources. In their view, junior consultants, who come fresh from university, learn a lot in the 'how to do things' area of management consulting. They learn the basics of the consulting profession. As the firm values collective learning, most of their basic level development resources are at group level, such as training; learning from peers[98]; and advisory group meetings. The firm offers various in-company training programs focusing on advisory skills, process skills, agile, lean, writing, and sales. In advisory group meetings, and when learning from peers, management consultants talk openly about difficult situations, offer advice and collaboratively solve problems. At the individual learning level, the firm currently uses (internal) mentoring. In general, from the consultant rank and up, management consultants are also encouraged to learn about 'why do I do what I do.' The coaching that I offered in this action research project was positioned in the tailor-made development area, to address specific personal needs or questions. It was positioned as an addition to learning with peers and mentoring. 'Specialties,' such as coaching, can be useful to give specific attention when needed, for example to meet specific project demand; to increase further development; or the personal needs of management consultants (e.g., experienced workability problems; dealing with recurring patterns; or guarding one's boundaries).

While discussing all the learning possibilities the firm offers, the partner said he still stands by our decision not to offer coaching to junior consultants (see section 4.3). The senior consultant agreed: "So they come to their first client and are more concerned about what they will be doing and what their role entails. So, I agree, first [juniors should] gain around three years of consulting experience before considering coaching" (Senior management consultant, personal communication, 16 December 2021). The importance of effective stakeholder interaction increases as management consultants continue maturing. In the client organization for example, consultants grow with re-spect to the hierarchical level of the stakeholders with whom they interact. More senior consultants need to be able to work at boardroom level and lower levels. Also in the

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98 In Dutch: intervisie.

consulting firm, the more senior consultants get greater responsibilities with respect to leading colleagues and being a mentor.

7.4 Tailor-made Coaching and Management Consultants' Learning Curves

In the consulting firm partner and the senior consultant's view, (the context of) the coaching I offered differs from "classic executive coaching" in several ways. First, my coaching was more focused on 'why people do what they do' whereas executive coaching focuses more on 'how to do things' or 'how to act.' My coaching fits the management consulting profession because: "I think that only when consultants are aware of 'why' they do what they do, can they really change. Being an important instrument themselves requires consultants to be really self-aware" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021). The senior consultant confirmed this: "Exactly… When I look back at our coaching conversations, we really looked at 'why do you act the way you do'? We looked for the origins of certain behaviors in my personal history" (Senior management consultant, personal communication, 16 December 2021). Second, the coachee, in the context of "classic executive coaching," can be characterized as: having a fixed position; in a relatively stable context for two to three years; working with more or less the same people; and being in formal, rule-based relationships. This is different in management consulting as relationships are more crucial with respect to being effective. "You constantly need to evaluate the impact of your actions. What it takes to be effective is different in different contexts" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021). Third, related to the second, is that management consultants are often involved with multiple client organizations at the same time, and interact with different people across different hierarchical levels. Reflecting on previous projects serves as a resource for the next one. An external consultant can make a fresh start in the next client organization, and put learnings to practice. This is different from the coachee in executive coaching. "When you are in a fixed position, old stories tend to stick to you, making it more difficult to do things in a different way. This is because you bring the history of relationships with you" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021). This difference results in possibilities for a steep learning curve for external management consultants when they switch clients.

The offered coaching concept facilitated this learning curve. According to the senior consultant, the first phase helped her to increase her awareness about the way she acts. The time between phase one and two was helpful: "I went from intensive reflection to 'just' deliberately applying what I had learned" (Senior management consultant, personal communication, 16 December 2021). This consultant has chosen to deliberately

do things differently when changing to a next project. She experienced keeping the reflective journal as intensive but also as useful to focus and be aware of her actions. The coaching follow-up reflections went deeper than 'talking about things at home.' When I checked whether a 'reflection muscle' had been trained during the action research project, and about reflecting more structurally, the senior consultant responded by "Yes exactly. I do tend to reflect more often and really take the time to think about how to do things differently. This is different than responding immediately to things [as they] happen" (Senior management consultant, personal communication, 16 December 2021).

The consulting firm partner noted that it was more difficult for him to talk about the details of my coaching concept, as he had not participated himself. However, he noted the result of the coaching for this specific senior consultant: "I can see what participating has brought her. I do see a difference in the way she positions herself and how she acts in her newest project. She really has acquired the position of 'trusted advisor,' which comes really naturally to her. She has shown a steep development curve ('hockey stick'). She has addressed her ambitions within the firm (which is a challenging thing to express) and we had a good conversation about that. So, these are examples of differences compared to before the coaching. I experience you [the senior management consultant] as more grounded. And I can imagine that clients will experience this too, that you relate differently with them" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021).

We addressed a few specific elements of the developed coaching concept. First, keeping the reflective journal as a tool was considered as very contributory by the consulting firm partner. "Any business training that I know of, has some instrument in order to get as much out of it as possible." In his view, the journal was an enrichment compared to "classic forms of coaching," which sometimes may be viewed as a 'free ride,'"like dropping a question; talking about it with the coach; and hoping that something sticks." Although he is aware of how much work keeping a journal meant for the consultant, "it's also about taking responsibility and ownership for your development as a consultant, and securing the learnings for future projects" (Consulting firm partner, personal communication, 16 December 2021). According to the senior consultant, four weeks of journal keeping was a good period. Second, although the follow-up did have an added value in itself, on top of the coaching journey in phase one, choosing what qualifies as a 'learning incident' in phase two was challenging for her. During the evaluating conversation, we collaboratively looked for criteria that may help with identifying learning incidents, such as: situations that really make an impression; situations that keep you occupied; situations in which you experience doubt or in which you get unexpected responses; when you realize you have stepped into your own trap again; or difficult conversations in general. Third, this senior consultant had not experienced coaching before, although

she had heard from others that it can be useful and it's not a taboo or something. On top of the information that she received at the beginning of the action research project, she thought it would be useful to 'manage expectations' just a bit more about what it is like to work with a coach with a particular background, compared to others.

7.5 Reflection

The necessity for effective stakeholder interaction is highly influenced by the consulting firm's orientation to 'how to practice management consulting.' Different from so called 'method driven firms,' this firm chooses to interact from a collaborative standpoint, rather than solely trusting their consultant's expert-knowledge as a means to gain influence. Resulting from such strategic orientation, this firm's management consultants need to build relationships from a clean sheet; collaborate from equal positions; and engage on a personal level. As the firm partner noted: they rely heavily on the personal competencies of their management consultants. This strategic orientation has led to deliberate investments in their consultants' development. In their 'firm university,' the focus is on collective learning. However, specifically for consultants with at least three years of experience, the coaching in this action research project serves as a means to offer tailor-made development possibilities. The concept that I offer has been evaluated and compared to executive coaching. One interesting difference is that management consultants' need for effective stakeholder interactions may be considered to be more crucial than for the clients of executive coaches. Interestingly, the possibilities for realizing a steep learning curve may be more present too. As such, the offered coaching concept may be an impetus for the maturing of management consultants. Two suggestions to improve this coaching concept include offering more upfront clarity about 'the type' of coaching, and facilitating the consultants more when they define their 'learning incidents' while working with the reflective journal in the coaching follow-up.

As noted earlier, chapters 5, 6 and 8 include an evaluation of the offered coaching at the level of the individual management consultant. In chapters 5 and 6, this evaluation was part of the coaching process itself, which is common in a social constructionist orientation. In addition, to complement this perspective, I will present an evaluation in chapter 8 which can be considered more independent, or apart from, the coaching process. Such an evaluation is common in more traditional research orientations. In the next chapter, I first present a qualitative evaluation of both outcomes and process of the coaching journeys (phase one). The data for this qualitative evaluation was generated by another researcher and (in part) analyzed collaboratively. Secondly, I present a quantitative study to evaluate the outcomes of the coaching journeys. This study focuses on the management consultants' emotional intelligence and leadership styles.
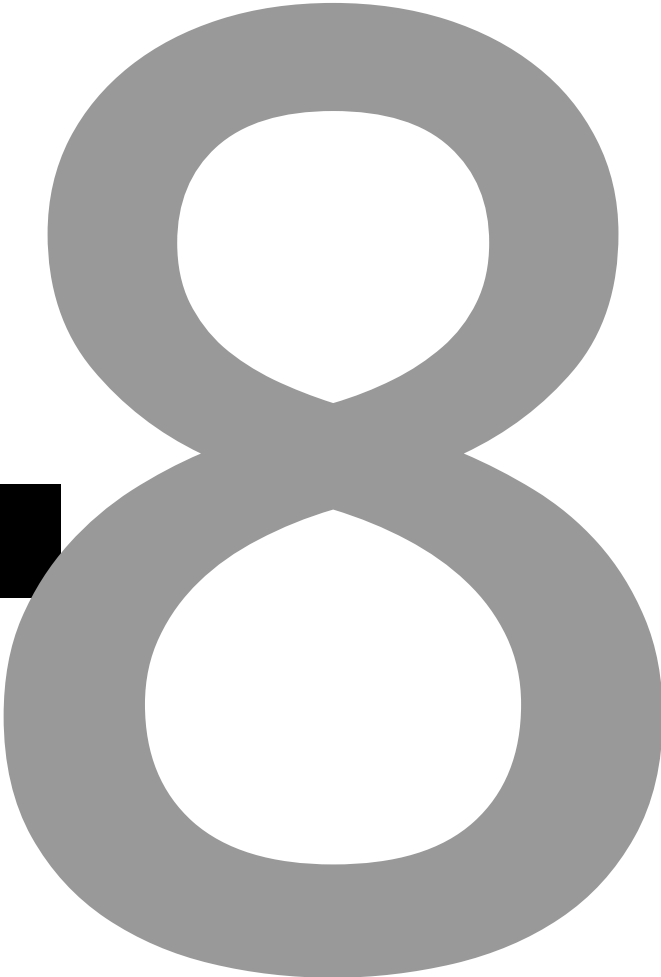
Coaching Journey Outcomes and Process: A Mixed-method, Multi-actor Study

"After gaining these insights about my tendencies, I started experimenting with slowing down and really connecting with others. Being able to deliberately choose (not) to apply my typical communication style is what I'll continue working on […] *I'm getting positive responses* [to doing things differently] *in the work setting, people also see the more thoughtful me now. Moreover, I'm experiencing the difference myself. It's like I'm more inviting to others to share or be present. Although I'm still sensitive to the ambiance, I refrain from acting and influencing immediately."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 7)

8.1 Introduction

The action research project with experienced external management consultants was designed to be a transformative inquiry (McNamee, 2010; McNamee & Hosking, 2012) or a future forming research project (Gergen, 2015b). My aim was to co-create, with management consultants, new locally useful possibilities (McNamee, 2014) for stakeholder interaction in their consulting practices. When researchers adopt a social constructionist stance, evaluation of both process and what is constructed in that process, typically takes an evaluating 'with others' approach, not 'of others.' Evaluating with participants (or co-researchers) neither privileges, nor silences the voice of science (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In this particular action research study, the evaluation with the management consultants has been described in chapter 5 (coaching journey) and 6 (coaching follow-up). Such an evaluation is coherent with the constructionist idea that there is no need to make a distinction between intervention and evaluation because both originate from a relational process, regardless of whether or not we name that process 'evaluation' (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). In the current chapter, however, I will evaluate the coaching journeys from an 'evaluation of' or 'evaluation as method' approach (McNamee & Hosking, 2012), constructed in a way that leans more toward traditional research orientations. In such orientations, it is common practice to make a distinction between the intervention and its evaluation. A separate, independent study with the purpose of evaluating can be considered as complementing the evaluation, as described in the previous chapters, yet from additional perspectives. More specifically, from a traditional qualitative orientation, we seek to understand and interpret the situated experiences according to participants (McNamee, 2014). In a more traditional quantitative approach, we seek whether we can prove what is true in a way that is statistically valid (ibid.)

To evaluate both the outcomes and process of the coaching journeys, I have used a mixed-method approach to the coachees' reactions, and to the reactions of various actors close to both the coachees and the coach. In the field of executive coaching, Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) call the increased use of mixed-methods in coaching studies a promising development, given the different merits of both quantitative and qualitative research. In their systematic review of executive coaching outcome studies, the authors argue that a mixed-method approach is needed in executive coaching outcome studies in order to look at both the journey (process) and the destination (outcomes) of executive coaching. Whereas quantitative studies tend to focus on 'does it work,' qualitative studies are needed to address the 'how does it work' question. According to Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), the specific contribution of qualitative studies is that mechanisms that underlie coaching effectiveness are located in the social context of the intervention, which cannot be fully captured by quantitative studies alone. As I describe in the semi-systematic literature review in chapter 9, we did not find

any scholarly publications on coaching for management consultants related to facilitating (complex) organizational change processes. However, the coaching in this action research study reflects elements of executive coaching, which inspired me when performing this mixed-method study. According to Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), executive coaching can be described as: "a targeted purposeful intervention that helps executives develop and maintain positive change in their personal development and leadership behavior" (p. 71). Furthermore, executive coaching is provided by an external coach in collaboration with the organization; it differs from therapeutic interventions (e.g., because it does not focus on mental health problems); involves key stakeholders: coach, coachee, and coachee's sponsoring organization; and is highly context sensitive, as a unique group of stakeholders may have a direct effect on the coaching outcomes. A very important aspect of executive coaching is that it should contribute to an organization's performance, meaning that the individual coaching intervention goals should link back and be subordinated to the organization's strategic objectives (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). Although the management consultants with whom I worked were not executives, the aim of the offered coaching was quite similar to that of executive coaching. The coaching journeys were purposefully targeted to contribute to the leadership performed by management consultants, regarding collaboration with stakeholders within their client organizations. Enhanced leadership was expected to be achieved through personal development during a series of coaching conversations with an external coach. Given the similarities between the coaching offered in this action research study and executive coaching, I find Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) contribution useful for the evaluation I describe in this chapter.

Section 8.2 describes how I inquired qualitatively into the outcomes that the management consultants themselves attributed to the coaching journey and how they had experienced the coaching process. The relatively open interviews in this study were performed independently by another researcher who was also a member of the research group, Organizing Decent Work[99] (Utrecht University of Applied Sciences), but who had not been involved in the action research project itself. In section 8.3, as an add-on to the designed interview study, I present the interviewers' views of the coaching journeys, based on her conversations with the coachees.

In addition to the interview study, I describe a quantitative study in section 8.4. This pre-post survey study was designed to evaluate the outcomes of the coaching journeys. In particular, I was interested in the extent to which the coaching journeys may be related to developments in the consultants' perceived emotional intelligence and leadership style(s). I was also interested in the extent to which these developments can be associ-

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99 In Dutch: Lectoraat Organiseren van Waardig Werk.

ated with developments in coachees' relating with others, and with developments in work results that emerged from their collaboration with stakeholders.

Below, I describe how I set up and carried out the evaluation studies, and I present and discuss the results. I start with a presentation of the interviews (including the add-on), to be followed by the surveys.

8.2 Qualitative Evaluation of Coaching Outcomes and Process: An Interview Study

In this section, I present the interview study in which I evaluated both process and outcomes of the coaching journeys. In this study, an independent interviewer held open interviews with 10 coachees. To analyze the results, Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) categories of positive coaching outcomes and factors affecting coaching outcomes were used. In general, all 10 participating coachees experienced the coaching as effective. It has contributed to an increase in the coachees' self-awareness, and reflecting on past experiences generated sustainable resources for interacting differently with their consulting stakeholders. With respect to the coaching process, the personal, open and tailor-made approach was valued (among others). Further results included the importance of being motivated and having a clear coaching question, differences between internal and external coaching, and the particular approach and communication by the coach.

8.2.1 Qualitative Evaluation of Coaching Outcomes and Process: Method

In addition to my own evaluation with the coaches, I was interested in the stories that an independent interviewer would generate, by talking with the coachees about their experiences of both the outcomes and process of the coaching journeys.

I asked an experienced qualitative researcher who was a co-worker in the Organizing Decent Work research group at the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences to help with this interview study. The interviewer had not been involved in the design or execution of the action research project itself. I informed her about the way the coaching journeys in phase one had been designed, and I forwarded my offer to the management consultants to her (appendix 2). I asked her to interview the consultants to evaluate their coaching journeys and to write interview reports. Given her extensive experience in qualitative research, and in order to maintain her independent position as an interviewer, I did not make further suggestions about how to perform the interviews or write the reports. In general, her main topics for the interviews were: a) the consultants' motivation to engage in the coaching journey; and b) the experienced effect of the coaching, both

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professionally and personally (in some interviews this explicitly included connections to their wider context, for example the received feedback from others, and how contextual influences may be experienced differently now). Consequently, once the coaching journey was finished, I connected each coachee and the interviewer, who met for the interview without any interference from me. Shortly after the interviews, I received the reports. Sometimes, the interviewer offered me a brief progress update or asked me a specific question. In total, 10 of the 12 management consultants[100] participated in the interviews, which had a duration of 30-60 minutes. The interviews and reports varied with respect to specific focus, length, and level of detail.

To analyze these interviews, I first read all the interview reports to get an impression of the whole data set. After this, I read each individual report and marked what the consultants had said about the outcomes of the coaching. I did the same with respect to their experience of the coaching process. Data that did not relate to coaching outcomes or process were discarded (for example, the consultants' introduction to the interviewer). After marking relevant data segments in the reports, I summarized the coachees' views in a spreadsheet. I used Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) 'coaching outcome categories' and 'factors affecting coaching outcomes' to interpret and categorize the coachees' responses. Derived from 84 reviewed studies, these authors offer a typology of executive coaching outcomes (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018, p. 75), summarized in Table 2, consisting of 11 positive outcomes, grouped by stakeholder group (coachee, organization, and coach) and in several categories (personal development, behavioral changes in relation to others, and relating to their work).

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100 I continued using the same consultant numbers from chapters 5 and 6 when identifying illustrative summaries of interview reports.

Table 2: Positive Coaching Outcome Categories (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018)

A. The coachee

a. Personal development

1. Overcoming regressive behaviors or experiences

2. Executive Coaching seen as effective, positive or lifechanging experience

3. Better personal management/self-control

4. Improved personal skills/abilities or acquisition of new ones

b. The coachee & the others: behavioral changes in relation to others

5. Better leadership skills

6. Better quality of interactions and relationships

c. The coachee & his/her work

7. Work performance/productivity and planning

8. Nurturing working environment

B. The organization

9. Positive organizational level outcomes

C. The coach

10. Positive perceptions of coach's effectiveness

11. Coach's personal development

An overview of 23 factors that, according to the reviewed studies, affect coaching outcomes are presented in Table 3, grouped by the following categories: the intervention, the organization, the coachee, the coach, and the relationship among coaching stakeholders (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018, p. 76).

The outcome categories and factors affecting coaching outcomes proved to be useful resources for performing the analysis following Athanasopoulou and Dopson's claim to offer the first systematic review that centers both on whether and how coaching works.

Table 3: Factors Affecting Coaching Outcomes (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018)

The intervention

1. Coaching model
2. Occurrence of critical moments
3. Use of personality assessment tools
4. Intervention focus and implementation
5. Use of influence tactics
6. Language and communication
7. Coaching setting, duration and means

The organization

8. Organizational support
9. Integration of coaching to leadership development
10. Size and type of organization/industry
11. Organizational culture

The coachee

12. Coachee's personal attributes
13. Coachee's expectations of outcomes
14. Sensemaking of intervention
15. Coachee's learning style
16. Pre-, during and post-coaching motivation
17. Job rank

The coach

18. Coach's background
19. Coach's behavior, skills, abilities, and quality of practice

The relationship among coaching stakeholders

20. Coach-coachee relationship and fit
21. Stakeholder alignment and collaboration
22. Coachee's and coach's gender
23. Clarity in roles & expectations

Although Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) note that both the outcome categories and the factors affecting outcomes offer a useful overview for both practitioners and researchers, they also stress the interconnectedness of outcome types and influencing factors. Hence, when using these outcome categories and influencing factors in categorizing the consultants views, the selected primary category was the one to which the particular text segment was most related to. When interpreting the coachees' responses from the interview reports and categorizing them, I drew on the broader context known to me through my own conversations with the coachees. Based on these analytical

steps, I wrote a theme-based evaluation of both the 'journey' (process) and 'destination' (outcomes) (Athanasopoulos & Dopson, 2018) of the coaching journeys across the whole dataset from the 10 interviews. Summaries (not literal quotes) of the coachees' views from the interview report illustrate the themes. I submitted my analysis and the outcomes to the interviewer and asked her if she recognized her interviews in it, and if she had any comments on the results.

After performing five interviews, the interviewer informally shared some of her insights with me. She said that, as a coach, I appear to be direct and confronting in a pleasant way, and that I got all five management consultants to experiment with acting differently and trying new things (Hanke Drop, personal communication, 28 August 2020). Consequently, an additional idea grew to talk about her reflections about my approach in coaching these management consultants. We did this in a conversation (January 2021), for which I prepared a starting question about her views on the resources that I had used in the coaching.

In the following subsections, I present the results from the evaluative interviews. After that, I summarize the interviewer's experience of my way of working, resulting from our additional evaluative conversation, as described above (section 8.3).

8.2.2 Qualitative Evaluation of Coaching Outcomes and Process: Results

First, I present the results which focus on the coaching outcomes or 'destination.' Following that, I present the results that focus on the process or 'journey.' I have used the beforementioned coding structure obtained from Athanasopoulos and Dopson (2018) to structure this subsection.

Coaching outcomes

The consultants did not mention any outcomes which I would *primarily* identify as 'overcoming regressive behaviors or experiences' (personal development of coachee category). The same goes for the organization level outcomes. Understandably, given the specific interview purpose, no consultant reported on the coach's outcomes.

The first group of outcome categories centers on the coachee's <u>personal development</u>.

- All 10 interviewed consultants *saw the coaching as effective or positive/life changing*. Some consultants described these effects in general terms, such as: contributing to improved self-assurance; supporting ongoing professional development; or helping to reflect on themselves. Others described the effects of the coaching in more specific terms. For example: dealing with a challenging client; dealing with doubts about their new role; or dealing with their typical behaviors or communication styles.

"In the coaching, we have worked on enhancing my self-assurance and feeling comfortable in that." (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"The coaching has been supportive in dealing with a client who is known to be tough. It helped me in dealing with issues such as collaborating; following my views; or going along with hers." (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"Although I have been working on my professional development for a longer period of time, our conversations did contribute to it. Specifically with respect to the way I'm handling things in concrete organization cases, or smaller insights about my qualities or why certain things bother me." (summary of interview report, consultant 4)

"Changing roles within the consulting firm generated different internal dynamics. The coaching supported me in dealing with doubts whether or not I was up for it." (summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"I'm well aware of my coaching question now. I connected to what is at play below the surface, and we looked at it from all directions. I get what I'm up against. It's not fully solved, but our coaching journey is completed." (summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"The sessions triggered me to really start thinking about my typical pleasing behavior." (summary of interview report, consultant 9)

"I got new perspectives on communication, including practical tools. For example, the coach experienced me as raising the bar for him (and myself). We started to look into this unintended effect of my communication, because I also got that feedback from others." (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"The coaching helped me to reflect and generate some practical and useful tools. For example: to use the observer position more, or deliberately check in with my needs a couple of times each day. These became positive habits. I feel closer to myself and my roots." (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

"The coaching really added something for me. It contributed to reflecting on who I am. Both personally and professionally." (summary of interview report, consultant 12)

"I have been on a quest around my coaching question for a long time. The coaching has contributed to more clarity and speeded up my development. He also offered

practical suggestions and mnemonics to put what I had learned into practice."
                                        (summary of interview report, consultant 13)

- With respect to the outcome category '*personal management/ self-control*,' the common thread in the reports are enhanced self-awareness and deeper self-acceptance. One consultant also mentioned being able to take more space to talk about herself. Many consultants reported they had gained more insight into the origin of typical ways of acting or things they struggle with when communicating and collaborating as a management consultant. When looking at things they could do differently, the consultants learned to relate to their personal histories more consciously, instead of looking for quick fixes.

"Now, I feel less of a burden to others when talking about myself, this offers space. I can take space a bit more easily."   (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"I've become more aware, gained clarity of the origin of some typical ways of acting and can deal with things more easily. I know that I can be accepting of certain things, that I'm okay, and I know the things I can work on because that may be helpful. Knowing that I can reflect on these things helps me to experiment with doing things differently."   (summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"I wanted the coach to give me a trick to get rid of some typical ways of acting that bothered me as a management consultant. Instead, I learned that I was self-judging; why I rely so much on this coping mechanism; and what could be more generative instead. I have become more aware of why I tend to use this way of communicating, and experience more space to experiment now."
                                        (summary of interview report, consultant 7)

 "I have become more aware of why I'm positioning myself the way I do when communicating. For example, why I tend to tune in on others more than being true to myself."   (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

"I've gained more awareness about what drives me and what I've learned about this when growing up. For example: pleasing others; creating harmony; and making people like me. I've learned about why I do what I do in this. I've learned to take my feelings more seriously; and check the origin of any experienced unrest and what I could do differently."   (summary of interview report, consultant 13)

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- The coaching outcomes identified as *improved personal skills/ abilities or acquisition of new ones*, include expanding their communication repertoire and lowering their own demands, related to perfectionism.

  "Yes, I have expanded my repertoire. Now I'm better at saying what is on my mind."
  (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

  "The way we talked also generated room. Sometimes the coach said, 'why don't you just say it quick-and-dirty.' I don't need to have figured everything out before saying what's on my mind."   (summary of interview report, consultant 12)

  "I feel closer to my feelings and intuition; and I can share that when communicating with others. I experience more peace of mind in this respect. I'm living less in my head now."   (summary of interview report, consultant 13)

The following two categories focus on the <u>interaction between the consultant and others</u>.

- The outcomes in the *better leadership skills* category focus on improved communication as a leader. This includes both formal leadership (being another consultant's boss) and mentoring less experienced management consultants.

  "I've learned to subtitle the way I like to work and what I expect of the consultants I'm managing. This has yielded positive effects. For example, one consultant first felt as if she was underperforming when I asked for an overview of her work. But when she remembered the 'manual about my style of working' that we had talked about, she could let go of that negative feeling about herself and offer me the information that I needed."   (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

  "The greatest compliment I received [about coaching gains] *was that one of my mentees really valued the deeper conversations we have when I am coaching and mentoring her."*   (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

- Nearly all the interviewed coachees reported outcomes identified as *better quality of interactions and relationships*. Some explicitly mentioned having received positive feedback from others about that. Examples of the mentioned outcomes are: taking a more central position more easily; addressing the experienced political games; intentionally influencing team collaboration; involving others in their line of thinking; positioning themselves more effectively when communicating; being more accepting of the encountered social situations as opposed to intervening immediately 'to make things easier.' Also, the personal relationships had reportedly improved. Many

coachees explicitly said that they had started to experiment with doing things differently and with positive effect. These experiments included slowing down and really connecting; subtitling thoughts and actions; being more assertive and clearer about their thoughts; and checking their assumptions more actively.

"In my new project, I have started to experiment and put to practice what I've learned [in the coaching] *[…] I'm showing myself and checking assumptions more often when I'm talking to the principal in the client organization."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"I wanted to improve our working relations as a team [in the client organization]… *In a team meeting, I addressed the holding back of information and political games. Expressing my emotions prompted a team conversation about a culture of fear and trust. This has turned out well. There is more autonomy and trust […] I've learned to involve others more in my line of thinking as opposed to doing things on my own."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"After gaining these insights about my tendencies, I started experimenting with slowing down and really connecting with others. Being able to deliberately choose (not) to apply my typical communication style is what I'll continue working on […] I'm getting positive responses [to doing things differently] *in the work setting, people also see the more thoughtful me now. Moreover, I'm experiencing the difference myself. It's like I'm more inviting to others to share or be present. Although I'm still sensitive to the ambiance, I refrain from acting and influencing immediately."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"The coaching made me aware of the impact [on others] *of the way I communicate. This was very valuable and useful. I started to experiment with the way I communicate, for example subtitling my thoughts and actions more. I started to see certain ways of acting as optional, and sometimes useful. I received many positive responses to my experimenting from people with whom I work. A partner said he experienced me as milder and more personal. A co-worker said that she used to experience some anxiety when I was around. But that had really changed!"*

(summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"I received positive feedback about the positive development in communicating. Both in my yearly performance review and in my private life I speak my mind sooner; I'm more assertive; and I experience more clarity about what I think of important matters, and earlier. I experience more space. I'm better at recognizing and articulating what moves me and I act sooner."(summary of interview report, consultant 11)

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"In my situation, the need to please others may result in making assumptions that may not be effective. I'm checking my implicit assumptions more actively now. I received positive feedback from a co-worker about the way that I subtitle my feelings."
(summary of interview report, consultant 13)

The next categories focus on the <u>consultants and their work.</u>

- With respect to *work performance/productivity and planning*, the coachees reported an increased self-awareness about the way they relate to their work in general: being one and the same person in both personal and professional life and having gained a different view on behavioral patterns. Further positive outcomes relate to being able to make a good transfer from the coaching context to their consulting practice.

"I realized that I'm one person, personally and professionally. I've become aware that certain behavioral patterns originated from my childhood. Although they may have been effective back then, today they may be less useful."
(summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"I was able to make the transfer from the insights generated in the coaching to my consulting practice very well." (summary of interview report, consultant 4)

- Outcomes in the *nurturing working environment* category include expressing career development aspirations and making conscious decisions about whether or not to stay in the current role or career path.

"In the coaching, we also looked at my doubts and interests about work in general. I've reconnected with things that I like and with my core qualities. Talking about this in the coaching, and with friends and family, generated a lot of positive energy. […] I have expressed my change management aspirations with respect to future consulting projects." (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"I have decided to continue in this new role. I really feel strengthened and want to keep doing this." (summary of interview report, consultant 6)

Coaching process

In terms of Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018), the consultants did not mention any factors affecting coaching outcomes which I could *primarily* identify as: the use of personality assessment tools; use of influence tactics; language and communication (factors concerning the intervention); integration of coaching to leadership development; size and type of organization/industry (factors concerning the organization); coachee's personal attributes; coachees expectations of outcomes; job rank (factors concerning

the coachee); stakeholder alignment and collaboration; coachee's and coach's gender (factors concerning the relationship among coaching stakeholders).

The first group of factors affecting the coaching outcomes that I present center on <u>the intervention</u>.

- With respect to the *coaching model*, the coachees experienced my approach as having an open format, and a new, natural and refreshing way of coaching. The tailor-made or open format was sometimes experienced as challenging, mostly in a positive way. One coachee was also critical about this (I elaborate on this below, in the fourth category group 'relationship among coaching stakeholders,' because I primarily identified this as a difference in expectations).

"In the beginning, I had to get used to this one-on-one attention [different from earlier group work experience]. *Also, the coach didn't have all kinds of questions prepared, he was really available for me. This difference was good, because I was not really used to talking about myself."* (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"I knew this coaching was related to his research project, so I was really surprised about the room I experienced. I anticipated a pre-structured format with question-naires and the like. The way we started felt really natural."
(summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"In the beginning, I wasn't sure what I had got into. Would we have conversations, or would he merely listen, like a psychologist? […] To me, this journey was a refreshing way of having a conversation with someone. This was a new approach to coaching for me. There was no preformatted plan, but looking back I see that we took our steps. After a few sessions, I realized that my initial coaching question was very normative."
(summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"In our first session, the coach said that he didn't have a preformatted plan, we would 'go with the flow.' I thought that was good because we would address my needs. But on the other hand, this felt weird. What was expected of me? What was I supposed to do? Would I say the right things?" (summary of interview report, consultant 12)

- Some coachees explicitly mentioned the *occurrence of critical moments* in their jour-ney. These moments were critical because key realizations or development points emerged.

"I have really been moved personally. We went back to growing up; my childhood; and family relationships. There was a lot to talk about, sometimes emotional topics.

This took energy, but also generated two interesting realizations: about myself as a person and as a professional; and how my relationship with my father has improved, influenced by the coaching."   (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"When the coach talked about how he uses his experience of the conversation in the coaching to intervene, he shared how he experienced me as raising the bar for both of us. At first, I didn't recognize that, but then I realized that I get this feedback more often. We dove into that unintended effect, which challenged me."
                                                              (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

- In the *intervention focus and implementation* category, the tailor-made supporting 'homework assignments' was central.

"We talked about the fact that I wasn't sure about what some project stakeholders wanted from my consulting role. The coach offered some concrete suggestions to look at together. Then we co-created my 'homework assignment' about talking openly to my client."   (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"I got small homework assignments such as summarizing sessions, and noting what moved me. This forced me (in a good way) to reflect, which I really liked."
                                                              (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"The homework assignments supported me in 'monitoring' myself."
                                                              (summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"As a homework assignment, he asked me to reflect on meaningful situations about my family. He also gave me some literature about it. Without this, I wouldn't have reflected as I did."   (summary of interview report, consultant 9)

- The *coaching setting, duration and means* category importantly focused on changing to online coaching, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The common thread in this was that online coaching was experienced as (surprisingly) effective. Having met face-to-face, before switching to online, was mentioned as contributing to online coaching effectiveness. However, one consultant who had only experienced online coaching said that she still felt mutual trust. Also, to some, online coaching had some specific advantages compared to face-to-face coaching, such as working from home which offered some comfort. Some of the reported disadvantages of online coaching include bad internet connections, and difficulties in sensing how someone is doing. In one case, the coaching question itself became less pressing, as working online in general resulted in a decline in the experienced struggles. Another theme was the

coaching duration itself and how we decided on ending the coaching. Rounding up was sometimes initiated by the coachee and sometimes by me, but always in collaboration. Regarding one specific coachee, the duration was limited due to leaving the management consulting firm. This coachee mentioned the topics that we would have addressed if we had continued (personal and professional 'me;' and looking at how the consultant's personal history contributed to that).

"It was nice that we had met face-to-face twice, before switching to online coaching. This way, I had an image of him [*the coach*]*. Surprisingly, the online sessions turned out fine, also because everything went online that time […] When I changed projects, we paused the coaching for a while. I wanted to experience doing things in the new client organization* [before deciding about finishing the coaching or not]*. In the following session it felt right to finish and 'just do it.'"*
                                            (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"First, we paused before going online, hoping to continue face-to-face soon. When we did change to online coaching, I had already gained experience in working online so it was fine. The only thing was the bad internet connection from time to time. However, this didn't hinder me in talking openly or sharing things […] For now, it's good to have finished. I think it's good that the coach said that we had to come to an end and to take the time for myself."   (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"In most cases, there is not much difference between face-to-face and online meetings. Especially in the work context. Sometimes, online even has advantages: you're in your own home which often works comfortably […] In July the coach suggested to use the next session to see where we stood with the journey. That felt natural. I think we both sensed that we were coming to an end, which was fine."
                                            (summary of interview report, consultant 4)

"The effect of COVID-19 on the coaching was limited. Online is not ideal because it's more difficult to sense how someone is doing. But we had met face-to-face before, which gave me trust."   (summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"We've had around six sessions. Not really much, we did talk about that. We had been pretty concrete about my private and professional life. But things changed because of COVID-19. The things that first bothered me, didn't occur anymore [context change: working online]*. This made our sessions less useful."*
                                            (summary of interview report, consultant 9)

"In total, we've had 12 sessions, also after the summer break. We met a few times face-to-face before the lockdown [COVID-19]. *At first, I disliked working online but then I realized that it's not impossible. It's not optimal, but it worked, like 90% was good. When we changed to online coaching, I first questioned what would remain of such a journey, but this turned out fine."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 11)

The second group of factors affecting coaching outcomes focuses on <u>the organization.</u>

- The Coachees' responses which I identified as signs of *organizational support,* indicate a consultant's positive development, as experienced and articulated by other organizational members. Examples include both spontaneous feedback from co-workers or consulting firm partners, and more formal feedback in the yearly performance review.

"Of course, my mentor follows me closely, so that's not really objective feedback. But around my seventh coach session, I had a conversation with one of the firm partners with whom I hadn't spoken for some time. He told me that he experienced me as milder and more present. A co-worker also told me that she was more at ease when she's in my company." (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"In last year's performance review [pre coaching], *they said that my further development should be in the area of communication and relating. This year* [post coaching] *they recognized the progress I have made in this area."*

(summary of interview report, consultant 11)

- A factor in the *organizational culture* category is that the coachees experienced a culture of stimulating development, for example through investing in training.

"As Junior Consultants, we have had a lot of training, for example in soft skills. Also, at Consultant level, we have training. I valued the offered personal development possibilities." (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"Our young professional program also offers many possibilities for development."

(summary of interview report, consultant 13)

The third group of factors affecting coaching outcomes focuses on <u>the coachee.</u>

- Many coachees made comments which I identified as *making sense of the intervention*. Some comments centered on their coaching question in relation to the effectivity of the coaching. According to one coachee, the coaching was very generative even though there was no pressing coaching question in the beginning. Another coachee

said quite the opposite, and mentioned that this coaching requires some urgency or otherwise getting stuck. Another coachee mentioned that the original coaching question transformed along the way. Other comments addressed what happened in the coaching process, and why this was important. For example: looking at patterns and their origins together; talking about the interconnectedness of emerging issues; the value of talking to someone about personal improvement; and that the coaching was both hard work and also generated room. One other comment reflected the experienced difference between having an external coach versus internal mentoring.

"I didn't have a pressing issue [at first], *still a lot came up. Even when you feel that you don't really need it, coaching can still offer so much."*
(summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"If I had to pay for the coaching myself, I may have questioned the utility of our sessions without a pressing coaching question. Normally, there should be some urgency, some getting stuck in something. In this case, the coach's offer came through the firm…"   (summary of interview report, consultant 4)

"The more formal coaching question I had when we started transformed into looking into the 'mess' I sometimes experience in my thinking and feeling. Talking to the coach helped me to make sense of that."
(summary of interview report, consultant 13)

"I wanted more insights into the way I position myself and how it influences the effectiveness of my actions. I had many self judgements about this. The coach said that there is probably a reason why I act the way I do. Then we almost psychoanalytically looked into that, which removed my own judgements."
(summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"I've really got new, complementing, perspectives through this journey. I couldn't have done this by myself, even though I'm always busy with improving myself personally. For example, when the coach suggested a book, I really recognized myself in this when reading it."   (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"We've looked at patterns and mechanisms which developed when growing up, as a kind of a survival strategy. The coach and I talked about that explicitly, and we used letter-writing, addressed to my parents, to create more room in that."
(summary of interview report, consultant 11)

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"I experienced the coaching as hard work. But I have never had coaching before, so I can't compare. The coaching added something, it's difficult to describe what exactly. We looked at me, both personally and professionally. […] It has been pretty intensive. The coaching put me to work, I started to live things through. […] Although it has been intense, it has also generated room. Sharing generates room, 'just saying it quick-and-dirty' generates room."   (summary of interview report, consultant 12)

"For such an individual journey with an external coach, the entry threshold is very low. It is different from team learning or internal coaching by a mentor. A mentor also evaluates."   (summary of interview report, consultant 13)

- Many comments were made about the consultant's *motivation to be coached pre-, during and post-coaching*. Pre-coaching motivation themes include acknowledging the importance of working relations; already experiencing the need for or interest in coaching and (in some cases) looking for a coach at that time; and being motivated to develop in general and seeing my offer as an opportunity. One coachee mentioned experiencing difficulties in prioritizing coaching in his schedule, which might have been related to a somewhat lower early coaching motivation. Comments that indicated motivation during the coaching focused on: extending the initial coaching question; having started putting to practice what they had learned; and including coaching insights in conversations with their mentor. Post- coaching motivation comments include putting to practice what they had learned; expressing they wanted to continue developing; and expressing an interest in a coaching follow-up.

"Working relations are very important in my job, this is why I wanted to participate when this opportunity came around. I enjoy developing myself and was curious about what this journey would yield."
(summary of interview report, consultant 4)

"I asked the coach if I could participate because interacting with both internal and external stakeholders is important in my new role in the firm."
(summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"I was already looking into my need for coaching. During that search, the coach's offer came along. He asked me to send him a letter to introduce myself, give some background information and express my coaching question."
(summary of interview report, consultant 9)

"Prior to the coaching, I had become more aware of the ways I acted, and I noticed that I was bothered by the way I did things. I knew I wanted change, and talking to

the coach also made it clear why I wanted change. [...] I looked at this offer as an opportunity. I wanted to get something out of this, which I did."
(summary of interview report, consultant 12)

"It took some time to get the coaching going. Because of my schedule, I had to cancel some sessions."   (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

"We have talked about a lot, for almost a year. I liked the fact that personal and professional are so connected. And that we addressed some career questions too (although that wasn't really the intended focus). We didn't go super deep into that, but what we talked about was valuable. Now I have started to put these insights into practice too."   (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"We had the right number of sessions. Multiple perspectives were combined, as I have brought my coaching insights to the conversations I have with my mentor. This co-incided nicely. This is all connected to how I continue developing as a person. I have experienced this as a whole. I've always been active in conscious communication and will continue that."   (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"I sent the coach my written evaluation in the 'hero's journey format' and he will send the survey to me and to some others around me. We will probably be in touch. The coach asked me if he could approach me for a follow-up on this coaching. I'm really open to that."   (summary of interview report, consultant 9)

"I'm always looking for ways to improve, and I want to continue what I've been work-ing on with the coach. In the meantime, I've started another program. [...] the coach and I have already evaluated our sessions. I'm writing my final reflection soon and we agreed to have a follow-up in December, to prevent my learnings from slipping away."   (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

"I think it's never really finished [personal development]. *I'm more connected to my feelings and intuition, and share that. Right now, I experience more peace of mind and I'll see how things develop."*   (summary of interview report, consultant 13)

The fourth group of factors affecting coaching outcomes focuses on <u>the coach.</u>
* With respect to the *coach's background*, a coachee mentioned that my specific affin-ity with organizations was a benefit to the coaching.

"The benefit of this coaching is that the coach has affinity and experience with or-ganizational issues. That is different from 'just coaching'. I could talk to him about a specific case, which was good."   (summary of interview report, consultant 4)

• Many coachees commented on the *coach's behavior, skills, and quality of practice*. These comments focused on the way I positioned myself in the conversation, for example: helping in a non-coercive way; being honest; refraining from judging; showing confidence in the process; making a relaxed impression; not acting biased or looking for specific things; and leaving ownership with the management consul-tant. Other comments were about things I had said or did, for example: the room I offered to influence the process; asking helping questions; listening well; offering summaries; reflecting on previous sessions together; helping to create peace of mind around issues; offering tough feedback in a pleasant way; offering practical tools [tailor-made] and using the literature, helping to keep the conversation going; and offering personal examples.

"When I wasn't sure what to say, the coach would offer something useful from the literature or he would offer a personal example from his own experience. This helped to continue our conversation."   (summary of interview report, consultant 2)

"To me, it was very special to experience so much room. I shared a lot and the coach asked many questions about what I had spoken about. So, it was never difficult to structure our sessions, they had a natural flow. In the beginning of each session, we looked back at the previous one to check if something needed attention."
                              (summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"I liked my collaboration with the coach. He has helped me in a very non-coercive way. I think that's pretty good. The coach listened very well and offered good sum-maries."   (summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"I think I felt very comfortable with the coach because he was so honest in our first session. I got pretty tough feedback from him, but in a pleasant manner. Back then, I thought 'at least someone who is honest'. Also, he doesn't judge. I haven't felt like I was being judged or evaluated. That felt free and pleasant."
                              (summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"Over the last few years, I've had several conversations with psychologists and coaches. I've experienced the coach's way of working and style as very pleasant. He nicely balanced conversation and practical things that I could do."
                              (summary of interview report, consultant 11)

"When I was struggling about what to say, the coach often said, 'the story is already there'. I found this difficult and remember thinking 'what do I need to say, I won't be of any use to him'. I liked that, when looking back, indeed the story was there already. I don't know how he did that. He made a relaxed impression, and didn't seem biased or looking for specific things […] I really made progress through the questions that the coach asked about the things I said. All this went very subtle. The confidence in the process that he showed made me feel confident too. When I was struggling to say things nicely, he would say 'why don't you say it quick-and-dirty'."

(summary of interview report, consultant 12)

"The coach offered practical tools which, on the day, served as useful mnemonic devices. I've learned to listen to my feelings more; checking where the unrest comes from; and what I could do differently […] What I find typical and pleasant about this coaching, is that the coach leaves the responsibility for questions and answers with me, in a pleasant, indirect manner. For example, by giving personal examples of his own, or by asking questions. I've never experienced that he already seemed to know how I should do things. He actually just wandered along for a while in my quest."

(summary of interview report, consultant 13)

The fifth group of factors affecting coaching outcomes focuses on <u>the relationship among coaching stakeholders</u>.

- A lot was said about the *coach-coachee relationship and fit*. Many of the coachees experienced safety and trust in our relationship, and a good fit. The coaching relationship with me as an external coach offered a different perspective compared to an internal coach. Furthermore, being open to an external coach made some feel freer.

"In the beginning, it felt weird to sit in a room with someone you don't know and bring all your fears and questions to the table. But the coach also shared many personal experiences, which built trust and made me realize that I'm not the only one with struggles. […] I experienced a personal fit."

(summary of interview report, consultant 3)

"This coach is an external coach, but does know my working context because he is also talking to other people in the firm. I shared a lot about how I experience working here. I wanted to participate in this journey because I could step out of the work setting and get a different perspective. Also being open to an external coach makes one feel freer (no influencing)."

(summary of interview report, consultant 6)

"He also reflected on what I had said. This made me trust him and open up."
(summary of interview report, consultant 7)

"There is nothing [about this evaluation] *that I haven't talked directly with the coach about, that needs attention now. I've always felt that I can address very well whatever I found or felt. I've said what I wanted to say."*
(summary of interview report, consultant 10)

"We only met online, but nevertheless there was mutual trust. I remember writing in my reflections that I experienced a click. I was amazed by how good this went in our conversations."
(summary of interview report, consultant 12)

- With respect to *clarity in roles and expectations*, one coachee mentioned that it took us some time to find a way that worked. This related to expectations about the coaching model (as noted earlier in this subsection) and how this translated in practicalities such as conversation focus and the planning of sessions. This also related to the absence of a clear coaching question in relation to coaching effectivity.

"It took us some time to find a way that worked for us, because this coaching offer was different from what I knew about coaching, and from what I wanted. This coach is used to working with clear coaching questions, including a personal approach and he proposed one session every three weeks. I didn't have a specific coaching question, but wanted to talk about concrete client cases, and preferred to meet once a month. I wrote my initial letter to him, and included topics in my written reflection that I wanted to address in sessions. Which we did. In that sense each session was generative. After some time, the coach went along with my wish to go more into client cases, which turned out to be very helpful. [...] Maybe I expect a coach to question things, now I questioned things myself a lot [instead]. *Maybe I had different expectations. We did talk about it. I know that there were other consultants who did have clear coaching questions. Then the effectiveness is different. In my case, I missed direction, and I expect a coach to monitor that, and that I would go through some process. If a coach directs that well, you can really dive into that."*
(summary of interview report, consultant 4)

8.2.3 Qualitative Evaluation of Coaching Outcomes and Process: Discussion

In general, the following picture emerged from this interview study, about both the outcomes of the coaching journeys and the journeys themselves (process).

With respect to outcomes, all 10 coachees experienced the coaching as effective. For some, the coaching supported their development and helped them to reflect in general terms, while others mentioned specific issues it contributed to, such as dealing with a challenging client or with their own 'typical behavior.' Reportedly, the coachees' self-awareness had increased, and they had learned at a 'deeper level' (relating issues to past experiences in other contexts). Through reflecting on how their past experiences influence their actions as a consultant, they generated a different kind of resource to enhance their interactions with stakeholders than tricks or quick fixes. Their deeper learning translated into doing things differently on a practical level as well, for example improved interactions with others. In addition, the coaching generated an increased awareness about the ways they relate to work and their profession, and to their working environments.

When reflecting on the process, nearly all the interviewed coachees valued the personal, open, and tailor-made approach of the coaching journey and the supporting home-work assignments. Switching from face-to-face to online coaching (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), went (surprisingly) well. Spontaneous and more formal feedback from other members of their own management consulting firm indicated organizational support for this coaching. In general, the coachees made good sense of the intervention and the coaching activities in relation to their coaching question. Interestingly, they expressed different views about the need to have a clear or pressing coaching question, for the coaching to be effective. Being coached by an external coach was considered to be an advantage compared to internal coaching (by their mentor), because of the smaller risk of being influenced in an undesirable way, or being evaluated. In addition, the external coach was somewhat familiar with their organizational context, which contributed to the perceived quality of the conversations. The coachees expressed a clear motivation for participating in the coaching and for developing in general. The coach's affinity with consulting and organizational matters was valued. Furthermore, the non-judging, confident and collaborative approach was valued, along with communication specifics (offering room, listening, reflecting together and offering honest feedback, and personal examples) and the offering of practical tools to put learnings into practice. The need for clear contracting was underscored as important in managing roles and expectations.

8.3 Interviewer's Reflections on the Coach's Way of Working

In the conversation I had with the interviewer, she distinguished two key factors in my way of working as a coach (Hanke Drop, personal communication, 14 January 2021). First, *my attitude, or the way I positioned myself*. In this area, she mentioned the following:
- Connecting with the other, being attuned to what the other person needs;

- Being accepting, not judging, which contributes to a feeling of safety;
- Being an equal conversational partner and, as such, share my own experiences, which was experienced as 'I'm not alone in this';
- Including struggles when growing up through a safe way of inquiring collaboratively into past experiences, without asking too directly or knowing upfront what 'the solution' was;
- To be a living example of other ways of how one could be, resulting in the co-creation of alternative ways to act (as opposed to drawing from blue-prints or pre-fabricated solutions or tricks);
- Combining a positive curiosity and interest about the other, while maintaining a relatively independent position. In her experience, I did not take over, or act as a savior for the coachees' troubles. On the contrary, the consultants had to act and be active themselves. This appeared to be a productive balance.

The second area in my typical way of working was *what I did: interventions, sensemaking, and the like*. In this area she mentioned:

- Being creative and pragmatic in suggesting alternative actions in their specific context, drawing on a broad repertoire. Attuning to what the other personally finds difficult in their consulting practice, and collaboratively looking at what a different way of acting could look like for them, which would fit their consulting practice. Personal, supportive mnemonics were also offered.
- Taking a different approach to development than they were used to from the consulting firm. While having a similar background (business), I offered them 'something different,' such as maybe work a bit 'deeper' and 'softer.' This 'offering of something different' appeared to be accepted because I knew their context somewhat and connected with that during the sessions. She referred to this as both 'attitude' and 'way of doing.' The interviewer considered the coachees' consulting practices as demanding and competitive. In a way, according to her, I challenged that and invited them to look into that.
- Transferring to online coaching (due to the COVID-19 pandemic), went well. We handled this ambivalent situation (being physically more apart, but also 'being in one's home'), in an experimental way: 'let's see how we can make this work.'
- Completing the coaching journeys was done in coordination with the consultants. There was no unexpected ending, or sudden detached rounding up. All the coachees said they had got something out of it. According to the interviewer, the consultants had not experienced this as 'just another journey,' but rather one they would remember or resonate for a relatively longer period in their lives.

8.4 Quantitative Evaluation with a Pre-post Survey Study into Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Style

As noted in section 8.1, in addition to the evaluation with the coachees noted in previous chapters, the coaching journeys were evaluated through interviews (section 8.2) and through a survey study. This quantitative pre-post study looks into the extent to which the offered coaching can be associated with (positive) developments in: 1) emotional intelligence; 2) leadership behavior; 3) the quality of relating; and 4) the level of work results. Surveys were completed by various types of respondents, at multiple measuring times. Analysis consisted of paired samples t-tests, and correlation and linear regression analyses. Several (positive) outcomes were reported consisting of a growth in the consultants' Emotional Intelligence, and Transformational, Transactional and Instrumental Leadership. Furthermore, a growth in satisfaction with both the internal and external stakeholder interaction was reported. The satisfaction with the work results resulting from stakeholder interaction increased (as reported by the management consultants) and decreased (as reported by their managers/co-workers). Positive associations were reported between the level of Transformational Leadership and satisfaction with the work results in both the client organizations and consulting firm after coaching; and between Transactional Leadership and satisfaction with the work results within the client organizations after coaching. Interestingly, a negative association was reported between the level of Instrumental Leadership and the satisfaction with the work results within both the client organizations and the consulting firm after coaching.

8.4.1 Quantitative Evaluation and Theoretical Foundations: Coaching Outcomes, Emotional Intelligence, and Leadership Style

Based on other studies, I expect that coaching will have a positive effect on the consultants' emotional intelligence (e.g., Grant, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005; Greif, 2007; Grant & Green, 2018) and leadership (e.g., MacKie, 2007; Carey, Philippon & Cummings, 2011; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Anthony, 2017). It can also be expected that the coachees' interactions with stakeholders, and the results of collaboration, will be improved through an improvement in emotional intelligence (e.g., Pastor, 2014; Petrovici & Dobrescu, 2018; Kotsou, Mikolajczak, Heeren, Grégoire & Leys, 2019) and leadership style (Avolio & Bass, 1999; Wang, Oh, Courtright & Colbert, 2011; Antonakis & House, 2014).

The expected relations between the variables are represented in the research model in Figure 4.

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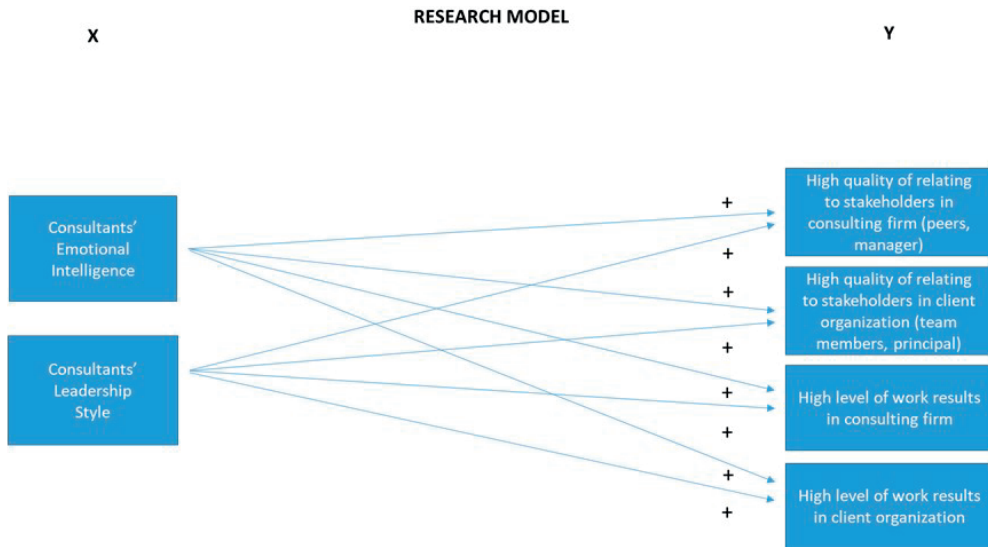
Figure 4: Research Model Quantitative Evaluation

Based on this research model, I have generated two sets of expectations. Set one concerns the expected development over time (from T1 to T2 and T3) of emotional intelligence and leadership (X variables), and of 'relating to stakeholders' and 'work results' (Y variables). Set two concerns the association of emotional intelligence and leadership (X variables) with 'relating to stakeholders' and 'work results' (Y variables) over time (from T1 to T2 and T3). In Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) terms of positive coaching outcomes, an improvement in the X variables may be categorized as 'personal development of the coachee,' and 'behavioral changes in relation to others' (coachee outcomes); whereas the Y variables can be categorized as positive organizational-level outcomes (organization outcomes).

Expectations set 1: Development over time of management consultants' levels of Emotional Intelligence, leadership styles, and outcomes 'relating to' and 'work results'.
1. Management consultants' post-coaching levels of Emotional Intelligence (T2 and T3) are expected to be higher compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1).
2. Management consultants' post-coaching leadership styles (T2 and T3) are expected to be at higher levels compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1).
3. The post-coaching quality of management consultants' relating to stakeholders in their consulting firm (peers, manager) (T2 and T3) is expected to be higher compared to their pre-coaching quality (T1).
4. The post-coaching quality of management consultants' relating to stakeholders in their client organization(s) (team members; principal) (T2 and T3) is expected to be higher compared to their pre-coaching quality (T1).

5.   Management consultants' post-coaching work results levels in their consulting firm (T2 and T3) are expected to be higher compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1).

6.   Management consultants' post-coaching work results levels in their client organization(s) (T2 and T3) are expected to be higher compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1).

Expectations set 2: Over time, increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence and leadership are associated with higher quality of 'relating to stakeholders' and 'work results'.

1.   Increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence at T1/T2 are associated with higher quality levels of relating to stakeholders in their consulting firm (peers; manager) at T3.

2.   Increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence at T1/T2 are associated with higher quality levels of relating to stakeholders in their client organization (team members; principal) at T3.

3.   Increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence at T1/T2 are associated with higher work results levels in their consulting firm at T3.

4.   Increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence at T1/T2 are associated with higher work results levels in their client organization at T3.

5.   Increased levels of management consultants' leadership styles at T1/T2 are associated with higher quality levels of relating to stakeholders in their consulting firm at T3.

6.   Increased levels of management consultants' leadership styles at T1/T2 are associated with higher quality levels of relating to stakeholders in their client organization at T3.

7.   Increased levels of management consultants' leadership styles at T1/T2 are associated with higher work results levels in their consulting firm at T3.

8.   Increased levels of management consultants' leadership styles at T1/T2 are associated with higher work results levels in their client organizations at T3.

8.4.2 Quantitative Evaluation: Methods and Procedures

To inquire into the extent of the expected effects, I designed a quantitative pre-post study using Wong and Law's (2002) Emotional Intelligence measure, as well as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1995) and the Instrumental Leadership measure (Antonakis & House, 2014). Wong and Law (2002) note that emotional awareness and emotional regulation are important factors affecting the quality of interactions. With respect to leadership, I expected that the participating consultants would enhance their leadership, which we measured using Transformational and Transactional Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995) and Instrumental Leadership (Antonakis & House, 2014). Both the emotional intelligence and leadership style measures are often used in leadership stud-

ies (e.g., Wilderom, Hur, Wiersma, Berg & Lee, 2015; Hoogeboom, 2019; Neffe, Wilderom & Lattuch, 2021). Lastly, I included overall outcome variables for the quality of relating with others and the quality of work results in various contexts to measure developments in coachees' interactions with their stakeholders, and in the collaboration results.

The survey included items originating from validated questionnaires measuring Emotional Intelligence (Wong & Law, 2002; Wilderom et al., 2015), the Transactional and Transformational Leadership scales from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 1995) and Instrumental Leadership (Antonakis & House, 2014). These validated questionnaire items were supplemented with personal items (e.g., level of education and years of experience in general, and as a management consultant) and overall outcome items (satisfaction with 'relating to' and satisfaction with 'work results'). The (unvalidated) personal and overall outcome items (as listed in appendix 11) were constructed by me, in coordination with my supervisors. In order to triangulate data sources, respondents from four different contexts were asked to participate: 1) Management Consultants (who participated as coachees); 2) Consulting Firm (e.g., the consultants' managers, co-workers); 3) Client Organization (e.g., the consultants' principals, project members); 4) Private Life (e.g., the consultants' partners, friends, relatives). I invited the respondents to fill out the survey prior to (or at the beginning of) the coaching journeys (T1); approximately one month (T2); and four months (T3) after the final coach session. This offered the opportunity to compare pre / post scores and see how the positive effects of the coaching would be sustained over (some) time. Table 4 shows this schematically, including the number of items per category. The questionnaires (incl. relevant information for respondents) can be found in appendix 11.

The survey was conducted through the online survey-tool Qualtrics, which enabled me to manage the process and collect the data in a practical manner. All the participating consultants were invited to fill out the questionnaires about themselves at T1, T2 and T3. I also asked them to generate respondents from the abovementioned contexts, who would be able and willing to fill out the questionnaires for them, multiple times. After the respondents had agreed to participate, I invited them to fill out the surveys through Qualtrics. The response rates per respondent group can be found in Table 5. The response was relatively disappointing given that the cooperation had been actively agreed upon by the participating management consultants and 'their' respondents. The low response rate is possibly related to the relatively extensive surveys. We aimed at a higher response rate because missing one response (at T1, T2 or T3) would result in not including the 'case' in the final analyses. This is why I tried to increase the response rate by sending a reminder to specifically those respondents who had not filled out a survey after some time.

Respondent group	T1	T2	T3
Management Consultants (coachees)	General questions (8), EI (16), MLQ (28*), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' and 'work results' (10)	EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' and 'work results' (10)	EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' and 'work results' (10)
Consulting Firm (e.g., consultants' managers, co-workers)	General questions (4), EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (8)	General questions (1), EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (8)	General questions (1), EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (8)
Client Organization (e.g., consultants' principals, project members)	General questions (4), EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (4)	General questions (1), EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (4)	General questions (1),EI (16), MLQ (28), IL (8), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (in consultancy firm and client organization) and 'work results' (4)
Private Life (e.g., consultants' partners, friends, relatives)	General questions (4), EI (16), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (2) *) transformational and transactional leadership scales only	General questions (1), EI (16), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (2)	General questions (1),EI (16), overall outcome questions 'relating to' (2)

Table 4: Survey Items

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Table 5: Response Rates per Respondent Group at Various Measuring Times

	MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS			CONSULTING FIRM			CLIENT ORGANIZATION			PRIVATE LIFE		
	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3	T1	T2	T3
Invited	12	12	12	21	21	20	8	7	6	21	21	21
Responses*	12	9	11	18	7	5	5	4	4	19	12	17
Response rate	100%	75%	91.7%	85.7%	33.3%	25%	62.5%	57.1%	66.7%	90.5%	57.1%	81%

*) Number of fully completed responses in Qualtrics.

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha Values of the Input Variables for the Respondent Groups: Management Consultants and Consulting Firm

Respondent group Variables	T1 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T2 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T3 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T1 CONSULTING FIRM	T2 CONSULTING FIRM	T3 CONSULTING FIRM
Input variables:						
Emotional Intelligence	0.76	0.67	0.82	0.86	0.91	0.91
Transformational Leadership	0.84	0.83	0.87	0.89	0.89	0.93
Transactional Leadership	0.75	0.81	0.85	0.77	0.87	0.96
Instrumental Leadership	0.84	0.63	0.86	0.55	0.91	0.97

Note: Given the unacceptable low Cronbach's alpha value for Instrumental Leadership of the respondent group Consulting Firm at T1, the reliability of the Instrumental Leadership scores for this particular respondent group is questionable for further analyses. However, because the T2 and T3 Cronbach's alpha values are very good, I will report the Instrumental Leadership results in the next analyses.

After the surveys were completed, we cleaned up the dataset and checked the consistency by checking the Cronbach's alpha values of all the respondent groups' central variables (see Table 6). All the Cronbach's alpha values were (nearly) acceptable (exceeding 0.70), except for the T1 Instrumental Leadership values of the respondent group Consulting firm (the coachees' managers or co-workers). Eliminating the indicated items did not result in an improvement. Notwithstanding this low T1 Cronbach's alpha, I will report and analyze the Instrumental Leadership scores for this respondent group because of the very good Cronbach's alpha values at T2 and T3. However, these specific outcomes should be interpreted with caution.

In the remainder of this section, I will only present the final analyses of respondent groups Management Consultants and Consulting Firm because, unfortunately, the number of respondents in the Client Organization was too small to perform meaningful regression analyses (see Table 5). This specific low number was related to the consultants not working on a project at one or more of the measuring times or switching clients during the coaching and/or measuring period. The total number of respondents from the Private Life group was acceptable, but we did not find any significant associations[101].

After assessing the Cronbach's alpha values, we performed factor analyses. Since the expected sub scales did not emerge in the factor analyses, we decided to combine the Emotional Intelligence sub scales into one total Emotional Intelligence scale. The same was done for the various leadership style sub scales, resulting in three total scales for Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, and Instrumental Leadership. After establishing the data consistency, we performed statistical procedures to test our expectations that originated from the research model (see, Figure 4). To test the development over time of the management consultants' levels of Emotional Intelligence, leadership styles, and outcomes 'relating to' and 'work results' (expectations set 1), we performed paired samples t-tests. We used correlation and linear regression analyses to test the extent to which, over time, increased levels of the management consultants' Emotional Intelligence and leadership styles are associated with higher quality of 'relating to stakeholders' and 'work results' (expectations set 2).

8.4.3 Quantitative Evaluation: Results and Analyses

Table 7 presents the mean scores of the input and output variables at the various measurement times.

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101 The results are not presented here, but are available upon request.

Table 7: Mean Input and Output Variable Scores for the Respondent Groups: Management Consultants (N = 9) and Consulting Firm (N = 5)

Respondent group Variables	T1 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T2 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T3 MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS	T1 CONSULTING FIRM	T2 CONSULTING FIRM	T3 CONSULTING FIRM
Input variables:						
Emotional Intelligence	5.05	5.42*	5.47*	5.14	5.46	5.56
Transformational Leadership	3.75	4.13*	4.11*	3.88	3.94	4.04*
Transactional Leadership	3.23	3.56	3.77*	3.63	3.59	3.63
Instrumental Leadership	3.36	3.89+	4.02+	3.67	3.88	4.06*
Output variables:						
Satisfaction with stakeholder interaction in client organizations (external)	4.89	5.44	5.89+	5.94	6.14	6.20+
Satisfaction with the results from stakeholder interaction in client organizations (external)	5.11	5.67+	5.78	5.94	5.71	5.60
Satisfaction with stakeholder interaction in consulting firm (internal)	5.11	5.44	5.56	6.00	5.86	6.20+
Satisfaction with results from stakeholder interaction in consulting firm (internal)	4.88	5.33*	5.50*	5.94	5.71	5.60+

Notes: + p ≤ 0.10, * p ≤ 0.05; All (marginally) significant changes in mean values reflect the difference from T1 to either T2 or T3. The Instrumental Leadership values of respondent group Consulting Firm should be interpreted with caution due to the low Cronbach's alpha at T1; Given the small sample sizes, I included the marginally significant results.

In general, Table *7* shows a positive development over time of all the *input variable* scores (emotional intelligence and leadership styles), as reported by both respondent groups. All the mean scores for T2 (1 month after coaching) as well as T3 (4 months after coaching) are higher than for T1 (prior to / at the start of coaching). Some variables show an upward trend, while others show statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$) or marginally significant ($p \leq 0.10$) growth (indicated by * or +).

Furthermore, all the mean scores of the *output variables* (satisfaction with internal and external stakeholder interaction; satisfaction with internal and external work results), as reported by the respondent group Management Consultants (coachees), show positive development over time (some significantly or marginally significantly). The scores of the same output variables from the respondent group Consulting Firm (consultant's manager/co-workers) show a more ambiguous picture. Their satisfaction with the consultants' interaction with the external stakeholders shows a growth from T1 to T2 and a marginally significant growth from T1 to T3. With respect to the consultants' interactions with internal stakeholders, the mean score decreases from T1 to T2 but shows a marginally significant growth from T1 to T3. The manager/co-workers' satisfaction with the internal and external work results from collaborating with the consultants shows a downward trend (with a marginally significant decrease in satisfaction with the internal results from T1 to T3).

Below, I address these results in more detail, as I reflect on the expectations formulated in section 8.4.1.

<u>Expectations Set 1: Development over time of management consultants' levels of Emotional Intelligence, leadership styles, and outcomes 'relating to' and 'work results'.</u>

1. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching levels of <u>Emotional Intelligence</u> at T2 (t = 2.36, $p \leq .05$) and at T3 (t = -2.38, $p \leq .05$), were significantly higher compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm showed an upward (though not significant) trend in management consultants' Emotional Intelligence from T1 to T2 (t = -0.87, n.s.) and from T1 to T3 (t = -0.99, n.s.). These findings support expectation 1.

2. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching leadership style levels at T2 (t = 2.76, $p \leq .05$) and at T3 (t = -2.71, $p \leq .05$), showed significant improvement with respect to <u>Transformational Leadership</u>, compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' Transformational Leadership at T2

were not significantly higher compared to those at T1 (t = -0.43, n.s.), but their T3 scores were significantly higher than those at T1 (t = -4.20, p ≤ .05). This signifies that the management consultants' managers/ co-workers reported an increase in the management consultants' Transformational Leadership after coaching.

According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching leadership style levels showed a significant improvement at T3 (t = -2.57, p ≤ .05) with respect to <u>Transactional Leadership</u>, compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' Transactional Leadership at T2 (t = 0.14, n.s.) and at T3 (t = -1.01, n.s.) remained relatively stable compared to those at T1.

According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching leadership style levels at T2 (t = 2.14, p ≤ .10) and at T3 (t = -2.17, p ≤ .10) showed marginally significant improvement with respect to <u>Instrumental Leadership</u>, compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' Instrumental Leadership showed an upward trend, including a statistically significant increase at T3 (t = -2.97, p ≤ .05).

In sum, expectation 2 was supported for all leadership styles (for the respondent group Management Consultants).

3. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching levels of quality of <u>relating to stakeholders in their consulting firm</u> (manager, co-workers) at T2 (t = 0.43, n.s.) and at T3 (t = 1.08, n.s.) showed a non-significant upward trend compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' quality of relating to stakeholders in their consulting firm showed, however, a statistically marginally significant increase at T3 (t = 3.00, p ≤ .10), after a non-significant decrease at T2 (t = -0.59, n.s.), compared to pre-coaching levels (T1). This partly supports expectation 3.

4. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching levels of quality of <u>relating to stakeholders in their client organization(s)</u> (principal, project members) at T3 (t = 2.12, p ≤ .10) showed a marginally significant upward trend compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' quality of relating to stakeholders in their client organization(s) were marginally significantly higher at T3 (t = -3.00, p ≤ .10) - but not at T2 (t = -0.54, n.s.) - compared to those at T1. This largely confirms expectation 4.

5. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching levels of <u>work results in their consulting firm</u> at T2 (t = -2.38, p ≤ .05) and at T3 (t = 2.38, p ≤ .05) were significantly higher compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' levels of work results in their consulting firm were (not significantly) lower at T2 compared to those at T1 (t = 0.26, n.s.). The T3 scores, as reported by the management consultants' managers/co-workers, were marginally significantly lower than those at T1 (t = -2.45, p ≤ .10). This partly supports expectation 5 for the respondent group Management Consultants.

6. According to the scores of the respondent group Management Consultants, management consultants' post-coaching levels of <u>work results in their client organization(s)</u> at T2 (t = 2.29, p ≤ .10) and at T3 (t= 1.79, n.s.) showed an upward trend, including a marginally significant increase at T2 compared to their pre-coaching levels (T1). The scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm on management consultants' levels of work results in their client organization(s) showed a (not significant) downward trend at T2 (t = -0.24, n.s.) and at T3 (t = -1.57, n.s.) compared to those at T1. This partly supports expectation 6 for the respondent group Management Consultants.

Table 8 shows the results of the regression analyses of the output variables at T3 (satisfaction with the results of collaboration in the client organizations and in the consulting firm) on the input variables at T1 (Emotional Intelligence and leadership styles), as reported by the respondent group Management Consultants. In general, the combination of the consultants' Emotional Intelligence and leadership styles explains 81% of the variance in satisfaction with the work results in the client organizations, and 60% of the variance in the satisfaction with work results in the consulting firm. The regression analyses resulted in a few (marginally) significant outcomes. For example, Transformational Leadership at T1 was significantly and positively associated with satisfaction with the results of collaboration in both the client organizations and the consulting firm at T3. Also, the Transactional Leadership at T1 was marginally significant and positively associated with satisfaction with the results of collaboration in the client organizations at T3. No other significant betas resulted from the analyses.

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Table 8: Regression Analyses of T3 Output Variables on T1 Input Variables for Respondent Group Management Consultants

	T3: Satisfaction with results of collaboration in client organizations	T3: Satisfaction with results of collaboration in consulting firm
T1:		
Emotional Intelligence	β = .44	β = .28
Transformational Leadership	β = 1.81*	β = 1.78*
Transactional Leadership	β = .90+	β = .65
Instrumental Leadership	β = -1.65*	β = -1.37+

Notes: + $p \leq 0.10$, * $p \leq 0.05$; The explained variance of the regression analyses for the client organization and the consulting firm are $R^2 = .81$, resp. $R^2 = .60$, which implies that Emotional Intelligence and Leadership together explain 81% of the variance in the satisfaction with the work results in the client organizations and 60% of this variance in the consulting firm; Given the small sample sizes, I included the marginally significant results.

Below, I address the results in more detail, as I reflect on Expectations Set 2 formulated in section 8.4.1.

Expectations Set 2: Over time, increased levels of management consultants' Emotional Intelligence and leadership are associated with higher quality of 'relating to stakeholders' and 'work results'.

Nearly all the expectations (1-4, and 6) with respect to the association between the T1/T2 input variables and the T3 output variables were not supported for the various respondent groups. However, three expectations (5, 7 and 8) were partly supported. Regression analyses showed that:

The T1 Transformational Leadership style was significantly and positively associated with satisfaction with the T3 results of <u>collaboration within the consulting firm</u> as reported by the respondent group Management Consultant (β = 1.78; $p \leq 0.05$). This partially (i.e., for Transformational Leadership) supports expectation 7 and implies that an increase in Transformational Leadership (at T1) leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of collaboration within the consulting firm after the coaching (at T3).

The T1 Transformational Leadership style was significantly and positively associated with satisfaction with the T3 results of <u>collaboration within the client organization</u> as reported by the respondent group Management Consultants (β = 1.81; $p \leq 0.05$). This partially (i.e., for Transformational Leadership) supports expectation 8 and implies that

an increase in Transformational Leadership (at T1) leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of collaboration within the client organization after the coaching (at T3).

The T1 Transactional Leadership style was marginally significantly and positively associated with the satisfaction with the T3 results of <u>collaboration within the client organization</u> as reported by the respondent group Management Consultants ($\beta = .90$; $p \leq 0.10$). This partially (i.e., for Transactional Leadership) supports expectation 8 and implies that an increase in Transactional Leadership (at T1) leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of collaboration within the client organization after the coaching (at T3).

There were no other significant regression analyses outcomes for this, or any other respondent group. However, as reported by the respondent group Management Consultants: the increase in Transformational Leadership at T2 showed a marginally significant association with satisfaction with the T3 results of <u>collaboration within the consulting firm</u> ($\beta = 0.81$; $p \leq 0.10$). This partially (i.e., for Transformational Leadership) supports expectation 5 and implies that an increase in Transformational Leadership (at T2) leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of collaboration within the consulting firm after coaching (at T3).

In addition, the regression analyses do support some associations between T1 input variables and several T3 output variables (Table 8) that were contrary to our expectations based on our research model with respect to Instrumental Leadership (Antonakis & House, 2014). The analyses showed that increased levels of Instrumental Leadership at T1 (data from the respondent group Management Consultants only) are associated with significantly lower satisfaction with the <u>work results in the client organization</u> and marginally significantly lower satisfaction with the <u>work results in the consulting firm</u> at T3. This implies that an increase in Instrumental Leadership (at T1) leads to a decrease in the satisfaction with the results of collaboration within both the client organization and the consulting firm after the coaching (at T3).

8.4.4 Quantitative Evaluation: Discussion

This study's results from the respondent group Management Consultants (coachees) showed a significant growth in management consultants' Emotional Intelligence, Transformational and Transactional Leadership following the coaching. The results also demonstrated a marginally significant growth in management consultants' Instrumental Leadership. According to these results, the consultants' leadership behaviors had been enriched with regard to various leadership styles. This is considered an expansion of their behavioral repertoire. As indicated by Table 7, the significant growth of both Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership continued growing significantly after the coaching had finished, or stabilized (i.e., 4 months after the final coaching ses-

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sion). Another observation is that the marginally significant growth of the Instrumental Leadership style kept on growing marginally significantly. These results suggest that the management consultants' learning processes did not stop after the coaching was finished. This is coherent with Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) notion that leadership development is a continuous process. According to these authors, evaluating the sustainability of a coaching intervention requires a longitudinal research design, as was invoked in this study. The results from a second respondent group, Consulting Firm, consisting of the coachees' managers and co-workers within the same consulting firm, showed an upward trend in the management consultants' Emotional Intelligence and a significant growth in both Transformational Leadership and Instrumental Leadership.

This study also showed that, after the coaching journey (phase one), the respondents in the group Management Consultants were significantly more satisfied with their interaction with both the internal stakeholders in their consulting firm, and the external stakeholders in their client organizations, and with the work results that originated from those interactions. Interestingly, the results from respondent group Consulting Firm (the coachees' managers and co-workers) showed a marginally significant increase in satisfaction with the consultant's internal and external interactions. However, their satisfaction with the management consultant's internal and external work results decreased (marginally significantly for internal work results). This can possibly be related to the idea that experimenting with different ways of acting may be appreciated by others, but that this learning comes with a price with respect to immediate results (as experienced by these others). We could hypothesize that investing in such learning and experimenting may pay out in better actual work results, noted by others, but only later than the three months that we included in our measurement. Another possible explanation for the difference in satisfaction with the internal and external work results between the respondent groups Management Consultants and Consulting Firm could be that the management consultants may have reframed their expectations of the results anticipating their learning process.

Furthermore, it appears that, at all the measuring times, the respondents from within the consulting firm (the coachees' managers/co-workers) showed a higher appreciation (mean score) of the management consultants' Emotional Intelligence compared to how the Management Consultant respondent group (the coachees) scored themselves. The same goes for both internal and external stakeholder interaction, and work results (except satisfaction with the work results in the client organization at T3). In other words: at all measuring times, the coachees' managers/co-workers in the consulting firm were more positive in their responses than the management consultants themselves. It might be that the management consultants in general tend to evaluate their performance more critically compared to their managers and co-workers.

In sum, the survey study only offers partial support for both Set 1 and Set 2 expectations. Specifically, the study supported that an increased level of Transformational Leadership leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of the collaboration within both the client organizations and the consulting firm after coaching. The results of the survey study also showed that an increased level of Transactional Leadership leads to an increase in satisfaction with the results of the collaboration within the client organizations after the coaching. Furthermore, and contrary to our expectations, an increased level of Instrumental Leadership was associated with a decrease in satisfaction with the results of collaboration within the client organization and the consulting firm after the coaching. However, when interpreting these results, the small sample sizes should be taken into account.

A practical implication of this study relates to the positive effect of coaching on Transformational Leadership and the (perceived) work results over time. Investing in Transformational Leadership, compared to investing in Transactional and Instrumental styles, might contribute (more) to improved results of collaboration. A further practical implication at the individual level relates to the context of the performance evaluation of the management consultants and long-term sustainability of the work conditions. In this light, it might be useful to address possible differences between an individual consultant's evaluation of (for example) their Emotional Intelligence; stakeholder interaction and work results, and the evaluations by their peers or managers.

This study's results have at least two theoretical implications. First, this study shows that leadership is associated with the quality of the interaction and results over time. With respect to Transformational and Transactional leadership, this is a positive association. Interestingly, Instrumental Leadership's association is negative, which is different from other studies (e.g., Rowold, 2014; Chammas & Hernandez, 2019). This may be typical for this sample type (management consultants) or for the particular outcome variables that were used in this study. Second, this study shows an increase in Emotional Intelligence and leadership after coaching. This result for management consultants is in line with other studies into the effects of coaching on Emotional Intelligence (e.g., Grant, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2005; Greif, 2007; Grant & Green, 2018) and leadership (e.g., MacKie, 2007; Carey, Philippon & Cummings, 2011; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Anthony, 2017).

The most important limitations of my study include the small sample sizes and the low response rates. Given the aim of the action research project to contribute to the interaction between management consultants and stakeholders in their client organizations, specifically the low number of complete responses from the client organizations (N = 4) was disappointing. Also, the time between T2 and T3 was relatively short (approximately 3 months). This may have resulted in missing lagged effects. As noted, due to the low

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Cronbach's alpha at T1, the Instrumental Leadership scores of the respondent group Consulting Firm should be interpreted with caution.

With respect to future research, I suggest the following. First, future studies could use larger sample sizes. As noted, due to the small sample sizes, I included marginally significant results. Larger sample sizes may possibly yield quantitative results that are more meaningful. Second, on leaving more time between T2 and T3, it could be interesting to include lagged effects and monitor the management consultants' development across a longer period of time. However, obtaining data from the same respondents in the client organizations would be (even more) difficult because of the temporal nature of the consultants' projects. Third, measuring other related variables, beyond Emotional Intelligence and leadership styles, may be interesting. For example, including variables focusing on the quality of life and work as experienced by coachees might be relevant for future studies.

8.5 Reflection

In this chapter, I first inquired more openly and qualitatively into the coaching outcomes, as articulated by the consultants. As noted, all 10 coachees experienced the coaching as contributing to their development in general, or to specific experienced issues. Reflecting on the influence of past experiences on their professional practices generated an increased self-awareness and concrete practical experimenting with doing things differently in a sustainable manner (as opposed to 'quick fixes'). Regarding the coaching process, the results from the interviews and the reflections of the interviewer suggest that the coaching approach was valued by the consultants. Addressing the roles and expectations when contracting is important. The advantage of external coaching over internal coaching relates to the idea of being influenced unwantedly or being evaluated by an internal coach. The coachee's strong motivation and my specific efforts in the coaching process contributed to the positive coaching outcomes. Examples of the latter include the way the I positioned myself as a coach (non-judging, confident, and collaborative); as well as the way I communicated (e.g., offering room, listening, reflecting together, offering honest feedback, and sharing personal examples of my own); while offering diverse practical tools or mnemonics to put their learnings into practice.

In this chapter, I also looked quantitatively into the extent to which the coaching may be related to developments in management consultants' Emotional Intelligence and leadership styles. I also looked at the extent to which these may be associated with developments in the quality of relating to others, and the work results that emerge from that. The results of this part of this PhD thesis study show that, based on the results from

the respondent group Management Consultants, their Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, and Transactional Leadership had grown significantly: shortly after completing the coaching journey and three months later. Their Instrumental Leadership style demonstrated marginally significant growth. The results from the respondent group Consulting Firm (consisting of the coachees' managers/co-workers) showed a growth in Emotional Intelligence, and a significant growth in Transformational Leadership and Instrumental Leadership among the coachees. With respect to the outcome variables, the results of the respondent group Management Consultants show that they were satisfied with both the quality of their way of relating to (internal and external) stakeholders and work results obtained from these collaborations. Interestingly, the results of the respondent group Consulting Firm show that they were also satisfied with the consultants' manner of relating to (internal and external) stakeholders. However, at the same time, these respondents were less satisfied with the outcomes of these collaborations. This could mean that experimenting with, and learning new ways of acting as a consultant comes at a price in the short term, which might have been anticipated by the consultants themselves. The results from the regression analyses show a significant and positive association between increased levels of Transformational Leadership and satisfaction with the results from collaboration with the stakeholders in both the client organization and the consulting firm. This association suggests that, in general, the coaching's significant contribution to enhanced Transformational Leadership among management consultants may be beneficial to the outcomes of their collaboration with stakeholders.

The results from both evaluations of the coaching outcomes suggest that the coaching journeys offered in phase one of this action research project contributed to a positive development of the management consultants with respect to communicating and collaborating with both internal and external stakeholders. Although this evaluation consisted of two separate parts, the results of the quantitative and qualitative part of the inquiry show some interesting parallels. For example: qualitatively reported gains in Athanasopoulou and Dopson's (2018) categories of personal management/ self-control (e.g., increased self-awareness; self-acceptance; and talking about oneself), and improved personal skills/abilities (e.g., expanded communication or behavioral repertoire; speaking one's mind; and connecting more often to, and sharing emotions), resonate with the quantitatively reported significant increase in Emotional Intelligence. Furthermore, the qualitatively reported gains in the categories of leadership skills (e.g., improved formal and informal leadership communication), and the quality of interactions and relationships (e.g., intentionally addressing team collaboration, involving others in their line of thinking and, the positive effects of experimenting with ways of communication) relate to the quantitatively reported upward trend (in part marginally significant) of satisfaction with the interaction with both the internal and external stake-

holders; and a significant increase in self-perceived Transformational Leadership. In addition to the gains in the work context, the qualitative evaluation also demonstrated an improved relationship quality in the coachees' private lives.

In this chapter, I have presented an evaluation of the coaching journey outcomes and process *apart from* the coaching process itself. As explained in the introduction of this chapter, this evaluation complements the evaluation that was performed as a *part of* the coaching process in chapter 5. This chapter concludes part II of this dissertation in which I have described the action research project. In the next part, I will articulate my contribution to theory and practice. This contribution (in chapter 10) follows a semi-systematic review of scholarly literature on the topic of this action research project (chapter 9).

PART III

CONTRIBUTION & REFLECTION

Locating the Action Research Project in the Scholarly Literature: A Semi-systematic Literature Review

[…] much to my surprise, the topic 'coaching of management consultants' […] appears to be an understudied area. However, and notwithstanding the rich variety in research interests, designs, and findings, […] I present the central themes for coaching which have been derived from this review's analyses […]. These seven themes, which may be considered as 'building blocks' of a coaching engagement, deserve deliberate attention, and may be crafted when co-constructing tailor-made development opportunities. (this chapter)

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a semi-systematic literature review (Snyder, 2019). To some, it may seem unusual to place a literature review near the end of a dissertation. However, in my view, this is appropriate in this action research dissertation. According to Coghlan and Shani (2018, 2021), action research typically starts with real organization issues, and is "simultaneously concerned with bringing about change in organizations, developing self-help competencies in organizational members and in adding to scientific knowledge" (Coghlan & Shani, 2018, p. 4; 2021, p. 2). Following its emergent, iterative character, the contribution of action research to the wider scientific community typically becomes clear when the project is approaching its end. This approach is fundamentally different from more traditional orientations to research, where empirical research follows a literature review. Such research usually starts with a systematic literature review, in which often one or more theory gaps are identified, through analyzing a systematically carved out set of papers. Subsequently, the researcher aims to contribute to theory development through (empirical) research. As a consequence of the particularities of action research (see also chapter 3), I started this literature review after I had generated a clear view of what the action research project would entail. The particular function of this literature review was to contribute to locating and articulating the actionable knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2018, 2021) which was developed in this action research project, by relating it to relevant scholarly literature. The current chapter describes the literature review itself. Following this, I will use its results in chapter 10 to articulate my particular contribution to scientific knowledge.

In November 2020, the data generation of the coaching journeys in the first phase of the action research project had been completed and the coaching follow-up (second phase) was being prepared to be carried out in spring 2021. By that time, I had a sufficient view of the scope of the whole project and its possible contributions to the scientific community. I started to prepare the semi-systematic literature review (Snyder, 2019) in project form, in which honors students of the Utrecht University of Applied Sciences could participate. Two undergraduate students in the department of Human Resource Management signed up for this as co-researchers. Aniek Ruijterlinde (AR), Maurits Marijnissen (MM), Dr. Josje Dikkers (JD), and Joost van Andel (JA) collaborated in systematically carving out a set of scholarly papers. In January 2022 (after a final rerun of the searches), JA and JD collaboratively performed the main analysis.

The aim of the semi-systematic literature review (Snyder, 2019) was to identify and analyze relevant academic knowledge about how personal coaching of management consultants may contribute to stakeholder interaction in the context of facilitating complex organizational change processes. I wanted to identify commonalities of the contributions by previous studies with this dissertation's topic; and suggest future research

possibilities. A semi-systematic review is typically used for broader research questions (compared to a systematic literature review); includes both quantitative and qualitative papers; and usually includes qualitative analyses (Snyder, 2019). Typical contributions of such reviews may be the highlighting of themes in the literature; offering a historical overview; identifying components of a theoretical concept; or adding to the research agenda. This is different from the typical systematic literature review which aims "to identify all empirical evidence that fits the pre-specified inclusion criteria to answer a particular research question[102] or hypothesis" (Snyder, 2019, p. 334) and often uses statistical methods. According to Snyder (2019), both systematic and semi-systematic reviews (may) have a systematic search strategy.

To locate the action research study within the recent scholarly literature, this review addresses the central research question: How can personal coaching of management consultants contribute to stakeholder interactions in the context of facilitating complex organizational change? After describing the methods used to carve out and analyze the literature, I will present the results. At the end of this chapter, I will discuss these results.

9.2 Method

We selected 21 papers based on the five iterative stages of systematically reviewing literature described by Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller and Wilderom (2013). These stages include: define, search, select, analyze, and synthesize. The analysis consisted of elements of textual narrative synthesis (Xiao & Watson, 2019; Lucas, Baird, Arai, Law & Roberts, 2007) and thematic synthesis (Xiao & Watson, 2019; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Lucas et al., 2007).

Define
The define phase focused on determining the scope of the review; on deciding which search terms and criteria would be used for including and excluding papers; and on determining appropriate databases. During an interactive process of various exploratory searches and multiple discussions, we (JA, AR, MM, and JD) decided on the search terms that would yield papers that, potentially, would contribute to the purpose of this review. Initially, we decided to include all the key concepts from the research question as search terms: 'personal coaching', 'consultants', 'organizational change', and 'stakeholder interaction,' including synonyms (and related words / equivalent subjects). This step was revisited during the Search phase in which we reformulated the search terms and criteria. Given the low number of results based on this narrow initial search, we decided

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102 Traditionally, systematic reviews are applied in fields of research where positivist and quantitative approaches are dominant (Jesson & Lacey, 2012). They typically examine the effectiveness of healthcare interventions and, more recently, wider issues such as how and why an intervention works; its feasibility; appropriacy; and cost effectiveness. The purpose of these systematic reviews is to synthesize research findings from a large number of different studies on a particular intervention or issue, which potentially can be used to inform policy and practice (Ridley, 2012).

to leave out the search terms related to stakeholder interaction (e.g., stakeholder inter-action, stakeholder communication, participant interaction) to widen the scope. In this phase, we did not want to exclude any possibly relevant studies due to a different or too specific use of keywords. Therefore, we agreed on excluding irrelevant papers after screening the abstracts. As explained in the select section below, we used Figure 5 to decide on the relevance of each paper.

During the define phase, we selected Academic Search Complete, PsycINFO, Science Direct, Web of Science, and Scopus as electronic databases to perform the searches by means of boolean phrases, including the terms 'personal coaching', 'consultants', and 'organizational change' (including synonyms). In addition, we used the following inclusion criteria:

- publication dates: 2000 to date (to include only relatively recent publications);
- document types: peer reviewed articles (both empirical and conceptual papers; and other reviews); approved doctoral dissertations;
- language: English and Dutch/Flemish[103];
- we selected the search options 'related words' and 'equivalent subjects' to expand the searches (as far as the specific electronic database allowed us to).

Search

In April 2021, we performed the 'final' searches in the selected electronic databases, using the search strings based on the search terms and criteria as decided on in the define phase. We searched articles which included the search terms in the title, abstract, or keywords. The exact search strings can be found in appendix 12. Please note that the search string used in Science Direct was split up due to the limited number of boolean operators per search. In June 2021 and January 2022, we did a rerun in order to not miss new publications and to update the search terms to our latest insights. No single study completely addressed the topic (i.e., how personal coaching of management consultants can contribute to stakeholder interactions in the context of facilitating complex organizational change processes). However, the studies by Kilburg (2002) and Cilliers (2018) came close to the review's topic. We checked whether applying forward and backward citation checks (e.g., Keijser, Smits, Penterman & Wilderom, 2016; Keijser, Poorthuis, Tweedie & Wilderom, 2017), would be useful, by looking at the papers by Kilburg (2002) and Cilliers (2018). We did not identify any new papers that met the inclusion criteria and approached our research topic more directly than the eligible papers. We concluded that such an extended search would not generate more relevant studies. Before screening the identified papers in the selection phase, we removed duplicates.

Select

Three researchers (JA, AR, MM) independently screened the titles, abstracts, and key-words to collaboratively decide on the exclusion of studies during multiple meetings. The

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103 However, exploratory searches with the Dutch translated search terms did not yield any results.

100 abstracts of unique papers were screened and discussed by the researchers. Here, we asked ourselves two fundamental questions about each paper. First, what do we consider is the central contribution of this article? Second, do we expect this central contribution to be possibly relevant for the purpose of this review? Studies that were not expected to contribute to the purpose of our review were excluded. These papers addressed different topics within relevant disciplines, or were even related to irrelevant disciplines (e.g., healthcare (30 papers); education (4 papers); child welfare (4 papers); abusive supervisory relationships (3 papers); farming (2 papers); and construction projects (2 papers)).

After excluding the irrelevant papers based on the abstract screening (and sometimes 'scanning' the whole paper), we focused on assessing the eligibility of the remaining articles for analysis. With respect to the papers obtained from the April 2021 run, the three researchers independently assessed the remaining papers. Then we decided collaboratively which papers should be included for analysis. During this meeting, we used Figure 5 to position the contribution of individual papers and decided on their relevance to our research question. Based on their individual preparations, the researchers agreed on the eligibility of most papers. Some differences in determining the contribution and relevance of some papers were solved easily after short discussions. In only a few cases did JA make an ultimate decision based on the wider context of the review (the action research project, and related knowledge and experience). With respect to one paper, there was little doubt when deciding on its relevance. Gan and Chong (2015) studied the association between the coaching relationship and executive coaching effectiveness. However, their study specifically focuses on the differences between Malaysian and Western cultures, with respect to the characteristics of the coaching relationship in the context of coaching Malaysian executives. We considered this study as not relevant for this particular review.

Ultimately, after a full text assessment, we selected a final set of 21 papers eligible for analysis.
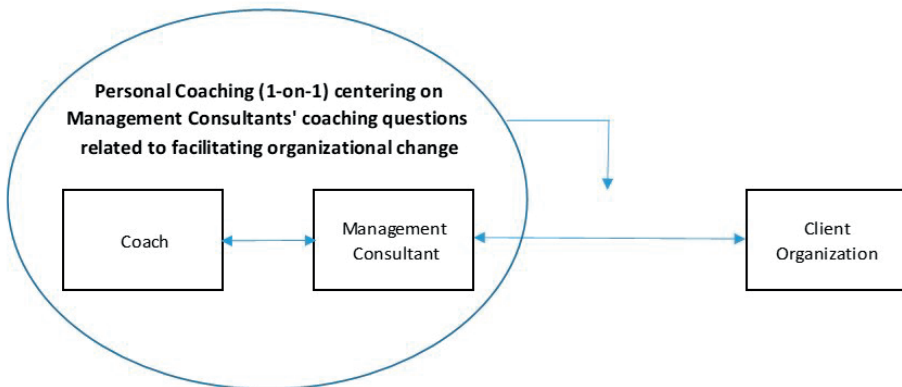

Figure 5: Presumed Associations between the Central Concepts Included in the Review

Analyze

Given the variety within the set of selected papers, and the fact that not a single paper addressed our topic in a way that directly related to our research question, JA, AR, and MM held group discussions to explore how to generatively analyze the selected papers. This is how we 'familiarized ourselves with the data', the first phase of doing thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2012), with the aim to "become intimately familiar with your data set's content and to begin to notice things that might be relevant to your research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 61). These group discussions were guided by the following five questions:

1. What were the authors' chief concerns when writing this article? (based on Charmaz (2008, in: Kenny & Fourie, 2015). This question addressed the relevance of the paper in its own terms.

2. What do the authors offer for dealing with these concerns? (based on Charmaz (2008, in: Kenny & Fourie, 2015). This question addressed the contribution of this paper, again in its own terms.

3. What, in the view of the authors, are the notable implications of their contributions? Both for science and practice. This question was considered relevant given the purpose of the review.

4. Which possibilities for future research do the authors suggest? Again, this was considered relevant given the review's purpose.

5. How can we relate these authors' offerings to our research question? With this question, we 'took a peek beyond the individual papers' and addressed the various contributions with respect to our review purpose.

Based on the outcomes of the group discussions, JA and JD concluded that a useful way to continue the analysis would be through a 'hybrid review' (Xiao & Watson, 2019), including elements of textual narrative synthesis to describe the scope of existing research (Xiao & Watson, 2019; Lucas et al., 2007) and thematic synthesis to identify commonalities between the various papers (Xiao & Watson, 2019; Thomas & Harden, 2008; Lucas et al., 2007).

To describe the scope of the included papers, we used a standard format to extract data on various characteristics of the studies: year of publication, author(s), title, journal, paper type (conceptual, empirical), study aims, study design (e.g., review of literature, case study, survey, interview/coach conversations, field notes), study setting and country, overall argument (key findings/conclusions/key learnings), and key concepts. Using the extracted data, we then organized the studies into more homogenous groups, based on study design, paper type, and journal, to compare similarities and differences across the 21 papers.

Synthesize

In a two-hour workshop, JA and JD looked for commonalities between the various studies in a way that was relevant for this review's purpose (i.e., relating the action research project to the scholarly literature) and its research question (how can personal coaching of management consultants contribute to stakeholder interactions in the context of facilitating complex organizational change?). As Braun and Clarke (2006, 2012) note, searching for themes is an active process, they do not simply emerge from the data. In other words: researchers construct themes rather than discover them. According to the authors, a theme captures something important about the data (in this review: the authors' findings) in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the dataset. In order to construct themes, we positioned the key concepts of each paper identified during the previously described data extraction, while keeping Figure 5 in mind; and the outcomes of the earlier described group discussions about each paper. Subsequently, we extracted relevant contributions from each paper related to the key concepts on a more detailed level. In an iterative process, we identified descriptive themes (close to the individual papers) and created analytical themes that went beyond the individual papers and related to our research question (Lucas et al., 2007; Thomas & Harden, 2008). Given the diversity in study topics, paper types and research designs, the synthesis remained rather abstract as we found very little accumulation of results among the 21 papers.

9.3 Results

Our initial search resulted in the abstract screening of 100 unique papers, of which 38 were assessed for eligibility by reading the full text. In total, 21 papers were included for analysis (see Figure 6).

Results of textual narrative analysis

In Table 9, I present an overview of the included papers and their characteristics, identified when performing the textual narrative analysis. This table illustrates the great diversity in the studies' aims; designs and settings; and their contributions. In general terms, the papers centered on executive coaching (16); group work facilitation in organizations (3); and related topics[104] (2). The publication dates ranged from 2001 to 2020. Ten papers were conceptual, and 11 were empirical in nature. With regard to research design, 10 papers reviewed literature (of which five included illustrative cases), seven performed case studies (employing various data collection methods); two used surveys; and two used semi-structured interviews. The majority (12) of the studies were carried out in the USA. Other papers were published by authors from the United Kingdom (3), Aus-

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104 These topics are Shadow consultation (Kilburg, 2002); and Supervision (Chidiac et al., 2018).
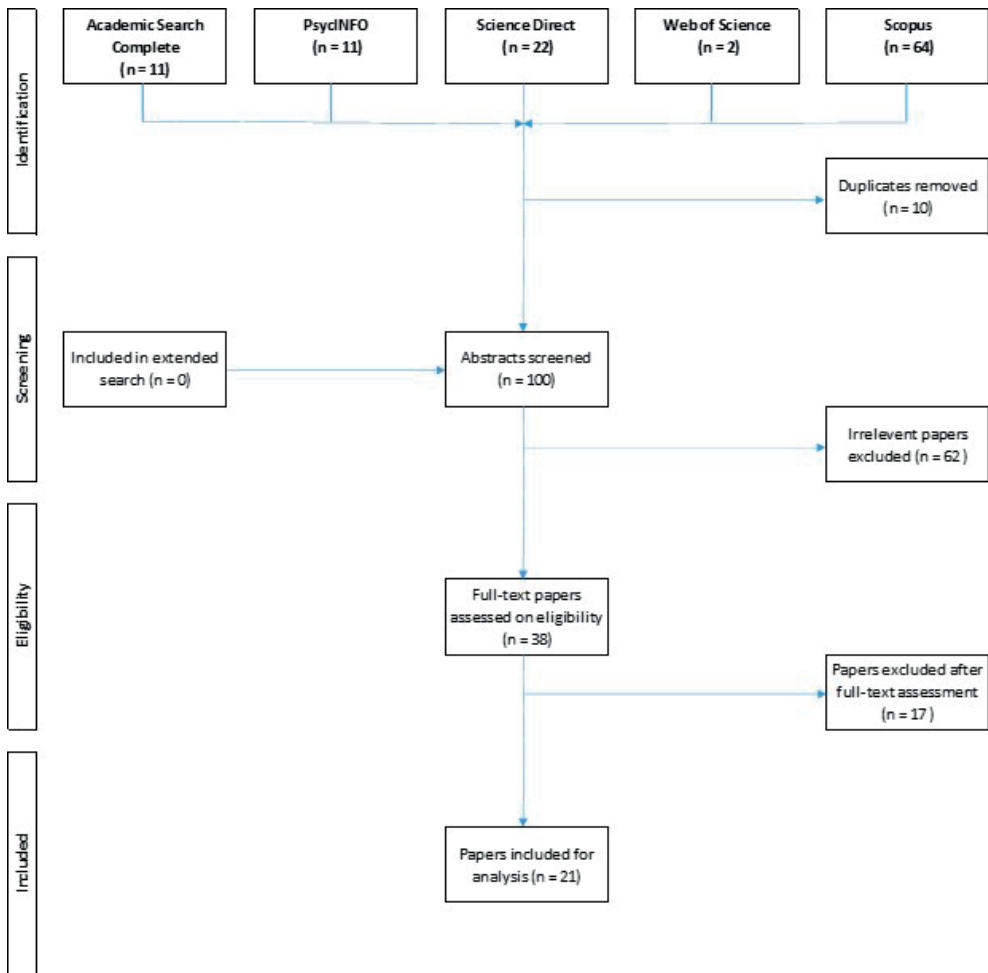
Figure 6: Flowchart of the Search and Select Process of Relevant Literature for Analysis

tralia/New Zealand (2), Belgium (1), Israel (1), the Netherlands (1), and South Africa (1). Seven papers were published in Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research; and two in Journal of Applied Behavioral Science. The other papers were published in different journals (e.g., Management Learning; Psychoanalytic Inquiry; and Coaching Psychologist). The key contributions of the individual papers[105], relevant in relation to our research question, are summarized in Table 9.

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105 For example, Kilburg (2002) offers a conceptual framework for shadow consultation including practical suggestions for fulfilling this role effectively. According to the author, shadow consultation can: contribute to an increase in consultant self-awareness, self-management, and self-confidence; help to prevent problems; and accelerate the learning curve of less experienced consultants, with an immediate impact on performance. Cilliers (2018) explores the experienced impact of systems psychodynamic leadership coaching amongst finance professionals, using a case study design in which professionals were offered a series of coaching sessions. According to this author, the coachees experienced the coaching as demanding, challenging, yet fulfilling. The systems psychodynamic approach added value to leadership effectiveness as it offered a safe and good-enough container to explore their own unconscious leadership behaviors; and to gain a significant level of understanding and awareness of their own anxiety and defensive behaviors in their interaction with followers.

Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review

(* C: Conceptual paper; E: Empirical paper)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Kilburg, 2001	Facilitating Intervention Adherence in Executive Coaching. A Model and Methods	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	C	This article offers a brief review of intervention adherence literature and presents potential components of an adherence protocol for executive coaches, along with major client and coach problems that contribute to nonadherence	Review of literature; illustrative cases
Kilburg, 2002	Shadow Consultation: A Reflective Approach for Preventing Practice Disasters	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	C	"This article provides a conceptual framework from which shadow consultation can be conducted and describes and discusses some typical goals, areas of expertise, the process of shadow sessions, methods that can be used, and some of the similarities and differences between shadow consultation and management and supervision" (abstract)	Review of literature; illustrative cases
Schnell, 2005	A Case Study of Executive Coaching as a Support Mechanism During Organizational Growth and Evolution	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	E	This case study offers lessons learned from a long term (5 year) executive coaching consultation, offered by an internal coach to a leadership pair, in an organizational growth and evolution context	Case Study (data collection: coaching conversations)

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
The paper addresses a deficit in the literature on intervention adherence or compliance in executive coaching USA	Description of 1) major client and coach problems contributing to nonadherence (e.g., insufficient agreement or goal clarity, lack of commitment and regression in the client or coach environment); and 2) components of an effective adherence protocol (e.g., clarity in coaching agreement, adherence awareness and client-specific adherence methods)	Intervention adherence in executive coaching
The paper indicates that shadow consultation is widely practiced in the field of organization development. However, there is little empirical, conceptual and practice literature available USA	Shadow consultation can: contribute to an increase in self-awareness, self-management and self-confidence of consultants; help to prevent problems; accelerate the learning curve of less experienced consultants, with an immediate impact on performance. The author offers a conceptual approach to shadow consultation including: frames for listening and attending in shadow consultation (client system, consultant client, shadow consultant); typical goals for shadow consultation (e.g., increase in the effectiveness of a consultant's behavioral repertoire, improvement in a consultant's psychological and social competencies, an increase in a consultant's ability to manage self and others); stages and flow of a shadow consultation session. Furthermore, areas of shadow consultants' expertise, coaching methods and differences between shadow consulting and supervision/ management are identified	Shadow consultation
This atypical* case study addresses a shadow consultation and coach process offered by the author, to the leader of the OD (Organiza-tional Development) department from a university who offered long-term executive coaching to a leadership pair in a large university USA *) atypical according to the author as the case does not follow typical assumptions about executive coaching: internal (vs external) coach; the client is a pair (vs individual); the organization was undergoing a phase shift from start-up to mature (vs either in start-up or mature)	"Lessons learned from this coaching experience include an understanding of (a) the advantages of using coaching as an adjunct to other forms of organizational consultation, (b) how to manage changes in contracting and intervention goals over time, (c) how to meet the challenges of coaching to a leadership pair, and (d) mechanisms for using coaching to support leadership succession" (abstract)	Regularity of meetings; Formal agreements and Goalsetting; (Dis) advantages of internal coaching; Family dynamics triggers, resulting from coaching leadership pairs vs. individual leaders; Organiza-tional growth and evolution as coaching contexts

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued***)**

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Wasylyshyn, 2005	The reluctant president	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	E	This case study describes how a data-driven, insight-oriented coaching methodology helped the CEO candidate accelerate his effectiveness; instill hope in the organization; and forge a more stable relationship with the CEO. This paper also highlights the importance of a) clinical skills; b) three coaching meta principles (traction, trust, and truth-telling); c) a role shift from coach to trusted advisor.	Case Study (data collection: 360-degree data gathering, coaching conversations)
Gray, 2006	Executive coaching: Towards a dynamic alliance of psychotherapy and transformative learning processes	Manage-ment Learning	C	"The purpose of this article is to examine the role of coaching in organizations, and especially how the use of psychological approaches informs the work of many coaching practitioners. The article also seeks to explore alternative approaches to coaching through adult learning theory, which sees the manager, less as a patient or client, and more, at least potentially, as a problem-solving professional practitioner" (p. 477)	Review of literature
Blattner and Bacigalupo, 2007	Using emotional intelligence to develop executive leadership and team and organizational development	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	E	"This case study explores how emotional intelligence (EI) was used to facilitate team and organizational cohesiveness" (abstract). "The case study outlines the process of the engagement and how two consultants collaborated together to offer their individual expertise and the effect the collaboration had on the outcome of the engagement" (p. 210)	Case Study (data collection: individual EI inventory incl. individual feedback, off-site team sessions)

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
Coaching CEO successor candidates is challenging and deeply nuanced in the best of circumstances. The stakes rise exponentially when the sitting CEO owns the company; resents having "anointed" an eventual successor; and has been phenomenally successful despite the bruising effects of his narcissism and toxic micromanagement USA	Various coaching tools were used to help the coachee meet his challenges. Next to obvious tools (e.g., coaching agenda; developmental history), creative tools were used (e.g., use of visual metaphors; and movie scenes on leadership). Most useful, however, were the three coaching process meta principles (traction, trust and truth telling); and four methodology factors (holistic approach, deep behavioral insight, involvement of top executives and sustained relationships).	Tools, Meta principles and Methodology factors for executive coaching
A lot of literature on coaching brings implicit assumptions that, if any theoretical model underpins the coaching practice, this is from a psychotherapeutic perspective. However, this is not a necessity. Alternative or parallel approaches may originate from an adult learning theory, particularly the transformative learning theory and the concept of critical reflection UK	The various roles of coaches as change agents include coaching for: skills; performance; development; and the executive's agenda. Coaching and therapy are closely related and share approaches such as MBTI (Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator); Freudian therapy; and 'alternative branches' such as person-centered therapy; gestalt; NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming); and CBT (Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy). Adult Learning theory, particularly Transformative Learning, offers a more direct learning and problem-solving focus to executive coaching. The Dynamic Coaching Model is proposed as a means to combine various approaches to the benefit of both clients and coaches.	Coaching roles; Psychothera-peutic theory informing executive coaching; Adult learning theory informing executive coaching; Dynamic coaching model
The case study uses EI competencies in relation to a CEO, senior leaders and (later) middle management of an international consulting firm which employed 150 people. The goal was to develop individual and team dynamics and to help foster a better organizational climate. An experienced executive coach and an OD professional collaboratively facilitated the process USA	The coaching and team building produced a significant shift in the organization. According to the CEO, success factors for leaders are 1) believing in the process; 2) patience; 3) awareness of goals; 4) willingness to learn and look through a different lens; 5) not giving up in case of resistance; and 6) accepting feedback. The facilitators were aware that their own group process was not different from what their clients had experienced. They provided each other feedback and shared their own group development process as a resource in their facilitation.	Leadership and group development; Emotional intelligence; Trust; Vulnerability

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Pedler and Abbott, 2008	Am I doing it right? Facilitating action learning for service improvement	Leadership in Health Services	E	"The purpose of this paper is to enquire into the role and skills of the action learning facilitator in the context of service improvement work in the UK's National Health Service (NHS)" (abstract). "Action learning is a maturing approach to management, leadership and organisational development, yet it has no single definition and varies considerably in practice. It is not a simple methodology with universal procedures, but an approach or discipline with core values and principles which are applied by various practitioners in differing ways in diverse situations" (p. 186)	Case Study (data collection: telephone interviews, focus groups, action learning sets and a World Cafe event)
Lee, 2010	A Coach's perspective and brief commentary on "executive consulting under pressure: A case study"	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	E	This paper examines a case study about the combined use of coaching and consulting under crisis conditions, from an executive coach's perspective. By sequencing and overlapping techniques and methods, the consultant in the case met his client's need in a timely way. However, the author identifies challenges related to mixing consulting and coaching in terms of contracting for process and outcomes.	Case Study

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
"An earlier companion paper examined the concept of service improvement and the possible contribution of action learning as a means of bringing about both personal and organisational development" (abstract). The current paper focuses on the facilitation of action learning as part of a leadership development program in the NHS. The research was triggered by the "sacking" of three facilitators by their action learning sets (in total there were 8 facilitators for 15 action learning sets) UK	The authors offer some clear choices and guidelines for the development of the demanding role of the action learning facilitator: 1) Expectations among participants are high. All the qualities of a good leader, manager or father/mother are projected into the facilitator role. 'Children' may digress, good 'parents' ought to bring them back; 2) The purposes and skill requirements of the action learning facilitator are of a high order and should allow definition ambiguities and situational variation; 3) Three role models are offered for the action learning facilitator (initiator, coach, and leader). Any person fulfilling this role should develop the habits of reflection, critique and learning as part of developing their practice. Supervision and developmental support are useful for people who are always asking themselves – 'Am I doing it right?'	Action learning
The case study Lee comments on, is a study of a complex case including the reflections of the consultants/ authors USA	Contracting a non-volunteer and resistant client is not recommended. By initially starting as an internal shadow consultant, offering advice and guidance, the coach/consultant could build trust and momentum to address 'typical' coaching issues. However, there was no explicit goal setting on these issues. Such guidance may be good consulting practice but is uncommon in executive coaching which focuses more on behavior change and learning. The consultant/coach should have been more "clear with the client about when he was consulting (to quickly resolve the crisis, to build trust) and when he was coaching (to build competence in the client)" (p. 208). A further challenge was that, different from consulting, executive coaching typically ends after 6-12 months to consolidate and own the progress and avoid dependency. The author suggests that in this case, the coaching was embedded in a larger consulting contract which raises the question how executive coaching is different in this context	Contracting; Goal setting; Consulting vs coaching; Trust

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued***)**

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Hoffman, 2012	Theory and Practice of Executive Consultation: Case Illustration in a Research Laboratory Setting	Psycho-analytic Inquiry	E	"To illustrate the theoretical and technical underpinnings of a psychoanalytic approach to executive role consultation, a case from the author's specialized practice is presented in detail" (abstract). The case focuses on the application of several psychoanalytic concepts in executive coaching and the need to balance both psychoanalytical principles and the business needs of the client.	Case Study (data collection: coaching conversations)
Lewis-Duarte and Bligh, 2012	Agents of "influence": Exploring the usage, timing, and outcomes of executive coaching tactics	Leadership and Organi-zation Develop-ment Journal	E	"The current study aimed to examine coaches' perceived use and effectiveness of the outcome, timing, and objective of proactive influence tactics in coaching relationships [...] There is little empirical data regarding how executive coaches effectively influence behavioral change in their clients. The current study applies research on proactive influence tactics to the context of executive coaching, bridging these two previously disparate streams of research" (abstract).	Online survey (cross-sectional)

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
Executive and organizational development are among the most fertile areas for applied psychoanalysis, leading to health care professionals offering business consultation, such as executive coaching. The case study discusses the executive coaching of a senior scientist lacking managerial and leadership skills. The executive coach, with a background in psychoanalysis, offered a series of coaching sessions USA	This case study demonstrates the strengths and utility of using psychoanalytic principles (minimally as a heuristic device) in executive coaching, contributing to workplace performance. The psychoanalytic features and techniques employed in this case include transference; counter-transference; defenses and compromise; unconscious motivation; and the co-construction of a reflective, analytic process between client and consultant. Some procedural technical features of the coaching process highlight differences between executive role consultation and psychoanalysis or therapy (a different start of the working relationship; payments not coming from the client personally; achieving a positive result quickly)	Psychoana-lytic theory informing executive coaching
10 professional coaching organizations participated in this study. In total, 110 (out of 201) participants completed the online survey. The participating executive coaches had varying educational backgrounds and levels of coaching experience (average of 11.7 years). 11 influence tactics (Apprising, Collaboration; Ingratiation; Exchange; Personal appeals; Coalition tactics; Consultation; Inspirational appeals; Rational persuasion; Legitimating tactics; Pressure) were explored with respect to the desired outcome (commitment, compliance, or resistance), timing (initial attempt, follow-up or both) and influence objectives (change behavior and assign work) USA	"Influence tactics including coalition, consultation, inspirational appeals, and rational persuasion were more frequently associated with client commitment. Consultation was more frequently utilized during initial influence attempts; pressure was more frequently utilized during follow-up attempts. Coaches also reported using different tactics depending on the desired outcome of the influence attempt: coalition and pressure were utilized to change behavior, whereas coaches used consultation and rational persuasion to both change behavior and assign work" (abstract). "[...] executive coaches could benefit from a greater understanding of which influence tactics are chosen, how and when the tactics are applied during the coaching engagement, and which outcomes are most likely to occur" (p. 275)	Influencing in executive coaching

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Gibson, 2012	The pivotal and powerful role of the action learning coach	International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management	E	"The climate in organisational environments is sometimes experienced as a pendulum that swings back and forth between one that encourages openness and is therefore conducive to learning and one that evokes defensiveness and is therefore characterised by evaluative pressure (Gibson, 2011). The purpose of this study was to use action-learning teams as microcosms of larger organisational environments and to learn from action learning coaches what they do to create a climate conducive to learning" (p.309)	Interviews (using interview protocol)
De Villiers and Botes, 2013	The impact of skills development interventions on corporate control: Executives' & directors' coaching	Corporate Board: Role, Duties and Composition	C	This study aims to identify which contextual circumstances, coaching behaviors, coaching methods, and coachee traits will result in behavioral changes that will lead to organizational improvement.	Review of literature

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
16 experienced action-learning coaches, with varying backgrounds in education and practice, were interviewed (5 in person, 11 over the telephone) USA	A climate that fosters learning is characterized by psychological safety as opposed to evaluative pressure which impairs people's ability to learn. The action learning coaches reported creating a climate conducive to learning by 1) un-freezing the team's climate and reducing defensiveness among team members; 2) introducing change by using themselves as instruments and launching the team decisively, embracing thoughts of unconditional positive regard, and using deliberate strategies to build a safe team environment; 3) encouraging team members to refreeze their behaviors which, as a result of the action learning experience, included interdependent leadership skills appropriate to self-directed teams with heightened self-awareness and self-knowledge.	Action learning
Senior decision-makers require knowledge, skills and attributes to navigate the business environment pro-actively in search of optimal organizational outcomes. Increasingly, executive coaches are employed to develop these leadership competencies. However, the impact of executive coaching on the mindset, perspectives and motives of coached executives, and thus ultimately on the client organizations' strategy, has been understudied New Zealand	On integrating literature findings from human resource development, organizational behavior, management and psychology disciplines, the authors introduce their Coaching Tripartite, Requirements & Outcomes model. This model suggests that good executive coaching requires specific coach's attributes and skills, coachee's traits and organizational support, and links to learning outcomes/ business needs. Although coaching yields positive outcomes (affective, cognitive, self-awareness, and performance) for the individual and the organization, studies should take a more long term and 360-degree orientation.	Executive coaching requirements; Executive coaching outcomes

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Vanheule and Arnaud, 2016	Working With Symbolic Transference: A Lacanian Perspective on Executive Coaching	Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	C	"This study explores how aspects of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic theory can inform the practice of individual coaching in organizations. Our main point is that this theory provides an important tool for studying and addressing unconscious determinants of observable organizational behaviors and problems" (p.296-297)	Review of literature; illustrative cases

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
Lacan's ideas have permeated the field of organization and management studies, and an increasing number of studies has contributed to the body of psychodynamic literature on organizations. Lacanian-oriented coaching invites people to go beyond the stories they usually tell about their job and about the organization, and to articulate what bothers them and what really matters to them. Similar to clinical contexts, applying psychoanalysis in individual coaching in organizations is not only a very useful interpretative framework but also a practice that can catalyze change Belgium	Lacan's psychoanalysis can serve as a framework for individual coaching in an organizational setting. Irrespective of the client's conscious intentions, suppressed desires and experiences permeate their speech. Returning signifiers in the coachee's speech and behavior may seem irrational and meaningless but can indicate suppressed desires that have not been recognized and valued. When read and recognized by the coach, paying attention to what is signified, opens up opportunities for clients to recognize the desires they are driven by, and decide on how they want to proceed in their professional life. This has strong implications for working with transference. Transference, according to Lacan, should not be interpreted directly (by focusing on images and expectations) but, instead, all the attention should go to the play between signifiers at the Symbolic (as opposed to the Imaginary) axis of speech. By offering the client a lot of space to talk freely, the coach picks up on returning signifiers, inconsistencies and vague elements in a client's accounts and invites him/her to explore them. If Symbolic transference is at play, the coach can be seen as a guide who knows how to gain access to, and handle, this as yet 'hidden piece of truth'. When adopting a Lacanian perspective, coaching itself changes from fulfilling immediate objectives to clarification of what is repressed.	(Lacan's) Psychoanalytic theory informing executive coaching

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Chidiac et al., 2018	The Relational matrix model of supervision: Context, framing and inter-connection	Gestalt Journal of Australia & New Zealand	C	"This article proposes a matrix model applicable to a wide range of supervisory relationships and settings; therapeutic and organisational. The emphasis is upon a "relational" approach" [from a consideration of] "the context of supervision as being of fundamental importance in framing both the "what and how" of the supervision session" (abstract). "Our wish in this paper is to further define and nuance these contextual/ situational factors and, indeed, to elevate them to the status of processes that preconfigure what is possible in the supervisory space" (p. 46)	Review of literature
Cilliers, 2018	The experienced impact of systems psychodynamic leadership coaching amongst professionals in a financial services organisation	South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences	E	"The research aim was to explore the experienced impact of systems psychodynamic leadership coaching amongst professionals in a financial services organisation, and to report on how this impact can be understood in the context of the literature guidelines on coaching and leadership effectiveness" (abstract)	Case Study (data collection: field notes and coachee essays during and after coaching)

	Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
	In addition to the importance of the supervisory relationship itself, supervision must also pay attention to the multitude of connections and relationships it attends to, and which form the context that frames the supervisory process. The influences and impact of each of these connections are alive in the room and need acknowledgment and exploration at different times. The authors utilize their extensive experience as supervisors in psychotherapy, counseling, consulting, management and training Australia /New Zealand	"The quality of our relationships powerfully defines and shapes the "quality" of us as individuals, be that individual people, teams, organisations or communities" (p. 47). The authors "propose a relational perspective as an ethical state of mind to cultivate when working on either 'side' of the supervisory relationship" (p. 49). The Relational Matrix, consisting of columns (Client, Supervisee, Supervisor) and rows (Self, Other, Situation), offers multiple lenses for exploration during the supervision. Some of the matrix' cells refer to the supervision session, while other cells refer to the supervision context.	Supervision; Relational approach informing supervision
	Research within a large financial services organization where individual leadership coaching was extended to help leaders understand the complexity of leadership's individual and organizational systemic role identity, explored from an unconscious perspective. A multi-case approach with convenient and opportunistic sampling comprising of 15 charted accountants who attended six 90-min coaching sessions over 12 weeks South Africa	The coachees experienced the systems psychodynamic leadership coaching as demanding, challenging, and yet fulfilling. Systems psychodynamics, as a coaching stance, offered a safe and good-enough container to explore their own unconscious leadership behaviors, and to gain a significant level of understanding and awareness of their own anxiety and defensive behaviors in their interaction with followers. "Compared to the general guidelines for leadership coaching effectiveness and the general indicators for effective leadership, systems psychodynamic leadership coaching seems to add value to leadership effectiveness" (abstract)	Systems Psychodynamic theory informing executive coaching

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Allen and Fry 2019	Spiritual development in executive coaching	Journal of Manage-ment Develop-ment	C	"The purpose of this paper is to discuss the merits of including spiritual development (SDev) in EC and how executive coaches can incorporate it in their practice" (abstract). Comparisons are made to the increasing inclusion of spiritual direction (SDir) in psychotherapy and counseling, drawing upon SDir as an ancient tradition of providing spiritual support to those seeking to develop spiritual aspects of their lives (Sperry, 2016)" (p.797)	Review of literature
Kuna, 2019	All by Myself? Executives' Impostor Phenomenon and Loneliness as Catalysts for Executive Coaching With Management Consultants	Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	E	This paper addresses the fundamental question regarding executives' desire to engage in executive coaching (the benefits of which are considered ambivalent). According to the author, this question has been overlooked in scholarly literature by tending to focus on the issue of executive coaching effectiveness	In-depth interviews (semi-struc-tured) with experienced executives

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
The scholarly literature on executive coaching has emphasized the performance development aspects of executive coaching more than the development of executives' inner lives, although there is some evidence of practitioners addressing spiritual topics. Executive leaders have spiritual needs, and executive coaches may well be positioned to address the intersection of the leaders' work and spiritual lives, provided the coaches observe the skill boundaries and the limitations of the coaching context USA	Athanasopoulou and Dopson (2018) view executive coaching as a "social rather than individual intervention where new meanings shaped by the social context are co-created by the organization, coach and client. This suggestion seems to invite a spiritual perspective to coaching, especially where leadership, meaning, values and worldview intersect" (p. 798). "People experience a spiritual journey in life and need support – executive leaders are no exception and may in fact need unique support and development" (p. 807). Similarities between facilitating spiritual development and spiritual direction were addressed (e.g., listening, asking questions, and confidentiality) as well as differences between both (e.g., the latter requiring intense training, experience, and supervision by other spiritual directors). "If judiciously applied, spiritual development can be included in executive coaching […] Suitable contexts, principles, a basic developmental framework and steps for executive coaches considering the inclusion and practice of SDev in EC were presented" (p. 807)	Spiritual development in executive coaching; Spiritual direction in psychothera-py and counseling
The participants consisted of 46 executives (23 men, 23 women) with varying educational backgrounds at (minimally) Master's level and an average age of 48 years, and (on average) 9 years of executive experience. The participants were clients of individual consulting relationships with external management consultants who offered them executive coaching. "The sample was a convenience snowball sample (Silverman, 2013)" (p. 311) Israel	"Despite the executives' choice to explain their need for executive coaching in the rational terms of knowledge acquisition, the findings reveal that two interrelated experiences acted as implicit catalysts for engaging in this type of intervention: executive loneliness and the IP [Imposter Phenomenon]. These manifested in effects of depletion, isolation, and agitation, which negatively influenced the executives' well-being and performance. This study highlights the valuable moderating role of executive coaching with management consultants as a means of emotional support for executives' role distress associated with these two experiences" (p. 318). The findings 1) shed new light on intense, and understudied, experiences of executive loneliness and impostorism; 2) articulate the gap between rational reasons for entering into the consulting relationships and the emotional benefit they derived from it; 3) highlight the significant benefits attributed to participating in executive coaching.	Drive to engage in executive coaching; Executive loneliness; Imposter phenomenon

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (*continued*)

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
De Haan et al., 2019	Executive coaching outcome research in a field setting: A near-randomized controlled trial study in a global healthcare corporation	Academy of Management Learning and Education	E	"...despite the popularity of coaching, the effect of coaching on relevant leadership performance measures remains unclear. We report on the development of a model for coaching effectiveness predicting that aspects common to all approaches are the main active ingredients, mediated by the working alliance as the single-best predicting common aspect" (abstract)	Randomi-zed Controlled Trial using online questionnaires, measured at three time points
Hambley, 2020	CONNECT©: A brain-friendly model for leaders and organizations	Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research	C	"The intent of this article is to highlight those aspects of brain science that are most relevant to our consulting clients by introducing the CONNECT© model—a framework for consultants to identify behaviors and strategies that they can incorporate into a "brain friendly" toolkit for work with clients. This model is an attempt to apply what the science tells us about how people are "wired" to connect with others and what happens cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally when social needs are met or are threatened" (abstract)	Review of literature; illustrative case

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
This study was situated in a global healthcare industry company with approximately 100,000 employees based in over 120 countries. In total, 180 coachees (recruited by line managers and HR leaders), 66 coaches (qualified internal coaches with 3-20 days of formal training; most line managers), and 140 of the coachees' line- managers were involved UK /the Netherlands	This study found strong indicators 1) for a strong correlation between coaching relationship and coaching effectiveness; 2) that executive coaching can be an effective intervention in the eyes of both the coachees and their line managers; 3) that coaching outcomes can be predicted by a coachee's preparedness for the impact of a coaching (indicated by factors such as: resilience, self-efficacy, perceived social support and mental well-being)	Coaching effectiveness; Working alliance; Coachee's preparedness
"The last decade has seen an explosion of social "neuroscience" within the field of leadership development and organizational consulting - both in the research literature and in popular press. The challenge has been sorting out fact from fiction, determining which elements of the science are most relevant to helping our clients, and then translating that science into practical skills and behaviors" (abstract) USA	CONNECT (Consistency, Ownership, Novelty, Need to know, Equity, Confidence, Trust) is a 'model of reward and threat' that helps to translate neuroscience into practical skills and behavior. It can "guide practitioners in enhancing their training, coaching, and consulting within organizations" (p.188). "Each element of CONNECT has direct implications for creating a culture of engagement, motivation, and well-being, and enhancing leadership effectiveness. [...] Leaders should be encouraged to understand and appreciate the effect that threat (especially social threat) has on people (e.g., Gino et al., 2011) by helping them recognize how they might inadvertently be triggering it and how they can proactively create a reward state, thus helping others achieve success. [...] This model is a tool that coaches and consultants can utilize in both an assessment process and development planning for leaders and organizations" (p.189)	Social neuroscience informing organizational consulting

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Table 9: Papers Included in the Semi-systematic Literature Review (_continued_**)**

Author(s), Year	Title	Journal	Paper Type*	Study aims	Study design
Boysen-Rotelli, 2020	Executive coaching history: Growing out of organisational development.	The Coaching Psycholo-gist	C	"The aim of this conceptual review paper is to uncover the link between coaching psychology and organisation development" (abstract)	Review of literature
Van Geffen, 2020	Optimizing team effectiveness and performance by using the cycle of team development	Transactional Analysis Journal	C	"Drawing on his experience as an organizational consultant, the author presents a new model of team analysis and development for working with organizations" (abstract)	Review of literature; illustrative case

Study setting and country	Overall argument (Key-findings/ Conclusion/ Key-learnings)	Key concepts
The main focus of many studies into the history of coaching has been on athletic coaching; adult development theory; education; management; and leadership theory. This article advances these studies by looking at the organization development roots of coaching psychology USA	"Coaching has grown from a rogue and unstandardised process to a profession with proven results and a credentialing process. Upon exploring the history of the coaching intervention as it has grown into a profession, it is evident that coaching has a connection to the business world and truly started to define itself in the 1980s" (p. 33). The paper shows strong ties between executive coaching and positive-focused OD tools through 1) direct alignment of OD values and coaching competencies as defined by the International Coach Federation; and 2) showcasing studies that report positive coaching outcomes that are similar to those attained through other OD interventions. Exploring the OD roots of executive coaching offers opportunities to recognize sources of the techniques and approaches that inform the coaching process.	Organiza-tional development theory informing executive coaching
The author had personally experienced challenges in balancing autonomy and working effectively in a group or team. This motivated his search for a model that can enhance current development in organizations such as transitioning to self-organizing teams the Netherlands	After concluding that neither 'classical' (by Tuckman; Bion; Belbin) nor TA (Transactional Analysis) (by Berne; Lee; Clarkson; Tudor; Weisfelt; Krausz) team development models offer sufficient insights into guiding and supporting established or self-organizing teams, the author developed the Cycle of Team Development model based on Krausz's group theory and Levin's 'cycle approach' of children's development. The Cycle of Team Development model, that also has connections with Steiner and Hay's TA work, consists of 7 stages describing developmental tasks for both Organization/Leadership and Team Members. These stages are: being, doing, thinking, identity, structure, integration, and recycling.	Transactional analysis; Group and team development; Cycle of team development model

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Organizing the studies into more homogeneous groups (by study design, type of paper, and journal), as a second part of the textual narrative analysis, did not offer any further sensemaking. Even within the various homogeneous groups, the papers' contributions still varied greatly.

Results of the thematic synthesis

On performing the thematic synthesis, we constructed seven analytical themes as a means to describe commonalities within the set of 21 papers. These themes are at varying levels of abstraction. This outcome may not do full justice to the 21 individual papers. Eliciting commonalities across such a diverse set of papers in a coherent way resulted in relatively abstract themes. As a consequence, creating a story of this data set 'as a whole' in relation to this review's research question implies not utilizing each individual paper fully. Below, I present the results of the thematic analysis, by offering an overview of the constructed themes and the related items in an organized fashion (see Figure 7). I consider this figure as zooming in on the coach process depicted in Figure 5. Table 10 lists the papers which contributed to each theme. After that, I will discuss the contributions of the various papers, per theme.

In the remainder of this section, I discuss the themes and sub themes depicted in Figure 7, thereby presenting the contributions, as I see them, from the various papers.

1. The theme *Disciplines informing coaching* captures the various academic disciplines that offer knowledge bases for coaching. The following items relate to this theme: psychoanalysis (Hoffman, 2012; Vanheule & Arnaud, 2016); psychotherapy (Gray, 2006); systems psychodynamics (Cilliers, 2018); spirituality and religion (Allen & Fry, 2019); social neuroscience (Hambley, 2020); adult learning (Gray, 2006); and organizational development (Boysen-Rotelli, 2020). It goes beyond the scope of this review and dissertation to go into further detail about these disciplines. However, Table 9 summarizes the key contributions of each paper.

2. The *Motivation for coaching* theme captures the reasons for coachees to engage in coaching, and contracting during a coaching engagement.

Motivation for coaching: Coaching question

In general, according to Kilburg (2001), the clients of executive coaches bring an enormous variety of challenges to be addressed. "The more complex, frequent, intense, emotionally demanding, and conflict ridden the challenges, the greater the pressure on both the client and the coach to perform well if positive outcomes are to be achieved" (p. 258). Allen and Fry (2019) suggest that the spiritual development of executives may very well be incorporated in executive coaching. They conclude that "people experience a spiritual journey in life and need support – executive leaders are no exception and may in fact need unique support and development" (p. 807). The authors argue that,
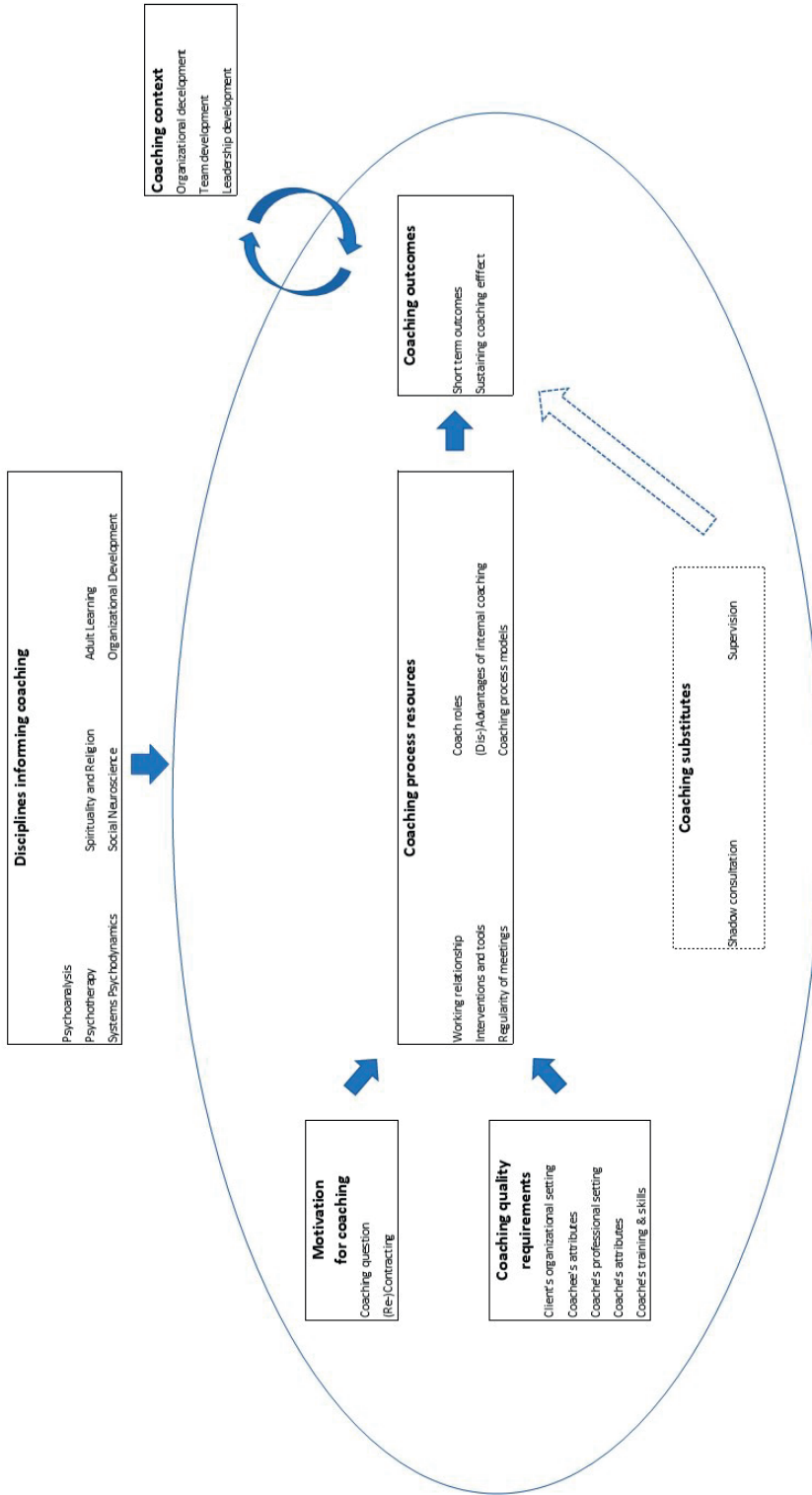
Figure 7: Associations between the Central Themes in the Selected Papers, Related to the Research Question

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Table 10: Themes and Contributing Papers

Themes	Sub themes / Items	Papers
Disciplines informing coaching	Psychoanalysis	Hoffman (2012); Vanheule & Arnaud (2016)
	Psychotherapy	Gray (2006)
	Systems Psychodynamics	Cilliers (2018)
	Spirituality and Religion	Allen & Fry (2019)
	Social Neuroscience	Hambley (2020)
	Adult Learning	Gray (2006)
	Organizational Development	Boysen-Rotelli (2020)
Motivation for coaching	Coaching question	Kilburg (2001); Wasylyshyn (2005); Schnell (2005); Lee (2010); Allen & Fry (2019); Kuna (2019)
	(Re-)Contracting	Kilburg (2001); Schnell (2005); Wasylyshyn (2005); Lee (2010)
Coaching process resources	Working relationship	Kilburg (2001); Wasylyshyn (2005); Lee (2010); De Haan, Gray & Bonneywell (2019)
	Interventions and tools	Kilburg (2001); Schnell (2005); Wasylyshyn (2005); Gray (2006); Blattner & Bacigalupo (2007); Hoffman(2012); Allen & Fry (2019); Lewis-Duarte & Bligh (2012); Vanheule & Arnaud (2016); Chidiac, Denham-Vaughan & Osborne (2018); Boysen-Rotelli (2020); Hambley (2020)
	Regularity of meetings	Schnell (2005); Wasylyshyn (2005)
	Coach roles	Gray (2006)
	(Dis-)Advantages of internal coaching	Schnell (2005)
	Coaching process models	Wasylyshyn (2005); De Villiers & Botes (2013); Chidiac, Denham-Vaughan & Osborne (2018)
Coaching outcomes	Short term outcomes	Wasylyshyn (2005); Hoffman(2012); De Villiers & Botes (2013); Cilliers (2018); De Haan, Gray & Bonneywell (2019)
	Sustaining coaching efffect	Kilburg (2001)
Coaching quality requirements	Client's organizational setting	Kilburg (2001); Wasylyshyn (2005); De Villiers & Botes (2013)
	Coachee's attributes	Kilburg (2001); Wasylyshyn (2005); Lee (2010); De Villiers & Botes (2013); De Haan, Gray & Bonneywell (2019)
	Coach's professional setting	Kilburg (2001); Gray (2006)
	Coach's attributes	Kilburg (2001); Wasylyshyn (2005); De Villiers & Botes (2013)
	Coach's training & skills	Wasylyshyn (2005); De Villiers & Botes (2013); Allen & Fry (2019)
Coaching context	Organizational development	Wasylyshyn (2005); Blattner & Bacigalupo (2007); Pedler & Abbott (2008)
	Team development	Gibson (2012); Van Geffen (2020)
	Leadership development	Schnell (2005); Lee (2010); Kuna (2019)
Coaching substitutes	Shadow consultation	Kilburg (2002); Lee (2010)
	Supervision	Pedler & Abbott (2008); Chidiac, Denham-Vaughan & Osborne (2018)

although spiritual development and executive coaching may have different intended outcomes, they are not independent of each other, as many executives seek to be spiritually centered and present, and then, consequently, (self) report they are more effective leaders.

The variety of coaching questions, as noted by Kilburg (2001), have been illustrated by multiple authors. Coaching questions, for example, may be well-discussed at the start (Wasylyshyn, 2005); be different from the 'real' motivation to engage in coaching (Kuna, 2019); develop and change over time (Schnell, 2005); or even be absent at the beginning (Lee, 2010). In the case described by Wasylyshyn (2005), the coaching question grew out of a troubled relationship between a CEO and his successor candidate (coachee). Central to the coaching question was what the coachee referred to as "the probable connection between things that have happened in my life and what was going on for me at the company" (p. 60). Particular areas for development were internal relationship building and people management. In her study, Kuna (2019) concludes that executive coaching has a moderating role as a means of emotional support for executives' 'role distress' associated with experiences of executive loneliness and impostorism. Although executives give rational arguments for engaging in executive coaching (e.g., knowledge acquisition), "the emotional burden associated with these experiences was reported by the executives as having been relieved successfully during interventions of executive coaching […]" (p. 323). In the long term executive coaching case described by Schnell (2005), the coaching question initially focused on structuring the work relationship of a leadership pair who jointly directed a medical school department. in order to pursue certain business aspirations. This later changed into surviving a crisis resulting from a management audit and dealing with a long medical leave (and return) of one of the two leaders. These evolvements influenced the contract. Lee (2010) reflects on a case in which an explicit initial coaching question was absent. Coaching issues that emerged include improving influencing skills, managing negative emotions, and setting boundaries and expectations.

Motivation for coaching: (Re-)Contracting

According to Kilburg (2001), it is very important that the coach and client reach a clear understanding about the nature of their agreement and the goals that are pursued during the coaching. With respect to long-term success, identifying barriers and roadblocks to goal attainment is of similar importance.

Various case studies offer examples of useful actions with respect to (re-)contracting: clear agenda setting and formal agreements when starting (Wasylyshyn, 2005); revisiting coaching questions given the duration of the engagement, and in light of formal agreements (Schnell, 2005); and balancing learning and dealing with a crisis situation

in the absence of an initial coaching question (Lee, 2010). Wasylyshyn (2005) facilitated an agenda-setting meeting after having had an introductory conversation with the coachee. Beyond coach and coachee, the CEO and HR director participated in this meeting, in which coaching methodology, roles, timeframe, confidentiality, coaching objectives, and progress assessments were discussed. In his case study about a long-term (over five years) executive coaching relationship, Schnell (2005) concluded that the use of a formal agreement forced the parties to examine the progress regularly. Repeatedly returning to the agreement reminded both the client and coach of 'root issues' related to the faced challenges. In the case presented by Lee (2010), it was unclear whether or not explicit contracting, with respect to goals, took place. In this case, the coaching was informal and situated within a larger consulting contract between the coach and the firm. Goals seemed to emerge once trust was built, and when the consultant saw the need to address these issues. Lee (2010) articulated a difference in contracting between consulting ("to quickly resolve the crisis") and coaching ("to build competence in the client") (p. 208). Another difference with consulting, noted by Lee (2010), is that executive coaching is typically supposed to end after 6 to 12 months, allowing the client to consolidate and own the progress, and prevent becoming dependent on outside help.

3. The *Coaching process resources* theme refers to the resources a coach may use when coaching after the initial contracting, such as the Working relationship; Interventions & tools; Regularity of meetings; Coach roles; (Dis-)Advantages of internal coaching; and Coaching process models.

Coaching process resources: Working relationship

The working relationship is viewed as being of key-importance for a successful coaching engagement. According to Kilburg (2001), an effective working relationship is widely viewed as being the most important item contributing to positive outcomes when helping human beings. Accurate empathy; authenticity and genuineness; playful challenge; and tactful exchanges can "make or break" a coaching assignment. Some of these variables are within the coach's power to create, while others emerge from the complex and sometimes mysterious interactions between coach and coachee (Kilburg, 2001). De Haan, Gray and Bonneywell (2019) conclude that the working relationship is the single best predictor of coaching effectiveness. A consequence of which is: "matching is best done by the coachee him-herself, on the basis of a chemistry meeting or trial session and not by HR or other intermediaries" (p. 17).

The case study by Wasylyshyn (2005) illustrates how the studied working relationship extended beyond the coach-coachee relationship, and included collaborations with the CEO and HR director. Trust played an important role and is described as one of the 'meta principles' of coaching. This trust is reciprocal and influenced by confidentiality and emotional competence. Having discussed the boundaries of confidentiality in the

agenda-setting meeting, the executive coach was not compromised later by inappropriate questions (Wasylyshyn, 2005). Lee (2010) offers an example of how a consulting relationship may develop in a way that makes it possible to move toward coaching. By building trust, through offering advice as a consultant (which is not typical for coaching), the focus can move to changing behavior; learning; and contributing to the increase of self-awareness (which is typical for coaching). Going beyond the initial coaching engagement, Wasylyshyn (2005) describes how the coach's relationship with the coachee transformed into that of a trusted advisor after the primary coaching objectives had been met. In this case, the executive coach became a sounding board to provide a safe place for expressing concerns and serving "as an antidote to the isolation that often occurs for businesspeople in senior leadership roles" (Wasylyshyn, 2005, p. 69; see also Kuna, 2019).

Coaching process resources: Interventions and tools

Given the earlier noted wide range of academic disciplines informing coaching in the papers, I was not surprised to encounter an even greater variety of possible interventions and tools. This was also addressed by Kilburg (2001). This author notes that, within executive coaching, the wide variety of techniques and methods include collecting evaluation data; creative and effective use of levels of reflection and methods of inquiry; and the application of techniques like role playing, reframing, and confronting. Below, I will present some of the resources addressed in the selected papers. Given the purpose of this review, I do not intend to offer a 'complete overview' of possible coaching tools and techniques (should this even be possible). Richter, Van Zeyl and Stander (2021), for example, do present an overview of 18 positive psychological coaching tools and techniques.

From a psychoanalytic vantage point, Vanheule and Arnaud (2016) explored how symbolic transference can be a resource for increasing a client's awareness about 'hidden pieces of truth'[106]. Psychotherapeutic resources include Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator; Freudian approaches; gestalt; Neuro-Linguistic Programming; and Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (Gray, 2006). Departing from a spiritual and religious perspective, Allen and Fry (2019) note that there is no prescription for how to address spiritual development related issues. "However, similar to the typical processes of EC [executive coaching], the coach can listen, ask questions, share resources, teach skills, monitor and reflect on progress, refer the client to external resources, use self-assessment tools, engage the client in spiritual practices such as [spiritual] discernment, prayer or meditation if needed, and even determine when to terminate the relationship" (p. 807). The authors also offer examples of appropriate and inappropriate contexts and practices for including spiritual

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106 By focusing on 'typical' elements of the client's speech, the coach invites the client to broadly explore what comes to mind. By doing so, coaching changes from fulfilling immediate objectives to learning about what is repressed.

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development in executive coaching. Drawing on the discipline of social neuroscience, Hambley (2020) developed the CONNECT model to contribute to a culture of engagement; motivation and well-being; and enhancing leadership effectiveness. According to the author, "as consultants, we must be mindful of how we might trigger/ threat and create reward for our clients" (p. 168). Originating from adult learning theory, Gray (2006) values Schön's reflection-in-action, which is an element of transformative learning. From an Organizational Development (OD) perspective, Lewis-Duarte and Bligh (2012) studied the use of influence tactics employed to facilitate personal and professional growth. Boysen-Rotelli (2020) offers OD values and coaching competencies (in an aligned manner) as resources for executive coaches. These resources focus on making rapport; being present when entering conversations; and focusing on self-awareness and interpersonal skills. In their paper on a relational approach to supervision, Chidiac et al. (2018) address the importance of the connections and relationships it attends to. These relationships frame the supervisory process which needs to be acknowledged and explored. The authors offer various lenses for this.

In practice, particular coaching engagements combine various interventions and tools. For example, Hofman (2012) applied psychoanalytic principles (minimally) as a heuristic device. This author stresses the importance of striking a balance between thinking psychoanalytically and addressing the business needs of the client. Wasylyshyn (2005) designed a coaching engagement based on various tools; 'meta principles' (traction[107], trust, and truth-telling); and 'methodology factors' (holistic approach, deep behavioral insight, involvement of top executives, and sustained relationships). Blattner and Bacigalupo (2007) used individual executive coaching, centering on emotional intelligence, in a team facilitation journey. Schnell (2005) describes how his approach developed over time during his long-term coaching engagement. This author changed his initial approach of offering 'how to' guidance, to a more inquiry-based approach by offering possibilities for reflection. Later, they aimed the interventions at dealing with strong emotions, and offering support for handling the acting director role. Lastly, the coaching looked at dealing with pushback about a leadership style, and finding useful ways to collaborate again, after one leader returned from a long sick leave.

Coaching process resources: Regularity of meetings

Two case study papers address scheduling details. Both Schnell (2005) and Wasylyshyn (2005) offer examples of a deliberate design. According to Schnell (2005), regularly scheduled meetings are the best way to, for example, use the coaching format and prevent long periods of non-contact. In his case, meetings were scheduled regularly (on

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107 According to Wasylyshyn, "traction in coaching is akin to the interaction between car tires and roads - a gripping of the surface while moving but without slipping. This need to keep moving without slipping is fundamental to effective coaching. The work will falter, drift, or even fail without it" (2005, p. 65).

a weekly and later monthly basis), instead of being a logistical challenge. Wasylyshyn (2005) designed a process consisting of four phases (see 'coaching process models' below) and planned 12-15 sessions for the four phases. During the coaching, she planned two-hour monthly meetings plus email and phone consultations when needed.

Coaching process resources: Coach roles

Gray (2006), following Witherspoon and White (1996), suggests four types of roles an executive coach can assume. These coach roles focus on using coaching for specific skills required for a current job; for a broader improvement of performance in the current job; for the development for a future job; and for the executive's agenda. In the latter, the learning is related to the executive's agenda (e.g., productivity and quality improvement; coping with growth; and change management). How these roles are performed is influenced (at least in part) by the theoretical perspective that informs the coach's practice (e.g., psychotherapy, adult learning).

Coaching process resources: (Dis)Advantages of internal coaching

While executive coaching is typically offered by an external coach, Schnell (2005) reports some advantages of being an internal coach. These include bringing in expert-knowledge; possibly offering internal contacts; a shared base of experiences to refer to; understanding of the broader organization goals; having alternative sources of information; and the ease of making contact for meetings and taking advantage of chance encounters. Some disadvantages are the strict maintenance of confidentiality, and the coaches' knowledge of 'right' answers to problems. In Lee's paper (2010), coaching was offered within an internal consulting contract. Although, as the author noted, this is different from typical executive coaching, the internal position has advantages with respect to offering advice and guidance which contribute to trust building and addressing coaching issues.

Coaching process resources: Coaching process models

Coaching process models may be useful to roughly design a coaching engagement. Two authors offer chronological models which split up the coaching into phases. Wasylyshyn (2005) used a four-phase model which was customized to the specific executive coaching engagement. It consists of 1) data gathering; 2) feedback; 3) coaching; 4) consolidation of coaching gains. De Villiers and Botes (2013) suggest five stages for effective coaching: 1) relationship building; 2) assessment / data gathering; 3) intervention; 4) follow-up; 5) evaluation. A different model, not having a 'phase approach,' is the relational model presented by Chidiac et al. (2018). Their model orients toward the relational situations being the origin of supervisory issues, and toward the supervisory process itself that is preconfigured by, and preconfigures, a session's content, process, and output. Their

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matrix model, which combines self, other, and situation, with client, supervisee, and supervisor, offers nine 'cells' for exploration in supervision.

4. *Coaching outcomes*. This theme captures the contributions related to short-term coaching outcomes and sustaining them over time.

Coaching outcomes: Short term outcomes

Resulting from their literature review, De Villiers and Botes (2013) describe four general areas of coaching outcomes: 1) affective (e.g., EQ development and interpersonal relationship skills); 2) cognitive (e.g., strengths awareness and use, and knowledge acquisition); 3) self-awareness (e.g., values and motives, and improved self-regard and self-knowledge); 4) performance (e.g., job performance, upward mobility). De Haan et al. (2019) found that executive coaching contributes to psychological well-being and social support. Furthermore, leaders that have been coached become more self-disciplined, responsible, or conscientious; and less moody, annoyed, hard to please, or emotionally volatile. Executive coaching seems to have a calming or containing effect (De Haan et al., 2019).

Case studies, for example by Wasylyshyn (2005); Hoffman (2012); and Cilliers (2018), clearly show that the studied coaching engagements included both personal learning and contributing directly to business goals. Conclusions about coaching outcomes vary in the extent to which they focus on either one. According to Wasylyshyn (2005), coaching results were: 1) accelerating the effectiveness and retention of a company's CEO successor candidate; 2) how top-level coaching influences organizational development; 3) the value of long-term coaching which influences the coach's role shift from coach to trusted advisor. The outcomes in Hoffman's (2012) case include both personal learning and business goals. In the study, the client's approach to managing changed dramatically. This was related to learning to deal differently with, for example, feelings of anxiety; addressing aggressive competition issues; and struggles around dependency. The atmosphere in the client's department changed, including an increase in openness; initiative taking; and resource sharing. Complaints about the client ceased to exist. Within a year, the client had been approved for a new position. Cilliers (2018) reports that the clients in his multi-case study explored their conscious and unconscious leadership behavior; the way they took up their leadership role; and how their leadership was authorized by themselves and the organization. Furthermore, they learned to manage their boundaries and developed insights into their leadership identity. They gained an understanding of and insight into their anxiety and defensive behaviors to work toward optimizing their leader-follower relationships.

Coaching outcomes: Sustaining coaching effect

Kilburg (2001) addresses client and coach problems (e.g., insufficient agreement or goal clarity, lack of commitment, defensiveness), which may contribute to nonadherence to interventions in executive coaching. Based on these insights, the author offers components of an effective adherence protocol as a means to prevent "regressive coaching outcome pathways." Such a protocol includes clarity in the coaching agreement, goal clarity, adherence assessment, adherence awareness, and client-specific and sensitive adherence methods.

5. *Coaching quality requirements* entails various requirements that, if met, contribute to a generative coaching engagement. These requirements are described in generic terms.

Coaching quality requirements: Clients' organizational setting

A supportive client organization is imperative. This includes supporting the developmental activities in general, committing time and financial resources (Kilburg, 2001). More specifically, coaching programs need senior management's support and should link to business imperatives (De Villiers & Botes, 2013). Since the coach is likely to affect the attitude, thinking, and ultimately the behavior of the coachee, and thereby the coachee's business, it is imperative, according to De Villiers and Botes (2013), to select coaches who are well versed and thoroughly briefed in the organization's strategy, culture, and orientation. Beyond this, the client should be provided with sufficient room to experiment and receive feedback on the progress. Kilburg (2001) discerns between organizations that show resilience, which are capable of doing this; and organizations that show regressive behavior, which might punish rather than reward change attempts.

In the case described by Wasylyshyn (2005), the executive coaching started with a rather conflictive relationship between a CEO and his successor candidate, and an organizational culture of anxiety and exasperation, emerging from the CEO's micromanagement and crude attacks on people, among others. In this particular case, which clearly lacked initial top management support, the HR director negotiated the coaching engagement, as he feared serious future problems for the company. Finally, the CEO supported the coaching engagement which ultimately resulted in various positive outcomes.

Coaching quality requirements: Coachees' attributes

Three authors noted attributes or factors that contribute to the coachees' commitment to (Kilburg, 2001); receptance or readiness for (Villiers & Botes, 2013); or preparedness (De Haan et al, 2019) for executive coaching. Kilburg (2001) stresses that engaging in executive coaching requires commitment to "the path of progressive development" which requires motivation and associated behaviors that move someone toward their goals for a period of time. 'Progressive' indicates that development takes place over time

and in stages, including the layering of experience, learning, and deliberate efforts to change According to Kilburg (2001), the coachee's commitment is composed of levels of self-awareness, and understanding of problems and issues; adherence behavior; competence and cognitive complexity; level of psychosocial development; curiosity; ability and willingness to learn; sufficient inquiry and communication skills; courage; diversity dimensions; development drive; and motivation.

De Villiers and Botes (2013) note that not much research is available about who is likely to be more or less receptive to coaching. They propose coachees' traits, including curiosity; flexibility; career stage; cognitive skills; learning readiness; feedback orientation; emotional intelligence; specific psychographics and demographics. De Haan et al. (2019) conclude that good coachee preparedness significantly predicts the coaching outcomes. These authors found that a good preparedness for the impact of coaching is indicated by coachee-related factors such as resilience; self-efficacy; perceived social support; and mental well-being. Furthermore, the authors confirm the relationship between coachee personality and outcome for the personality factors Adjustment; Ambition; and Interpersonal sensitivity.

Interestingly, case studies by Wasylyshyn (2005) and Lee (2010) show that commitment to, or even resistance to coaching may be more dynamic and open to development than terms such as 'attributes' and 'traits' would suggest. Wasylyshyn's study reports that the executive coach's initial reservation about her client's commitment disappeared as a result of his eagerness to learn and willingness to invest time. Lee (2010) writes about the unusual situation in which an executive coach was confronted with a client in a crisis situation, who was initially resistant toward coaching. The client's motivation for coaching grew as a result of being offered useful advice through shadow consultation.

Coaching quality requirements: Coaches' professional setting

Beyond the client's organizational setting, Kilburg (2001) notes that a supportive organizational setting for the coach is also a key element of coaching effectiveness. In this respect, Gray (2006) offers an interesting and practical suggestion, by proposing that the coaches would benefit from participating in a dynamic coaching network. Such a network should consist of various types of coaches, such as transformative learning coaches; psychotherapeutic supervisors; NLP coaches; and business coaches. Participating in such a network offers: 1) access to therapeutic coaches in case of potentially dangerous 'red flags' (e.g., "deep-seated psychological anxieties"); 2) mutual learning of all coaches through continuous professional development; 3) utilizing written ethical codes by coaches with a non-therapeutic background; 4) benefiting from coaching supervision offered by coaches with a counseling or psychotherapeutic background.

Coaching quality requirements: Coaches' attributes

Beyond a coachee's commitment, Kilburg (2001) notes that a coach's commitment[108] to "the path of progressive development" is also a key element of effective coaching. Other coach's attributes contributing to effective coaching include courage; integrity; empathy; flexibility; self-control; genuineness; self-awareness; tolerance of conflict; adaptive to goals and a coachee's preferences; and unconditional positive regard (De Villiers & Botes, 2013).

According to Wasylyshyn (2005), a high degree of emotional intelligence is a requirement for a coach to manage trust in the coaching relationship.

Coaching quality requirements: Coaches' training and skills

Two general orientations relating to executive coaches' educational backgrounds emerged from this review. De Villiers and Botes (2013) articulate them as: 1) executive coaches should be certified psychologists; 2) executive coaches may have 'an alternative' background with "sound insight into psychological factors and general psychological skills" (p. 58). The authors found no empirical studies into the relation between coaches' backgrounds and coaching effectiveness. Regarding the skills level, the authors suggest coaches need listening skills; reflection skills; self-monitoring skills; expertise in focus area of concern to the coachee; metacognitive skills; honest and reliable feedback; and varied career experiences. These two general orientations also resonate with the case studies which addressed the coach's educational background. For example, Wasylyshyn (2005) conclude that both her clinical training and business experience contributed to the successful approach of her executive coaching engagement. The same goes for Hoffman (2012) who combined psychoanalytic thinking and addressing the business needs.

With respect to including spiritual development in executive coaching (which is not common), Allen and Fry (2019) note that the skills utilized in typical executive coaching processes may contribute to handling spiritual development issues as they arise. More specifically the authors suggest: "the coach can listen, ask questions, share resources, teach skills, monitor, and reflect on progress, refer the client to external resources, use self-assessment tools, engage the client in spiritual practices such as [spiritual] discernment, prayer or meditation if needed, and even determine when to terminate the relationship" (p. 806-807). According to the authors, coaches need to be aware of the limits of their own skills, be willing to refer clients to experts, and avoid seeking a guru status with clients.

6. *Coaching context* refers to the context from which the coaching questions originate, and to which coaching is aimed at to make a contribution.

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108 The coach's commitment is composed of the same aspects as the coachee's commitment (Kilburg, 2001).

Coaching context: Organizational development

Three case studies demonstrate a clear organizational development context. Two cases had a clear group work focus. Blattner and Bacigalupo (2007) describe a consultation process consisting of team development (which included individual parts) that extended to a larger organizational development journey. Pedler and Abbot's case study (2008) describes action learning facilitation within a large leadership program. In this context the authors conclude that developing possibilities for the demanding role of action learning facilitators are currently limited. Beyond developing action learning facilitation skills, "facilitators should develop the habits of reflection, critique and learning […]" (p. 197-198).

The third case, described by Wasylyshyn (2005), reflects on an executive coaching engagement. Beyond the focus on leadership development, this engagement contributed to organizational development in a culture which was dominated by a "partially dysfunctional CEO." This coaching engagement was designed at top organizational level, including CEO an HR-director, and 'cleared the air' for embarking on key organization development initiatives around culture and leadership.

Coaching context: Team development

Van Geffen (2020) offers an action-oriented team development model which describes developmental tasks for both team members and their leaders. This model was developed to support teams in their transition toward self-organizing. The author was inspired by balancing individual autonomy and working in teams effectively. Gibson (2012) describes how action learning facilitators, working with "microcosms of larger organization environments" facilitated the team learning process. Her study highlights the importance of facilitators' self-awareness and observations to guide their interventions. Human Resource Development practices (such as coaching) can foster the development of these skills, which ultimately contribute to organization improvement.

Coaching context: Leadership development

Contributions in this area focus on dealing with various leadership challenges.

In Schnell's case study (2005), executive coaching helped leaders to deal with challenges related to organizational growth and evolution, and collaboration in their shared leadership role. Lee (2010) centered on the leadership development of a poor functioning manager who was faced with a business crisis situation. Kuna's (2019) contribution focuses on dealing with executive loneliness and the imposter phenomenon related to emotional distress from holding an executive position.

7. *Coaching substitutes* captures practices that may be viewed as a substitute for coaching with respect to learning and competence building.

Coaching substitutes: Shadow consultation

Shadow consultation, as described by Kilburg (2002), may include developmental goals which are common in (executive) coaching. Examples include the effectiveness of a consultant's behavioral repertoire; improvement in psychological and social competencies; and the abilities of managing self and others. As an example of how shadow consultation and coaching may be connected, Lee (2010) describes coaching interventions that were included within a larger (shadow) consulting contract.

Coaching substitutes: Supervision

Another coaching substitute may be found in Chidiac et al.'s (2018) contribution which focuses on supervisory relations in both therapeutic and organizational settings.

The possible utility of supervision as a resource for developing action learning facilitators was indicated by Peddler and Abbott (2008).

9.4 Discussion

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Beyond the specific purpose to locate my action research project in the scholarly literature, a general aim of a semi-systematic literature review is to (e.g.) map a field of research and set a research agenda (Snyder, 2019). According to this author a semi-systematic review may be used to detect themes, theoretical perspectives, or common issues within a research discipline. In this section I discuss the results of my review.

The search for, and analyses of relevant literature was guided by the (rather broad) research question 'how can personal coaching of management consultants contribute to stakeholder interactions in the context of facilitating complex organizational change?' The review resulted in a large variety of papers. The fact that there was hardly any accumulation of results is probably a consequence of the broad research question, due to the review's particular purpose. As noted in the introduction of this chapter, this review's function was to locate the action research project in relevant scholarly literature and contribute to articulating the created actionable knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2018, 2021), as a contribution to generative theory (Gergen, 1978, 1982). Of course, this is a rather different purpose than identifying gaps in the literature aimed at contributing to general theory, which is more common in traditional research.

Looking at the results of this review, it is apparent that there has been ample interest in studying the coaching of managers and executives (16 papers), the facilitation of group work in organizations (3 papers), and shadow consulting and supervision (2 papers). However, and much to my surprise, the topic 'coaching of management consultants'

(as depicted in Figure 5) appears to be an understudied area. Two publications *came close* to my topic. Kilburg (2002) offers a conceptual framework of shadow consulting, and Cilliers (2018) explored the contribution of a systems psychodynamic approach in leadership coaching. The forgoing implies that answers to the research question that directed this review cannot be found by 'simply' comparing 'similar' studies. However, and notwithstanding the rich variety in research interests, designs, and findings, as presented in Table 9, I present the central themes for coaching which have been derived from this review's analyses (see Figure 7). These seven themes, which may be considered as 'building blocks' of a coaching engagement, deserve deliberate attention, and may be crafted when co-constructing tailor-made development opportunities. Different crafting these 'building blocks' or altering or expanding Figure 7, might be appropriate and opportune, when the focus shifts from executive coaching to the coaching of management consultants.

I will briefly summarize the results of the review by relating the central themes pictured in Figure 7 to the research question (i.e., How can personal coaching of management consultants contribute to stakeholder interactions in the context of facilitating complex organizational change?) This generates the following picture. A wide variety of *disciplines may inform the coaching process* as general orientations or lenses. In this review, the following disciplines emerged: psychoanalysis (Hoffman, 2012; Vanheule & Arnaud, 2016); psychotherapy (Gray, 2006); systems psychodynamics (Cilliers, 2018); spirituality and religion (Allen & Fry, 2019); social neuroscience (Hambley, 2020); and adult learning (Gray, 2006). I expect that more disciplines may be relevant, for example social psychology.

A coaching engagement by management consultants and coaches – or a *substitute* such as shadow consulting (Kilburg, 2002), or supervision (e.g., Chidiac et al., 2018) - may contribute to the intended effects in the focal *context*. At the organizational level, such effects may be fostering further organizational development (Wasylyshyn, 2005; Blattner & Bacigalupo, 2007); improving organizational action learning processes (Pedler & Abbot, 2008); and clearing the air in a hazardous organizational culture (Wasylyshyn, 2005). At the team level, the intended effects may include maturing self-organizing teams (Van Geffen, 2020) and facilitating team learning (Gibson, 2012). In the context of individual leadership development, these effects may be dealing with the challenges of organizational growth and development (Schnell, 2005); improving leadership in times of organizational crisis (Lee, 2010); and dealing with executive loneliness and the imposter phenomenon (Kuna, 2019). With respect to stakeholder interaction when facilitating (complex) organizational change by management consultants, I expect all three context levels (organizational, team, and individual) are at play.

In addition to potentially realizing the desired effects of coaching outcomes in the consulting context, that same context also generates coaching questions which contribute to the *motivation for coaching*. The variety and intensity of challenges may put pressure on both the coachee and coach with respect to the desired outcomes (Kilburg, 2001). For example, coaching questions may include spiritual development (Allen & Fry, 2019); be related to the coachee's specific position (Kuna, 2019); or originate from relational conflicts (Wasylyshyn, 2005). The (real) coaching question requires active attention as it needs to be addressed well by the involved stakeholders (Wasylyshyn, 2005); not be fully conscious (Kuna, 2019); be absent (Lee, 2010); develop over time (Schnell, 2005). Both contracting at the start (Kilburg, 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2005) and recontacting as the engagement unfolds (Schnell, 2005; Lee, 2010) are needed to ensure goal clarity and agreement.

Several *coaching quality requirements* have been identified in this study. Requirements concerning the client's organizational setting include general management support (Kilburg, 2001; Wasylyshyn, 2005; De Villiers & Botes, 2013); time and financial resources (Kilburg, 2001); and experimenting room and feedback in the organizational setting (Kilburg, 2001). Additionally, the coaching programs and selected coaches should be in alignment with the organization's general business strategy and culture (De Villiers & Botes, 2013). With respect to the coachees' attributes, it is emphasized that coachees must be committed to (Kilburg, 2001); ready for (De Villiers & Botes, 2013); or prepared for (De Haan et al., 2019) coaching. This commitment, however, is considered dynamic and open for development (Wasylyshyn, 2005; Lee, 2010). A coach's requirements include a supportive organizational (Kilburg, 2001) and professional (Gray, 2006) setting. They are also expected to be committed (Kilburg, 2001); emotionally intelligent (Wasylyshyn, 2005); and show courage; integrity; empathy; flexibility; self-control; genuineness; self-awareness; tolerance of conflict; adaptive to the goals and the coachee's preferences; and unconditional positive regard (De Villiers & Botes, 2013). The coach's educational background should preferably include both 'people' and 'business' expertise (De Villiers & Botes, 2013; Wasylyshyn, 2005; Hoffman, 2012).

With respect to *coaching process resources*, the importance of a good working relationship is often emphasized (Kilburg, 2001; De Haan et al, 2019; Wasylyshyn, 2005; Lee, 2010). Following this, matching is best done by the coachees themselves (De Haan et al., 2019) and trust needs to be built deliberately (Wasylyshyn, 2005; Lee, 2010). The importance of meeting regularity (Schnell, 2005; Wasylyshyn, 2005) and possible coach roles (Gray, 2006) point to designing the coaching engagement specifically. In relation to the coach's specific educational background and academic discipline, there is a great variety of interventions and tools available, such as: working with transference (Hoffman, 2012; Vanheule & Arnaud, 2016); Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Gestalt therapy,

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Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (Gray, 2006); and various influencing tactics (Lewis-Duarte & Bligh, 2012). The use of specific tools and techniques needs to be balanced with addressing the client's business needs (Hoffman, 2012); should be tailor-made (Wasylyshyn, 2005); and may evolve over time (Schnell, 2005). Coaching process (phase) models (Wasylyshyn, 2005; De Villiers & Botes, 2013; Chidiac et al., 2018) may be helpful when designing tailor-made coaching engagements.

With respect to *coaching outcomes,* it seems useful to address these in both business terms and personal learning terms, and how they may relate to each other (Wasylyshyn, 2005; Hoffman, 2012; Cilliers, 2018). De Villiers and Botes (2013) discern between four general outcome types: affective; cognitive; self-awareness; and performance. Lastly, with respect to sustaining the effect of coaching, Kilburg (2001) offers several suggestions for consideration, both when starting and during a coaching engagement.

9.5 Theoretical Implications

The review described in this chapter is an exploratory contribution to the field of coaching management consultants in the context of facilitating (complex) organizational change. This review's contribution to generative theory (e.g., Gergen, 1978), as a part of this PhD thesis' contribution to theorizing, is a model of related 'building blocks' for a coaching engagement. This model, intended as actionable knowledge (e.g., Coghlan & Shani, 2018), may facilitate the crafting and description of tailor-made coaching processes for management consultants and possibly other professional service providers. In chapter 10, I use this model to describe the practice named Relational Coaching for Management Consultants, which is developed in this thesis. In chapter 11, I present the theoretical implications of this PhD thesis as a whole.

Further, this review has shown a void in studies centering on the topic of personal development possibilities for management consultants, with regard to stakeholder interaction.

Many of the papers that have contributed to the results of this review, centered on executive coaching, prompting the question of differences and similarities between coaching executives, managers, and management consultants. Theoretical advancements around that very question would enable more refined differentiation among the theorizing on the types of coachees and their possible specific and other coaching needs or opportunities. In the next chapters, much more will be added about theorizing in this realm.

9.6 Practical Implications

The results from this review have several practical implications with respect to coaching effectiveness, for various coaching stakeholders.

First, Figure 7 can be used to inform *professional coaches* about the 'building blocks' of a coaching engagement which require attention when designing tailor-made development opportunities. It also offers language which may be used to communicate about their services with their clients and supporting organizations. Further, the results of this study may elicit themes for reflecting on their practice, and seeking possibilities for improving it, for example through training, or adjusting their professional conduct.

Second, (potential) *coachees* may benefit from the same 'building blocks' with respect to finding potentially fitting coaches and making an informed decision in the matching process. They can, for example, ask the coach critical questions about their educational background; preferred use of resources; flexibility in their approach; and expertise in the specific area of their coaching questions.

Third, *supporting organizations* (e.g., coachees' leaders and HR professionals), may benefit from this study with respect to contracting coaches. First, by getting potential coachees to do the matching themselves. Second, by discussing the coaching needs, readiness, and conditions before actually contacting a coach. Third, by making sure that the pre-selected coaches, who are aligned with the organizational strategy and culture, are available and periodically evaluated.

As noted, the results mostly concern executive coaching, which prompts the question of their relevance for the coaching of management consultants. How can the results of this study contribute to studying coaching of management consultants, in the specific context of facilitating organizational change? This is why I have articulated topics and questions for future research, which I will present after discussing this review's limitations.

9.7 Limitations

Although this review offers some interesting results, the study has some limitations.

First, as discussed, some of the included papers used the same terms for 'coach' and 'consultant' but with a different attributed meaning. This may lead to conceptual fuzziness. To deal with this, we created Figure 5 to make sense of the concepts in each paper

in the context of the review purpose. At the same time, one could argue that possibly interesting papers did not show up in our search if they had used 'another term'[109] for the 'same meaning.' However, in my view, applying 'related words' and 'equivalent subjects' as search options in our electronic searches, sufficiently reduced this risk.

A second limitation concerns the methodological quality of the selected papers. We did not assess the quality of the selected papers ourselves. Using the search criteria 'peer reviewed articles only' and 'approved doctoral dissertations' in the electronic searches was assumed to assure the paper's quality. Typically, a semi-systematic review aims to identify and analyze relevant academic knowledge. In this review, I intended to offer an overview of related previous studies and identify commonalities between their contributions, not to critique individual studies (Snyder, 2019). We followed Keijser et al. (2016) who argued: "given that the data analysis was done on words and phrases, valuable insights from methodologically "weaker" but conceptually sound articles would otherwise have been lost" (p. 334).

Third, as noted, this review was carried out with the particular purpose of locating and articulating actionable knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2018, 2021) resulting from an action research project. This study was not designed to identify theory gaps to be filled by subsequent empirical research. As a consequence, this review may have limited value for researchers who seek to identify theoretical advancements or theory gaps.

9.8 Future Research

Notwithstanding the limitations of the literature review, this study has generated some possibilities for future research. First and foremost, I would really welcome more studies into the practice of coaching management consultants in the context of facilitating (complex) organizational change. As coaching in general seems a well-studied area, I would suggest future studies take this specific context focus (given that not a single paper addressed this topic). Given the relevance of my action research study, as articulated in chapter 2 and the apparent scholarly interest in executive coaching and facilitating group work in organizations, I expect that such studies will contribute to both science and practice in the fields of coaching, management consulting, and organizational change. Figure 7 may generate various areas for future research. Currently, I would be interested in the following topics and questions:
1. Challenges addressed by management consultants. What do management consultants experience as challenging when facilitating organizational change in their

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109 For example: mentoring or therapy, although these have been defined as having different purposes, depth, and professional requirements (e.g., Peterson, 2011; De Haan & Burger, 2017).

client organizations? What do they struggle with? Which related (types of) coaching questions do they bring to a coaching engagement?

2. Outcomes and effect of coaching. Which (types of) outcomes do such coaching engagements generate? What effects do management consultants experience or expect to experience on realizing these outcomes when working with their clients?

3. Coaching process. How do coaches and management consultants craft their journey? Which resources do they employ? Which disciplines inform their coaching practice? More specifically, the recognition, practical use and experienced value of the 'building blocks' model of a coaching engagement could be explored.

4. Requirements. Which effective coaching requirements (e.g., with respect to the coachee, the coach, and the supporting organization) are at play in the specific area of coaching management consultants, in the context of facilitating organization change?

5. Executive coaching 'versus' coaching management consultants. Which differences and similarities can be identified between executive coaching and the coaching of management consultants in this specific context? Which consequences do these similarities and differences have for professional coaching practice, for example in terms of the seven themes depicted in Figure 7?

I expect that the specific directions future studies may take will be guided by the general scientific interests of the researchers' research orientations (for example, McNamee, 2014; Coghlan & Shani, 2018). As noted by McNamee (2014), researchers within a more traditional quantitative research paradigm will probably be interested in discovering universal truths, and cause and effect mechanisms. More traditional qualitative interpretative oriented researchers may pursue generating contextualized knowledge and multiple realities; and social constructionist researchers are probably interested in generating new (local) realities. As noted in chapter 3, a shift from competing over 'the best' research orientation toward collaborating and valuing different contributions of each paradigm, is called for. This could result in a variety of study designs and contributions following the abovementioned suggestions for future research. In chapter 10, I present my contribution to the fields of coaching, management consulting, organizational change, and relational action research; based on the empirical studies which are described in part II of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 10

Articulating the Practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants

From a relational perspective, the client's problems can be seen as a communally constructed problem, rather than an individual's problem. This invites a shift of the focus from distantly evaluating, diagnosing, and relying on expert knowledge, to cooperatively constructing a narrative account about the client's problem.

(McNamee, 1992)

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my contribution to theory and professional practice. To refresh the reader's memory, in chapter 2 I noted that my aim in doing this action research study was to help management consultants reflect and grow, and then describe my way of working to make it a potential resource for others. I expect that making these direct and indirect contributions may benefit management consulting practice and theory, for example, ultimately improving the success rate of organizational change initiatives. As a scholar-practitioner, I was interested in how personal coaching, informed by the therapeutic knowledgebase, as described in chapter 4, could contribute to reflecting on the learning questions and experiences of management consultants in relation to stakeholder interaction. I was also interested in the possible transformations related to the questions and experiences which management consultants bring to the coaching; how we could co-create different ways to go on in dealing with their challenges; and how management consultants utilize what they have learned in the coaching sessions in practice. I consider this aim and these research questions both scholarly and practically relevant. It became apparent from the scholarly literature that possibilities for improving the facilitation of organizational change by management consultants seem, at the least, to lie in supporting collaboration, which requires self-awareness (e.g., Boonstra, 2000, 2004b; Werkman, 2006; Ardon, 2009). Interviews with expert practitioners supplemented this relevance from the perspective of professional practice, as most of the experts explicitly noted the possible contribution of the management consultants' personal transformation to facilitating organizational change.

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In this chapter, I articulate a potentially transformative practice for management consultants, to help them reflect on their role as a facilitator of (complex) organizational change processes. This practice was developed through my action research project, using multiple data streams (coaching journeys; coaching follow-up; mixed-method evaluation; concept evaluation; literature reviews; and expert-interviews). The various chapters in part II, in which I detail and study the action research project, offer a thick description (e.g., Erlandson et al., 1993) of process and outcomes, thereby contributing to the transferability of the developed practice to other contexts. In the current chapter, I offer a more conceptual description of the developed practice, in relation to relevant literature and in relation to the experts' voice (see section 2.3). In doing so, I intend to make a contribution to generative theory (Gergen, 1978, 1982). By now, it will be clear to the reader that this thesis is not about identifying common issues in management consulting with respect to stakeholder interaction, which are representative of larger groups of management consultants. Rather, this thesis documents a possibly transformative process that provokes one to think reflexively about stakeholder interaction in management consulting. In this context, reported issues and coaching outcomes in this

thesis should be considered examples instead of 'generalizable facts'. As noted, I consider this study of coaching for management consultants in the context of facilitating organization change an early contribution.

In this chapter, I first briefly refresh the reader's memory with respect to generative theory and the particular kind of contribution to theory that I seek to make. Second, in section 10.3, I offer a theoretical framework for relational coaching in general, which serves as the groundwork for the developed practice and possibly for future research endeavors. Third, in section 10.4, I present the concept of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants as my contribution to academic progress. Finally, in section 10.5 I discuss reflexivity and becoming a reflexive practitioner, for which the concept of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants may be a resource.

10.2 Contributing to Generative Theory

Briefly refreshing the reader's memory regarding social construction and relational action research is important because of differences compared to theory and contributions to theory from a more traditional research approach. In chapter 3, I reflected on the emergence of social construction as an alternative scientific approach, and on relational action research as a means to making more direct contributions to the world. I have presented Gergen's arguments about why the social sciences, compared to the natural sciences, have only offered limited contributions to the world (1973, 1978, 1982, 2015b, 2020a). In sum, Gergen's arguments imply that knowledge cannot accumulate in the traditional scientific sense because the social sciences study phenomena that are largely nonrepeatable and which fluctuate over time. As general laws of human interaction are misdirected and unjustified (Gergen, 1973), the author proposes social construction, as an alternative metatheory, as the greatest step to generative theorizing (Gergen, 1982). Moving from describing 'what is the case' (i.e., generalized pronouncements of truth) to performing 'future forming research' (i.e., active achievements), may lead to the return of the optimism that social sciences can actually contribute to solving problems. Gergen (2015b) considers action research particularly promising in this respect. He challenges us to reverse the preoccupation of the social sciences with the role of truth making and "to undertake research as a form of social action, with the words following after" (Gergen, 2015b, p. 307). In chapter 3, I also noted that action research projects are situation specific and not aimed at creating universal knowledge (Coghlan & Shani, 2018). This is clearly related to the idea that action research starts with real organizational issues as opposed to filling a theory gap. However, action research may very well contribute to knowledge accumulation through extrapolating from a local situation to more general situations (Coghlan & Shani, 2018); drawing from preceding research practices; and shar-

ing their narratives with the wider community (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 2008; Bradbury et al., 2019). By sharing my action research narrative with the wider community, I intend to make such a (generative) contribution to knowledge accumulation. First, by articulating the developed practice and its groundwork in this chapter, and extrapolating beyond its particular context. Second, by offering a thick description (e.g., Erlandson et al., 1993) in the preceding chapters of how I developed this practice. This contribution to theory and professional practice is not so much a how-to recipe for action, but an invitation "to borrow, hybridize and reformulate as needed in one's unique circumstances" (McNamee, Gergen, Camargo-Borges & Rasera, 2020, p. xxxiii).

10.3 Coaching as Social Construction: Philosophical Orientations for Practicing Relational Coaching

In addition to centering on relationships between management consultants and the various stakeholders with whom they engage, the developed practice is deeply relational because it has a foundation in social construction. Following McNamee and Sawver (2004), an interesting question is what it means, and what we do when we approach coaching as a process of social construction. To me, this is a relevant question given the topic of this dissertation and the social constructionist approach to it, which I introduced in chapter 3. When reflecting on this question, I found the therapy and supervision work by (among others) Sheila McNamee, Kenneth Gergen, and Harlene Anderson useful. John Shotter's and Reinhard Stelter's work on coaching also offered useful insights. I will address differences and similarities between therapy and coaching in section 10.4. In the current section, I articulate what I consider the groundwork of any relational coaching practice, including Relational Coaching for Management Consultants.

Philosophical stance, not theory or method
When I refer to coaching as a process of social construction, this is intended as a philosophical stance, not as a model or method. As McNamee (2021) notes, it is not that some therapies (or ways of coaching the context of this dissertation) are constructionist and others are not-constructionist. Rather, some therapies are more coherent with an individualist view, focusing on analyzing and transforming an individual's attitudes, traits, behaviors, and beliefs. Social construction, however, "assumes that problems or issues that bring people to therapy are emerging aspects of ongoing and continuously unfolding processes of relating" (McNamee, 2021, p. 13). Such philosophical differences have important consequences. In a modernist approach, therapists would distantly evaluate and diagnose the client's problems by general, culturally significant criteria while, in a relational orientation, the client and therapist engage cooperatively in constructing a narrative about the client's problems (McNamee, 1992). The former approach has been

referred to as inviting dehumanizing practices related to centering expert knowledge, while the latter is oriented to rehumanizing dialogic practice. In such a practice, the client and therapist (or coach) collaboratively construct generative ways to go on, from an active attentiveness to the process of relating (McNamee, 2015d). This is what McNamee (2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2016) refers to as 'radical presence'. According to McNamee (2015b, 2015d, 2016) radical presence positions us to appreciate a relational understanding of the world, and focus on coordinating (understanding) its complexities, rather than eliminating complexity through expert diagnosis. In terms of what is ethical or moral, McNamee and Gergen (1999) replace individual responsibility with relational responsibility, and focus on sustaining continuous meaning making processes when confronted with competing values[110].

Harlene Anderson also prefers to speak of a philosophy rather than a theory (2012, 2020, 2023). Philosophy refers to continuously being puzzled with questions about self, identity, agency, mind, relationships (Anderson & Gehart, 2007); and to "a *way of being with* versus a system of doing for, to, or about" (Anderson, 2012, p.13). This includes the way a therapist or coach thinks, talks, acts, orients, connects, and responds with the other. In contrast, a theory is viewed as "agreed-upon knowledge that, in turn, informs methods" (Anderson & Gehart, 2007, p. xix). Theory refers to an "explanatory map that informs, predicts, and yields standardized procedures, structured steps, categories etc." (Anderson, 2012, p.13). Anderson (2012) discusses six orienting principles for practicing therapy from this approach, which emerged over the past decades as a response to a growing uneasiness with therapy practices based on inherited traditions. These assumptions are: 1) meta-narratives and knowledge are not fundamental and definitive; 2) generalizing dominant discourses, meta-narratives, and universal truths is seductive and risky; 3) knowledge and language are relational, generative social processes; 4) local knowledge is privileged; 5) dialog, knowledge, and language are inherently transforming; 6) self is a relational-dialogical concept. Later in this section, I present Anderson's translation of these orienting assumptions into actionable features of this philosophical stance, which may serve to navigate therapeutic or coaching conversations. Anderson (2007, 2012, 2020, 2023) offers these features in an attempt to articulate similarities in collaborative, dialogical therapy (or coaching) from one situation or person to the next. Different from applying theory-informed standard procedures, these similarities concern how we engage with others, and develop a relationship which influences the kind and quality of conversations that we can have. In turn, our conversations will influence the kind and quality of our relationships.

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110 Gergen (2009) argues that everything that is considered ethical and moral, is established in relationship (first-order morality). As multi-beings (Gergen, 2009), people are part of multiple relationships, resulting in "myriad traditions of the good" (p. 358). Committing to one value (or first-order morality) may result in violating another, which led McNamee and Gergen (1999) to recognizing a collective responsibility for sustaining the potentials of coordinated action. In this respect, Gergen (2009) proposes processes of second-order morality, which are collaborative activities that restore the possibility of generating first-order morality (p. 364). According to the author, dialog, for example, is a practice which places care for the relationship before care of oneself.

This collaborative way of being, as articulated by Anderson (2007), is acknowledged as central in a recent orientation to coaching (Stelter & Law, 2010). As Stelter (2021) notes, the relational attitude of the coach is what counts in what he refers to as 'third-generation coaching' (Stelter, 2019, 2021; Stelter & Law, 2010), or coaching as a narrative-collaborative practice (Stelter & Law, 2010). Stelter's third generation coaching has a basis in phenomenology and social construction.

From 'the mind' to the conversation

When we consider coaching as a process of social construction, we shift from a focus on 'the mind' to a focus on the conversation, or in other words, we focus on the interactive processes, rather than problems 'inside the individual' (McNamee, 2021). From a relational perspective, the client's problems can be seen as a communally constructed problem, rather than an individual's problem (McNamee, 1992). This invites a shift of the focus from distantly evaluating, diagnosing, and relying on expert knowledge, to cooperatively constructing a narrative account about the client's problem (ibid.). As noted earlier, a relational orientation assumes that the coachee's problems or issues emerge from ongoing and continuously unfolding processes of relating (McNamee, 2021). Through Figure 2 in chapter 3, McNamee (2014) offers a useful relational approach to how people develop patterns and worldviews, through coordinating activities with each other. In coordinating their activities with each other, people develop rituals and patterns, which generate standards and expectations which we use in assessing our own and other's actions. Once in place, these standards and expectations generate a moral order, or what we believe to be real (dominant discourse).

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As noted in section 5.1, we focus on the narratives that clients bring to the coaching conversation which relate to their problems or coaching questions. Similar to relational therapy (McNamee & Gergen, 1992), in the pursuit of transformation, coachee and coach work to co-create new, more satisfactory 'stories', in ways that recognize their social, relational character. This could take the form of replacing one story with a different one, referred to as first-order re-storying (Gergen & Kaye, 1992), or first-order change (McNamee & Sawver, 2004; McNamee, 2015a). However, learning at Bateson's higher levels of learning (Gergen & Kaye, 1992) or, second-order change (McNamee & Sawver, 2004; McNamee, 2015a) may also be possible. When that occurs, learning moves toward developing new categories of meaning, or transforming one's premises of meaning itself (Gergen & Kaye, 1992); or moving from substituting one action with a similar one (maintaining the overall pattern of meaning), to changing entire patterns (McNamee & Sawver, 2004; McNamee, 2015a). In this sense, understanding the client's story and how this makes sense to him or her, without accepting or confirming its premises, may contribute to transformation (Gergen & Kaye, 1992; see also Hosking, 2004; Hosking & McNamee, 2006).

The relational approach is different from the individualist or modernist approach in that it privileges what is happening in conversation over the practitioner's techniques. By focusing on dialogue rather than on individuals, psyches, problems, or relationships, separated from the processes that constructed them, a therapist or coach is open to any method. This pluralist stance (McNamee, 2021) is different from taking theoretical models as incommensurate or competing. The coordinated respect for all models sets the stage for all of them to be potentially viable and generative when working with clients. As to which model may resonate with a particular client is uncertain ahead of time. A relational practice in this sense, "is to characterize any theory or technique as an option for action rather than an essential truth or means toward truth" (McNamee & Sawver, 2004, p. 262). Any theory or model becomes, in this view, a potential resource for transformation, rather than a tool that will cause transformation. By understanding coaching as a conversational process, we can never be certain where it will go. Working from a relational approach, a coach will not impose their way of working on their client or make the client see their problems through an expert's view. The coach focuses on how they may bring particular forms of practice or knowledge into the conversation, rather than on what these practices or concepts may be (McNamee & Sawver, 2004).

According to McNamee (2021), the abovementioned pluralism contrasts the taken-for-granted view that competent professionals are typically well trained in a particular model and can apply it effectively. By taking a pluralist stance, we become curious about what might be effective in a specific therapy or coaching situation. "Using a particular model of therapy because it has been empirically demonstrated to be effective might have little to do with whether or not that model will be 'effective' with a particular client […]" (McNamee, 2021, p. 15). Change is not made possible by a model. An unfolding relational process that is attentive, curious, and responsive invites change. In this approach, any theory or model becomes a potential resource for transformation, as we tune in to the interactive moment that is open and indeterminate, and which has the uncertainty of any other conversation.

Conversational resources

The postmodern idea that a person is in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction (Gergen, 1991) elicits the potential of dialogue or conversation in therapy and coaching. Put differently, social construction as a philosophical stance brings us to the interactive moment where transformation might be possible (McNamee & Sawver, 2004). In this subsection, I present some conversational resources offered by Sheila McNamee, Harlene Anderson, John Shotter, and Reinhard Stelter. On a pragmatic level, these conversational resources may be beneficial to the interactive moment and, as such, may possibly be beneficial for transformation.

McNamee (2015d) offers six conversational themes to achieve the humanizing practices of the aforementioned radical presence: 1) Use familiar resources in unfamiliar places: in order to invite clients into something other than the same old unwanted story, coaches may draw on the various voices, views, and opinions people carry with them[111] instead of doing what they think is the professional thing to do; 2) Focus on the future: embrace the uncertain potential of the future, not to abandon any interest in the past, but to prevent the reification of stories of the past; 3) Languaging the ideal: ask how things ideally would have been in the present if the past had been ideal, which honors a painful client story and, without further pathologizing, can serve as a bridge between stories of despair and stories of hope; 4) Avoid speaking from abstract positions: being generatively curious about the story of who influenced the client in honoring and valuing certain beliefs and practices opens the space for a different story, instead of using abstract or professional discourse of right/wrong, healthy/unhealthy, or good/bad; 5) Engage in reflexive inquiry: a) by being purposefully doubtful about our own certainties, which opens up the possibilities of alternative constructions and interactions; and b) engage in relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005) by inquiring into how the other is experiencing the conversation (see also Hosking & Pluut, 2010); 6) Coordinate multiplicity: can we coordinate multiple discourses and curiously explore their related values and beliefs, rather than looking for ways to move toward consensus?

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McNamee (2015d) acknowledges that the reflective practice of radical presence comes with uncertainty, which she refers to as 'generative uncertainty'. It encourages us to be responsive to the interactive moment. The professional is liberated from being 'right' and is, instead, required to be present and responsive. The professional can be responsive by using the ability to move in and out of theories, techniques, or conversational themes, and view them as practical options for action (McNamee & Sawver, 2004; McNamee, 2015a). This pluralist stance invites us to be present in the moment, and opens a space for a generative use of a wide array of methods and models (McNamee, 2021), and for context-sensitive decisions about 'what is ethical' (McNamee, 2015a). McNamee (2015a, 2021) suggests a continuous reflection on the collaborative process, and our contributions to it, through the following questions (Pearce, 2007):

- What are we making together?
- How are we making it?
- Who are we becoming as we make this?
- How can we make better social worlds?

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111 In this respect, Gergen (2009, 2015a) speaks of multi-being: "From every relationship there emerges a residue or resource in the form of potential actions (e.g., language, emotional expressions, scenario movements), any of which (alone or in combination), may be activated in the moment. The person is essentially constituted, then, by a multiplicity of relationships. Some relations leave residues that are well practiced, while others leave little but whispers of possibility" (2009, p. 149).

According to Anderson (2012), "collaborative relationship refers to how we orient ourselves to be, act, and respond so the other person shares the engagement and […] mutual inquiry" (p. 14). She refers to Shotter (1984) who suggests that we all live in joint action: meeting and interacting with one another in mutually responsive ways. By mutually influencing each other, our 'selves' cannot be separated from the relationship systems of which we are a part. As we are always responding, how we respond is critical if we aim to facilitate transformation, which invites the question of how we can invite and facilitate dialog. In response to this question, Anderson (2007, 2012, 2020, 2023) translated the beforementioned orienting assumptions into the following actionable features for the practitioner's philosophical stance, or way of being: 1) being hospitable and open to set the stage for mutual inquiry, to the benefit of the conversation; 2) relational expertise: creating local knowledge together from the local encounter; 3) taking a not-knowing approach and introducing expertise as a possibility, and in congruence with the current conversation; 4) being public about one's professional and personal thoughts to take part in an unbiased manner, and offering the client the possibility to respond ; 5) living with, and trusting the uncertainty of being in conversation, not with structures or preformed questions and strategies but being prepared to respond; 6) accept the transforming process as being mutually transforming, as each person is influenced by the other; 7) orienting toward everyday ordinary life rather than being constrained by discourses of pathology and dysfunction such as diagnoses (which may have an imprisoning effect and limit possibilities).

John Shotter offers another way of how we can engage with clients. Talking and thinking in conversation, from a 'withness perspective' rather than an 'aboutness perspective' (e.g., Shotter, 2005, 2006), allows practitioners "uniquely to affect the flow of processes from within their own unique living involvements with them" (Shotter, 2005, abstract). This is different from the more common thinking and talking about process from outside, from happening 'over there.' According to Shotter (2006), withness (or dialogic) thinking and talking "occurs in those reflective interactions that involve our coming into living, interactive contact with an other's living being, with their utterances, with their bodily expressions, with their words, their 'works'" (p. 600). Contrarily, aboutness (or monologic) thinking and talking "is unresponsive to another's expressions; it works simply in terms of an individual thinker's 'theoretical pictures', which they must try to 'get across' to us in their talk — but, even when we 'get the picture', i.e., their picture, we still have to interpret it to suit our circumstances, and to decide, intellectually, on a right course of action" (p. 599). Drawing on Shotter's work, Anderson (2012) notes that the encounter between client and therapist becomes less hierarchical; the process more mutual; and the outcome locally tailored. In such encounters, therapists are being spontaneously responsive to a person and to unfolding events, knowing and acting from within the moment. As a possibility to achieve a less hierarchical and more mutual

encounter, the therapist or coach may share personal stories from their own lived experience to open up the dialogue (McNamee & Sawver, 2004). Such stories are not told in a mode of self-depreciation, but in the spirit of inviting the client to fully engage.

Withness thinking and talking may increase the possibility of being 'arrested' or 'moved' by what the other is saying (Katz & Shotter, 1996). When practitioners respond to such arresting moments, they may invite clients to express or live out what is important for them. According to the authors, the occurrence of such arresting moments between people creates new possibilities that would not be found solely in theory and intellectual reflection in that very moment.

Stelter's (2019) third generation coaching shifts away from specific problems or goals which may put the coach in an expert position (Stelter & Law, 2010), or from a narrow focus on performance optimization (Stelter, 2021) toward offering a reflective space beyond everyday challenges, through conversations that are more collaborative and symmetrical (Stelter & Law, 2010). Starting from the individually experienced reality and meaning, the coachee and coach collaboratively seek more uplifting reconstructions of narratives through dialog. A third generation coaching dialog typically features 1) a focus on values that are grounded in local practices and events, and which govern a coachee's actions; 2) giving opportunities for making meaning through linking stories to past experiences and future expectations; and 3) making space for the unfolding of narratives to help the coachee further develop their stories and (perhaps) alternatives (Stelter, 2009, 2019, 2021; Stelter & Law, 2010).

10.4 The Practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants

In this section, I present the practice which I developed through the action research project, and as an elaboration of the presented groundwork in section 10.3. Relational Coaching for Management Consultants is designed as a potentially transforming practice and a reflective space for Management Consultants, with respect to questions they encounter when relating with stakeholders in their (client) organizations. The development of this practice was inspired by the key importance of communication and collaboration in organizational change work, as discussed in section 2.2; through relational theory (social constructionist ideas); and through the particular resources available to me as a practitioner (see section 4.4). As a general structure to describe this practice, I use the seven themes from chapter 9, which I have identified as 'building blocks' of a coaching engagement (see Figure 8).
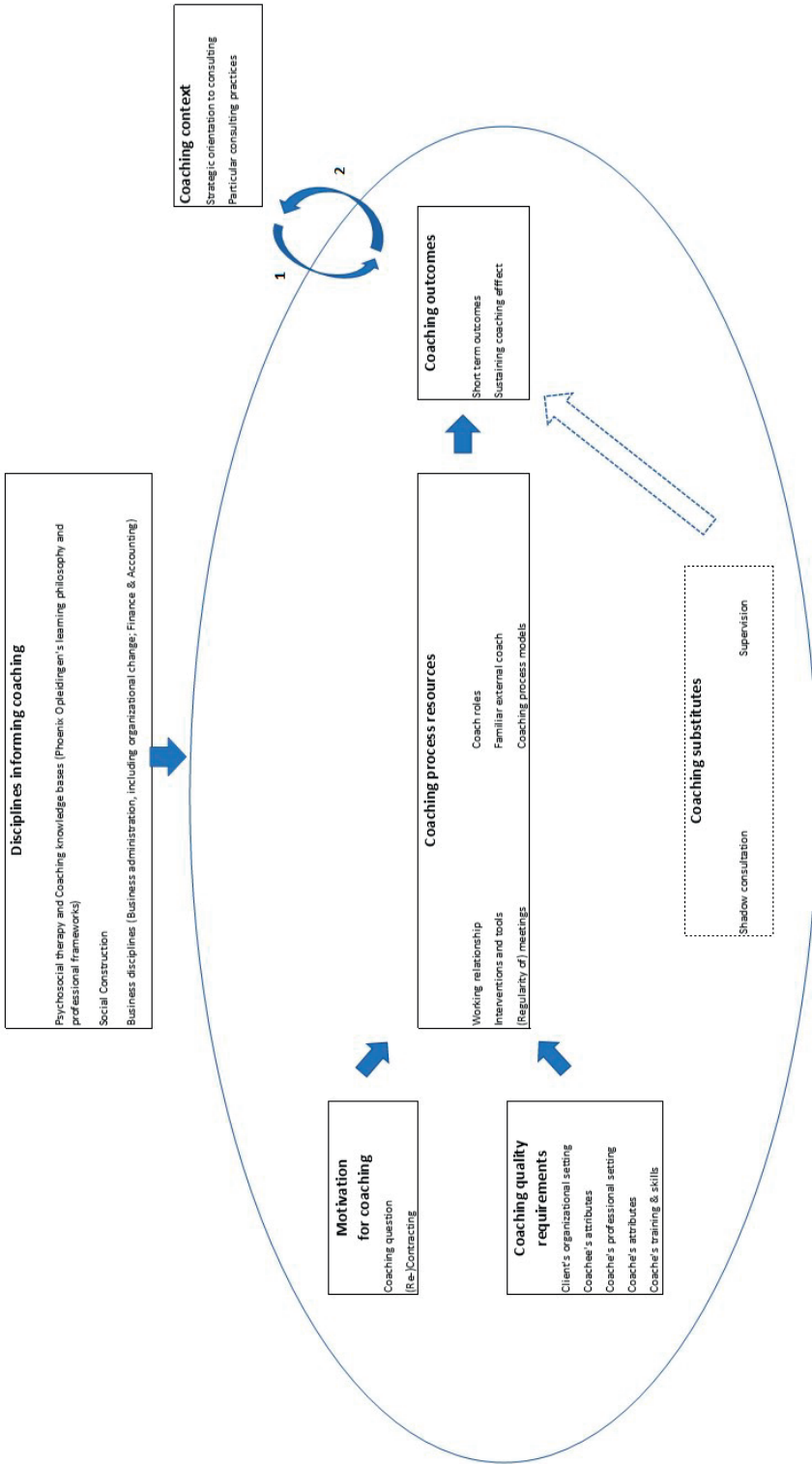
Figure 8: 'Building blocks' of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants

Below, I discuss this figure and address each theme. I also refer to earlier chapters for more details. As the seven coaching practice themes are connected and intersect, some descriptions may seem repetitive, although the levels of detail are clearly different. Furthermore, some of the 'Coaching quality requirements' building block items may, unintentionally, suggest a more individualist approach (e.g., coachee's attributes and coaches' attributes). For clarity reasons, I have split up the description of the Coaching context theme. I first address context as an origin of coaching questions (part one) and, at the end of this section, I address context as the 'recipient' of the generated coaching outcomes (part two).

0.   Coaching context, part one

Strategic importance of personal competencies
Although the motivation for engaging in coaching (see theme 2 below) may be considered a personal motivation, the consulting firm's strategic orientation to consulting (including key drivers and values as described in section 4.2) may very well influence this motivation. As noted in section 4.2, the particular management consulting firm with which I collaborated facilitates change processes which require good collaboration. At least some of their projects may be identified as third- or second-order-change processes (Van Dongen et al., 1996; Boonstra, 2000, 2002). The specific strategic orientation of this particular firm can be regarded as more 'relation driven' (coming in with a clean sheet, building relationships, and creating something collaboratively) than 'method driven' (intentionally creating a knowledge gap between clients and consultants, running a standard consulting process, and telling clients what to do). This strategic orientation strongly relies on the management consultants' personal competencies rather than centering on their expert knowledge. More specifically, as noted in section 7.2, since collaborating with their client stakeholders requires engagement with them on a personal level, the management consultants' personal skills become an important means for effective consulting. The professional experts in organizational change and therapy mentioned in chapter 2 suggested that management consultants' personal development may contribute to facilitating organizational change by: including themselves in the process (Moerkerken, personal communication, 29 July 2020); being aware of how their psychological issues relate to stakeholder interaction (Van Oss, personal communication, 16 September, 2020); and recognizing how personal components have relational effects (Spanjersberg, personal communication, 22 September 2020). In addition, learning how their life stories influence their facilitation of organizations, may result in more room to act (Woudenberg, personal communication, 26 October 2020). Personal development may contribute to the consultant being more 'with the people,' possibly increasing the chance of success of organizational change initiatives (Van Lawick, personal communication, 21 October 2020).

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Of course, a different strategic orientation may require different 'typical' consulting abilities (such as being able to offer state of the art expert knowledge in more 'method driven' firms). In this developed practice, coaching questions (see below under 'Motivation for coaching') originate from the context of the participant's consulting practice. Examples of particularities in these contexts, at the start of the coaching journey, include:

- Questioning the personal fit with management consulting as a profession;
- Experiencing difficulties in utilizing learnings from previous consulting projects;
- Consulting in a large client organization (with peers) for the first time;
- Recently being promoted to managing consultant;
- Experiencing difficulties with performing in a new role within the consulting firm;
- Struggling with ones positioning in meetings in the client organization;
- Annual performance review suggesting that further professional development should focus on personal development rather than on expert-knowledge.

(see section 5.4).

1.   Disciplines informing coaching

Knowledge bases from various disciplines have informed the developed coaching practice. First, central to my professional training as a psychosocial therapist and coach have been a) Phoenix Opleidingen's learning philosophy, which underpins learning and working with clients by focusing on: a context for learning; learning from life itself; the way of man and related key themes in life; the encounter as a learning landscape; being the instrument; and ethical guidance based on values (see section 4.3.1); and b) Phoenix Opleidingen's many professional frameworks, which are conceptualized from a wide range of schools of thought, such as: systemic practice; transactional analysis; neuro linguistic programing; voice dialogue; gestalt therapy; and phenomenology (see section 4.3.2). A second discipline which informs this coaching practice is social construction which, in general, considers everything that we call 'real' and 'good' as a byproduct of people coordinating their activities (see section 3.3). In particular, social constructionist ideas about therapy and coaching, as described in section 10.3, inform this relational coaching practice. Third, as noted in section 4.3, two business disciplines (business administration, including organizational change; and finance & accounting) contribute to relating to the management consultants' contexts; to what they encounter there; and to co-constructing alternative ways to dealing with their challenges.

A note about differences and similarities between therapy and coaching is in place, since the developed practice is informed by therapeutic knowledge bases (among others), while the management consultants applied for coaching. Although Grant and Green (2018) draw distinctions between coaching and counseling or psychotherapy, they also see connections. One distinction centers on 'who the client is,' rather than on 'how the coaching or counseling is conducted.' As the authors note, coaching is not therapy, in

the sense that coaches work with clients outside the psychiatric or clinical population (see also, Theeboom, Beersma & Van Vianen, 2014; Cavicchia & Gilbert, 2019). The management consultants who participated in the development of this practice were not knowingly associated with these populations. However, according to Grant and Green (2018), therapists may very well be positioned to offer developmental coaching (which differs from skills coaching and performance coaching). According to these authors, developmental coaching is like "therapy for people who don't need therapy" (p. 348) and often addresses the "more intimate questions of personal and professional development" (p. 348). This requires a personal reflective space to explore issues, options, and possible actions in a confidential, supportive environment (Grant & Green, 2018). The herein developed practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants may be positioned in this main coaching typology and, as such, may benefit from the 'therapeutic domain.' Peterson (2011) also notes similarities (in addition to differences) between coaching and therapy, as various therapeutic traditions have contributed to the coaching literature and practice (see for example, Wasylyshyn, 2005; Gray, 2006; Hoffman, 2012; Vanheule & Arnaud, 2016; Cavicchia & Gilbert, 2019).

2. *Motivation for coaching*

Coaching question
Taking a relational orientation, we assume that coaching questions "are emerging aspects of ongoing and continuously unfolding processes of relating" (McNamee, 2021, p. 13). In other words: what and how we learn in life relates to multiple fields of relations in which we grow up (Veenbaas et al., 2019). Coherent with the strategic importance of personal competencies of this particular consulting firm, the coaching questions are centered on relating with the stakeholders in the consulting context. Examples of (initial) coaching goals and struggles are: dealing with politics; communicating and collaborating more effectively; increasing self-awareness and reflection skills; balancing other people's perspectives and their own intuitions and feelings; balancing expert knowledge and process skills; leaving room for others and not taking over responsibilities; keeping a more professional distance; engaging in discussions and arguments with more confidence; dealing with leadership more effectively; and dealing with issues and tendencies such as perfectionism, and being strict with themselves; preference to work with men over women; experiencing themselves as immature sometimes; pleasing others; and coordinating conflicting values (see section 5.2).

Consultants' reasons for participating in a coaching follow-up may include: a general desire to keep developing; consolidating previous coaching outcomes; applying previous learnings in a different context; and positive expectations of using the reflective journal. Having a particular focus when using the reflective journal is advised, for example with

respect to reflecting on both common feedback and persistent patterns, and moving forward in a useful way; or particular topics such as leadership, collaboration, expressing negative experiences, and maintaining ones workability (see section 6.3).

(Re-)contracting

Contracting a coaching engagement occurs at the organization level, where the consulting firm is the coachee's employer and the coach's client, and at each individual management consultant's level. As noted by Cavicchia and Gilbert (2019), the coach needs to deal with the tension of serving both the organization and the individual client. At firm level, the coaching offered in this particular project was designed as a tailor-made development opportunity, in relation to their strategic orientation and other development opportunities. This contracting included terms and conditions for participation, as coordinated with the consulting firm partner with HR responsibilities (see section 4.3 and appendix 2).

When contracting the initial coaching journey at the individual management consultant's level, it is important to address roles and expectations (see chapter 8; see also Kilburg, 2001). In this study's particular context, the contracting consisted of inviting management consultants who met the criteria to respond to the offer; inviting them to write about their goals and coaching questions; offering them an initial experience in a first session (intake), and being able to decide afterwards whether to continue (see section 5.2). Coaching questions may develop over time (e.g., Schnell, 2005) or even be absent at the beginning (Lee, 2010). As the coaching relationship develops, and parallels between the coaching question and other contexts (e.g., private life, coachee's upbringing) are becoming clear (Veenbaas & Weisfelt, 1999), re-contracting may shift the focus from 'solving particular problems in a specific context', to 'working toward script change' (see section 5.2). Or, as Stelter and Law (2010) note, the coaching shifts away from specific problems or goals, toward offering a reflective space beyond everyday challenges. When re-contracting, the following insights and topics may be at play, inviting 'deeper learning' beyond the immediate context of the initial coaching question.

- Developed patterns in the coachees' lives, and how they affect the difficulties experienced in their consulting practice;
- Becoming aware of parallels between acting in a family and organization;
- Starting to look behind the goals the management consultant had set. Why are they important?;
- Starting to address the question also from a personal perspective, rather than strictly a business one;
- Becoming interested in how certain experiences in the consulting practice relate to the consultant's life story;

- Going from 'wanting to get rid of what bothered the consultant,' toward 'understanding the personal life story and how the consultant could relate to that' (see section 5.4).

The coaching follow-up, aimed at making a direct contribution to the management consultant's practice by reflecting on utilizing their earlier learnings, is also contracted at both firm level and individual level. In this instance, I contracted with the same consulting firm partner and one of the participating management consultants. Following my invitation, contracting with individual management consultants was accomplished in a start-up conversation and focused on: reflecting on previous outcomes and developments; on their focus in the follow-up; and on practical matters around using the reflective journal and planning the 1.5-hour coaching session (see section 6.2).

3. Coaching process resources

Working relationship

From a relational perspective, coaches actively attend to the process of relating rather than centering expert knowledge (McNamee, 2015d), or actively attend to a certain way of being with the coachee, rather than doing to, for, or about the coachee from standard procedures (Anderson, 2012). Rather than pursuing a conversation based on professional discourse, one should engage in more everyday-like conversations, for which McNamee (2015d) and Anderson (e.g., 2007, 2012, 2023) offer several conversational resources. These resources can contribute to a working relationship from a radical presence (McNamee, 2015b, 2015d, 2016), witness thinking and talking (Shotter, 2005, 2006), relational responsibility (McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Gergen, 2009), and relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005; Hosking & Pluut, 2010). We consider the encounter as a learning landscape (Veenbaas et al., 2019) and utilize moments of 'being arrested or moved' (Katz & Shotter, 1996; Veenbaas et al., 2019). Applying the abovementioned conversational resources, and taking the time to create a dialogic space, can contribute to what the coachees may consider 'experiencing a personal click'.

The working relationship between a management consultant and coach is of key importance for coaching success (Kilburg, 2001; De Haan 2008; De Haan et al., 2019). This is why we deliberately offered a 'trial session' during the contracting phase. Further, conversations in this developed practice may be considered intensive, sometimes even unsettling, when the consultants start to deliberately change things they had become used to and worked effectively with. Sometimes, this personal 'looking in the mirror' can be different than expected and experienced as intensive, despite not being considered as psychologizing (section 5.5). In my study, the participating management consultants characterized our working relationship as: experiencing a personal click; experiencing conversations as pleasant, safe, and free from judgment; experiencing trust and room

to influence the process; stimulating curiosity; setting things in motion; and experiencing conversations as effective (section 5.5). It was appreciated 'how I positioned myself' (e.g., being honest and empathetic; showing confidence in the process (see section 5.5); being accepting, not judging; being an equal conversational partner and offering personal experiences to invite sharing (see section 8.3)); and 'the way I communicated' (e.g., listening very well; offering clarifying summaries; checking interpretations of personal stories (see section 5.5); offering honest feedback and practical resources (see section 8.5)).

Interventions and tools
Following Anderson (2012) and McNamee (2015d), in a relational approach: the encounter between the management consultants and coach becomes less hierarchical; the process more mutual; and the outcomes more locally tailored. In other words, unlike a modernist approach, relational coaching privileges what is happening in conversation over the coach's techniques (McNamee, 2021). According to this author, change is not made possible by a model but, instead, change is invited by an unfolding, relational process that is attentive and curious. Given the generative uncertainty (McNamee, 2015d) about where a particular coaching conversation will go, any theory or model becomes a potential resource. This pluralist stance requires a coordinated respect for all models; to be present in the moment; and a curiosity about what might be generative in a specific situation (McNamee, 2021). In this sense, Veenbaas et al. (2019) speak of interventions emerging from the interaction: 'the encounter as the mother of all interventions'. These authors suggest a metaphor of the coach as an alchemist, who orients through questions such as 'what is this particular coachee currently learning, and what can I offer to facilitate this'? From a relational stance, similar to the emergence of coaching questions, resources for going on differently may be found in other contexts (see the notions of 'multi-being' (Gergen, 2009) and 'growing up in fields of relations' (Veenbaas et al., 2019)).

As presented in chapter 5, in pursuit of transformation, client and coach work to co-construct new, more satisfactory narratives that recognize their social, relational character (McNamee & Gergen, 1992). Stories may be replaced by different stories, or learning may focus on the process of story making itself (Gergen & Kaye, 1992; McNamee & Sawver, 2004; McNamee, 2015a). In the latter, the author(s) speak(s) of changing patterns as opposed to replacing an action while maintaining the overall pattern. This approach is recognized by Stelter (2009, 2019, 2021), and Stelter and Law (2010), whose 'third generation coaching' focuses on the values which govern coachees' actions; meaning-making through linking past experiences and future expectations; and helping coachees to further develop (or change) their stories. By doing so, their approach is aimed at collaboratively seeking more uplifting reconstructions of narratives.

In this developed practice, several frameworks, for example from transactional analysis; NLP; and systemic practice, were used within the abovementioned pluralist stance. These frameworks serve as heuristic devices (Hoffman, 2012) for collaborative sensemaking. As such, they offer both language to understand 'what is going on' and signposts for related developmental options and re-storying. In addition, 360-degree data from emotional intelligence and leadership style surveys can be used to reflect on and add to the conversation (see section 8.4). In this specific instance, the following actions contributed to facilitating the coaching journey: offering a welcoming context; offering consultants space to influence the process; proposing supportive homework assignments; requesting written session reflections; inviting deeper reflections; offering resources for sensemaking and reframing; offering resources to do things differently; looking back on previous sessions to check if things need attention; and leaving owner-ship with the consultants. It was valued that we combined business and personal issues when co-constructing ways to apply insights into their consulting practice. When doing so, we deliberately included the anticipated interests of the involved stakeholders (see section 5.5). It is important to be attentive to misunderstandings in interactions; use written reflections effectively; and recognize that a tailor-made process may sometimes be experienced as unstructured (see section 5.5).

In the coaching follow-up, which on average started nine months after finishing the coaching journey, the reflective journal (see appendix 9) was the central tool. During the startup session, when the reflective journal was introduced and discussed, it was important to address that the tool was a resource, a tool for the management consul-tant to use in a generative way, as opposed to a 'data generation tool for the coach.' This included keeping their focus on 'learning incidents,' changing the format when useful, and writing in a way that was useful for the consultants (see sections 6.3 and 6.5). In this specific instance, the offered journal facilitated the reflection process better than asking them to just write their reflections (without any guidance). Although some con-sultants preferred to reflect in conversation, investing in a user-friendly journal design is expected to contribute to its utility (see section 6.5).

(Regularity of) meetings
As noted, from a relational approach, we understand coaching as a conversational pro-cess with uncertainty (McNamee & Sawver, 2004). This uncertainty is at play both within and across the coaching conversations, for example with respect to the total number of needed conversations. In the developed practice, the conversations are planned in mutual coordination, as are the decisions about finishing the coaching journeys. As noted in section 5.3, each of this study's coaching journey consisted of approximately 10 one-hour conversations on average, varying between five and 14 sessions. The in-terval between sessions varied from three weeks up to a month. The first sessions were

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face-to-face, either at the consulting firm's office or at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. One particular uncertainty to respond to was COVID-19 and related restrictions, resulting in the need to transfer to online coaching, as described in section 5.3. As noted in section 8.3, we approached this in an experimental way: 'let's see how we can make this work'. Online coaching was found to have both upsides and downsides, including: saving traveling time; missing time to reflect and relax when traveling; different non-verbal communication (experienced as both positive and negative); comfort of working from home; and practical problems (e.g., bad internet connections). The experienced negative effects on the coaching process were limited, which was often linked to the already existing working relationship. Although the outcomes were still good, multiple consultants still preferred face-to-face coaching (see section 5.5). The coaching follow-up consisted of one online startup session, and one (1.5 hour) face-to-face coaching session after the agreed reflecting period (see section 6.2).

Coach roles
Within a relational approach, the coach and coachee roles are both different and equal. They are different in that the coach brings coaching expertise to the encounter, whereas the management consultant brings personal life stories and particular consulting expertise. However, as conversational partners in the process of co-constructing alternative ways to go on in the consultant's particular context, they are equal. McNamee and Hosking (2012) refer to this as 'power with' instead of 'power over'. As noted earlier, the encounter becomes less hierarchical and the process more mutual (e.g., Anderson, 2012; McNamee, 2015d). The coach who works from a relational stance is focusing less on particular practices or knowledge, and more on how to bring them into the conversation (McNamee & Sawver, 2004).

Looking at the coach's roles from another vantage point, the four coaching roles identified by Witherspoon and White (1996) may be useful in this coaching practice. Depending on the particular situation and coaching question, the coach's role may vary between focusing on 1) skills required for a current job (or consulting project in this sense); 2) a broad improvement in performance in the current job; 3) development for a future job; 4) the executive's (management consultant's) agenda.

Familiar external coach
Working with an external coach in this case was experienced as bringing a fresh perspective on things. The coachees also appreciated that the external coaching conversations were confidential. There was less risk of being influenced or evaluated, because I did not have a stake in the management consultants' work or a position in their organization. Still, working with multiple consultants and having conversations at the partner level contributed to being somewhat familiar with their work context (see sections 5.5 and

8.5). This resonates with some advantages of internal compared to external (executive) coaching: a shared base of experiences to refer to; and an understanding of the broader organization goals (Schnell, 2005).

Coaching process models
Resonating with the executive coaching practices suggested by Wasylyshyn (2005) and De Villiers and Botes (2013), the developed coaching practice (Figure 9) consists of two phases (see chapters 4, 5, 6 and 8).

First, a tailor-made coaching journey, starting with the management consultants' coaching questions about stakeholder interaction. In this phase, 360-degree data on emotional intelligence and leadership style, collected for outcomes measurement, are available for reflection purposes.

Second, a follow-up, using a reflective journal as a tool, is offered for continuous reflection on 'learning incidents' and sustaining coaching journey outcomes. A coaching session is offered after four weeks of journal keeping, during which coach site visits are recommended.

As described in section 7.4, keeping a reflective journal may be considered an enrichment compared to 'classic forms of coaching', which can sometimes be viewed as a 'free ride' (i.e., dropping a question, talking about it, and hoping that something sticks). Through keeping a journal, the management consultants take active responsibility for and ownership of their development as a consultant, and for securing their learnings for future projects. The same can be said of the written reflections during the coaching journey which the coach reads to prepare each following session. Both the coaching journey and the coaching follow-up include an intake and an evaluation at the individual management consultant's level (see chapters 5 and 6).

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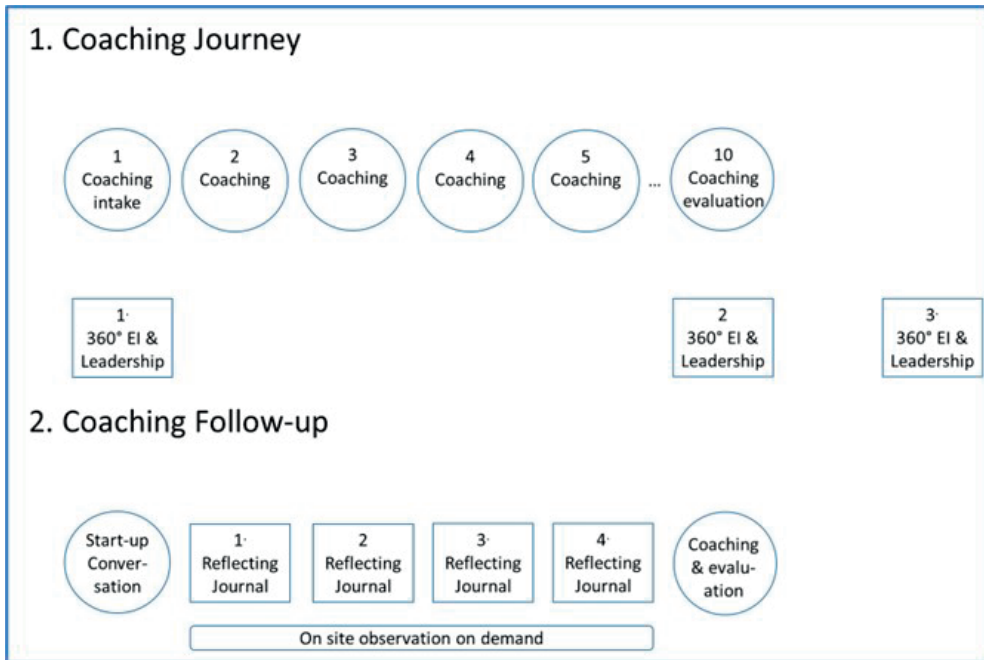
Figure 9: Two-phase Design of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants

4. *Coaching outcomes*

Short term outcomes

Through co-constructing a narrative account about experienced problems (McNamee, 1992), and co-creating new, more satisfactory stories, in ways which recognize their relational character (McNamee & Gergen, 1992), coachees and coach co-create different ways to go on, which are locally tailored. The coachees' awareness of how they have sto-ried their problems, may invite re-storying in a way that generates concrete possibilities to act as a management consultant. This awareness may result from tapping into past experiences related to coaching questions; narratives about family and growing up; and their influence on 'professional behavior' in their consulting practice. In this particular instance, the following general outcomes are co-created in the coaching journeys, which are articulated in 'professional consulting language':

- More acceptance of specific phenomena in management consulting;
- Increased awareness of and reflecting abilities on the performance of patterns, their origins and effects;
- More self-assurance in their new role within the consulting firm;
- Changed orientations to the way they see themselves as professionals (less focus on 'what they should be', more acceptance of 'who they are');

- Broader repertoire of professional conduct, related to situations experienced as challenging;
- Actively experimenting with doing things differently, in a sustainable manner (as opposed to 'quick fixes').

Related to, and often preceding these outcomes in 'professional terms', some outcomes can be identified as 'personal', which contribute to increased acceptance of self, others and life history; improved personal relationships; understanding the 'personal back-grounds' of 'professional coaching questions'; and improved experiences of wellbeing (see sections 5.4; 8.5 and appendix 6).

In addition to outcomes in the form of different narratives, surveys can offer a quantita-tive (360-degree) perspective. Emotional intelligence (e.g., Wong & Law, 2002; Wilderom et al., 2015) and leadership style (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1995; Antonakis & House, 2014) may be complemented with (for example) work engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker & Salanova, 2006). In this instance, the management consultants' Emotional Intelligence, Transfor-mational and Transactional Leadership demonstrated significant growth. Their (self-reported) Instrumental Leadership style increased marginally significantly. Measured among the respondent group Consulting Firm, the management consultants showed a growth in Emotional Intelligence, and a significant improvement in Transformational Leadership. Furthermore, results from the respondent group Management Consultants indicated that they were satisfied with both the quality of their relating to (internal and external) stakeholders and work results obtained from those collaborations. Interest-ingly, results from the respondent group Consulting Firm show that they were satisfied with the coachees' relating to (internal and external) stakeholders but, at the same time, they were less satisfied with the outcomes of those collaborations at that measurement time (see section 8.4.4).

Sustaining coaching effect
Sustaining the gains from a coaching journey can be increased by deliberate applica-tion of the learnings in the coachee's consulting practice and continued experimenting; by talking about unproductive patterns with the consultants' managers or mentors; and through a follow-up session (see section 5.4).

The general outcomes of the management consultants' participation in the coaching follow-up included: experimenting continuously with ways to act; an extended aware-ness of and acknowledging where challenging consulting situations intersect with typical personal narratives; and experiencing the persistence of typical issues. These particular participant outcomes can be summarized as:

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- Experimenting with doing things differently than 'typically', which generates different experiences and often better interaction outcomes, both in the consulting firm and in the client organizations.
- Realizing to be performing the 'the same pattern' in various contexts. Enhanced understanding of previous learnings, and doing things differently and getting better outcomes.
- Experiencing both gains and stepping into 'familiar traps' with respect to the focal pattern. Acknowledging one's own contribution to own problems, through striving for perfection, and that a good conversation may help to solve things.
- Experiencing struggles with workability. Realizing that the pattern is persistent but still being happy with the progress. Looking for ways to keep working on challenges.
- Experiencing that communication and leadership skills have improved in various settings. Learning about and 'improving' the typical tendency to 'please others'.
- Experiencing improved awareness of smaller daily learning incidents, which may be overlooked when only reflecting weekly. Insights are extended on patterns of 'controlling and letting go', and related insecurities; patterns of thinking to be on one's own and fixing everything oneself; and patterns of positioning oneself toward others. Experiencing a clear connection with the previous coaching journey and also the emergence of new questions (see section 6.4).

5.   Coaching quality requirements

<u>Clients' organizational setting</u>
The relational coaching practice was developed in an organizational setting which was supportive, provided room to experiment, and offered feedback (Kilburg, 2001). Noteworthy was the fact that the management consultants discussed their participation with their manager in order to acquire their support, and confidentiality was offered. The consultants could plan their coaching sessions during office hours. A further factor was that multiple consultants included their learnings from the coaching in conversations with (for example) their manager or mentor. A coaching practice needs to fit the organization's business imperatives and strategy (De Villiers & Botes, 2013). As noted, the study involved a fast-growing consulting firm, which works from a particular strategic orientation; has explicit key drivers and values (see section 4.2); and has their own 'firm university' which offers multiple development opportunities at various consultant maturity levels (e.g., in-company training, peer coaching[112], mentoring). In this context, the coaching was positioned as 'a specialty', to address specific, personal needs. It was deliberately oriented toward the more mature management consultants who had made their way in consulting, and were more likely to participate in projects in which effective stakeholder interaction is critical for success (see sections 4.2 and 7.3).

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112 In Dutch: intervisie.

Coachees' attributes

As noted, this coaching practice is directed at management consultants who have reached a certain maturity level in their practice. Commitment to 'the path of progressive development'[113] (Kilburg, 2001) and making a deliberate decision to engage is critical, because the coaching may be experienced as intensive (see also Villiers & Botes, 2013; De Haan et al., 2019). Commitment or even resistance to coaching are considered dynamic (as opposed to static 'traits') and open for development (Wasylyshyn, 2005; Lee, 2010). In this particular instance, being at the center of individual attention was a new experience for some management consultants. Talking about important things in an open and honest way demands courage and trust in the process. A management consultant's motivation contributes to dealing with resistance and feeling unsettled when developing new ways (see section 5.5) and generating desired outcomes (see section 8.5).

Coach's professional setting

Given the intensive and tailor-made character of the relational coaching practice, being well trained and experienced is of key importance. In addition to participating in various academic research groups and training programs, I also participate, as a coach and therapist, in a professional network which includes peer coaching[114] with other coaches and therapists; in therapist associations (NVPA and RBCZ); and in professional training programs at Phoenix Opleidingen (among others). I have gained practical experience by running a part-time therapy and coaching practice since 2010; by offering an intensive coaching training program to students at my university; and by facilitating team development at my university (for teams of lecturers, management teams, and support teams). With respect to both the coaching training program and team facilitation, I collaborate intensively with other professional coaches.

Coach's attributes

Based on what I noted earlier (see 'Coaching process resources'), I can say that, as a coach, I have committed to the path of progressive development (Kilburg, 2001); shown a high degree of emotional intelligence (Wasylyshyn, 2005); and shown the various attributes deemed important by De Villiers and Botes (2013). However, different from these individualist notions, it is suggested one should, from a relational stance, focus on attending to the process of relating (see 'Working relationship').

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113 According to Kilburg (2001), 'progressive' indicates that development takes place over time and in stages, including the layering of experience; learning; and deliberate efforts to change.
114 In Dutch: intervisie.

Coach's training and skills

In addition to the aforementioned therapy and coaching background, I have a business background through education and professional experience (see section 4.3). This combination is well recognized as important for executive coaches (e.g., Wasylyshyn, 2005; Hoffman, 2012; De Villiers & Botes, 2013) and was valued by the management consultants who participated in developing this coaching practice (for example, see chapters 5 and 8).

6.   Coaching context, part two

Returning to the coaching context, the reason for engaging in relational coaching is to generate outcomes which contribute to coachees' consulting practices. In order to enhance the ultimate outcomes of their consulting endeavors, the coaching outcomes should expand their communication and collaborative repertoire in the workplace. In this study's particular instance, the consultants actively started to put their learnings to practice in their consulting work. Examples of how the coaching journey and the generated outcomes have influenced their consulting practice are:

*   Consultants started to communicate and collaborate differently (for example, using soft skills and intuition more; being clearer about expectations, boundaries, and views; clarifying or subtitling their actions; trusting and following their experienced feelings more; being more open and vulnerable, and sharing feelings; standing up for oneself; confronting others more).
*   Consultants experienced relief and more room 'in themselves', to maneuver with people. Both in the client organization and internally in the consulting firm (for example, feeling liberated by using the transference concept in difficult communication patterns; doing 'the work' -relating here-and-now experiences with earlier created patterns- and moving forward more deliberately).
*   Consultants enhanced their process interventions (for example, focusing more on process instead of staying on the safe side by solely relying on expert knowledge).
*   Consultants changed their (internal) leadership behavior (for example: more coaching and less controlling; being clearer when doing performance reviews)

(see section 5.4).

After finishing the coaching journey, a management consultant explicitly noted: "from a distant perspective, these may seem small things; but when you look at my personal context, they are really big steps" (see section 5.4). Another management consultant noticed in an 'informal follow-up', that he had just started to really do things differently after starting a new consulting project. He expected that it may take a while to be able to measure concrete results in the client organization (consultant 13, personal communication, 12 February 2021). A consulting firm partner acknowledged the contribution of the coaching journey and coaching follow-up to the consulting context: "I can see what participating has brought her. I do see a difference in the way she positions herself

and how she acts in her newest project. She has really acquired a position of 'trusted advisor', which comes really naturally to her. She has shown a steep development curve […]" (see section 7.4).

In addition to contributing to the consulting context, the coaching also had effects in the context of their private lives (for example: improved communication with their partner; improved family relationships) (see section 5.4).

7. Coaching substitutes

The coaching practice was designed as a resource for developing management consultants and their questions about stakeholder interactions. As noted, various disciplines inform this practice. From a relational orientation, it is more important to locally tailor the practice than strictly keeping to formats or boundaries of 'what coaching is, or is not.' By keeping the focus on co-creating locally generative engagements, some conversations may lean more toward being identified as therapy, and others toward shadow consulting. In this specific instance, we navigated this implicitly from a perspective of responsivity (McNamee & Sawver, 2004). During the particular coaching journey of one consultant, we re-contracted our engagement more explicitly as this consultant did not have a pressing coaching question, and preferred discussing concrete client cases over talking about personal matters and their influence on the consulting practice (see sections 5.5 and 8.2.2). When re-contracting, we moved more toward a shadow consulting contract (Kilburg, 2002; Lee, 2010). In this dissertation, I consider shadow consulting and supervision as substitutes for coaching with respect to learning and competence building. For example, dealing with transference and countertransference may be part of coaching (Hoffman, 2012; Vanheule & Arnaud, 2016), as well as of both supervision and shadow consulting (e.g., De Haan & Birch, 2021).

10.5 Reflexivity and Becoming a Reflexive Practitioner

Earlier in this dissertation, I talked about reflexivity in research (chapter 3) and in my therapy and coaching training (chapter 4). Now that the action research project is finished, I have articulated the practice that we developed in the process. In this section, I zoom out and reflect on what this study may contribute to engaging in reflexivity and becoming a reflexive practitioner. I discuss relevant theoretical concepts and relate them to this study. By doing so, I aim to position Relational Coaching for Management Consultants as a particular form of reflexive management learning.

10.5.1 Reflectivity and Reflexivity

What the co-researchers and I have done in this action research project resonates with engaging in reflectivity and reflexivity. In order to reflect on this from a theoretical perspective, Ann Cunliffe's work appears to be a good starting point. This author distinguishes between reflectivity and reflexivity. "Reflection is traditionally defined as a mirror image. This idea incorporates the modernist view that there is an original we can think about, categorize and explain" (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 38). She notes that "reflection is often seen as a systematic thought process concerned with simplifying experience, by searching for patterns, logic, and order" (ibid.). According to Cunliffe (2004), reflective analysis, which she links to Argyris' single-loop learning, is best summarized as an objective, analytical process in which we make connections and construct an understanding of a situation by testing "intuitive understandings of experienced phenomena" (Schön, 1983 p. 241, cited by Cunliffe, 2004, p. 413). In contrast, reflexivity begins with Argyris' double-loop learning (Cunliffe, 2004) which is more about complexifying our thinking and experience by exposing doubts, dilemma's, and possibilities (Chia, 1996, in Cunliffe, 2002). Drawing on postmodern and social constructionist ideas, Cunliffe (2002) suggests we need to question the ways we account for our experience. Critical reflexive questioning "means exploring how we might contribute to the construction of social and organizational realities, how we relate with others, and how we construct our ways of being in the world" (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 414). In her later work (e.g., 2008, 2009, 2016), Cunliffe distinguishes between self-reflexivity and critical reflexivity. With respect to leadership, "Self-reflexivity means recognizing that we shape and are shaped by our social experience, and involves a dialogue-with-self about our fundamental assumptions, values, and ways of interacting: a questioning of our core beliefs, our understanding of particular events, and how these shape our own and others' responses. Through this self-reflexive process we may become responsive to others and open to the possibilities for new ways of being and acting" (2009, p. 98). Critical reflexivity "means examining and unsettling our assumptions, actions and their impact and, from a broader perspective, what passes as good leadership and management practice." (ibid.). Reflexivity is rooted in our personal experience (inside-out approach: surfacing and questioning tacit knowledge), in contrast to the application of theory to practice (outside-in approach: observing, reflecting) (Cunliffe, 2002, 2004). Here, learning is about recognizing our authorship: "our ability to shape situations through reflective and reflexive dialogical practices" (Cunliffe, 2002, p. 48).

In the action research project, I experienced that the management consultants started to engage in reflexivity in, what I called, the second contract (see section 5.2). Here, the coachees started to look beyond their initial coaching question. This included seeing familiar patterns connected to experienced difficulties in their consulting practice. Parallels with other contexts surfaced. They started to look beyond their goals, to look

from different perspectives, and became curious about relating their personal life stories to typical experiences as management consultants. Hence, resulting from the way this action research study was set up, the consultants particularly focused on the abovementioned self-reflexivity process. For example:

> *"It was pretty confronting to see some parallels between how I act in this organiza- tion and my family. This was a new perspective for me."*
> <div align="right">(full journey story consultant 3)[115]</div>

> *"After that first session, I also started to reflect on my goals for this coaching, and more specifically why these goals were important to me. For example, why do I 'have' to take a certain position? Why do I 'need' to acquire certain knowledge? What do I really need to do, compared to what I think that I should do? I feel like I may slow down a bit more and change patterns that may not help me."*
> <div align="right">(full journey story consultant 6)</div>

> *"So, at first, I was looking for how to get rid of my typical ways of acting. I learned pretty quickly that this is not something I could just address purely business wise. We talked about who I am, and why I do what I do. Separating business from private turned out to be impossible."*   (full journey story consultant 7)

<div align="right">**10**</div>

When I look at the outcomes of the coaching, the participating management consul- tants reported results including: increased awareness and reflecting abilities about patterns, their origins and effects; changed orientation in how they see themselves as professionals; generation of a broader repertoire of conduct in challenging situations; and experimenting actively with doing things differently. For example:

> *"To me it turned out to be more about the process than its outcomes. I mean, at the beginning, my goal was to learn about how I tend to position myself and about the question why I experience difficulties in this from time to time. Looking back, I was clearly judging myself for doing things wrong and wanted to fix that. Somewhere halfway, this changed to understanding the history and background of my typical ways of acting and patterns. We talked about how certain ways became familiar to me and seemed to have become a protecting mechanism. […] I learned to appreciate that my actions have a function and that I didn't need to judge so hard. I learned that my typical ways of acting weren't causing the discomfort I tended to feel, but that these typical roles didn't really match my specific feelings at certain times. Discon- necting from my feelings would result in disconnecting from the people I am talking*

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115 Due to the English editing of the main text of this thesis, there are some minor textual differences between these excerpts and the full journey stories in appendix 6.

to and, with that, to ineffective relational leading. At that time, I felt liberated from the urge to 'solve this.' Our coaching sessions have offered me resources to slow down and reflect, which has made me step out of judging mode into learning mode. Right now, I can connect better to why I tend to do things in a certain way. Not doing my 'typical things' has become a possibility." (full journey story consultant 7)

"Now that I look back, I experience feeling at ease, looking more mildly at myself. I have learned a lot, and gained new perspectives to look at myself and my actions. I continue to reflect in a positive manner. On a daily level, I experience that having a broader range of possibilities to act is useful for me and the people around me. At the same time, it's good to realize that the old way can still be a useful and effective way to act." (full journey story consultant 10)

10.5.2 Becoming a Reflexive Practitioner

On becoming reflexive practitioners, managers (and other professionals) "question the ways in which they act and develop knowledge about their actions. This means highlighting ideologies and tacit assumptions - exploring how our own actions, conversational practices, and ways of making sense create our sense of reality" (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 414). "A critically reflexive practitioner not only questions her basic assumptions but also whether she may be silencing the voices of others, and she is more aware of how she constitutes and maintains realities and identities through responsive interaction" (ibid., p. 418). Reflexivity and being a reflexive practitioner are important because, "by thinking more critically about our own assumptions and actions, we can develop more collaborative, responsive, and ethical ways of managing organizations" (Cunliffe, 2004, p. 408). Being reflexive is about "having a heart" (Cunliffe, 2016, p. 745), it is not a technique but a way of being in relation with others. It "doesn't give us definitive answers to problems but highlights the need to engage in critical questioning and deeper debate around taken-for-granted issues that have potential moral and ethical implications […]" (ibid.).

The effects of engaging in reflexivity may include generating different emotions, attitudes and self-perceptions, as well as observable behavioral changes (Antonacopoulou, 2004). An example of an eye-catching result is the radical change in a CEO's leadership from a top-down, no-nonsense, to a coaching style (Segal, 2010). In this case, the reflexive process followed on from a state of "existential anguish" (ibid., p. 382).

The participating management consultants reported positive effects on their consulting practice. One consultant said: "from a distant perspective, these may seem small things. But when you look at my personal context, they are really big steps" (full journey story consultant 11). The effects on their consulting practices included: changed com-

munication and collaboration; experiencing relief and more room for maneuvering in conversations; performing enriched process interventions; changed (internal) leadership; and they continued developing. For example:

"I'm trying to be more personal in the way I communicate. For example, addressing things that seem unclear or difficult to handle. That's no solution to the problem at hand but talking about it may contribute to finding one. And that's really different from me making things too big and withdrawing, which may cause others to experience me as distant and hard to follow." (full journey story consultant 5)

"People used to experience me as being flexible and cooperative. Then saying that something was a problem for me, that I wanted to address, was pretty challenging. So, for me it's a nice thing to hear my colleagues say that I'm becoming a bit bolder or unpolished instead of ever-adapting. This is something that is being appreciated." (full journey story consultant 6)

"I experience more peace of mind during conversations with clients, firm partners and other people who I hold in high regard. In addition, I experience a helping belief that I can now feel: 'I need you, but you also need me.'" (full journey story consultant 11)

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"In one session [in their client organization], my colleague and I met with quite a bit of resistance among the people we worked with. After expressing the options of a) just go on; or b) stop for today, I went for c) saying something like: 'I realize that we're losing you here in the process, I'm not really sure how we can do things better for our next meeting. So, let's talk a bit about what we can do differently to make the next meeting more useful for you.' This was pretty intense but really effective. For me, this is about showing courage, not expecting myself to know everything and be open about that. Also: letting go of the perfect picture and involving others in 'how to proceed.' This was totally unprepared, and I was thinking and acting at that very moment, not knowing where this would take us. By being honest about what I didn't know, I felt I was being taken more seriously and we were able to take a next step. Afterwards, the people with whom I worked also labeled this moment as positive. Also, when talking with my managing consultant about these situations, I experienced trust about the way I approach things and felt I was being trusted with more autonomy and responsibility." (full journey story consultant 2)

"I had to have a difficult performance evaluation conversation with a consultant, in which I had to make myself very clear. To me, this was very challenging, but the consultant was happy with it. It was really about finding a new balance for both driv-

ers ['please others' and 'be perfect']. *A new balance that fits me better in my leading role."*   (full journey story consultant 13)

With respect to taking their learnings into their futures, the consultants mentioned they were deliberately applying what they had learned in their practice and were still developing. For example:

"So now that I'm more okay with using soft skills, because it is necessary to get results, I want to apply them more deliberately in the consulting context when working at the client organization. It would be nice if my next project needs me to use these skills more. And that someone from my firm or client organization offers me feedback on when I do use them. Maybe an interim management role would fit, stepping out of my comfort zone."   (full journey story consultant 1)

"Well, first of all, there is no way back. Something about my personal development has been set in motion. And I expect that in the near future, my awareness will keep growing, like it did during our sessions. A question then is 'how do I keep a powerful position as a consultant while allowing more vulnerability?' And how does this all relate to the needs or expectations of my clients and conversational partners? I mean, what does a CFO care about my feelings? This will all generate new questions I think."   (full journey story consultant 10)

Consultant 10 (together with five others) participated in a follow-up to continue their development. These follow-ups resulted in: experimenting continuously, and generating better results in their practice; extending awareness of, and acknowledging where challenging situations meet typical personal backgrounds; and becoming aware that key patterns or issues may be persistent. For example:

"I also experienced a growing difference between my initial reflex and my more deliberate response after pausing. I've been learning to think in that very moment of what may be a useful response that I feel OK about myself too. I really liked these moments of awareness in the conversations. Seeing myself do something or feeling it. And then explicitly subtitle what just happened and what my response to that is."   (Summary follow-up coaching conversation, Consultant 10)

From a different perspective and in different terms, the abovementioned effects on the participants' consulting practice may be recognized in the outcomes of the quantitative study in section 8.4. As I noted in the discussion section (8.4.4), both the coachees and their colleagues in the consulting firm were satisfied with the consultants' interactions with their internal and external stakeholders.

10.5.3 Relational Coaching for Management Consultants as a Form of Reflexive Management Learning

Engaging in reflexivity has gained a lot of attention in the scholarly field of management learning through what is called Reflexive Management Learning. In their integrative literature review, Cotter and Cullen (2012) define Reflexive Management Learning (RML) as "all conceptual and practical expressions of formal management learning, education, and development which endorse and include both reflective and/or reflexive elements situated within a variety of pedagogical settings" (Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 229). The authors follow Ann Cunliffe's distinction between reflectivity and reflexivity. In Cotter and Cullen's definition, management learning takes place in formal practices, although they argue that RML "seeks to break the mould of traditional, directive training approaches […] to engage learners in more dialogical and relational pedagogies […]" (p. 234). As noted by Hersted and Frimann (2020), leadership development may indeed also be semi-formal. According to these authors "learning about leading in complex situations, paradoxes and dilemma's cannot be achieved through manuals and standardized concepts […]." (Hersted & Frimann, 2020, p. 75). They present a dialogically based approach to leadership development and organizational learning among 45 school managers, based on the principles of action research and social constructionist ideas. In their approach, the learning process is sensitive to the organizational context, highly flexible, and relationally-responsive. Another example of less formal management learning through dialogic action research, now with an individual senior manager, was presented in chapter 3 (Shotter, 2010b).

Looking at the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants, and how this was experienced by the participants (see chapters 5, 6 and 8), I would say that it can be identified as a form of personalized reflexive learning for management consultants. The tailor-made approach makes it highly sensitive to both the organizational context and the participating management consultants. Investing in the dialogic space resulted in what the coachees called experiencing a personal click with the coach. In line with some of the contemporary developments in RML, as noted by Cotter and Cullen (2012), this practice may help to reconceptualize experiences into potentially more effective paradigms for future action; is time-intensive and psychologically challenging; and may result in changing the self rather than merely knowing things.

In order to distinguish between various forms of RML, Cotter and Cullen (2012) propose a typology that consists of: 1) Decelerative-Latitudinal RML, in which managers are given time and space to reflect/reflex on their work experience; 2) Collective-Commensurative RML, in which managers are provided with an organized, public forum in which their shared experiences may be reflexively interrogated together; 3) Arousive-Agonistic RML, in which managers are encouraged to enter a learning environment which challenges

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their values, beliefs, and working assumptions and provides sincere inquiry into taken for granted realities; 4) Confessional-Kenotic RML, in which managers are metaphorically invited to confess their organizational transgressions and empty themselves prior to reflexive renewal; and 5) Revisionist-Reformist RML, in which managers are invited to reflexively consider their ethical ways of being as a prelude to moral reformation (ibid., p. 238).

Cotter and Cullen's (2012) proposed typology may be useful to further characterize the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants. I recognize elements of both Arousive-Agonistic and Confessional-Kenotic RML. For example, Arousive-Agonistic RML assumes that managers behave (in part) from unreflexive modes of consciousness. By examining belief patterns and assumptions, this type of RML aims to increase awareness about "their existing modes of thinking and being to explore new ideas and share different perspectives with their peers and colleagues within a relatively safe environment" (Cotter & Cullen, 2012, p. 239). We examined the belief patterns and assumptions in the coaching journeys and follow-up (see chapter 5, resp. 6) to increase awareness. In addition, we also co-created new possibilities for action. Unlike Cotter and Cullen's definition, this practice is one-on-one. I recognize from the Confessional-Kenotic type of RML that other people's streams of lived experience are never fully accessible to others, which points at an individualistic part of reflexivity. However, by sharing our stories of findings, we "create ourselves as subjects for ourselves and for others and for them to reciprocate" (ibid., p. 240). "[…] Humble self-emptying […] must precede the reflexive task of assessing and reassembling prior beliefs, values, and assumptions to neutralize unhelpful credos in a managerial act of conscience" (ibid., p. 240). According to Swan (2008), confessing is about a dyadic dynamic self-making or self-shaping process rather than about "examining our innermost self." Here I recognize an anti-essentialist orientation to self which is coherent with social constructionist ideas. Especially in the coaching journeys (chapter 5), we co-created process and outcomes using both the consultants' particular knowledge (i.e., about their life stories and their client organization context) and mine (i.e., my coaching and therapy expertise and professional and academic business background). The sharing of sometimes painful personal life stories and offering interventions may be considered self-emptying and dyadic dynamic self-shaping. This often contributed to creating room for doing things differently in the context of the consultants' private lives and consulting practice.

In this section, I have shown that the process in which we developed the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants has contributed to their reflexivity. According to Cotter and Cullen's (2012) review, empirical RML studies are rare, and more work has been completed on conceptualizing RML than on empirical studies into efforts

in real-life situations. As a personalized approach to reflexive learning for management consultants, this action research study may be of interest to the field.

10.6 Reflection

In this chapter, I have articulated the developed concept of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants (section 10.4). I have articulated this concept in the 'building block' terms of a coaching engagement, which originate from the semi-systematic literature review in chapter 9. The practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants may be considered an elaboration of relational coaching in general, for which I offered the groundwork in section 10.3. In section 10.5, I have argued that the developed practice has contributed to the reflexivity of the participating management consultants, and suggested that this may be considered a particular contribution to the field of reflexive management learning.

I noted that the practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants was developed in a particular context which I attempted to extrapolate beyond that context in this chapter. The purpose of this is to offer the developed knowledge as a resource to be crafted in other particular, local contexts. As such, I hope that reflecting on this practice may be generative for co-constructing new possibilities to facilitate organizational change in particular, and for experienced management consultants' learning journeys in general.

Returning to the social constructionist character of this study, I propose maintaining the process orientation and resist 'the tendency to lock this practice in place' (Gergen, 2020a) or 'close down possibilities' (McNamee & Hosking, 2012). We should not consider this concept in modernist terms as 'the way relational coaching of management consultants is done'. In order for a practice to remain transformative, one should refrain from using such a practice as a formalized tool and remain, instead, attuned to unique individuals and conditions, and embrace the possibilities of hybridization and continuous reforming (Gergen, 2020a).

In the next chapter I will address the implications for science and practice, reflect on future research possibilities, and reflect on my role as an action researcher.

10

Looking Back and Forth: Implications, Future Research, and Reflections

"Advice is a form of nostalgia. Dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts, and recycling it for more than it's worth."
(from: Everybody's Free - To Wear Sunscreen, Baz Luhrmann, 1999)

11.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I look back and forth. Having arrived at the end of this action research journey, I will now discuss several implications; propose future research possibilities; and reflect on my role as an action researcher. In doing so, I aim to highlight what I consider important implications of the second-person and the third-person action research. Section 11.2 presents the practical implications for management consultants and their organizational change work; coaching practitioners; consulting firms; and educators. Following this, I describe theoretical implications. I propose topics for future research in section 11.4. In section 11.5, as an important part of my first-person action research, I share some of my own learning experiences in this PhD journey by reflecting on my role as an action researcher.

11.2 Implications for Practice

In this dissertation, I have described my work aimed at making a direct contribution to enhancing the participants' management consulting practice. This contribution was aimed at the participants' particular and strategically important coaching questions regarding stakeholder interaction, by offering tailor-made coaching journeys. The conversational space offered in the developed practice is of key importance. Or as a consultant put it: "I couldn't have done this by myself, even though I'm always busy with improving myself personally" (consultant 10, section 8.2.2). The offered coaching follow-up is a resource for reflecting on how each consultant put their learnings into practice. As such, the follow-up serves as a means to sustain and extend the co-created coaching journey outcomes. In line with Shepherd (2004), the sharing of reflections after keeping a reflective journal can contribute to a deeper understanding of events. I developed a reflective journal as a practical tool, to support the management consultants' focused reflection. I hope I have shown how the practice developed in this dissertation can contribute to management consultants' reflexivity and more deliberate action. In addition to what is written about this in chapters 5 and 6, I invite the reader to delve into the full journey stories of several management consultants (see appendix 6). Although I expect that Relational Coaching for Management Consultants can be a useful resource in decreasing the rate of failed organizational change initiatives (which I introduced in chapter 2), improved reflexivity and more deliberate action do not guarantee direct improvement. Despite this study not being designed to measure actual improvements in the success rate of the organizational change initiatives, participating in it was an opportunity for the consultants to engage in reflexivity and expand their behavioral repertoire as a person in the role of a management consultant facilitating organizational change. In general, this has resulted in an increase in acceptance of specific phenomena

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in management consulting; better awareness and reflecting abilities about typical patterns in communicating, and improved self-assurance; enriched orientation to professional identity; a broader repertoire of professional conduct in challenging situations; and active experimenting with doing things differently, in a sustainable manner. These 'professional outcomes' were often preceded by 'personal outcomes', which contributed to increased acceptance of self, others and life history; improved personal relationships; understanding the 'personal backgrounds' of their 'professional coaching questions'; and improved experiences of wellbeing. The coaching journeys resulted in a broadly recognized growth in emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, and increased satisfaction with internal and external stakeholder interaction. The participants of my study's coaching follow-up sustained and extended earlier coaching outcomes through continued experimenting; extending awareness; and acknowledging (persisting) personal intricacies in challenging consulting situations.

Based on the results of this action research, I hope that the management consultants who participated will continue to reflect with someone, and continue to be curious about ways to enhance communication and collaboration in their organizational change work. In addition, I recommend other management consultants to engage in similar personal learning practices, regardless of how we name such an engagement (e.g., coaching, supervision, shadow consulting). I hope that the offered full journey stories in appendix 6 will serve as a generative metaphor that inspires management consultants to 'take a look in the mirror' and enrich their professional conduct.

I hope that this study and the developed practice will be considered a useful resource for professional coaches and similar practitioners, to facilitate such development processes. This hope stems from both the results of the action research project described in part II of this dissertation, and from the practical relevance of this work, as recognized by professionals who I consider having relevant expertise (see section 2.3).

11.3 Implications for Theorizing

In line with the social constructionist action research orientation of this study, my primary intention was to make a direct contribution to enhancing the participants' consulting practices. From the outset, while doing a form of transformative inquiry (McNamee & Hosking, 2012) or future forming research (Gergen, 2015b), I did not intend to acquire a fuller or better understanding of a research phenomenon, or fill a theory gap (Gergen, 2015a). Yet, I wanted to understand if and how I could contribute to the professional development of management consultants. Hence, I am sharing what has been created in this action research. This sharing of actionable knowledge, referred to

as third-person action research (e.g., Coghlan & Shani, 2018), is oriented to contributing to a range of future possibilities (Gergen & Gergen, 2008), and may be considered an invitation "to borrow, hybridize and reformulate as needed in one's unique circumstances" (McNamee et al., 2020, p. xxxiii). For example, the developed concept may be useful in other professional service fields, management learning, and leadership. This being said, the following scientific implications can be described.

Following on from the semi-systematic literature review in chapter 9, it is notable that Relational Coaching for Management Consultants, as a practice in the field of organizational change, has neither been described before or explored in the scholarly literature. The results of my action research study, as an early contribution to this field, include a description of a personal learning possibility for management consultants regarding stakeholder interaction. The developed practice is conceptually described in section 10.4, using the following seven 'building blocks': disciplines informing coaching; motivation for coaching; coaching process resources; coaching outcomes; coaching quality requirements; coaching context; and coaching substitutes. I hope that this conceptually described practice is considered a contribution to generative theory (Gergen, 1978, 1982, 2015a) and will provoke thinking reflexively about stakeholder interactions in management consulting. In general terms, Professor Dian Marie Hosking described my line of work as "facilitating personal transformation in such a way that this has a fundamental influence on how [management consultants] work as change practitioners." At the outset, she considered this work "a very practical, very pragmatic contribution in an area which is relatively neglected [in academia]" (personal communication, 5-7 March 2019). Having completed the action research project now, the results of my study underscore the possible contributions of this kind of personal transformation for management consultants, and its relevance. This empirical study, including the conceptual description of the developed practice, resonates with the need for facilitators of organizational change processes to 'look in the mirror' (e.g. Boonstra, 2000, 2002, 2004b; Werkman, 2006; Ardon, 2009); the possible contributions of psychological therapy, coaching, and counseling (Ardon, 2009); and personal patterns in organizational change work (Moeskops, 2016; Burger 2008; Van Dinteren, 2016). The developed practice, which provokes reflexivity, can be considered a response to Boonstra's (2004b) call to use social construction to develop new knowledge and practices for organizational change and learning, that center on language and communication.

The developed practice should not be considered as 'just a form of executive coaching' because there are both similarities and differences. Similar to executive coaching (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018), this practice is purposefully targeted at contributing to personal development and leadership behavior. It is also highly context-sensitive and needs to contribute to the organization's performance. However, unlike executive coach-

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ing, the need for management consultants to have effective stakeholder interactions is considered more crucial because they have no formal position or power. Second, the developed practice focuses on 'why do you act the way you do,' rather than on 'how to do things' or 'how to act' (the latter was considered typical for executive coaching in the concept evaluation). Third, management consultants are often involved with multiple client organizations at the same time, and interact with different people across different hierarchical levels. With respect to their development, there are more possibilities for realizing a steep learning curve because external consultants can make a fresh start in the next client organization and put learnings to practice. Contrarily (regarding executive coaching), being in a fixed position as an executive for longer makes it more difficult to do things differently, as one carries a history of relationships and stories that stick.

The coaching follow-up is a contribution to the limited number of diary study publications in the field of action research (e.g., Mshelia et al., 2016). The development of the reflective journal can be considered a response to the call by Robertson et al. (2021) for more studies with a focus on reflective tools which make reflection, as a part of leadership development, less 'awkward,' and on showing that reflection is learnt behavior.

As argued in section 10.5, the developed practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants may be considered a particular (i.e., a personalized, highly context-sensitive) form of reflexive management learning for management consultants. As such, this could be an interesting contribution to the field which, as noted by Cotter and Cullen (2012), may benefit from more empirical studies.

As noted in section 10.3, the developed practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants is relational in two ways. Obviously, the first is that the coaching practice centers on the relationships between management consultants and the various stakeholders with whom they engage in their work. As a resource for offering a conversational reflecting space, the developed practice may contribute to enhancing these relationships and interactions in management consulting and organizational change. This may increase the possibility of generating better results. Second, the developed practice is relational as it has its basis in social construction. I consider, as noted in chapter 2, that relational practice and theory, and social constructionist ideas, are two sides of the same coin. From this second perspective, the developed knowledge about coaching with a focus on stakeholder interaction can be moved beyond management consulting and be extrapolated to other areas. In particular, the groundwork or theoretical approach, as offered in section 10.3, might add to (or expand) the social constructionist base of scholarly work on relational coaching (e.g., De Haan, 2008; Critchley, 2010; Cavicchia & Gilbert, 2019). In addition to being a foundation for the developed practice in particular, this groundwork may serve other coaching areas as well (e.g., teacher education; ex-

ecutive coaching). Unlike modernist, essentialist approaches, relational coaching could help to humanize the coaching practice by privileging what happens in conversation over expert-knowledge and the application of a particular model or method. The described philosophical orientations for practicing relational coaching may contribute to crafting more generative coaching practices. As Harlene Anderson noted, the coaching field would benefit greatly from such a social constructionist orientation (personal communication, 19 September 2022).

A methodological implication of my study relates to research paradigms and the use of methods. When zooming out and moving beyond this particular study, my dissertation may contribute to what Ken Gergen called "moving from conflict to collaboration" (lecture at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) in Amsterdam, 11 June 2019). In this dissertation, I have used research methods that are not often used by 'typical' constructionist researchers or postmodern researchers (Johnson & Duberley, 2003). Holding on to a particular research paradigm does not require a researcher to principally discard any research method. As constructionists say: each method generates its own story. It all comes down to what is useful in a particular context. For example, the developed practice has been evaluated using multiple approaches, lenses, and researcher roles. During its development, the practice was evaluated in conversations between the coachees and the coach. Furthermore, the coaching journeys have been evaluated in a longitudinal quantitative study of emotional intelligence and leadership styles, and in a qualitative interview study focusing on both outcomes and process. I hope that my extensive introduction of social construction as a research paradigm in chapter 3; how it emerged out of critique; and how it is criticized, will contribute to a further 'cease fire' and increased collaboration in academia. In other words, I hope that social construction will be considered a complementary rather than competing approach, including an acknowledgment of its attempt at co-creating locally useful practices, as opposed to pursuing general Truth claims. In general, and borrowing from Ken Gergen (see also 2015b), I recommend that researchers reflect on and talk about their research paradigms in terms of concrete offerings to the world, rather than in terms of 'who's Church is right' (whichever paradigm they may hold).

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I have already noted that this dissertation is an early scholarly contribution to the field of coaching management consultants who facilitate organizational change. I hope that this may inspire other researchers to contribute to this knowledge base. In the next section, I offer some future research suggestions.

11.4 Future Research

As noted in chapter 10, within a constructionist orientation, we prevent formalizing what we have created in research into tools or typical ways of practicing. Instead, we acknowledge that things could have always been constructed differently. From this standpoint, we do not draw final conclusions, but rather reflect on the process and what has been created in that process. Ideas for future possibilities may emerge from these reflections. In that regard, this study has generated ample possibilities for future studies. As this study may be positioned in a liminal space between management consulting, with a focus on organizational change, and coaching, topics for future research may lean more toward either. As noted in chapter 9, future studies will be guided by the general scientific interests of the researchers' research orientations (e.g., McNamee, 2014; Coghlan & Shani, 2018), for example: discovering universal truths, and cause and effect mechanisms; contextualized knowledge and multiple realities; or generating new (local) realities. From the perspective of reflective pragmatism (Gergen, 2015b), all of these directions may be useful for creating knowledge. With this in mind, some of the following topics may lean toward a social constructionist approach while others may fit a more traditional research design.

First, as an extension of the current action research study, I am still interested in what my initial plan for the coaching follow-up could generate. As described in section 6.1, my initial plan was to perform a form of collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005) or relational ethnography (Simon, 2013) which may potentially be transformative. In such a future study, I (or an action researcher with a similar profile) would not simply be a 'fly on the wall'. Rather, the action researcher would serve as an extra pair of eyes and ears during the organizational change facilitation. The action researcher would intervene when considered useful for the stakeholder interaction in the management consultant's client organization. The purpose of such interventions would be to co-create the 'best possible' interaction among the stakeholders working on an organizational change initiative, in order to co-create the 'best possible' end result of that initiative. Such a study requires a high level of trust and clear contracting between all the involved parties (i.e., the management consultant and the consulting firm; the stakeholders around the organizational change initiative in the client organization; and the action researcher). I propose a longitudinal, social constructionist action research design which covers the entire duration of the change initiative.

Second, a future study could center on the experienced end results of the organizational change initiatives which were facilitated by management consultants who participated in coaching. The current study's focus is on the learning process of management consultants. I have described process and outcomes of a practice which facilitates this

learning. The results of these learning processes may be considered input or resources for facilitating organizational change. However, this study has not fully addressed the process or end results of such organizational change facilitations. Hence, a future study could explore the extent to which organizational change initiatives have generated the desired results, and evaluate the change process. I propose a cross sectional qualitative research design to explore the experience of both the process and outcomes for different groups of stakeholders (for example: top management, middle management, professionals, support staff, clients, the management consultant). With respect to sampling and case selection, two respondent groups can be distinguished: 1) stakeholders who have worked with consultants who have recently completed a coaching journey with a focus on stakeholder interaction; 2) stakeholders who have worked with consultants who have not participated in such coaching. Both respondent groups would include a management consultant who facilitated the organizational change process.

A third and fourth topic for future studies resonate with the two ways in which I have identified the developed concept as relational coaching, namely: 1) the coaching centers on the relationships and interactions between management consultants and the various stakeholders with whom they engage; 2) the coaching practice is relational in the sense that it has a foundation in social construction.

The third topic for future studies centers on coaching with the purpose of contributing to stakeholder interactions, between service professionals and their clients in a broader sense. As such, this implies zooming out from this study's particular context and including studies in other contexts. Such studies could identify similarities and differences in coaching practices, as well as their outcomes and effects on the service that is provided. I suggest focusing on knowledge workers in contexts in which the interaction between the service providers and their clients has a strong impact on the experienced quality of the service (e.g., lawyers, teachers, medical doctors, advisors). When writing my dissertation, I came across studies on the importance of the relationship in sports coaching (e.g., Jowett & Shanmugam, 2016), teacher education (Ehmer, 2018; Robertson, Padesky, Ford-Connors & Paratore, 2020) and executive coaching (De Haan, 2008). With respect to research design, a study on this topic could consist of reviewing comparable empirical studies and/or performing a new empirical study based on relevant coaching literature.

The fourth topic centers on social construction as a grounding for practicing coaching in general (as described in section 10.3). Here I suggest two possible studies: a literature review and an empirical study. First, the proposed literature review should address relational coaching on a conceptual level. After naming the developed practice 'Relational Coaching for Management Consultants,' I was happy to learn that the abovementioned authors (among others) have also published about relational coaching as well. However,

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various approaches to relational coaching can be discerned, possibly contributing to conceptual fuzziness. For example, De Haan (2008) approaches relational coaching from a common factor paradigm (McNamee et al., 2023), which seeks to identify underlying factors below intervention models and other 'treatment' dimensions that make coaching successful. De Haan's approach to relational coaching originates from the field of psychoanalysis. Based on extensive quantitative studies into working factors in psychotherapy, the author concludes that the coaching relationship is the ingredient of the coaching engagement that best enables the prediction of the coaching outcomes, and offers 10 commandments for executive coaches. The coach needs to make an active effort to "make this relationship as strong and productive as possible, as experienced by the coachee" (De Haan, 2008, p. 53). Although the relationship is considered to be the most important for coaching effectivity, De Haan's relational coaching approach may, unlike a social constructionist orientation, be considered essentialist (Burr, 2015) or individualist (Gergen 2015a; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). The contributions to relational coaching by Critchley (2010), and Cavicchia and Gilbert (2019) include a few references to social construction. Following these differences, a more thorough review of the literature on this topic may offer clarity about how to understand relational coaching in various approaches, and what this implies for research and professional practice.

Second, I propose an empirical study into practices in varying coaching disciplines (e.g., coaching with a focus on well-being at work; career coaching; executive coaching; life coaching). I would be interested in the extent to which coaching practices are coherent with 'coaching as a process of social construction' as described in section 10.3. Such a study could explore the experienced differences between coaching practices based on a social constructionist approach compared to coaching practices based on more essentialist orientations. In particular, I would be interested in the way coaches craft the coaching process in order to address the challenges their clients bring to the coaching; the outcomes created in the coaching process; and the effects in the focal context. With respect to the study design, I suggest starting with explorative conversations or semi-structured interviews with experienced coaches, to collaboratively reflect on their practice. Based on the results, a study may be designed in more detail.

A fifth possible topic for future studies emerged from the conversation with the consulting firm partner and a senior management consultant in which we evaluated the coaching concept (see chapter 7). In addition to the conversations when preparing the action research study, this evaluating conversation underscored the strategic importance of management consultants' personal competencies with respect to relating with their stakeholders. The consulting firm that participated in this action research study appears to have created a 'learning landscape' for their management consultants which aligns with this firm's strategic orientation to management consulting. Although this

was not an intended research topic per se, it has made me become more interested in the policies of other consulting firms in this regard. Which typical management consultant competencies are of strategic importance to a particular consulting firm? And to what extent is their professional development policy or learning landscape aligned with that? Studying this alignment appears to be relevant because, following Boonstra (2000, 2004b) and Werkman (2006), failing to match the particular characteristics of organizational change initiatives with a suitable approach, results in disappointing outcomes. Ensuring that consultants can develop the necessary competencies may reduce this risk. In my view, such a study can be designed once its relevance has been confirmed through a review of the literature on this topic and explorative conversations with top level (HR) managers of consulting firms.

11.5 Reflecting on My Role as an Action Researcher

When I approached the end of the journey of 'doing my PhD,' my sister, and some friends and colleagues started to ask me if I would do it again… My honest first answer was: "yes if I can forget the struggles and start with the same confidence as at the beginning." On second thought however, overcoming struggles and challenges has resulted in a different kind of confidence. One that I like better, because it has emerged from dealing with these struggles and challenges. After all, it is not only about 'doing the work' and writing a doctoral dissertation. 'Getting there,' is also a learning process which comes with enthusiasm; rejection; courses at multiple universities; joy; multiple advisors offering different feedback; traveling; frustration; adjusting to circumstances; new friends and connections; feeling supported; and seeing the path that I have walked. On a personal level it was sometimes difficult to allow myself to learn, and still feel okay about myself. However, acknowledging that one can be both okay and learn is what has always helped me to continue my journey whenever I felt stuck. Below, I share some of my learning experiences[116] which focus on dealing with research paradigms; handling relations during the action research; the writing process; and things that I would reconsider if starting over again.

When I was studying for my Master's degree at Erasmus University Rotterdam, I (naively) thought of research paradigm debates as interesting stories. Little did I know about what it would feel like to take part in such a debate as an active player, from a dependent position as a PhD candidate. This all changed when I started my PhD journey. First, in order to obtain an internal scholarship, I needed to convince a committee of six lectors (Professors of Applied Sciences) of the quality of my research plans. My proposal

116 Some of these experiences were published in my PhD story on the Academic Transfer website (Academic Transfer, n.d.).

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was rejected twice. Several parts of my first two proposals could and should have been done better (e.g., getting a consulting firm to agree to participate, which would have contributed to better descriptions of research activities and methodological approach). In addition, some critiques about the research design (in my view) were also due to paradigm differences. Beyond the things that I should have done differently, this experience also raises the question of how to evaluate research proposals given the enormous variety in available research approaches. Second, having two PhD supervisors who hold different views on doing research turned out to be 'challenging' at times. Although they both supported the social constructionist orientation of my action research approach, the differences in feedback and suggestions sometimes felt like 'not being able to do things right.' Still, all (co-)supervisors have been committed to my work from the start. I learned to be true to my core ambitions and intentions, as well as to learn and be flexible about 'how to get there.' Commitment to what I, 'in my heart,' considered to be my mission, helped me to patiently persevere. Practically, I learned to see and respond to the interest behind the feedback that I sometimes 'just didn't want to hear'. When I looked at such feedback from more distance or 'in a higher order,' I always found a way to go on. Such a way may not have been 'just accepting' specific suggestions, but responding to 'the spirit' of the critique or feedback. This often came down to clarifying what I had decided and why. When I look back, I feel that my PhD journey has been a well-balanced combination of experiencing academic freedom and learning to do research at the doctoral level. Although at times the paradigmatic differences felt like Gergen's (2015b) 'science wars', I do feel that being an active player in this specific debate has contributed to my doctoral education. For example, by further developing my sensitivity to balance being questioning, curious, open minded, and responsive to the local context; and applying scientific methods, following steps, and working rigorously when writing.

While discussing different forms of research and their implications, Professor David Coghlan noted that "action research is for grownups" (personal communication, 27 November 2020). Action research, being an emergent inquiry process around real issues, of real organizations, with real people requires good intervention skills. Because collaboration with research participants is important, there is less room for control by the researcher, compared to (for example) pure quantitative research. This equal relationship between the action researcher and the co-researchers has been characterized as doing research *with* people, rather than *on* or *for* them (Coghlan & Shani, 2018; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) and centering "*power to*" instead of "*power over*" (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 67). Beukema (2013) also notes this equal relationship in practice-driven research. To me, an advantage of doing a PhD at an older age is the life experience that you bring to the table. This is particularly useful when doing an action research PhD. Coordinating my research activities with multiple stakeholders was sometimes challenging, especially at times that I realized this dependency was mutual. For example, when making practical

decisions about going forward, and with respect to finalizing the collaborative analyses of the generated data. However, I have never felt the Imposter Syndrome that many PhD candidates experience (e.g., Nori & Vanttaja, 2023). In my experience, the dependency was really mutual, in the sense that I also had something to offer that 'they wanted.' I experienced that my professional experiences in finance; higher education; and coaching/therapy/training, together with having consulted in multiple organizations, have served as useful resources for becoming a professional action researcher (which may be considered my fourth profession in 25 years). All in all, I felt well equipped to deal with these equal relationships and mutual dependencies.

A third topic for reflection is writing, which also had its challenges. First, I am happy that I decided to author my dissertation in English, and did so from the start. I only wrote notes of conversations in Dutch, as did the management consultants who participated in the study. One clear advantage of writing in English over writing in Dutch is reaching a wider audience. In addition, since most of the literature was in English, I did not have to spend time on translating. Second, following the advice of my (former) colleague, Esther Verboon, who finished her PhD in 2016, I wrote down every important decision including arguments and references. For example, when I decided to work with reflective journals (chapter 6), my notes saved valuable time when writing the final dissertation. The well-argued decisions could be easily included in my dissertation, without going through the same details again. Third, something that I grappled with from time to time, was that writing is a creative process which tends to take its own course. Ironically the most stressful experience here was when I wrote chapter 10, or should I say struggled with writing this chapter. I had already experienced several times that good ideas came while taking a shower; sleeping; driving my car; or just doing nothing. I also already had plenty of experience in improving a 'finished' chapter after reviewing it some days later, or thinking about my advisors' feedback. Still, one day when I was working on chapter 10, I found myself yelling at my computer and I had to decide to put things away for a week. Of course, after this break, chapter 10 was over-and- done-with relatively easily. Professor Dian Marie Hosking's advice about dealing with perfection during the writing process, "get it writ, don't get it right" (personal communication, 5-7 March 2019), indeed turned out to be simple but not easy. Another valuable piece of advice with respect to writing came from Sheila McNamee: "for every PhD [candidate] there comes a time to stop reading and start writing" (personal communication, 5-7 March 2019). Again, simple but not easy. From my own lived experience, I would like to extend this with 'and there also comes a time to stop writing and say ok, this is my contribution for now.'

A last topic for reflection here is 'things I would reconsider' if I were starting over. Although action research is typically an emergent process over which the action researcher shares control with the participants, there are some things I would reconsider if I were

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to do 'the same' study again. I do not see these as mistakes or bad decisions, rather as disadvantages of how particular things took their course. First, I would consider seeking agreement with a consulting firm, before applying for the PhD scholarship. The time and effort invested in writing the best possible proposal without a participating organization in mind, could have been spent better. Second, I would consider spreading the starting moments of the 12 coaching journeys over a longer period of time. A disadvantage of starting them at the 'same' time is a peak workload for me in analyzing and writing the narratives (step 5 in section 5.3), which resulted in the checks for approval (step 6 in section 5.3) being later than desirable. Although the coaching journeys varied in the number of sessions, and by that in length, spreading the starting moments may have spread the workload of analyzing and writing the narratives. This might have reduced the time between rounding up each coaching journey and agreeing on the constructed narratives. Third, regarding the coaching follow-up, I should have suggested even more strongly to plan site visits and contacting me during the four weeks of keeping the reflective journal. Or I should have considered calling the participants to check how things were going, on top of the email-contact that we did have and the invitation to contact me when needed. Calling them pro-actively could have contributed to keeping the agreed focus for reflection and limiting the management consultants' time investments. It could possibly have also helped them with questions about how to keep their journal. Fourth, I would reconsider the way I set up the survey study (section 8.4). Although we included questions from validated questionnaires, some questions seemed repetitive to a few respondents. This, and the time it took to complete the survey, may possibly explain the low response rate. Pilot testing the survey experience and making adaptations if needed, may contribute to an increase in response rate. In addition, the decision to use the survey data as reflection material elicited the possible benefits of actively generating 360-degree feedback during the coaching journeys. Originally, the survey study was intended as a way of evaluating the coaching outcomes, and the decision to use it as reflection material was rather spontaneous instead of planned. Fifth, and this is something that I would definitely do again, is starting my PhD journey as a visiting scholar with Professor Sheila McNamee at the University of New Hampshire. Our collaboration has been beneficial in many ways. It has extended my knowledge of social construction which was very helpful throughout my whole PhD. In addition, it marked my career change and helped me to focus on my research tasks and let go of my leadership role of a team of lecturers. With respect to my lecturing role, it has been great to experience (from a student position) how others teach, and what we (as lecturers) 'do to our students.' It has also been a joy to be a student again and learn; to meet new people; and to experience a US university campus. What I would do differently in this regard is to better prepare my travels by applying for the appropriate US visa. But that is a learning experience of a different kind.

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Summary

In 2016, the idea grew in me that management consultants and their clients may benefit from consultants' personal development. Reviewing literature and interviewing professional experts offered support for doing an exploratory PhD study in this field. According to both the literature and the experts' views, an increase in consultants' self-awareness and reflexivity may contribute to the facilitation of complex organizational change processes. In turn, this may help to decrease the infamous number of 70% of organizational change initiatives that fail to deliver the expected results. In this dissertation, I present whether and, if so, how coaching management consultants could provide solace. An Amsterdam-based, fast-growing management consulting firm participated in the action research, which is also presented in this dissertation. This consulting firm offered their experienced consultants an opportunity for coaching by me, focused on their individual questions, centering on their own stakeholder interactions.

This action research study is based in social construction, which key premises center on a) language practices; b) process orientation; c) future forming; d) meaning as relational; and e) centering the specific context. Social construction resonates well with action research which a) addresses real organization issues; b) contributes to practical knowing through scientific process; c) is collaborative, doing research with people, rather than on or for them; and d) is reflexive, meaning a constant evaluation of what is happening, to decide about how to go on. For the empirical part of this study, I designed a two-phase relational coaching experience in collaboration with the consulting firm partner and the participating management consultants. In phase 1, 12 consultants participated in a tailor-made coaching journey of approximately 10 sessions on average. In phase 2, six of these consultants participated in a coaching follow-up with a reflective journal which was specifically designed for this. At the individual management consultant level, the coaching journeys were evaluated both from within the coaching process, and through independent interviews and a pre-post survey study for phase 1. The survey study measured Emotional Intelligence and the Transformational, Transactional, and Instrumental Leadership style, before and after the coaching. Furthermore, the 'concept' of the developed practice was evaluated in conversation with the consulting firm partner and a senior consultant who had participated in both phases.

The results of the coaching should be considered examples of outcomes of a potentially transformative process, rather than identifying common themes in management consulting or 'generalizable facts'. This study underscores the unique character of problems as narrated by the consultants and co-constructed different ways to go on. However, the realized unique outcomes and actions in this particular study can be articulated in the following generic terms. Varying per management consultant, the coaching has

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resulted in an increase in acceptance of specific phenomena in management consulting (such as organizational politics); better awareness and reflecting abilities about typical patterns in communicating and improved self-assurance; enriched orientation to professional identity; a broader repertoire of professional conduct in challenging situations; and active experimenting with doing things differently, in a sustainable manner. These 'professional outcomes' were often preceded by 'personal outcomes,' which contributed to increased acceptance of self, others and life history; improved personal relationships; understanding 'personal backgrounds' of their 'professional coach questions;' and improved experiences of wellbeing. The coaching journeys resulted in a broadly recognized growth in Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership, and increased satisfaction with internal and external stakeholder interaction.

In the coaching follow-up, the participants sustained and extended earlier coaching outcomes through continued experimenting; extending awareness; and acknowledging the (persisting) personal intricacies in challenging consulting situations.

Resulting from a semi-systematic literature, the developed practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants turned out to be an early contribution to the field. I have described the developed practice using seven 'building blocks' which I identified through this literature review. Offering this description is my attempt to further extrapolate the results of this particular study, and offer an actionable resource beyond the people and organizations that were directly involved (for example, other management consultants and coaches). In addition, I offered a theoretical account of relational coaching, being coaching from a social constructionist orientation. This account serves both as the groundwork for articulating the developed practice, and as an addition to, or expansion of existing relational coaching literature. Further, the developed practice can be considered a contribution to the field of organizational change and learning centering on language and communication, which was called for. The developed practice may also be considered a particular contribution to the field of reflexive management learning. Finally, I hope to have made a small contribution to a methodological 'cease fire' in science wars, by showing that holding a particular research paradigm does not require an a priori rejection of any research method.

With respect to future research, I have suggested five topics: 1) a relational oriented ethnographic study into consultant – stakeholders interaction (my initial plan for the coaching follow-up); 2) an empirical study into the extent to which organizational change initiatives, facilitated by consultants who engaged in coaching, generate the desired results; 3) an empirical study (or analyzing existing empirical studies) into the contribution of coaching other service professionals around stakeholder interaction and the experienced quality of service; 4) a literature review on the topic of relational

coaching in order to prevent conceptual fuzziness, and an empirical study into how practices in other coaching disciplines are coherent with 'coaching as process of social construction'; 5) an empirical study into the extent to which management consulting firms' 'learning landscapes' aligns with their strategic orientation toward effective management consulting.

I have shared my reflections on my role as an action researcher which include struggling and persisting; finding my way around differing research paradigms; writing in English and the writing process in general; and things I would (not) reconsider if I would start over again.

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Samenvatting (Summary in Dutch)

In 2016 groeide bij mij het idee dat management consultants en hun opdrachtgevers baat kunnen hebben bij de persoonlijke ontwikkeling van consultants. Het bestuderen van literatuur en het interviewen van professionele experts leverden steun voor het doen van een exploratieve PhD studie op dit gebied. Volgens zowel de literatuur als de opvattingen van de experts kan een verhoogd zelfbewustzijn en reflexiviteit van consultants bijdragen aan het faciliteren van complexe organisatieveranderingsprocessen. Op zijn beurt kan dit helpen om het beruchte cijfer van 70% van organisatieveranderingsinitiatieven die niet de verwachte resultaten opleveren, te verminderen. In dit proefschrift geef ik weer of en, zo ja, hoe het coachen van management consultants soelaas zou kunnen bieden. Een in Amsterdam gevestigd, snelgroeiend management consulting bureau nam deel aan het ook in dit proefschrift weergegeven actieonderzoek en bood hun ervaren consultants een mogelijkheid tot coaching door mij, gericht op hun individuele vragen over hun eigen stakeholder-interacties.

Dit actieonderzoek is gegrond in een sociaal constructionistische wetenschapsopvatting, met als belangrijkste kenmerken a) taalpraktijken; b) procesoriëntatie; c) toekomstvorming; d) relationele betekenisconstructie; en e) het centraal stellen van de specifieke context. Het sociaal constructionisme gaat goed samen met actieonderzoek dat a) gericht is op echt bestaande organisatieproblemen; b) bijdraagt tot praktische kennis via een wetenschappelijk proces; c) collaboratief is, door onderzoek te doen met mensen, in plaats van op of voor hen; en d) reflexief is, door het constant evalueren van wat er gebeurt, om te beslissen hoe verder te gaan. Voor het empirische deel van deze studie ontwierp ik een vorm van relationele coaching in twee fasen, in samenwerking met de partner van het management consulting bureau en de deelnemende management consultants. In fase 1 namen 12 consultants deel aan een op maat gemaakt coachtraject van gemiddeld ongeveer 10 sessies. In fase 2 namen zes van die consultants deel aan een coaching follow-up met een specifiek voor dit doel ontworpen reflectiedagboek. Op het niveau van de individuele management consultant werden de coachtrajecten geëvalueerd, zowel binnen het coachtraject, als door middel van onafhankelijke interviews en een pre-post surveystudie voor fase 1. De survey richtte zich op Emotionele Intelligentie en de Transformationele, Transactionele en Instrumentele Leiderschapsstijl, voor en na de coaching. Daarnaast heb ik het 'concept' van de ontwikkelde coachpraktijk geëvalueerd in gesprek met de partner van het management consulting bureau en een senior consultant die aan beide fasen had deelgenomen.

De resultaten van de coaching moeten worden beschouwd als voorbeelden van uitkomsten van een potentieel transformatief proces, in plaats van geïdentificeerde algemene thema's in management consulting of 'generaliseerbare feiten'. Dit onderzoek

benadrukt het unieke karakter van de hierin door de coachees verwoorde problemen en gezamenlijk geconstrueerde oplossingsmogelijkheden. Desondanks kunnen de gezamenlijk gecreëerde, unieke uitkomsten en acties in deze specifieke studie in de volgende algemene termen worden beschreven. Variërend per management consultant, heeft de coaching geleid tot een grotere acceptatie van specifieke verschijnselen in management consulting (zoals politiek in organisaties); een vergroot zelfbewustzijn en reflectievermogen met betrekking tot typische communicatiepatronen en een toegenomen zelfverzekerdheid; verrijkte oriëntatie op professionele identiteit; een vergoot professioneel handelingsrepertoire in lastige situaties; en het actief experimenteren met dingen anders te doen, op een duurzame manier. Deze 'professionele resultaten' werden vaak voorafgegaan door 'persoonlijke resultaten', die bijdroegen aan een toegenomen acceptatie van zichzelf, anderen en de eigen levensgeschiedenis; verbeterde persoonlijke relaties; inzicht in de 'persoonlijke achtergronden' van hun 'professionele coachvragen'; en een verbeterd welzijnsgevoel. De coachtrajecten resulteerden in een breed opgemerkte groei in Emotionele Intelligentie en Transformationeel Leiderschap, en in een toegenomen tevredenheid over de interactie met interne en externe stakeholders. In de coaching follow-up bestendigden de coachees hun eerder behaalde coachresultaten en breidden deze uit, door te blijven experimenteren; door het verder vergroten van hun zelfbewustzijn; en het erkennen van (hardnekkige) persoonlijke lastigheden in uitdagende consulting-situaties.

Uit een semi-systematische literatuurstudie, bleek dat de ontwikkelde praktijk van Relational Coaching voor Management Consultants een vroege bijdrage aan het veld te zijn. Verder heb ik de ontwikkelde praktijk beschreven aan de hand van zeven 'bouwstenen' die ik via dit literatuuronderzoek heb geïdentificeerd. Het aanbieden van deze beschrijving is een poging om de resultaten van dit specifieke onderzoek verder te extrapoleren, en een bruikbaar hulpmiddel te bieden voor mensen en organisaties die niet direct betrokken waren bij dit onderzoek (bijvoorbeeld andere management consultants en coaches). Bovendien bied ik een theoretische beschrijving van 'relational coaching', zijnde coaching vanuit een sociaal constructionistische wetenschapsopvatting. Die beschrijving dient zowel als basis voor het verwoorden van de ontwikkelde coachpraktijk, als ter aanvulling op, of uitbreiding van bestaande literatuur over relational coaching. Verder kan de ontwikkelde praktijk beschouwd worden als een noodzakelijk geachte bijdrage aan het veld van organisatieverandering en -leren waarin taal en communicatie centraal staan. De ontwikkelde praktijk kan ook beschouwd worden als een specifieke bijdrage aan het veld van reflexive management learning. Ten slotte hoop ik een kleine bijdrage te hebben geleverd aan een methodologisch 'staakt-het-vuren' in de wetenschapsoorlogen, door te laten zien dat het hebben van een bepaald wetenschappelijk paradigma geen a priori afwijzing van welke onderzoeksmethode dan ook vereist.

Met betrekking tot toekomstig onderzoek heb ik vijf onderwerpen voorgesteld: 1) een relationeel georiënteerde etnografische studie naar de interactie tussen consultant en stakeholders (mijn initiële plan voor de coaching follow-up); 2) een empirische studie naar de mate waarin organisatieveranderingsinitiatieven, gefaciliteerd door consultants die coaching hebben gehad, de gewenste resultaten genereren; 3) een empirische studie (of het analyseren van bestaande empirische studies) naar de bijdrage van coaching van andere dienstverlenende professionals rond stakeholderinteractie en de ervaren kwaliteit van dienstverlening; 4) een literatuurstudie over het onderwerp relationeel coachen om conceptuele vaagheid te voorkomen, en een empirische studie naar hoe praktijken in andere coaching disciplines coherent zijn met 'coaching als proces van sociaal construeren'; 5) een empirische studie naar de mate waarin het 'leerlandschap' van management consulting bureaus aansluit op hun strategische oriëntatie op effectieve management consulting.

Ik heb mijn reflecties over mijn rol als actieonderzoeker gedeeld, waaronder mijn worstelen en volhouden; het vinden van mijn weg in het omgaan met verschillende wetenschapsopvattingen; schrijven in het Engels en het schrijfproces in het algemeen; en dingen die ik (niet) zou heroverwegen als ik opnieuw zou beginnen.

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Although there is only one name on the cover of this dissertation, many people have been part of the process of this study. I am grateful for their participation, guidance, support and facilitation, practical contributions, suggestions, and interest.

First of all, this study could not have been carried out without the participation of the management consultants; the involved partner of the consulting firm; and the various respondents from within the consulting firm, their client organizations, and the consultants' private lives. Thank you very much for participating, for your trust and openness, and for your willingness to collaboratively analyze and to member check the coaching journey narratives. To the consulting firm partner: thank you for trusting me to work with your people; for your cooperation in setting up and evaluating the project; and for discussing decisions that had to be made. To all survey respondents: thank you for filling out the questionnaires (three times!).

I have been blessed with three great supervisors who I will never forget, and with whom I hope to continue to work: Josje Dikkers, Sheila McNamee, and Celeste Wilderom.

Dear Josje, you have been there for me from the early start in 2016. You were there when I started to think of doing a PhD, when I wanted to discuss my plans, and when the scholarship proposals needed adjustments. You helped my thinking in balancing differences in research orientations. You never were ahead of me in the process. By letting me set the pace and offering your guidance in time (never too early), I experienced being 'in control' of my research, with you by my side (and probably seeing what laid ahead). In addition to being one of my favorite co-workers you have been a guide, a supporter, and a true SPSS-hero. You had to hear it all: always making time for me when I needed to express my frustrations, discuss feedback, and celebrate successes. Thank you for offering guidance and room at the same time.

Dear Sheila, I'm very grateful for willingness to work with me. The way you talk about social construction and therapy is a great source of inspiration. To me you are a living example of social construction as a way of being. I still remember our first meeting in Tilburg where we discussed my ideas, after which you introduced me to Celeste. Before I knew it the supervising team was complete. Your invitation to come to the University of New Hampshire as a visiting scholar was a great start of my PhD. It was a perfect opportunity to learn more about social construction, brush up on my English, and have a great time too. In addition to inviting me to your classes and making an extra effort to arrange the formalities with the university, you have been very hospitable. I have good memories of our dinner parties, together with John and Rita. Beyond any doubt I have

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learned a lot from you about doing research from a social constructionist stance. You have been supportive in thinking through the whole project and by making practical suggestions, without telling me what I should do. Thank you for connecting me with Celiane Camargo-Borges, Justine van Lawick, and Dorti Been.

Dear Celeste, thank you for welcoming me to your research group at the University of Twente. You have been actively involved in, and committed to this project from the start. You offered practical suggestions and connected me to others. You have supported the social constructionist orientation of this study and at the same time you have challenged me to look further. I have experienced your guidance as leaving room to do 'my study' and making sure that I would come up with a dissertation that could be accepted at the University of Twente. I must admit that I sometimes struggled with the particular approach to method in your feedback, which illuminated differences in orientation to method between social construction and positivism. Although at times this was not easy, it certainly has contributed to my doctoral education, which I value very much. I have learned to be an active player in paradigm debates, and I believe that this makes me a better scientist. I hope that the dissertation that resulted from all this may be beneficial to others who find themselves 'in between' as well. I thank you for challenging me, while supporting my research interests. Further, I am grateful for your detailed feedback on my work and concrete suggestions, which showed your commitment. Thank you for organizing the 2019 NIAS talk with Ken Gergen and Angélique Cramer!

Many other people have supported this journey. Caroline Leeuwenkamp and Eva Reuling: as my direct manager and former director of education (now board member), you have supported this journey by creating room in my job responsibilities which generated room and focus. Laurens de Graaf, thank you for welcoming my early PhD plans and 'assigning' me to Josje. Alexander Maas, you have been of much help in thinking about my initial research proposal and getting things in motion. And thank you for suggestion to contact Shirine Moerkerken and Edu Feltmann.

I have participated in many educative PhD workshops which offered introductions in valuable research methodologies and generic academic skills. I have learned a lot from (among others) Dian Marie Hosking, Sheila McNamee, Harlene Anderson, Celiane Camargo-Borges, Ken Gergen, Danielle Zandee, and David Coghlan. In addition to these workshops, thank you Celiane Camargo-Borges, Esther Verboon, and Wouter Keijzer, for your practical suggestions.

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About the Author

Joost van Andel was born in Hoogeveen, the Netherlands in 1975. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Finance & Accounting from Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen and a Master of Science degree in Business Administration from Erasmus University Rotterdam, where he majored in organizational change. He holds postgraduate diploma's in business control (Nive Opleidingen) and psychosocial therapy/coaching (Phoenix Opleidingen), and he is a licensed psychosocial therapist (NVPA and RBCZ). Joost has worked in several finance positions for (among others) Siemens and Hema, and worked with a small training and coaching company (Dreamfactory). He has worked at Utrecht University of Applied Sciences since 2004 in various positions, including chairing the personal coaching and team coaching minor; leading teams of lecturers; and facilitating team development as an internal team coach. In addition, in 2023, he started lecturing graduate students at Marnix Academie (University of Applied Sciences) in Utrecht. Furthermore, he runs a part-time company in Utrecht in which he currently offers therapy and coaching services to individual clients and organizations.

In his free time, Joost likes to meet with his family and friends, walk, go to the gym, play squash, ski, ride motorcycle, meet for dinner and drinks, and watch movies: many things that have suffered from his PhD journey.

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Appendices

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent Form Interview Study Professional Experts

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.
FACULTY OF BEHAVIOURAL, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Informatieblad & Toestemmingsformulier Onderzoek

Informatieblad voor onderzoek 'Furthering the professional development of organizational change consultants'

Doel van het onderzoek

Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Joost van Andel, promovendus bij onderzoeksgroep Change Management & Organizational Behavior.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is bij te dragen aan de persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling van change consultants zodat zij effectiever kunnen bijdragen aan het begeleiden van organisatieverandering. Binnen dit onderzoek bent u verzocht deel te nemen aan een expertinterview teneinde uw specifieke praktijkkennis mee te kunnen nemen naast wetenschappelijke literatuur.

Over dit onderzoek wordt gepubliceerd in de vorm van een dissertatie en eventueel in de vorm van artikelen in wetenschappelijke of vaktijdschriften.

Hoe gaan we te werk?

U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarin een expertinterview wordt afgenomen. Hierin zullen we informatie vergaren door:
- U te interviewen en uw antwoorden te noteren/op te nemen via een audio-opname/ video- opname. Er zal ook een transcript worden uitgewerkt van het interview.
- Verwijzingen te bespreken naar eventuele andere experts en/of professionele literatuur

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken
- Er zijn geen fysieke, juridische of economische risico's verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie. U hoeft geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding.

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Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

U wordt geïnterviewd in hat kader van uw specifieke praktijkkennis waarover u ook algemene bekendheid heeft in het vakgebied als gevolg van uw professionele activiteiten, publicaties en/of opleidingsactiviteiten. Gezien deze expertstatus verzoekt de onderzoeker om m.b.t. dit interview een samenvattend verslag op te nemen onder vermelding van uw naam. Indien u hier geen toestemming voor geeft via het toestemmingsformulier, zullen wij de uitkomsten van het interview geanonimiseerd verwerken bij publicatie. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente en op de beveiligde (versleutelde) gegevensdragers van de onderzoekers.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van 10 jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden indien nodig (bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit) en alleen in anonieme vorm ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep.

Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen.

Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden.

Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider.

Contactgegevens onderzoeksleider:
Joost van Andel
Email: j.vanandel@utwente.nl
Mobile: +31643048202

Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-

bms@utwente.nl. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u specifieke vragen hebt over de omgang met persoonsgegevens kun u deze ook richten aan de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de UT door een mail te sturen naar dpo@utwente.nl.

Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de Onderzoeksleider.

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Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad incl. bijlage. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord.

2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onder- zoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

	JA	NEE
3. Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onder- zoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is opgenomen in het bijgevoegde informatieblad.	☐	☐
4. Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het interview opnames (geluid) te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.	☐	☐
5. Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de onderzoekspublicaties.	☐	☐
6. Ik geef toestemming om mijn naam te gebruiken bij quotes en verwijzingen in onderzoekspublicaties	☐	☐
7.. Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde onderzoeksdata geanonimiseerd te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek en voor onderwijsdoeleinden.	☐	☐

Ik geef toestemming voor *alles* dat hierboven beschreven staat.　☐

Naam Deelnemer:　　　　　　　　　Naam Onderzoeker:

Handtekening:　　　　　　　　　　Handtekening:

Datum:　　　　　　　　　　　　　Datum:

Appendix 2: Invitation Management Consultants, Phase 1 (Incl. Forwarding Email)

COACHING VOOR [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] CONSULTANTS

Wil je je relationeel handelen verder verbeteren en daarmee effectiever werken als change consultant? Phoenix-opgeleid coach en PhD candidate Joost van Andel biedt de mogelijkheid voor een coachtraject als onderdeel van zijn promotieonderzoek.

Dit persoonlijk en professioneel ontwikkeltraject draagt bij aan het realiseren van de ambitie van [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] om mensen en organisaties te laten groeien. Het sluit aan bij de [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM]-drijfveren ken jezelf, zorg voor de ander en een betere omgeving.

Het aanbod: wat kun je verwachten?

In een traject van 1-op-1 coaching werk je aan jouw ontwikkeldoel in je functie als consultant. Dit doel gaat over jouw relationeel handelen als consultant tijdens de projecten bij je opdrachtgevers. Vanuit onze eigen rollen werken we samen aan het realiseren van je leerdoel. Mogelijke opbrengsten van jouw traject: toename van zelfbewustzijn en reflectievaardigheden en handvatten om (complexe) organisatieveranderingen nog beter de begeleiden. Deze opbrengsten zijn gericht op nog betere projectresultaten die bijdragen aan de performance van de organisatie van je klant en daardoor aan die van [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM].

Het traject bestaat uit het volgende:
- Ongeveer 8 tot 10 1-op-1 coachsessies van ongeveer 1 uur, gedurende een periode van 4-5 maanden, inclusief een persoonlijke intake
- Persoonlijk traject 'as we go' (geen standaard programma)
- Jou in actie meemaken bij je opdrachtgever ter input van jouw traject is een mogelijkheid
- Vertrouwelijkheid
- Een rol als co-onderzoeker door gezamenlijk jouw reflecties te analyseren
- Mogelijke deelname aan een vervolgstudie over de toepassing van het geleerde in jouw dagelijkse consultancy-praktijk bij een (andere) opdracht

Er is ruimte voor 12 deelnemers, je kunt starten in september, oktober of november 2019. De coachsessies plannen we in onderling overleg (bijvoorbeeld aan de randen van de dag). We werken in Amsterdam op het kantoor van [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM], of in Utrecht.

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Voorwaarden voor deelname

- Je begeleidt (complexe) organisatieveranderingen en hebt minimaal 3 jaar ervaring (dus je bent consultant, senior consultant of managing consultant)
- Je bent nieuwsgierig naar het verbeteren van je relationeel handelen als succesfactor bij het faciliteren van organisatieverandering en bent om gemotiveerd daar stappen in te zetten.
- Deelname is op vrijwillige basis. Stem dit vooraf af met je leidinggevende
- Je bent bereid en hebt de mogelijkheid om tijd en moeite te steken in jouw traject (gemiddeld 1-2 uur per week)
- Je bent bereid om naar aanleiding van elke sessie jouw reflecties te schrijven, te delen en te bespreken, ten behoeve van jouw coachtraject en het onderzoek (1-2 A4)

Jouw persoonlijke gegevens

De coachsessie worden opgenomen (audio) ten behoeve van het coachtraject en het onderzoek. Op geen enkele manier wordt door de coach persoonlijke informatie over jouw traject gedeeld. […] Alleen met Copromotor dr. Josje Dikkers wordt eventueel over de sessies gesproken voor zover noodzakelijk voor analyse-doeleinden. Ook zij zal geen persoonlijke informatie van coachsessies delen met anderen. Natuurlijk staat het jou vrij om wel met anderen over je traject te spreken, bijvoorbeeld in de gesprekken met je leidinggevenden. Dat wordt zelfs aangeraden.

Over Joost van Andel

Joost is PhD candidate in Change Management & Organizational Behavior aan University of Twente. In dit onderzoek werkt hij samen met prof. dr. Celeste Wilderom (University of Twente) […] en prof. dr. Sheila McNamee (University of New Hampshire en founder & vice-president van het Taos Institute) en dr. Josje Dikkers (Lector aan Hogeschool Utrecht).

Joost heeft een bachelor in Bedrijfseconomie, een post-bachelor in Business Control (Hofam) en een MSc. in Bedrijfskunde met als specialisatie Management van Verandering (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam). Vanaf 2007 heeft hij bij Phoenix Opleidingen de driejarige coachopleiding gedaan en meerdere opleidingen ter verbreding en verdieping. In 2019 verdiepte zich hij aan University of New Hampshire, als visiting scholar bij prof. dr. Sheila McNamee, in de relationele benadering van zijn onderzoek. Joost is erkend Psychosociaal therapeut (NVPA) en Registertherapeut (RBCZ) en heeft meer dan 10 jaar ervaring in coaching en therapeutische begeleiding, zie www.joostvanandel.nl.

Joost heeft als financial gewerkt in het bedrijfsleven en not-for profit (o.a. Siemens Nederland, Hema, Kinderopvang Humanitas) en heeft vijf jaar als zelfstandig gevestigd trainer, coach en interimmanager voor diverse organisaties gewerkt. Sinds 2004 is hij verbonden aan Hogeschool Utrecht als hogeschooldocent. Momenteel is hij voor het Instituut voor Arbeid & Organisatie opleider en coördinator van het minorprogramma Coaching, naast zijn functie als onderzoeker. Hij gaf leiding aan de propedeuse Bedrijfskunde tot zijn promotie startte begin 2019.

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Collega's,

Op uitnodiging van […], gaan wij deelnemen aan wetenschappelijk onderzoek naar het effect en de bijdrage van coaching op de persoonlijke effectiviteit en impact als change consultant. Een onderwerp dat natuurlijk sterk aansluit op onze professionele overtuigingen en kernwaarden ("The quality of the intervenor" bepaalt "The quality of the intevention" volgens Theory U).

Dit betekent dat wij 12 collega's een coach traject aan kunnen bieden dat je kan benutten voor gerichte professionalisering en verbeteren van jouw professionele effectiviteit. Het coaching traject bestaat uit 8 tot 10 sessies gedurende een periode van circa 4 maanden. De enige harde selectie-eis is dat je minimaal over drie jaar werkervaring als consultant beschikt.

De coaching zal worden verzorgd door Joost van Andel. De vertrouwelijkheid van hetgeen in de coaching wordt besproken wordt uiteraard volledig gegarandeerd.

Voor alle overige relevante informatie verwijs ik graag naar de bijlage.

Als je aan de coach-trajecten wilt deelnemen, stuur mij dan een mail om jouw belangstelling kenbaar te maken.

Alle aanmeldingen worden aan Joost doorgestuurd. Joost neemt vervolgens voor een intake contact met je op. De definitieve selectie voor deelname ligt geheel bij Joost.

Mocht je nog vragen hebben, aarzel niet deze aan mij te stellen.

Een heel fijn weekeinde toegewenst,

[…]

Partner

Appendix 3: Confirmation of Application for Coaching

Beste […],

Dankjewel voor je aanmelding voor een traject van personal coaching ter verdere ontwikkeling van je relationeel handelen als consultant. Er is plek voor 12 consultants en ik heb 11 aanmeldingen ontvangen. Dat betekent dat ik vooralsnog niet hoef te selecteren. Ik plan op korte termijn een intake met jou zodat we kunnen kennismaken, over je doelen kunnen spreken en nagaan of we beiden een goede click ervaren voor een traject. Uiteraard is er ook ruimte om punten te bespreken die mijn onderzoek betreffen en wat dat betekent voor onze samenwerking. Als we daar beiden 'ja' tegen zeggen plannen we een eerste sessie in. In overleg met jou spreid ik de startmomenten uit over enkele weken zodat ik tijd en aandacht voor je heb.

Ter voorbereiding op het intakegesprek zou ik je willen vragen om mij een 'brief' te schrijven. Vermeld daarin wat over jezelf, wat je graag zou willen bereiken tijdens jouw traject (je ontwikkeldoel met betrekking tot relationeel handelen) en wat je hoopt dat dat gaat opleveren in je werk als consultant. Daarnaast zou ik jou en enkele direct betrokkenen willen vragen om een vragenlijst in te vullen vóór de intake. Dan denk ik aan je leidinggevende bij [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM], je partner of goede vriend(in), en een collega die jou goed kent. Zodra die vragenlijst gereed is stuur ik hem toe. Die vragenlijst komt later weer langs in verband met het onderzoek.

Lukt het om mij uiterlijk vrijdag 20 september deze brief te mailen?

In de bijlage nogmaals de eerdere uitnodiging en informatie die je via […] ontving. Als je vragen hebt schroom niet om contact op te nemen per mail of mobiel (06-4304 8202)

Vast bedankt en tot binnenkort!

Joost van Andel

drs. J. (Joost) van Andel QC | PhD candidate, hogeschooldocent en trainer. Coordinator Minor Coaching. Team-coach voor HU-teams | Instituut voor Arbeid & Organisatie | Hogeschool Utrecht | Padualaan 101 - 3584 CH Utrecht | Locatie PL101-2.215 | Postbus 85397 - 3508 AJ Utrecht | 088-4819281 bij geen gehoor graag een mail sturen | joost.vanandel@hu.nl

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Appendix 4: Consent Form Management Consultants, Phase 1

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.
FACULTY OF BEHAVIOURAL, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Informatieblad & Toestemmingsformulier Onderzoek

Informatieblad voor onderzoek 'Furthering the professional development of organizational change consultants'

Doel van het onderzoek
Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Joost van Andel, promovendus bij onderzoeksgroep Change Management & Organizational Behavior.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is bij te dragen aan de persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling van change consultants zodat zij effectiever kunnen bijdragen aan het begeleiden van organisatieverandering. Binnen dit onderzoek wordt u in staat gesteld om gebruik te maken van personal coaching. Over dit aanbod en de voorwaarden bent u door de onderzoeker, per mail via uw werkgever op 30 augustus 2019, geïnformeerd. Deze informatie is als bijlage bij dit informatieblad toegevoegd.

Over dit onderzoek wordt anoniem gepubliceerd in de vorm van een dissertatie en eventueel in de vorm van artikelen in wetenschappelijke of professional tijdschriften.

Hoe gaan we te werk?
U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarbij u deelneemt aan een traject van personal coaching door de coach-onderzoeker en een vragenlijstonderzoek. Hierin zullen we informatie vergaren door:
- U te coachen en deze sessies op te nemen via een audio-opname. Ook zullen korte notities gemaakt
- Uw reflectieverslagen van de coachsessies met daarin o.a. voor u belangrijke inzichten, ontwikkelingen, (nieuwe) vragen
- U en betrokkenen bij uw dagelijks functioneren een vragenlijst voor te leggen welke online wordt ingevuld
- Observatie.

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken
- Tijdens uw deelname aan deze studie kunnen u vragen worden gesteld die u als (zeer) persoonlijk kunt ervaren, vanwege de gevoelige aard van het onderwerp. Wij stellen deze vragen enkel en alleen in het belang van coachtraject en het onderzoek.

U hoeft echter geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding
U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens
Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u zal kunnen herkennen. Met de begeleidend hoogleraren wordt alleen op hoofdlijnen over het onderzoek gesproken, er worden met hen geen gegevens uitgewisseld over individuele coachtrajecten. Alleen met de dagelijks begeleider wordt eventueel over de coaching gesproken en alleen voor zover dit noodzakelijk is voor analyse. Dat gebeurt altijd anoniem.

Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd.

In een publicatie zullen anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente en op de beveiligde (versleutelde) gegevensdragers van de onderzoekers.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van 10 jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon. De audio-opnamen van coachsessie worden na het goedkeuren van de dissertatie vernietigd, een geanonimiseerd transcript kan bewaard blijven. De onderzoeksgegevens worden niet ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep, tenzij dit wordt opgelegd, bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit. In dat geval worden gegevens alleen in anonieme vorm beschikbaar gesteld.

Tot slot is dit onderzoek beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de faculteit BMS..

Vrijwilligheid
Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen.

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Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden.

Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider.

Contactgegevens onderzoeksleider:
Joost van Andel
Email: j.vanandel@utwente.nl
Mobile: +31643048202

Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u specifieke vragen hebt over de omgang met persoonsgegevens kun u deze ook richten aan de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de UT door een mail te sturen naar dpo@utwente.nl.

Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de Onderzoeksleider.

Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad incl. bijlage. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord.

2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onder- zoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

		JA	NEE
3.	Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onderzoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is opgenomen in het bijgevoegde informatieblad. Deze toestemming ziet, *indien ik er vrijwillig voor kies daar zelf iets over mede te delen*, dus ook op het verwerken van gegevens betreffende mijn gezondheid/ras/etnische afkomst/politieke opvattingen/religieuze en of levensbeschouwelijke overtuigingen/lidmaatschap van vakbond/seksueel gedrag/seksuele gerichtheid gegevens.	☐	☐
4.	Ik geef toestemming om tijdens het interview opnames (geluid) te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.	☐	☐
5.	Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de onderzoekspublicaties.	☐	☐
6.	Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde onderzoeksdata geanonimiseerd te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek en voor onderwijsdoeleinden.	☐	☐

Ik geef toestemming voor *alles* dat hierboven beschreven staat.   ☐

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Naam Deelnemer: Naam Onderzoeker:

Handtekening: Handtekening:

Datum: Datum:

Appendix 5: Invitation to Member Check and Request for Publication Consent (Phase 1)

Beste […],

Ik heb een rapportage gemaakt van ons eerste traject en wil je dit graag voorleggen met twee doelen. Allereerst ben ik benieuwd of jij je herkent in dit verhaal. Is dit ook wat jou betreft de rode draad van ons traject en weerspiegelt het de manier waarop we gewerkt hebben? Indien jij zaken mist, of anderszins dingen opvallend vindt of niet herkent, laat het me vooral weten! Ten tweede wil ik je vragen of deze tekst wat jou betreft ook anoniem gepubliceerd mag worden in mijn dissertatie. Dus dat gaat over de vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens. Ook al publiceer ik het anoniem, ik verwacht dat mensen die jou goed kennen jou best zouden kunnen herkennen in dit verhaal. Dat is denk ik niet te voorkomen, dus daarom deze extra check bij jou. Richting de lezer op afstand, die mijn dissertatie leest en jou verder niet kent, zal alles nog meer anoniem zijn. Dus aan jou de vraag is of je instemt met publicatie van deze tekst. Mocht je hier bedenkingen of vragen over hebben, dan kunnen we daarover natuurlijk in gesprek. Overigens: deze tekst wordt mogelijk nog tekstueel aangepast in het proces van editing van het manuscript, maar inhoudelijk zal het niet veranderen.

Hoe heb ik deze tekst gemaakt? Ik heb als structuur een gespreksvorm gekozen: een eindgesprek waarin we samen terugblikken op het traject: inhoudelijk en qua proces. Dat gesprek heb ik opgebouwd vanuit al jouw (geschreven) reflecties, mijn aantekeningen, de opnamen van sessies en het eindgesprek dat je met mijn collega Hanke voerde. Je ziet dat terug in de voetnoten. Ik ben gestart bij het einde: ons laatste gesprek met de terugblik van jou en mij en de evaluatie met Hanke. Vervolgens heb ik een terugblikkende gesprekslijn opgebouwd waarin ik details uit de losse sessies heb gehaald om de rode draad aan te kleden met snapshots en samenvattingen. Wat je gaat lezen is dus een door mij geconstrueerde dialoog uit al het beschikbare materiaal en niet een letterlijke weergave van ons eindgesprek.

Mijn plan is dat dit een weergave wordt van ons traject in de bijlage, waaruit ik put t.b.v. andere hoofdstukken in mijn dissertatie. Daar wil ik dan ook een vertaalslag gaan maken richting de bruikbaarheid voor het beroepenveld en de wetenschap. Maar daar ga ik jou niet mee lastig vallen verder ☺

Ik ben echt heel benieuwd naar je reactie op beide punten: de herkenbaarheid en je gedachten over publicatie.

Veel leesplezier gewenst ●

A

Groet,

Joost

J. (Joost) van Andel MSc. | PhD candidate - Coordinator minor Coaching - Teamcoach (HRD) | Institute for People & Business | Utrecht University of Applied Sciences | Padualaan 101 – NL 3584 CH Utrecht | PO box 85397 – NL 3508 AJ Utrecht | +31 (0)88-4819281 or send an email | joost.vanandel@hu.nl

Appendix 6: Approved Coaching Journey Stories[117] resulting from Collaborative Analyses

6.1 Full Journey Story Consultant 2

Good afternoon, how are you? Ready for our final session?	
	Hi Joost. Yes, I am. I've received your agenda suggestion.
Great, do you have anything to add to it?	
	No, it's fine. Let's go for it!
Okay let's start with a general reflection. What in general comes up when you look back at the coaching?	
	Well, notwithstanding the suboptimal start in the project context, we talked a lot about patterns, typical ways of acting and we articulated those. This made me more aware and offered me resources to start doing things differently. I started to experiment more, even in my project context back then. In my current project I experience that I've really made good progress. Not in a way that all difficulties have disappeared but I'm better able to articulate and manage them[118].
Nice, so you really got things out of the coaching that contribute to your current project[119].	
	Yes, and although two of the earlier client organizations I had been working for weren't perfect contexts for me, I did make progress there too. For example, addressing mutual expectations at the start of a project made it easier to later on address things that didn't go well. So, when I was experiencing difficulties in taking the lead in a meeting and I addressed this, we created possibilities to practice this more. Just to find out that I'm actually pretty good at it. Even with less preparation[120].
You said that the start was not really optimal, what can you say about that?	

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117 In section 5.3 I have detailed the process of deriving these stories from the collaborative analyses of the coaching journeys and how they have been submitted to the participating consultants for adjustment and approval.
118 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
119 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
120 Overall reflection, consultant 2

	When we started the coaching, I had just finished a very interesting project in which I experienced typical difficulties in my ways of working. I realized that I needed to do something about that if I wanted to grow in my work as a consultant. However, although I was very motivated to learn and develop around these topics, I had started working on different projects that weren't a motivating context for me to learn about these things. And of course, COVID-19 wasn't contributing as well[121]…
Yes, I remember that you didn't really like the project back then and that you and I were looking for a way to make this coaching work for you[122].	
	That's right. Also, although I was immediately exited to participate in the coaching, I experienced difficulties to write about my coaching question. Maybe this is related to finding it hard to ask for help in general[123].
I can imagine! So, what were the things that you wanted to get out of the coaching?	

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121 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
122 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
123 Overall reflection, consultant 2

	In the letter I sent you, I wrote about becoming more aware of my strengths in consulting and how I can better relate them to the projects I'm doing. I also experienced an urge to choose one specific path in consulting. So, on the one hand I have this interest in content, expert knowledge and analysis which show up as valuable and useful in project evaluations. On the other hand, I thought about doing more change work and working with people more, coaching them and doing interventions. That is also a more challenging and demanding path with respect to acknowledging and expressing my feelings more and connecting with people. Back then I often found it hard to be open and be vulnerable on the spot and I could only afterwards find the words for what I was experiencing. I was looking to extend my possibilities to have impact and help people more[124]. So, I felt that, as a consultant, I had to choose between content and process. I was drawn to the latter but that's also more challenging because it's not within my comfort zone[125]. Doing more change work also means opening up. Relying on both ratio and senses[126] instead of just ratio. This would also imply asking for help sooner, when I experience that something is not going right. For example, when I'm working on a project with my colleagues, just putting it put there without exactly knowing what is going wrong[127].
Yes, and as I remember you really have been working on getting out of your comfort zone. How about talking about the main things that you are taking away from the coaching, then look at our collaboration and after that see if there are details about the sessions that we need to address?	
	Sounds good to me.
Great. Earlier you said that the typical difficulties haven't gone but you are better able to deal with them. What themes are related to the process of learning this[128]?	

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124 Initial letter Consultant 2 about their focus for the coaching journey
125 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 1 with Consultant 2
126 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 1 with Consultant 2
127 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
128 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	Two things that we talked about kept coming up in our sessions. The first is the Symbiotic Character Style that I identify with to a great extent. Being symbiotic helps to adapt in various situations. Less helpful about this style is that it may seem hard to see myself as autonomous. In my work context this is about not trusting myself well. Second (and related to this) is that out of some kind of perfection, I tend not to include others in my thinking before I've sorted out everything myself. Showing a product I'm working on that isn't finished yet was not something I would easily do because people could have comments either way. I liked that those two things could easily be related to a lot that we talked about from both private and professional context. For me this felt like having identified two key issues that bothered me in my acting as a consultant. This offered clarity, and talking about them gave me confidence that things would get better[129]. Another thing related to this is that I've become more open to others[130]. So, I've added that to my repertoire and it's easier now to take more space in conversations[131]. With respect to asking for help, ironically my first question for help from you was about finding it hard to ask for help in general. And I had some limiting beliefs or heavy thoughts about asking for help. I mean, I used to only ask for help when I knew precisely that the problem was, after I'd tried everything myself first and knew what specific kind of help I needed to fix it. Right now, I've learned to just talk about things that I'm not sure of and put out a 'general request for help.' So, without completely knowing all about the problem myself. Related to this, I also learned to address emotions and things I sense that are going on without exactly knowing upfront what is the case. I've learned that it's okay to say 'I don't know yet' when someone asks me what exactly my question is or what exactly I have observed. The fear about that has shrunk[132]. In general, we worked on a more strengthened 'me' and feel comfortable about that. I mean, being sensitive to what is going on with others is a good thing and being oriented to others is too. But it shouldn't go that far that I stop saying what I feel or think myself[133].

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129 Overall reflection, consultant 2
130 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
131 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
132 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
133 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher

Great steps. I remember that you talked about "the syndrome of needing to fix everything myself"[134]. I also remember from your initial letter to me that you had difficulties with being open, showing yourself, which is conditional to doing more change work. How do you see this at this moment[135]?	
	Well, that was hard sometimes but I've also learned that doing this contributes to making good connections and creating trust. It has expanded possibilities to influence the situation. I've also started to like this more. And also, that content and preparation is not a prerequisite for 'doing the right thing' in unexpected situations. I've experienced that I often know what I need to know in such situations and that it's okay to say 'I don't know this yet'[136].
To me that sounds more maneuvering space[137]...	
	It does[138].
Nice. I'm curious… are there things that you really do different now than before[139]?	
	In general, I'm more clear about expectations and frames or boundaries, when I start a new project. For example, expectations about what I expect and what I would like to learn or develop in this project. What I really do differently is that I'm more aware of things, but what I still do sometimes, is let some things slip and not jump on everything that happens. So, I create a starting moment to talk about expectations and so on, but later it's still convenient to talk about the content of the project[140].
Yes, and of course dealing with process and content are both important. I remember we talked about how you could have intake conversations when starting a project, also as a way to deal with the inconvenient feeling of not knowing everything you think you should know, when you start a new project. And also, in your initial letter you referred to this[141].	

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134 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 2
135 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
136 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
137 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
138 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
139 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
140 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
141 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	I did. When I reflect on this now, I realize that the content in my projects is like a safe ground I can easily return to. In 99.9% of the cases things go right there. So, when things 'go wrong' I tend to continue on content rather than to intervene in the process. However, I have learned to intervene on the process more often and then just see how things evolve[142]…
That is really courageous! As I understood, you are more open and personally visible when you do that, instead of 'hiding' behind the content. How are you experiencing this[143]?	
	It's good really. Also my current working context contributes to this. Right now, the preparation of content gets met to 80% and what I lack there I can add by 'playing with the process'. And that's fine because in general as a management consultant, you're never successful just relying on the content because you are always the 'new one' when you start at a client organization. So 'reading people' and act on that is important[144].
That's interesting. Can you tell me a bit more about what you do when you are 'playing with the process'[145]?	
	Eh, in my current project context (in which we work online a lot) it's also like making some jokes with the colleagues to energize a bit and prevent everyone from losing focus. And also making a more personal connection and showing interest in people. In one session my colleague and I met with quite some resistance among the people we worked with. After expressing the options of a) just go on, or b) stop for today, I went for c). I said something like: 'I realize that we're losing you here in the process, I'm not really sure how we can do things better for our next meeting. So, let's talk a bit about what we can do differently to make the next meeting more useful for you.' This was pretty intense but really effective[146].
Wow! You addressed what was going on, were personally open and connected with them. So, what did you do to make this work[147]?	

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142 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
143 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
144 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
145 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
146 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
147 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	Yes, this is really new! For me this is about showing courage, not expecting myself to know everything and be open about that. Also: letting go of the perfect picture and involve others in 'how to proceed.' This was totally unprepared and I was thinking and acting in the very moment, not knowing where this would take us[148]…
This is also really coherent with what you just said: because the management consultant is always the new, external person you need something different than 'just' content[149]…	
	Yes, by being honest about what I didn't know, I felt taken more seriously and we were able to take a next step. Afterwards, the people I worked with also labeled this moment as positive. Also, when talking with my managing consultant about these situations I experienced trust about the way I approach things and felt being trusted with more autonomy and responsibility[150].
To me this sounds like really maturing in your consulting profession: less 'perfect picture' and more acknowledging of the 'actual situation' and work from there. Anything else about you'd like to mention about what you got out of the coaching[151]?	
	No that's it.
Okay great. What are your thoughts about taking all these learnings into the future? Professional either personal[152]?	
	I want to continue experimenting, expand that and then see what fits. Like we talked about keeping the content and add focusing on the process. Also looking at where I can maybe prepare less and work more in the moment which isn't bad[153].
Maybe even lower the earlier mentioned 80% content a little? I mean on the preparation side. So maybe trusting the process even more? What would be possible when you would do that[154]?	

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148 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
149 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
150 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
151 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
152 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
153 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
154 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	Yes. Well, when I'd let go a bit more of the content and focus on the process, we could go on in different directions which means more flexibility in how to approach things. It is being open to that and also show myself more in sessions with clients. Again, not hiding in the content but trusting the process and expressing my views on what happens in the dynamics of collaborating. So, sharing my experience of the process instead of sticking to 'the facts.' This is important for me as a consultant because if I want to facilitate organizational change it is important to facilitate the process and the people concerned, and to connect to what's important to them. This requires conversation and being open in conversation. Also, to hear what is not said and respond to that. This is challenging and maybe a bit scary sometimes: being sensitive to things is different than really acting on it… This needs practicing and learning to trust what I sense[155]…. The new project I just started gives me a lot of opportunity to work on that. I'm doing this project together with two colleagues and we have already talked about our development goals. For me it's important to use my influencing power, to direct more and to guide or facilitate people. This is like a next step, following what I just mentioned: taking action sooner instead of staying in my head[156]…
Nice and I think these are important things if you want to facilitate change indeed[157].	
	Yes.
So, let's take a look at the way you and I worked together. What about the way we collaborated invited you to talk about all these things that were important for you[158]?	

155 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
156 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
157 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
158 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	When we first met at your university for our intake conversation it immediately felt good[159]. In the beginning I had to get used to getting one on one coaching and just focused om myself. Also, it was not that you had all kinds of questions prepared, you were just available for conversation. Different, but good because I wasn't really used to being the center of the attention. I've gotten better at this now[160]. I remember believing that you could help me with my coaching question. Our first conversation was open and you were also open about your experiences and insecurities. This invited me to be open too and talk about my coaching question[161]. The following couple of sessions I experienced resistance[162]. This may be related to being in the center of the attention[163]. Also, like I said earlier, I was on a project that I didn't feel good about, and I didn't see how I could work on my development in that context. The second time this happened you addressed this and asked where this came from. This intervention helped[164]. We broadened the context of our conversations and included my private life when talking about patterns and examples[165]. For example, we talked about me being more of a rebel at home[166] than I am at work[167]. What helped me in the sessions was you being open yourself and not putting right or wrong labels on what I said. Instead, without judging you added to what I said. You shared how you interpret what I said or the way it affected you. All this was helpful because specially in the beginning of our journey I thought 'oh now I need to talk to Joost for a whole hour, just about myself[168]…'
Hahaha, yes[169]…	

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159 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 2
160 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
161 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 2
162 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 2
163 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
164 Overall reflection, consultant 2
165 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
166 Overall reflection, consultant 2
167 Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 2
168 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
169 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

| | It's good that you acknowledged and mentioned the resistance that I was experiencing. And also, that we could create a tailor-made path. I liked that we talked about what could contribute to having these conversations[170]. You introduced me to the terms comfort zone, panic zone and learning zone and we looked at how to practically handle my frustrations about my project. This is when doing intake conversation with clients came up, together with your book suggestion 'Opdrachtgever Gezocht.' New insight for me were 1) leaving the comfort zone is not the same as entering the panic zone and 2) that talking about expectations with a client is not a sign of weakness but a professional thing to do when you're a consultant[171]. So, when we started and were finding a way to make our conversations useful, we applied a broader focus on behavioral patterns in the context of personal family history and things like personality. This as a way of looking for coaching questions and things I wanted to change. As we continued, we narrowed things down to the consulting context more. That turned out to work really well. So, in a way we could go on for much longer if we were to broaden our conversations again. I've got at least 80 topics for you haha. But for my consulting work this has been very useful and I think that our broader start was necessary to find our way, given the work context I was in at that time[172]. |

170 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
171 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 2
172 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

I'm happy that we found this path for us because in the beginning it felt like an obligation for you to talk about these work things. At least that's what I remember[173]. Also, I think this is really interesting. It was your presumption that we would talk 'work only' and work with a preformatted plan while in practice I worked tailor-made with every consultant, starting from your initial letter about what you wanted to learn[174]. In my experience, also with some of your colleagues, people tend to do 'the same' in different contexts. So, for me it's really okay and useful to vary contexts in our conversations and talk about different ways of 'doing patterns' in different contexts[175]. But also, to see where things are different in one context and use that as a resource for another context. It's true that I mentioned the resistance but you also were open about it and wanted to look at how we could make things work[176].	
	Yes. And what I also liked is that when I shared my stories, you offered stories from your experience or a theoretical concept to make sense of my experiences. You also did this when I didn't know how to go on. This helped to continue the conversations so it was never really uncomfortable. It gave me trust that my experiences aren't weird and that there is knowledge available to reinterpret them without you selling me your personal truth[177].
That's nice. I don't look at myself as all-knowing indeed and I do like to offer my professional and personal stories in a way that contribute to the learning process[178].	
	Yes, and of course I could talk with friends about these things but then I'd miss the professional or academic approach. And again, not that your stories would be the new truth but they offered different perspectives[179].

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173 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
174 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
175 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
176 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 2
177 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
178 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
179 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

Okay, nice. And were there things about the way we talked that you didn't like so much or that weren't helping[180]? Or was there anything that you've missed in the coaching[181]?	
	Uhm… hard to say, not really. It's more that in the first sessions I was thinking 'I'm not going to get much out of this because we have to talk about work, and I don't really like my current project'[182]. I might have experimented more if that had been different. However, when we talked about how it was unclear to me what people in the client organization wanted in the project, you gave me resources to talk to the client about this. This is something that I do more often now. And I'm checking more instead of following my own assumptions[183].
That's nice. I remember you talked about the imposter syndrome that you experienced because there was not much work for you in the beginning of your new project. And that I indeed recommended having intake conversations to deal with that and referred to the book 'Opdrachtgever Gezocht' as a resource to help you with this[184]. Is there anything that I could have done different here that would have been helpful for you[185]?	
	No, I don't think so. Of course, there was the context of your study and the offer through the partners of our consulting firm but indeed the start with the letter about what I wanted to learn was open. So, the way we've dealt with this context and started with the more personal stories first was no problem at all. That would have been different if you would have said 'no we have to talk about all the stuff in the project that you don't like'[186].
No haha that would have been a nasty conversation! And still, it is interesting feedback. Because I presumed upfront that I would talk about both personal and professional stories with all participating consultants. But I could have been even more clear about that in the first session[187].	

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180 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
181 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
182 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
183 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
184 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 2
185 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
186 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
187 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

	You could but I wouldn't change that because if you would have said 'we're going to dig into childhood experiences and relate them to your consulting work,' this may scare people off[188].
Haha no that would not be a nice start. But anything else that I could have done differently? I'm really curious about that[189]…	
	No, I can't think of anything now[190].
Okay. I realize that we have already talked about a lot of things. Are there any important details that we haven't mentioned?	
	Maybe it is interesting to share a bit of how things are connected with respect to the key things that kept coming up? In the beginning we talked about the comfort zone or 'the backseat' I tend to take[191]. This is a way to position myself in order not to be rejected and to be able to perform above expectations. However, by doing so I get frustrated because of missing on a challenge[192]. We continued to talk about this and I realized that I'm doing some 'basic pattern' in various contexts[193] so we started to talk about my life story using old family pictures as a starter[194]. We looked at family dynamics and how these relate to family history. For example, I was raised to behave and not take too much risks[195].
I remember that you said something like 'by rebelling I wanted to show that there is more to life and that is can also be fun and not just heavy'[196].	

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188 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

189 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

190 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2

191 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 2

192 Written reflection on session 3 by Consultant 2

193 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 2

194 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 and 4 with Consultant 2

195 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 and 4 with Consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 2

196 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 2

	Yes. And that's when we mentioned that 'being a rebel' a bit more at work could be a resource sometimes. I can be too confirming and do what I'm expected to do, especially when I'm unsure about a situation[197]. Being a rebel more would mean taking a more leading role and looking after my interests better. I decided to have two conversations. One with my co-workers to be more concrete about what I wanted to learn in this current project. And another one with my mentor, to be clearer about my future ambitions. You and I talked about preparing those conversations and think about my interests and anticipate on the interests on the client and the consulting firm[198]. I also decided to experiment in varying how fast I would ask for help and reflect on the feelings that I would experience. It was also interesting to experience that much things that I find hard can be related to a few key patterns[199] and the Symbiotic Character style.
It is! Concerning the Symbiotic Character style, we talked about how you could respond when experiencing a strong but inexplicit appeal by someone. I shared that I too tend to be sensitive to such experienced appeals too and that I've learned to respond by asking 'how can I be of any help in this' or 'is there anything you expect from me here'? Just to initiate conversation about possible expectations or experienced responsibilities[200].	
	That is indeed a useful response for when I'm assuming all kinds of things that the other person wants from me. We also talked about what I could learn from my direct coworkers about dealing with perfectionism, taking more space, guarding my boundaries. For example, colleagues who are really good at looking after their own interests, asking for help, expressing what they need from others or assigning tasks . These were things I can become better at by being more aware and choose deliberate actions[201]. I was really happy about these sessions in the middle of our journey. We really talked about important things in depth with practical takeaways[202].
Great!	

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197 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 2
198 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 and 6 with Consultant 2 / Written reflection on session 5 and 6 by Consultant 2
199 Written reflection on session 6 by Consultant 2 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 2
200 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 2
201 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 2
202 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 2

	The concept of the Symbiotic Character style is an interesting resource for looking at communication in both my private and professional life. I tend to let other people's interest prevail over mine, and to position myself more in the background. However, my current co-worker and I had development goals that are quite opposite to each other. So, we could learn from each other. I also experimented with being more visible during an advisory skills training[203].
Yes, so this was about how to position yourself and others and dealing with the fear of being rejected.	
	Yes, in this respect I remember experiencing 'there is not much to gain here,' when I grew up with my family and became a bit of a rebel sometimes. But then when I went to university, I felt kind of intimidated by 'oh wait, there are more intelligent people' and learned to hold back and be a pleaser[204]… Around these sessions I started experiencing more space within the consulting firm. For example, with one specific partner who reminds me of my uncle. I can be more direct to him and counter him when needed. The way I learned to be assertive from my uncle can be a resource here and I'm learning to trust my comebacks. In client organizations I was still following others too much. If people there saw me as 'junior' I settled for that even though I wanted to take the drivers' seat more[205]. I intended to be more active in conversations and give my views more and earlier. I remember you offering a suggestion to put this into practice. Something like 'I'm sure that your suggestion is a good way to proceed, but can you please explain me why again'? This may be a steppingstone to challenge the other's view without being a burden[206].
Looking back at that session I felt invited push a bit harder than in the earlier sessions. I wrote down this reflection to check with you later[207].	
	Yes, I felt a bit frustrated then because in the beginning I had many new insights. However, my actions and my working context didn't change that much[208].
I remember. We talked about increased awareness and that deliberate choices and discipline are also important. And that these things also take time. So, we talked about maybe we are coming to an end of this journey[209].	

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203 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 2
204 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 2
205 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 2
206 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 2
207 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 2
208 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
209 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2

	Yes. However, besides that frustration there was much to harvest too! In last year's performance review, I got the feedback that I needed to ask for help sooner if I wanted to keep growing in this profession. So, by the end of 2019 I started working with you. In this year's performance review, I could truly say that a lot had changed, for example asking for help and sharing semi-finished work to get feedback. My mentor said that I may be more proud of the things that go well rather than believing the 'inner critic.' Another colleague said that I had been really proactive. So yes, things developed pretty good this year. Your kicking me out of the door to start talking to my clients about mutual expectations also helped me[210].
Great performance review! So, what are you most proud of[211]?	
	In general: taking action sooner instead of staying 'in my head.' For example, expressing what I need and submitting my semi-finished work for feedback. In conversations I'm jumping in sooner[212].
And that's how we came to wrapping up. What are your thoughts about today being our last session?	
	For me it feels good to finish today. After our last meeting it felt good to round things up and 'just do it'[213]. When we were nearing the end of the coaching I asked if we could plan the final session a few weeks later than we normally did. I had just started working for a different client and wanted to experience using my learnings in practice before really rounding up with you[214].
And?	
	Not that everything is perfect now, but I do see a big difference compared to a year ago[215]. I experience more trust in myself and my actions. This also makes it easier to involve people earlier than I used to. And when people give me feedback on my work it feels more like working collaboratively in the right direction rather than me failing. Also, I'm seeing that I don't need to choose between content and process in my consulting work. It's about combining them! To strike a balance and learning to play with both. This takes courage and if there is one thing that I've built this last year its courage and confidence to keep experimenting and learning[216].

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210 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
211 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
212 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
213 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher
214 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 2
215 Overall reflection, consultant 2 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 11 with Consultant 2
216 Overall reflection, consultant 2

That's great. And I remember sensing the difference! You were confident that finishing the journey was a good thing to do while earlier you seemed to doubt this[217].	
	It was different indeed. And also useful that we could talk about my collaboration with a colleague and see how things could be improved with respect to guarding my boundaries and make sure that the project keeps on going well[218].
One more thing before we end today. How did you experience working online[219]?	
	I remember it was weird to have the first online session in the COVID-19 context. Still, we had already established a trusting relationship so the atmosphere wasn't really different[220]. The weird thing was that it's harder to read nonverbal communication online and that you only see faces. But it wasn't really bad, we did pretty good and got a lot out of it. However, I still think that working face-to-face is better. Working 'through screens' is pretty exhausting and less natural[221].
I agree. We got pretty far, and I also prefer working face-to-face[222].	
	It was good that we had met face to face a couple of times before continuing online. This gave me a better idea; you know about mimics and how people are. I was surprised how well online coaching went. I guess this is also because everything had to go online because of COVID-19[223].
Yes, I have that experience too. Well for now I think we're done! I want to thank you for your participation.	
	Thank you for the coaching sessions.

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217 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 11 with Consultant 2
218 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 11 with Consultant 2
219 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
220 Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 2
221 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
222 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 2
223 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 2 and another researcher

6.2 Full Journey Story Consultant 3

Hi, good morning. How do you feel about finishing today?	
	It's unfortunate. But I liked that we extended the coaching beyond our initial topic and continued about my career in general. Although we didn't go super deep in this, what we talked about was valuable[224].
Good to hear this.	
	Yes, we talked about so many things for almost a year. For now, it's fine to finish. And good that you said 'now it's time to stop the coaching and get out in the world to practice the things that I've learned'. I recommended you to my friends!![225]
Well thank you, that's great feedback. Is it okay to start with the agenda for today? I'm curious. What comes up when you spontaneously reflect on our sessions?	
	I am amazed how everything is connected. Work, my past, growing up with my family and the role I took on. In a way you know all this, but now I have this realization of being one person and that my work life and private life are related. My self-awareness has increased. I can see patterns and the way that I learned to act in certain situations as a child and how I tend to continue doing things although I'm an adult now and situations are different. A specific example is how I relate to my father differently now. Although 'the situation' is 'the same' I respond differently. To me this changes the situation even while the other person isn't doing anything different. I experience more space now, different possibilities to respond within relationships and to the way life itself goes. I've learned to switch off the 'autopilot'[226].
That's really nice. What, in your view, are important themes that we addressed during our time together?	

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224 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
225 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
226 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Overall reflection, Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher

	Well. There were several. The first I already mentioned: my relationship with my father and the role I took in my family, being very independent at young age[227]. Secondly, you suggested 'job crafting' when we talked about a project where I felt that I could not use my abilities to the fullest [228]. Third is that I tend to do a lot by myself and not involve important people when making decisions that are important to me[229]. Fourth, and related to this: I'm learning to address important things or problems earlier, before I've made up my mind about how to proceed or I've thought of a possible solution. So, I involve people more[230]. Another theme was about our development as a team of consultants, working for the same client organization[231].
Wow that's a lot. I'd like to go a bit deeper into this later if that's fine. Another thing we talked about is how you used to approach things in a black-or-white or all-or-nothing kind of way. How do you reflect on this[232]?	

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227 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Overall reflection, Consultant 3
228 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
229 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
230 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
231 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
232 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3

	Yes, this is still hard sometimes. I used to think that 'you choose something and then go for it' but sometimes things may turn out differently and then you adjust. I see and value this openness, this flexibility at the same time I make things bigger and more difficult by thinking in terms like 'ultimate decisions.' Approaching it in a less 'all or nothing' kind of way is still difficult. However, I did learn to just take a first step in the direction I think something needs to go. And then see how this works out. A bit like I did in the 'research orientation' I took to think about how I feel about my career so far[233]… When I reflect on it now, I realize that everything is a process. Life is unpredictable, I cannot control the outcomes of things. It's emergent. This coaching helped me see how I tend to wrestle with, on one hand the need to control and straight away answers and on the other hand, seeing the benefit and fun in taking things step-by-step and grow through experience. I think fear plays a big part here. Fear of myself, of what could make me happy, fear for what I could achieve. And also fear of failure, of dreams not coming true, fear of losing options. I'm learning now that fear doesn't get me further unless I see that fear shows me the things I want and value, which touch me and are important to me. Why am I making things so hard for myself? I think approaching things with more curiosity and learning possibilities may help making things lighter in life. Oh, and stop the 'analysis paralysis' and do more things for fun[234].
Sounds like you really learned a lot there. I like stopping the analysis paralysis and doing more fun things! How about we talk a bit about how we started and the way we collaborated and then go a bit more into detail about all you gained from our conversations?	
	Sure.
Great, so how do you look back at how we started? What were your goals?	
	I experienced a personal fit. When I started, I didn't have a specific subject in mind. There was no pressing issue. Still much came up. Even though I didn't feel that I 'really needed' coaching, it can still offer so much[235].

233 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
234 Overall reflection, Consultant 3
235 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher

That's nice. I do remember that you wrote about the little experience you had in working in big corporates and that you were used to working very autonomously. Your project demanded much coordination, accepting other ways of working and compromising instead of doing 'your thing'[236].	
	Yes, that's true. I wanted to focus on interacting with people and collaborating effectively. I think that these topics will contribute to peace of mind and a good team atmosphere, which is productive. For me personally it meant experiencing less negative energy and instead putting more energy into the work I'm doing. For example, I do need a harmonious working environment and I tend to take small tensions personally and get annoyed by them[237].
Okay, good. You said that you experienced a personal fit. What about the way we collaborated invited you to talk[238]?	
	Eh… you offering a (theoretical) frame to make sense of what I experienced helped, and also to realize that I'm not the only one dealing with these things. Also, your personal stories about family and work experiences helped. This was not too much, it was helpful to create a safe atmosphere and served as an invitation to talk about everything that I wanted to talk about. I also liked the way we started: just having one session and then together decide if we would continue. It felt very natural. This space you offered felt safe. I think this may help people to say 'no' to continuing the coaching, if they have any doubt[239]…
Yes, and it does happen! Sometimes people do decide to work with another coach…	

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236 Initial letter Consultant 3 about their focus for the coaching journey
237 Initial letter Consultant 3 about their focus for the coaching journey
238 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
239 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher / Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 3

	I entered without any specific expectations and was also curious about the research part. I mean, would it be just questions you'd be asking me or could I influence things myself too… So gladly there was so much room, really pleasant. This was a positive surprise which I really enjoyed. I think I gained much more out of this than I ever expected. I'm still amazed about how much you can learn about yourself with a relatively limited time investment. I'm really going to take all this with me and things will change. They already have. In one of the last sessions, I was talking about that I may want to continue with a coaching journey. And it was good that you said, "but for now it's time to wrap up this coaching and live what you've learned"[240].
That's great to hear. And yes, that's important indeed!	
	In the beginning of our talks, it was a bit weird. I mean we don't know each other and I'm talking about all these personal things. At the same time this also was useful and offered space because we had no prior history together[241].
And there is no obligation for a future as well. You don't need to hold up anything[242]…	
	Indeed, that's different from talking about fears with friends… Also, the way that you listen and summarize is very helpful. You offered me room to talk freely but also interrupted me to check by summarizing briefly. This helped me to stay focused on what I wanted to say and get an idea of what others make of my stories[243]. I also liked that when starting a session, we looked back at the previous one to see if things needed attention[244].
Thank you. And what were things that weren't useful?	

240 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 3
241 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
242 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
243 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
244 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher

	Well, the setup, the working space wasn't really comfortable to talk about such personal things. But that's also about me, being in an unfamiliar situation. And you may be a bit more strict regarding homework when I hadn't written my reflections about our sessions. I think this happened twice. Writing is important because it is useful for reflection. Summarizing sessions and writing down important learnings kind of forced me to reflect. In a positive way[245]. I experienced this again in writing my 'final reflection' after our last session. The hero's journey format you suggested really touched me and was very useful. At the same time, I'm putting pressure on myself, wanting to write a very good reflection[246]…
Well, that sounds like a nice evaluation of the way we worked. Maybe now is a good moment to talk a bit more in detail about what you've learned. You mentioned your father, growing up and family first. So, let's start there?	
	Okay, and maybe we'll mix it with collaboration in the client organization because it's all related. It was pretty confronting to see some parallels between how I act in this organization and my family. This was a new perspective for me[247].
Of course!	
	Starting with my relationship with my father, and the role I took in my family, being very independent at a young age. Our conversations about this opened my eyes and I was really touched by this. First, I was scared that too little of the relationship with my father would remain once I decided that I wanted to stop talking about his work situation. But this turned out differently… I choose to act differently than I used to and this has had a great positive influence on our relationship. Just a short conversation yielded much space, I stopped making his topics my problem and I shared this with him[248].
I remember you had strong opinions about some of his work-related decisions. You talked about this together and he said he had been making conscious decisions. Great that you're experiencing more space now. As I heard you talk about this: you did an adult thing and respected his choices and stopped taking care of him in a way that wasn't helping him or you[249].	

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245 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 3/ Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
246 Overall reflection, Consultant 3
247 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 3
248 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Overall reflection, Consultant 3
249 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3

	Yes. It had been pretty hard and frustrating to see my parents do things really differently than I would have. I now see that they live their own lives and they have every right to do so. Of course, I can share my views but It's not up to me to help them. Giving them unsolicited advice affected our relationship. So, I decided to do things differently. I wouldn't want them to advise me or tell me what to do either[250]. This conversation with my father went surprisingly well. I felt relieved and less dependent. I realized what I need and talked about that. You helped me by seeing the Child perspective and the Adult perspective here. Thank you for helping me gain a clear picture about family and child experiences. I now experience more space to maneuver[251]. Although these 'roles' may still be challenged from time to time, I experience relief in having more options to react[252].
That's really nice! A bit earlier you mentioned being independent at young age…	
	Yes, that is related to my tendency to do a lot by myself and not involve important people when making decisions that are important to me. For example, with the client on my project, or my boss in our firm. In part this was related to the pretty dominant and controlling way my client works which improved after we as a team stood up and intervened. But this was also about me finding it hard to understand her ways of working in the beginning; later I found a way to balance her working style and my need for autonomy. Also, I've learned to ask more open questions on a 'meta level.' For example: how do you feel? Or what are you afraid of? I learned to connect more on a personal level. Also the shared experience of losing someone close helped us to better understand each other and this changed our communication[253].
Okay, sounds like a great improvement for you both. I'm a bit struggling with how this relates to being independent at a young age. Can you tell a bit more about that?	

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250 Written reflection on session 8 by Consultant 3
251 Written reflection on session 8 by Consultant 3
252 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 3
253 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3

	Ah, sure. I reflected on the tendency that I mainly trust myself over others. Doing so I connected to the story that as a child (from 5 years on) I had been home alone pretty often as both my parents were out, working. I became independent at young age: cooking, doing small tasks and not be a burden to my mother[254]. My mother also used to bear big responsibilities. I wanted to relief her by doing my tasks well and on time. So, I learned to take responsibility and take care. I did talk about this with my mother recently and she didn't really remember us talking about this much. During that time, I also started dancing and met friends after school[255]. Although I hadn't felt super lonely, the days seemed pretty long back then. I also remembered that we shared much at the dinner table and the kid's views were taken in consideration when my parents made decisions[256]. While reflecting I also realized that at work, I often find it difficult to trust my feelings or intuition in the very moment. Instead of trusting my intuition I tend to rationalize, to find out later that my intuition was right. But still, I tend to make pro's and con's lists, look for tools, anything to get a grip. I have had the experience of feeling checked upon which makes me want to be able to offer logical grounds for my actions[257].
I remember that I shared the feeling 'left out' in these talks sometimes. Like I needed to work hard to participate. In these situations, you would talk very much and hardly leave any space. It's like you need to say something three times, in different ways, to be sure that I see you and understand you[258].	

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254 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3
255 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 3
256 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3
257 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3
258 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3

	Yes, I recognized that. This is something that I already 'had' to do back home. Interesting that this has this effect on others[259]. You invited me to reflect on this. I remember that talks at the dinner table felt like 'family conferences.' We could talk about any subject. But it was a bit chaotic. We all wanted to be heard, talked over each other, not leaving room for others. Recently I experienced this again and saw a pattern in our family communication: focusing on details, trying to say things in the exact right words, exchanging arguments. Then it becomes a big discussion instead of listening and also valuing different points of views. It would be helpful if we as a family could share without feeling the need to convince the others. It's okay if there are different opinions. It often grows too big, and this takes up a lot of energy. Then I realized that I don't 'have to' share everything with my parents/family. We can be different people and still be a family. This kind of felt like a relief[260]. After this recent incident I just mentioned, we made a family agreement about how to act when things 'seem to get out of control'[261]. It was interesting to have seen this happening while I was with my family for three weeks. I also talked to a friend about this and in their family, they really have different conversations. They try to convince each other less[262].
Great reflections. I remember asking how you looked at the parallels between this family pattern and your work, being a management consultant[263].	
	Well, I remember that, during our first session, we talked about how I relate to people and particularly my client, that I experience as an authoritarian, possible triggers of specific emotions and how I find my way in a new and changing environment. I could be more present and less holding back; ask more questions and be critical[264].
Yes, and in the second session we looked more into how you relate to your client organization, using concepts like transference, parentification and triangulation. You mentioned how important team atmosphere is to you, even though this is not really your assignment. And how conflicts within the team often relate to your client's actions[265].	

259 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3
260 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 3
261 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 3
262 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
263 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
264 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 3
265 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 3

	Indeed. Confronting parallels between how I act in this organization and my family. Like I said, this new perspective made me rethink the roles I'm taking on. I also started to practice communicating more about things that I deem important, instead of holding them back. It made quite an impression when I realized how I tend to act in respect to my needs and the needs of others[266].
I experienced you as very open and eager to learn about ideas like the learning curve, a systemic perspective and magical thinking and script patterns[267].	
	Yes, these were important topics for me! When wanting to help others, it's very relevant to accept that my way isn't the only way and that some things are beyond my control. Sometimes things will not be all right (as I see it) … and how to handle such a situation[268]… I mean if I want control and be independent. But then, how can others help me? Do I even let them help me or do I want to decide just by myself? Also, it's not that I don't know what I want… I do know. It's more about articulating and expressing it. Often, I'm afraid of possible consequences. But once I know what I want, I tend to make quick decisions and act them out. Then I see things black/white and don't want to wait or look for other options that I hadn't seen yet myself. It became clear that it's good to keep an open mind because alternative options may be useful too. In that session you gave me homework to fantasize about all that's good about being independent and being in control. Insightful assignment[269]…
That was interesting indeed. We talked about what seemed to be a pattern: not expressing your needs, deciding what you want and then acting in a black/white kind of way that may prevent others from helping you. I said I was curious about how (with whom) you had learned to act this way[270]… This must feel alone when I think of it now… Is this possibly related to feeling checked upon?	

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	Maybe. These past months I've learned to show more of myself than just my professional role. Although people may be very different, we are all people with experiences that may connect. I can find ways to connect more actively. Previously I felt that work was just work, and private should remain private. Connecting more actively is something that I can do earlier than I'm used to. Creating a basis of doing things together more by focusing on things like: 'how do you feel about this,' 'does this work for you,' 'how do you feel about the way that we collaborate,' 'what are your expectations' and 'how can I be of help for you in this project'[271]. And: 'Are we still on the right path'? Also: more mutual feedback and checking assumptions actively[272]. With respect to a specific client with whom collaborating wasn't easy I've learned to actively ask for what I need to be able to do my work. This was especially difficult when this didn't match her way of working[273].
Wow I can really see the benefits of this for your communication with stakeholders.	
	Yes. And like I said earlier, I'm involving people more early. This provides me with the room to address things that bother me without making things too big. This is like a communication resource somewhere between 'making things bigger than they are and 'simply ignoring things'[274]. For example: sharing thoughts, worries and feelings. And: 'I see this happening; do you see it too?[275]
These are interesting learnings that you have experienced!	

271 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
272 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
273 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
274 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
275 Overall reflection, Consultant 3

	Yes, through this coaching I've really learned to involve people more, ask their views on things that I find difficult. Less doing-it-alone-by-myself[276]. After our talks about my family, I was ready to connect these insights with my professional role more[277]. I've really learned to offer more context when collaborating with others. Be more clear when communicating and share more about how and why I say or do the things I say or do. Not be afraid to say what I need[278]. During that period, I seized an opportunity in the project to take over some more interesting responsibilities from a colleague. I worked harder but was more fun. Somehow 'everything is the same, but my perception has changed.' I'm taking more initiative, take the lead, I feel better and dare to do more than I used to. This I can also take with me to the next projects I'm doing for clients. My collaboration with the difficult client we talked about has also improved. She let's go more and I experience more trust. I share more of my thoughts. I know her and her needs better now. I received positive feedback about this from her[279].
Great. Yes, and in my experience, bosses like to be informed about things they bear responsibility for. It seems like you are doing this more[280].	
	I have underestimated the importance of this[281].
It was also interesting that you earlier said that these things that you easily do in you private life, were not really seen by people you work with[282]. To me it seems that you're taking up on this…	
	Yes, that's right. I learned this through a 360-feedback session in an Advisory skills training[283]. I've really learned to transfer these skills from my private life to my work context. And I've learned to ask for tasks that I like. Teambuilding for example[284].
Nice. I remember you earlier mentioned your development as a team. What did you take from that?	

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276 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
277 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
278 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
279 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 3
280 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 3
281 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 3
282 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
283 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 3
284 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 3

	As a group of consultants working for the same client we experienced a lot of pressure, lack of trust, keeping information from us, political games and hidden agenda's from the client. Some colleagues came home crying sometimes. This was not easy. We managed to talk about this and I remember that I had to cry when addressing my own values and way of working. Afterwards I felt bad about not having control over my emotions. However, we grew as a team in communicating about the way we collaborate and drawing a line when values were not respected. Afterwards a colleague said she was happy that I showed my emotions because things didn't go well and needed attention. This was interesting because at first, I felt bad about crying but apparently this had a positive impact. This was an important moment for me. Also, because I felt a bit alone in addressing this and remember thinking: am I the only one that experiences this as problematic or do my colleagues just don't want to make the effort?[285]. My experienced colleague said: "I really think it's great what you did. We have a culture of fear here and no one has been brave enough to do what you just did." This was very supportive, much happened within our team. After this meeting, more conversations about trust followed and much improved in the way we collaborate. We now experience more trust and autonomy[286]. I've learned to talk with my team about how we want to collaborate: ask for intended outcomes; set and guard ethical boundaries[287].
I remember that we talked about this[288] It was around our fifth session and a lot was a going on, things were moving. You mentioned the political games and lack of fairness that you experienced at the project you were doing for your client organization. You were moved and happy that you stood up for what you believed in. I remember that I noticed that you weren't doing this all alone, but you actively sought and found support in dealing with these issues from a partner within the consulting firm[289].	
	That's right. I'm learning. And I'm really happy that my firm took position in this conflict which clearly went beyond me and the client[290].

285 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
286 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
287 Overall reflection, Consultant 3
288 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
289 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 3
290 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 3

In your story I've heard you showing the courage to address pressing issues, to engage with your team and ask critical questions. You have articulated and expressed your needs. For you these were relatively new actions as I understood. That's brave and useful in your consulting work[291].	
	Yes, I really have been involving others in what was going on instead of making my mind up by myself. It was a great experience to express my thoughts about something, without first having figured out what exactly was going on, let alone that I had already decided on 'the solution'[292]. I experienced contradictions in my values and actions around this. In my life I've learned to trust my own judgement and ask critical questions. For me this is about being sure if things are right or that there may be other possibilities. Others may feel that I don't trust them when I'm being critical… You and I talked about alternatives to handle such conversations. For example: asking things like 'for which problem is this a solution,' 'I see this happening, do you recognize that.' Also: addressing patterns I experience[293]. You gave me homework to reflect on how I value control and independence 'versus' entrusting the team and people I work with and my social needs[294]. This is how I connected with my experience of being independent at young age we just talked about.
Sounds like we are coming to a point that most things have been addressed… Just before finishing today let's talk about how you've experienced working online. But first, we also talked about your career as another topic[295], and how you look at work in general[296]. What was important about that second part in the journey[297]?	

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291 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 3
292 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 3 / Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 3
293 Written reflection on session 6 by Consultant 3 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 3
294 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 3 / Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 3
295 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
296 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 13 with Consultant 3
297 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3

	Yes, we were coming toward finishing our sessions and you asked if that was okay or that there was maybe something else I wanted to talk about… So yes, there was[298]. I was struggling with what I want in my life, related to my career. I remember that this felt very heavy, frustrated and emotional. I felt stuck in this and treated this as a big life question. Just labeling this as a coaching question was already generative. You offered me really concrete and actionable suggestions like granting myself a 'research period' about this and resources I could use[299]. This first step took off the pressure and made this into something that I could benefit from[300]. It became light and fun and also your stories about how you moved from being stuck in a finance job to an inspiring challenge in higher education served as a good example of how you could handle these questions[301]. This approach raised positive curiosity, possibilities and nice, generative conversations with family and friends[302]. Specifically, the session in which you asked me all these appreciative questions about work related experiences like my startup, what I liked about it, what gave me energy, how I felt, what was important. Already during that session, I experienced much energy answering these questions. And I remember thinking: 'there are possibilities, there are things I like, things I'm good at, and there are environments in which I thrive[303].
Nice!	
	It was also Important not to make this too big of a problem myself. I remember you saying something like "you're not that old yet really, and you haven't really done that much, so it's also relative"[304].

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298 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
299 Written reflection on session 10 & 12 by Consultant 3/ Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 & 12 with Consultant 3 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
300 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
301 Written reflection on session 10 & 12 by Consultant 3/ Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 & 12 with Consultant 3 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
302 Written reflection on session 12 by Consultant 3/ Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 12 with Consultant 3 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
303 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher / Written reflection on session 11 by Consultant 3/ Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 11 with Consultant 3
304 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3

Haha. Did I? I think this was in session 13 when we talked about the place of work in your life in general[305].	
	Haha. So, I guess that's also good to hear from time to time, for me who is making this so heavy and just wanting answers straight away[306]. You again mentioned the all-or-nothing perspective I tend to take. I feel I can be so demanding toward myself. I would like to live life a bit lighter[307].…
Well. Although we didn't start our conversation to be career coaching, I'm happy that I could contribute to this question! So, working online due to COVID-19. How have you experienced that?	
	In the beginning we worked on location at your university. This was a bit uncomfortable at first. But that changed quickly, the physical location became less important. Then we changed to working online. I didn't really mind this; I was already used to it. Sometimes we had a bad internet connection which was annoying[308].
Yea, the connection was sometimes a problem!	
	However, this didn't stop me from opening up and talking freely or sharing things. I don't think that I acted differently during the online coaching. But I missed traveling to your university which facilitated reflection. Doing things online leaves out this opportunity. In general, the coaching was pretty intense, and I realized that I shouldn't have three online calls with clients after our sessions. I mean, I really was touched personally, when talking about growing up and relating to parents and family members. These were emotional and important topics that use more energy[309]. Finally, working online from home also took some effort to find a way that both my boyfriend and I could work in our home[310]…
I'm glad that working online didn't prevent you from sharing personal stories! And it was smart indeed to plan some free time adjacent to the sessions! So, I think we've talked about everything we planned for today. I want to thank you for your participation and your openness!	
	Thank you for the journey and the insights and good luck[311]!

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305 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 13 with Consultant 3
306 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
307 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 13 with Consultant 3
308 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
309 Report of evaluating conversation Consultant 3 and another researcher
310 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3
311 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 3

6.3 Full Journey Story Consultant 7

Good morning! How are you? Ready for our final conversation?	
	Good morning. Yes sure!
So, I have sent you the proposed agenda for today. Anything you wish to add?	
	No this seems fine; we did already talk about some of the bullet points last time[312].
Yes, we did, it's fine if we are brief about those things[313]. What would be some first, spontaneous reflections about our coaching journey?	
	Well, the coaching turned out to be a surprisingly different path than I had expected, although we did address the same issues. Initially I wanted to look at the way I manifest myself in interaction with others in my consulting context[314]. I interpreted the coaching offer about relational leading strictly businesswise in the beginning. Looking back at certain meetings in business setting, I often felt uncomfortable about the way I positioned myself[315]. For example: I can be very energetic, clownish even, which can be a bit too much for people sometimes. I wanted to be more in control of this because I deemed this unprofessional. It's a bit ambivalent really because it can also contribute to the ambiance in a conversation[316]… I judged myself for that and felt that I had to learn to stop doing that. So, at first, I was looking how to get rid of my typical ways of acting[317]. Pretty quickly I learned that this is not something I could just address purely business wise. We talked about who I am and why I do what I do. Separating business from private turned out to be impossible[318].
Wow that's a lot already! Great to hear you summarize it this way. I was rereading the letter you sent me. You wrote about your experience that some conversations are more complicated than others. Something you also experienced in other jobs[319].	

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312 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
313 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
314 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
315 Overall reflection, consultant 7 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher
316 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher
317 Overall reflection, consultant 7 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher
318 Overall reflection, consultant 7
319 Initial letter Consultant 7 about their focus for the coaching journey

	Yes. I tend to end up in typical ways of acting when I feel that I need to do my best, when a conversation is tense or when I think something is difficult. I tend to become 'girly' in a way, less of an adult. I wanted to be more of a professional and have more well-structured and powerful conversations[320].
So, in your view, what were important themes we talked about working toward that goal?	
	To me it turned out to be more about the process than its outcomes. I mean, at the start my goal was to learn about how I tend to position myself and about the question why I experience difficulties in this from time to time. Looking back, I was clearly judging myself for doing things wrong and wanted to fix that. Somewhere halfway this changed to understanding the history and background of my typical ways of acting and patterns. We talked about how certain ways became familiar to me and seemed to have become a protecting mechanism[321]. To make this a bit more specific, I learned that 'my typical ways of acting' is often a self-protection mechanism. I'd tend to use this to not show myself really and to control what others will see of who I am[322]. Working toward the end of the coaching the focus transformed to being sincere in connecting with others. My initial question was disconnected. Disconnected interaction feels uncomfortable to me and others and I realized that I didn't respect my own limits that costed too much energy[323].
Interesting. What made you look at this differently as we continued our conversations?	
	Interesting reflective questions about why I would do things that currently feel unsuitable to my professional role? In my situation this is something I learned to do in the past, something that was effective to handle the situation back then. So, the things I wanted to get rid of now appeared to have been useful somehow in my past[324]. Speaking in a metaphor: in our conversations we didn't put the cherry on the pie, but we addressed the cake pan[325].
That's described very nicely. You really took the chance to look for fundamental changes instead of 'how to do it' recipes.	

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320 Initial letter Consultant 7 about their focus for the coaching journey
321 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
322 Overall reflection, consultant 7
323 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
324 Overall reflection, consultant 7 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher
325 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7

	Yes, both in my professional and my private contexts. For me this feels right now. It's not about whether or not my actions are right or wrong but about the way I engage in processes of relating. And that both me and others can probably sense when I'm disconnected. I had never thought about it that way[326].
Wow, that's spot on I would say. Stepping away from some expert's judgment of right and wrong of something about you. And start to look at what people experience in interaction and look for other ways to go on[327].	
	Yes. So soon I started experimenting by doing things differently. For example: not doing my typical things and leaning back for a while. Also, when this becomes unsettling. Easier said than done! After some careful experiments in opening up to my colleagues COVID-19 came and spoiled my experimenting space. I got frustrated because I started this coaching to get some results and now this wasn't possible! Later on, I could look at his and be wondered… This is when I learned that it wasn't about right or wrong as we just talked about. I learned to appreciate that my actions have a function and that I didn't need to judge so hard. I learned that my typical ways of acting weren't causing the discomfort I tend to feel, but that these typical roles didn't really match my specific feelings at certain times. Disconnecting from my feelings would result in disconnecting from the people I'm talking to and by that as ineffective relational leading. At that time, I felt liberated from the urge to 'solve this.' Our coaching sessions offered me resources to slow down and reflect, which made me step out of judging mode into learning mode. Right now, I can connect better to why I tend to do things in a certain way. Not doing my 'typical things' has become a possibility[328].
I'm curious about what this experimenting brought you in relating to others?	

326 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
327 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
328 Overall reflection, consultant 7 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher

	People around me now give me the feedback that they can also see the thoughtful me. The effect is in the little nuances. And I notice it myself, the influence my relational leading can have on a conversation. It's like being more able to invite the others instead of controlling, influencing the situation or ambiance. I'm really focused on ambiance. People often think that energetic people focus on themselves more than others. For me that's different. I instantly sense how people are doing and what could improve the situation[329]… One critical reflection about this though. You totally haven't solved any of my issues. Hahaha. Nothing at all, haha[330]!
Haha I'll take that as a compliment! Which brings me to the question… what has invited you to 'dig a little deeper' in our conversations[331]?	
	Ehhhm… To start and this is simple, I liked talking to you. After all we're human, haha. This made it easy. Also, and not to be mean in any way, I really have been probing and testing you in our first session. Looking whether or not you were a pushover, If you had skills, were perceptive and sharp. You know, that is what people do[332].
At least that is what you did[333]… By the way: I really like how you stepped in later and started talking about what really was important to you. I experienced that as different from that first session in Amsterdam[334].	
	Haha… And third, I really experienced the way you coached me as pleasant. I must admit that did have to get used to it in the beginning. Sometimes it really takes a while for you to say something and I realized I couldn't trick you into saying anything. And sometimes there comes this whole story about yourself. Haha I really had to get used to that[335].
That's really nice that you noticed this. At those moments you witnessed me making a journey into my own stories[336]…	

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329 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher
330 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
331 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
332 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
333 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
334 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
335 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
336 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7

	And probably you have been testing also. Looking how the stories you were telling worked out in our interaction[337].
I'm definitely doing that. Very deliberate[338].	
	For me, this really worked out pretty well. This also made our conversations more humane[339].
Exactly. And this is risky or tense for me too. I'm also just a human being when I'm talking with you. And I share real, personal stories hoping that they are beneficial to you and our conversation[340].	
	Yes, so I had to get used to this, like 'okay so this is what we are doing'[341]. At the start I did test you a little because I would never say: 'here it is… my heart and soul.' For me this was related to 1) not knowing you yet and 2) previous experiences with 'mentors' that I didn't really confide in because in my opinion they had only 'read the same self-help book' as I had[342]…. I've also had totally different experiences with the more traditional trained experts[343]. For example cognitive behavioral therapy and psycho analyses are really different. I've experienced those as just offering tricks by experts who seem to know how to 'fix people.' Talking to you was really different. We had a more mature collaboration; our process was future oriented. In our conversations it wasn't about right or wrong. We were looking at the effects of actions and exploring alternatives, which has been very helpful. This was more about the journey than reaching the destination[344]. You know, these traditional experts don't reveal anything about themselves. So, you'd have no idea who these people are. So that explains why this stood out in your way of working. Besides that, I really think that you are well trained and good in what you do, I personally liked the way you worked with me[345].
Thank you. I also experienced a good personal click and I think that together we created a way of collaborating that helped you to really engage and step in the process with me[346].	

337 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
338 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
339 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
340 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
341 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
342 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
343 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
344 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
345 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
346 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7

	This is also something that grew. For example, sharing about the death of my mother, which is of daily importance to me, is not something I always do. Or do immediately. And I didn't make a plan about it, so it turned out that I told you in our third session[347]. And I have to say that in the beginning I sometimes sat in front of you, not having a clue what to say. And later on, I found myself having an overflow of examples and experiences[348].
Yes, that's really nice, I wrote down about our second session: we went from 'no clue about what we were to talk about, to ending up having a deep conversation'[349]. So now that we've briefly mentioned the outcomes and talked about the way we collaborated, how about looking back at the outcomes in a bit more detail? I liked it how you spoke about the importance of the journey rather than reaching the destination. So, let's talk about some of the 'places' we visited along our journey… And after that we can take a look at the future and talk about how we've experienced working online due to COVID-19…	
	That's fine!
For example, in that second session we just mentioned. We worked with two sub persons and looked at positive intentions of both[350]…	
	Yes, I didn't know what to talk about in this session at first. After a long silence I said, 'I've been making jokes with IT and finance people again.' And that I learned though my manager that people sometimes experience difficulties in figuring me out. This was interesting feedback. Talking about those sub persons taught me that my sub person that seeks safety when I'm feeling uncomfortable undermines the more adult, professional me by building a wall around me and disqualifying myself through typical ways of manifesting myself in interactions. My homework was to reflect on both sub persons, see who's in the lead. Interesting was looking for possibilities to transform the 'child strategies' or coping mechanisms into more adult ways to handle insecurities[351].
Like you said: we went from not having a clue to a pretty deep conversation, starting from what really bothered you in that moment.	

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347 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
348 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
349 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 7
350 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 7
351 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 7 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 7

	Then in our third session we talked about my mother's death and I experienced how this dramatic event influences the coaching questions I brought to our sessions. At a young age I had to grow up fast and be mature. I was forced to be an adult at once in a way that didn't feel natural but necessary… I wrote a letter to my 21-year-old me in preparation for our fourth session. This was a confronting thing to do[352].
I remember that moment very well. We were taking coffee from the machine at my University and I asked you where you had just come from. 'From the house that I inherited from my mother' you said. To me this was an arresting moment. I remember thinking 'of course the young you comes around when things get tough!' So, we gave this the attention it needed[353].	
	Then we talked about an interesting moment of feedback I got. In an internal advisory skills training of our firm, we did an exercise called 'constructive gossiping.' I was curious about the first impression I made in that group. They said things like hard to read, creates the atmosphere, breaks the ice, when things get tough, she explicates that and nice to have in the group. Things they said that I didn't agree about were she likes to work in groups, to her atmosphere is more important that results, as long as it's fun[354]… I'm aware that I'm very actively present in a group and that I speak out. I have this sensitivity to sense the atmosphere and I feel responsible for making sure everyone is feeling at ease. In my life I have seen a lot of misfortune around me and I haven't really experienced much room for my misfortune[355]… Like we talked about I'm very much aware about two typical roles I tend to assume: the adult woman and the playful girl. Both are really me. I just want to perform the adult one more to be a more effective consultant. I reflected on particular examples to follow up on this[356].

352 Written reflection on session 3 by Consultant 7
353 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 7
354 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 7
355 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 7
356 Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 7

Yes, we talked about this. How both roles connect to useful competencies. Useful in various contexts. And how you've experienced that some competencies you are used to perform, are less helpful in your consulting practice than others. For example, the grown-up woman might ask for help less than she wants or needs, the one making sure everybody feels okay might share less about what's important for her… Because this has been of such great importance for you… An example from my life is that I need to remain friends all the time[357]…	
	It's really hard not to do these things. They are like mental elephant paths[358].
That's a great metaphor! Sometimes we keep doing things even though they don't really help us here and now. Just because we are used to doing this. And we're good at it[359].	
	So, making all the jokes is something I learned as a child. And the adult woman, she did the work! She knows what she is talking about. She has done a lot of soul searching. Feeling at ease while talking to board members. So, reflecting on this, of course some people experience difficulties in reading me. I'm both and that's fine, until it doesn't help me in particular situations[360]…
Both qualities are useful. Like we talked about earlier, looking for 'more adult' ways of using the sensitivity you've learned as a child could help maybe. Or ways that better fit your consulting context. So instead of distracting others from sorrow, for example, by making joke, you could say something like: I'm looking at you and I get the impression that you're not feeling okay….[361']	
	In the fifth session we talked about the feedback you received after giving a presentation. 'Shouldn't you do cabaret'? Although I liked the credits for my coping mechanism, do I really want to keep manifesting myself like this[362]?
Yes, we started to talk about Game versus Intimacy as Transactional Analysts would say. The Game resulted in people laughing about good jokes. What would Intimacy possibly result in? Connecting to what you are feeling in the moment might lead to different reactions? We talked about what you might risk if you keep doing the Game[363].	

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357 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
358 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
359 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
360 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
361 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 7
362 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 7
363 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 7

	This could overshadow the content that is at hand… But seemed hard to suppress[364].
Yes, and I remember I was touched by the sharp views you expressed about this. And your determination to learn. We talked about resources you could benefit from on this journey[365].	
	Yes, I planned to talk to my aunt after that session[366]. To hear her views on me dealing with my mother's death.
Great. Our sixth session was after COVID-19 'happened'. I remember you also started a new project that time[367]…	
	Yes. Working online requires different skills[368]. My new slogan became: 'new world, new ways'[369]. A lot became different then and I felt challenged. I realized how valuable it is to have these coffee machine talks. I also felt challenged in respecting my limitations. That, and also communicating clearly about it, is really important to get what you need. Also, to ask others about what they need[370]. At the same time, there are plenty of possibilities to reflect on the goals we have been working on. Just in a different way[371]. For example: I talked about my coaching goals with my peers during intervision[372]. It was interesting to hear their responses, namely not really understanding the problem I addressed. Then I became aware that I'm the one that labeled my typical ways of acting as problematic. It was nice to not get as response like 'Yes that's clearly your problem'[373].
Great that you talked about your journey during intervision. And in my view their response shows that your 'typical ways' aren't bad or wrong. It's something that got you where you are right now. The only thing you wanted is to choose more deliberately to use those skills and sometimes do something different. Not learning a new skill but use it more in your consulting context[374].	
	It was really interesting that my colleges ended this session by saying something like 'thank you for being this open and honest about this.' Then I thought to myself: now you see it, this is something I cán do[375]!

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364 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 7
365 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 7
366 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 7
367 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 7
368 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 7
369 Audio recording of session 6 with Consultant 7
370 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 7
371 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 7
372 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 7
373 Audio recording of session 6 with Consultant 7
374 Audio recording of session 6 with Consultant 7
375 Audio recording of session 6 with Consultant 7

Of course, you can! Then we had the session in which you felt stuck and frustrated. Later this turned out to be a turning point for you!	
	I wasn't in a good place in our 7th session. I was tired of a busy week and felt demotivated because I hadn't been experiencing any progress for some time. I was reluctant to talk and shut off[376]…
I remember. I experienced you as passive and pulled back…not saying what you wanted or needed. Me, I felt an appeal to keep our conversation going[377]…	
	Yes, that's something I recognized[378]. When we ended that short session, you asked me to reflect on what went on. Although I still think the timing was bad, later I also thought it was a way to show my frustration. I guess I'm more result-oriented and like to talk about the progress in a coaching session. I became aware of two interesting assumptions I had: 1) standstill is decline and 2) not making progress is failing. Later on, I thought: why can't I enjoy the process more[379]?
I was wondering then, if this was somehow related to the 'young girl-grown up women' theme we had been talking about. In the conversation you said this was an interesting parallel[380]…	
	Yes, but after we finished that session, I thought that this psychologizing was too easy… However, when I went through my notes of earlier sessions and I read that my Child sub person not only likes to make jokes but also sometimes also needs to build a wall for safety. So, then I learned that both by making jokes and building walls I create a distance. Then it hit me that some earlier homework assignment focused on creating more intimacy or openness when meeting people…. Still, I did experience that creating that intimacy is not easy when working online in well-structured meetings. This felt like having arrived at some sort of plateau in my development: having gained new insights and specific things to experiment with but no available context to put things into practice. Apparently, it was hard for me to accept not being able to make progress when I wanted. I finished that written reflection by asking myself: it seems that I've run a little stuck in this, the question is how bad this really is[381]…

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376 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 7
377 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 7
378 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 7
379 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 7
380 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 7
381 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 7

That was an interesting reflecting question about the process… because I also found that you were being a bit hard on yourself[382]…You also said that you didn't want to reschedule that session because that wouldn't be nice to me. That was really interesting. The way I experienced this was that by doing that you kind of started to take care of me. And I felt the urge to respond by taking care of you by keeping the conversation going, like I said earlier[383].	
	At least I was taking better care of you than I did of me[384]….
Yes, and then I became curious about what would have happened if you had taken care of your needs, and I had taken care of mine[385]… And I liked your honest and deep reflection on this session very much. You mentioned a pattern of building a wall around you as another way of disconnecting than making jokes about things[386].	
	Yes, I did, didn't I? I think I passed with flying colors about connecting in this session. Compared to the previous session which I experienced as the lowest[387].
You sure did! You looked beyond the judgements you had about experimenting and learning. You went from needing great and compelling steps in learning to appreciate the questions themselves and acknowledging that different, smaller learning steps just as well offer possibilities for development[388].	
	I also talked about that session with my boyfriend. He said: 'okay…, and why are you dissatisfied with this'[389]? To me that eighth session was a turning point. I went from 'running stuck with respect to my coaching question' to 'maybe this is the essence of my coaching question.' That is all about being mild toward myself and my learning process. Due to the changed circumstances, I experienced being out of control of my learning process. And for me it's hard to enjoy the process when there are no clear results[390].
I think this is wat Wibe Veenbaas calls being life's pupil. Learning from life itself[391].	

382 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 7
383 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 7
384 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 7
385 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 7
386 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
387 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
388 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
389 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
390 Written reflection on session 8 by Consultant 7
391 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7

	To be able to be a bit mild about myself and this coaching journey, two insights were important. First: I may have categorized this coaching too much as only work related. When things change in the working situation, this doesn't mean that development stops. It stresses that that you always bring yourself when you get coaching on how you act in the workplace. Second: your quote 'when you know how you disconnect, you also know how to reconnect.' Besides that, this is an interesting thought, offering possibilities to experiment it also takes the limitations of my situation (the plateau I mentioned) and helps me to make the best of things. It's just another side of the coin and I can choose which side I want to show[392].… I have been thinking of this coaching as a linear process too much and judging myself for not making progress in the way I thought of. So why did I have to be so hard on myself and think that I did run stuck in my development[393]?
I remember you also told me that you talked to your aunt…	
	I talked to my aunt and asked her if she thought that I'd changed since my mother passed away. She said, 'yes for sure, you grew up really fast and had to be an adult and deal with things you weren't really prepared for.' And she said that I had become more friendly and less judging. I used to be more fierce in a way that could push off people she said. I did work hard to be more mild toward others around me. But not really toward myself yet[394]…
Yes, and then we talked about what being more mild toward yourself would be about and what judgement you held toward yourself[395]…	
	Uhm…. To me that's very much about doing the right things for others and using a fair compass toward others. I tend to be very much oriented toward others. And with respect to myself… it feels like I need to get the best out of myself. All the time. And that if I, for example, meet you unprepared, I have wasted my time. And that I find it hard to look back at situations and see them as learning possibilities[396].

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392 Written reflection on session 8 by Consultant 7
393 Audio recording of session 8 with Consultant 7
394 Audio recording of session 8 with Consultant 7
395 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
396 Audio recording of session 8 with Consultant 7

It was a great ending of that session when you said you'd use the 'therapist' you live with more and try to enjoy your learning process[397]…. Instead of positioning yourself as being all alone in this. Again, the theme of intimacy in conversations showed up[398].	
	I really have been working on 'not pinning myself down' so much. Maybe it's just okay when I'm better able to reflect and see progress on one day than another… In a small peer group during an advisory skills training, I reflected on my recent developments with respect to connecting and disconnecting with people. And how I tend to often disconnect in certain situations and how I would like to more deliberately choose my actions given my role and the situation. Then a colleague said: 'don't we all want that? I think some 60-year-olds still need to learn that'… And said that I'm learning it now[399].
Nicely put[400]!	
	Yes, and this was also nice to practice being more open and vulnerable in a group of people I know and trust. I shared my recent developments, also disconnected while doing a presentation and afterwards shared my reflections about disconnecting and how I'm creating distance to others in doing so[401].
I loved the way you talked about your active experimenting and learning. As I was watching you talking about that, I saw a grown-up woman telling her story. That was a big difference compared to two sessions earlier[402].	
	Thank you. And that really is about being a bit more mild toward myself. Like this presentation I made a joke of. I could easily despair about 'oh I did it again'[403]… I think that in my first conversations with you I engaged from some kind of malleability approach. I was focused on stopping some 'bad habits'[404]. But now, when I walked back to my chair from doing my presentation, I was thinking 'oh I did it again.' And it's okay. As long I'm also showing that other side of me[405].

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397 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 8 with Consultant 7
398 Audio recording of session 8 with Consultant 7
399 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
400 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
401 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
402 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
403 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
404 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7
405 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7

Nice. In my experience many people who come to me initially are looking to 'fix something' from a perspective of malleability. Then as our process continues, we re-contract to 'what is this learning process about on a deeper level?' Often we look at the ways we connect with others and developed patterns that we bring to that. Looking from a more mild perspective, like we talked about coping mechanisms, often results in more room to move toward a more desired future. That's different from 'now I want to fix this and that.' Right now, to me you appear to be more respectful and accepting toward your personal life story and how you responded to certain events. And from that position, to start learning to do things different is a very different approach than 'my old way has to go, give me some tricks'[406].	
	Exactly, that's less convulsive. And making this step really feels like combining both work-related and personal learning. So, to continue the presentation example: a next step could be instead of afterwards returning to my seat thinking 'I did it again in this presentation,' I could think about the way I'd like to present before taking the floor.' At least right now it feels more liberated. It's like expanding my assortment beyond 'just being this girl that makes jokes.' Not only expanding my assortment to interact 'better,' but also toward myself. It's funny that most people view me as an extraverted person given the way I act in groups. While when I do these common tests, it turns out that I'm largely introverted, getting energy from being by myself. I could continue thinking… okay I'm both… But I could also think about how this relates to being effective, how I'm using my energy[407].
What I find interesting about that is that you said that you returned home exhausted after meeting your colleagues for a training, for the first time after working from home for three month. I'd say that a textbook-example of an extraverted person would return home full of energy after 'finally being able to meet his/her colleagues again and chat, drink coffee'… But in your case, it didn't yield energy, it costed energy[408]! I really like how our conversations developed from 'high energy' and nervousness to more being at ease, including silent moments and a collaborative reflecting and growing. Instead of doing patterns, we went to looking at patterns. Honest, without adding or leaving things out[409].	

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406 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
407 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
408 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
409 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7

	When you first met me, you probably saw someone who deliberately gives a lot of energy, because that's what I do… While the way I'm right now is more about some kind of 'natural energy'[410]. As I felt we were approaching a moment that we would conclude our conversations I wanted to focus some more on being more personally effective than only looking at relational effectiveness. A goal in this respect could be to more deliberately choose a way of engaging with specific people in a specific situation. To close the circle, I focused on the way that I'm using my energy without an immediate adaption to specific others[411].
I really liked it that, while we were working toward the end, you mentioned this. And I appreciate that you wanted to focus on yourself that way. In my view, this ís related to how you engage with other people although our conversations could focus more on 'this is what happened to me' rather than 'this is what happened between certain persons'[412].	
	Things that came up when I thought about this were things like 'focusing on myself some more,' 'how am I feeling today,' 'what gives me energy,' 'do I feel the urge to talk to people,' 'what if I don't feel that urge but the situations demand it.' These kinds of questions that are also related to take control while being aware of my energy level[413].
As I heard that, that's also about taking yourself and your needs more seriously while interacting with others, instead of putting yourself last[414].	
	Yes. And make deliberate choices. For example, say things like 'I'm not feeling very energetic today, so….' Being more honest and allowing myself more wellbeing rather than just 'go, go go.' As a homework assignment I started to take the time and look into this at the start and end of each day for some time[415].
And then, as you mentioned, we already did some looking back in that following session…	

410 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
411 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Written reflection on session 9 by Consultant 7
412 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
413 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
414 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 9 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7
415 Audio recording of session 9 with Consultant 7

	Yes, we did.
	In my experience the possible trap of coaching is to problematize and psychologize everything. Like holding the DSM in your hands and work toward the 10 steps of … whatever. But of course, I knew that my struggles relate to something and in our sessions, I think that we really were on to this. You really helped me to look at this more mildly. I also recognize this in the feedback I get in various situations. For example: I had a 360-degree feedback conversation today and a colleague said she finds me and my feelings hard to read. Another example is about another colleague who is really not happy with the project we're on and showing that in an unfriendly way. And my response is to feel responsible and start working on our relationship. I'm giving a lot of energy and she gives nothing back. It's not that I want her to like me or be friends. It's just productive to have a workable relationship. I tend to accept a lot from people and not use my energy in a good way[416].
It seems to me that you allowed her to rob you of your energy. And try to save the relationship, just by yourself[417].	
	Yes. When I reflect on different relationships, groups, one-on-one, I often tend to take much responsibility for maintaining a good relationship. While in a personal relationship I probably would have been more assertive. So, this morning I confronted her about her mood. But what I really want is to make this more of a shared responsibility[418]. And I realized that by not addressing that, I'm also disconnecting from her[419]. By the way, in my private life I tend to do the same. My boyfriend once told me: 'when I'm having a bad day, you don't need to fix that'[420].
These examples remind me one of my therapist trainings in which the trainer said: 'Joost you don't need to guard my boundaries; I can do that myself. Why don't you watch over your boundaries and trust that I will watch over mine.' So, we are in this together. In my case I'm terrified to be rejected, that's why I assume too much responsibility[421]…	

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416 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
417 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
418 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
419 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 10 with Consultant 7
420 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
421 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7

	Uhm… in my case I would think that I'm the cause of people not feeling okay or are upset. So, I should solve that situation. So then, upfront I can train to be more aware of my energy level and things like that, but in the interaction, there is this Pavlov's response[422]…
This is what I think Dutch communications trainer Aty Boers means by saying 'the real learning starts after you know it all.' Put differently: 'knowledge of' is not enough to change things. In my experience life keeps offering these situations. In my case: I keep feeling invited to guard other peoples' boundaries. So along with self-awareness and knowledge, I need discipline. Patterns don't just disappear like that… This needs dedication. In my experience it gets better, but there is no quick-fix[423].	
	I can see this in our process so far. We went from: help me get rid of this to understanding why I'm doing what I do and the effects it has. Then I started to change things deliberately and got different out-comes. But now I've come to a place in which I realize I cannot fully control that in interaction[424].
Exactly. Although you have reflected and know how to do things differently, people keep inviting you to step into the familiar pattern. We all bring our pat-terns to our interactions. I also like it that these are things that don't go away. And don't need to even. We do learn how to deal with things differently. So, when you tell your colleague what you don't like about the way you both are interacting, instead of fixing things alone, that's also adding intimacy to the conversation. That may not feel that comfortable, but at least gives you both the opportunity to do some-thing about it collaboratively[425].	
	At least I've found ways to reflect on situations that, for example, cost me lots of energy. Like you said, once you're aware, the learning begins. And then I began to see all these examples and learning pos-sibilities. Not that things are solved or that I learned new tricks. Together we began to see all the layers in the learning process[426].
That's a nice way to conclude on the things you're taking with you… So how do you see yourself going on from here?	

422 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
423 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
424 Written reflection on session 9 by Consultant 7 / Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
425 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7
426 Audio recording of session 10 with Consultant 7

	Of course, the things I've learned are useful in both my private and my professional context. So, for sure I'll do things differently with respect to the protective mechanisms and their effects that we talked about. I think that I'd already started doing that in my private life. This is because, especially since the death of my mother, I've been looking at my friends as 'my chosen family.' And to them I've been more open already. Sharing about being tired of things or not feeling well is something I've learned to do. In my professional context this is not common yet and I tended to rely on coping mechanisms more. Over the last few weeks, I have deliberately started to tell people things were not going well in a specific project. I had to do this really because I always get the feedback that I seem to have to have everything under control and that I'll manage…. I do think this may become easier after some time[427].
Very nice that you've already made changes in your personal life that can help you in your consulting context. Again, it's not about a new skill, you're just learning to apply this also in your working life… So just before we say goodbye let's talk a little about how you've experienced working online with me. You already mentioned that this had been a challenge in your consulting work. So how did this influence the coaching?	
	What helped was that we had met face to face a few times. So, switching to online coaching didn't bother me really. As a matter of fact, I experienced this more intimately as we both were at home. Online working in general was not really great. Missing body language or sensing how somebody is doing was hard. Also, the internet connection was sometimes bad…. All was compensated by being able to work at home instead of both our less inspiring offices… I purposively planned 30 minutes free time before and after our sessions to prevent getting stressed by back-to-back meetings. So, although it's a bit sad that we didn't finish this in person, for me and talking about things it turned out fine[428].
I agree, we did well in finding a way. Fortunately, we had a good start, meeting in person a couple of times. And I'm sure we'll meet again as I'll probably be in your office and of course all of you will be invited to attend my PhD defense! How do you feel about ending this collaboration today?	

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427 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7
428 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 7 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 7 and another researcher

	It feels very natural that we came to this end. I'm more aware of the backgrounds of my questions. We looked at it from all sides and I'm aware of what I can do. It's not solved but our conversations are complete[429]. I went from the 'solving mode' to the 'learning mode.' That feels good and I think I can further benefit from this in the near future. I'm more aware now about the way I act and anticipate that I will be more effective as a consultant because of this[430].
That's really great. I want to thank you very much for taking part in this. I've experienced you as honest, reflective, and willing to learn. Too bad that you hardly make any jokes ;-)	
	Haha. Well thank you too! Like I said, I liked collaborating with you. You've listened very well and offered pleasant summaries. You also were able to offer reflections on what I said. Because of that I felt I could trust you. You were able to help me in a very non-forcing way. That's a job well done[431]!
Well thank you for that. We'll be in touch.	

6.4 Full Journey Story Consultant 9

	Hi Joost! How are you?
Hey, how are you? I'm fine, really enjoying the weather. And how are things with you?	
	Yes, the weather is really fine. And some days off ahead…
Nice! And now we are already having our final conversation…	
	Yes. Amazing how things changed because of COVID-19 and the effect that's had on my work. Anyway, we'll get to all this in a minute, I guess… I did take a look at the suggested agenda you sent me, seems just fine[432].
Great, so why don't we just start? Okay? Can you share something about the start of our coaching sessions?	
	I was already looking for coaching when your offer came along[433]. I wanted to focus on saying 'no' more and dealing with leadership. And I wanted to look at where some typical behavior originates from and how to handle this better[434]
Great so we started right on time! So, in general terms, what did you get out of our conversations? And we'll get into more detail later I'd think.	
	Our conversations really triggered an increase in awareness about the way I act in certain situations[435]. Both in my professional and my private life I was struggling with things like: why am I acting the way I do? How do others see me? How am I supposed to act around here? I'm more aware of things now, more often reflect on how I feel and try to please people less. Being a consultant, I experience being more self-aware, reflect more and have tools change the way I act, for example in my newly started project[436].
Sounds like something you can work with… So, this is our final conversation, our sixth. Why is now a good time to wrap things up?	

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432 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
433 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
434 Written overall reflection, consultant 9
435 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
436 Written overall reflection, consultant 9

	Things have changed now. Both in my professional and private life. In part due to the COVID-19 measures, my work context has changed dramatically. I'm less amid my colleagues physically[437]. In general, I'm feeling pretty good these days. Besides great things happening in my personal life, things at work are running more smoothly. Being able to focus on one project means experiencing less distraction from internal firm matters. My current project is in a more masculine culture (a difference we talked about). One colleague there is looking up to me, we learned a lot from each other. Also, the newly formed advisory group in our firm I take part in is in a good place[438].
Okay. So, what is it like for you, to finish our talks today?	
	Well. I was thinking about the final conversation we're having now, to round things up. And how it's such a pity that our conversations changed because we all work online now[439]. Because of that I don't experience the specific (non) verbal communication situations that bothered me when we started. Our online conversations were less deep, compared to face-to-face meetings[440]. The online sessions added less value in my view[441]. Right now, not much is happening at home or work, so it's more of the same I guess haha[442].
I would say that's okay right? We did a lot of work in, I'd say, session 2 and 3. And after that everything changed like you said. So that's just the way it is… Of course, it would have been great to continue, but only if you have things you want to work on[443]…	
	Yes. I've also talked about this with friends and some colleagues…. And although I do miss social interactions, working from home is also relaxed. I really feel pretty good. But many colleagues and friends I talk to really struggle with some things they had been ignoring for years… And now because of the COVID-19 measures these things emerge. But for me this is different. I'm really okay[444].
That's just nice right[445]?	

437 Written overall reflection, consultant 9
438 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
439 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
440 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
441 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
442 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
443 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
444 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
445 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

	Yes, and at work I feel more confident. Things go the way I want[446]. Also, my situation has changed recently. Both in my private and my professional life. For example, since I have one fulltime project now, I'm more calm compared to constantly switching between smaller projects, multiple clients and internal tasks at our firm[447]. I'm also happy that I have a project right now. If I'd be without a project, like some colleagues have been for four months now, I wouldn't be this relaxed[448]. Also, I have a manager at the client organization who really trusts me in doing my job without getting in my way. That's really contrary to a previous project we talked about, where my (female) manager was really in my face… Which I really experienced as intimidating[449].
Sounds fair. How about talking a bit about how you and I worked together and then go a bit more into detail about what you are taking away from that?	
	Okay.
So how did you experience our collaboration?	
	We both decided to continue this coaching after our initial session. For me, the most important condition to say 'yes' was trust. I experienced trust because I could influence the process, you were very flexible and we both shared our experiences. I never felt ashamed or the need to keep secrets. You listened really well and asked questions to make me reflect more, which made me more aware[450]. This trust grew from the start. And once I feel trust, and experience that someone really listens, I tend to share a lot. So, there were some things that we talked about that I have also talked to my boyfriend about but that had been more superficial. In the conversations with you I shared more in depth. Getting some things off my chest offered some kind of relief. So, I think it's the trust that invited me, and how we built that up[451].
Great to hear that we both created a context that offered trust and invited you to 'get things off your chest.' What else worked for you?	

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446 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
447 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
448 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
449 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
450 Written overall reflection, consultant 9
451 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

	Well, we started looking at the initial letter I wrote you and the feedback my mentor in the firm offered. We talked about questions like 'okay so how could these things have possibly emerged in your life?' So, the inviting questions you asked really helped me to get to the bottom of things. I remember some 'aha moments' in which I could relate certain things I'm up against in my work to my life story. It was not that you immediately, in our first meeting, asked me what the things I talked about had to do with the way I was raised. That is what I meant by 'we built it up.' These conversations and the way you asked questions felt natural and pleasant. Not too much or too little. And not like a psychiatrist or something[452]…
Like a psychiatrist?	
	I never talked to a coach or psychologist before so I had no specific expectations about how things would go. But compared to stories I heard of 'people really digging into the depths of you' it has been less intense than I anticipated. But that is also related to the things I wanted to address from the beginning of our collaboration. I think that when I really had been struggling with some issues and needed a coach to help me handle things, I would have expected another outcome. But in our arrangement, your invitation through our management made me curious. So, I didn't start from a 'troubled situation' and I think that made a difference[453].
That's a nice way of saying it. Normally, in my practice I talk with clients from a more troubled position. They often feel stuck in several parts of their lives. Whereas in your case, it's more development oriented from a relatively positive start. That's not to say that we talked about less important things or had superficial conversations. You did touch upon important patterns, for example in session 3 or 4 like you said[454].	

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452 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
453 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
454 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

	Yes, and some other things about our conversations helped as well. For example, the many questions you asked have invited me. I remember that I went home feeling 'wow I did share so much.' Probably because I felt at ease and that talking about these things helps[455]. And in our second conversation you named things that we talked about, which really invited me to think about it[456]. Also, the practical 'homework assignments' helped me to reflect on the way I act. For example, using the Script circles helped me to deliberately change the way I behave in some situations. I have experienced different reactions from people around me as a result. For example, in my family. I tend to adapt to others too much, want to do things 'right.' People that I experience as dominant can have an intimidating effect on me. I changed the way I act, more aware of my behavior and that of others[457]. Specifically, the homework assignment you offered about looking into our family dynamics during a two-week family trip was pretty tense. This, and the related literature really invited to start thinking about 'what is going on'[458].
Great how you specifically addressed the things in our conversations that were useful. If it's okay for you let's talk a bit more about the things that you are taking with you.	
	Okay
Just before we started our meeting today. I reread the letter that you sent me at the start of the coaching. Important goals you addressed in your letter had to do with 'saying no' and 'dealing with leadership.' You said you are a pleaser who says 'yes' too quickly to things that don't match your abilities and interests. You wanted to be a good consultant who achieves results, without pleasing[459]…	
	That's right. I would say there were three important areas we talked about: growing up, people that are important to me and specific situations at work. I also remember, I wrote you about focusing on questions like 'why do I act so different at home (very dominant) compared to the way I act at work (contrary to dominant)'[460].

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455 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 9
456 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
457 Written overall reflection, consultant 9
458 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 9 and another researcher
459 Initial letter Consultant 9 about their focus for the coaching journey
460 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

Yes, I found that very interesting too. So, what did you learn about that?	
	I remember that we talked about the difference I experience in relating to people I'm familiar with and who really know me, compared to new people I meet. I feel more need to prove myself at the consulting firm, at new client organization. The urge to prove myself becomes less once I've become more familiar with people. And I can tell the difference already with some colleagues I've gotten to know better[461]. Also, some insecurity… the need to do everything right all the time. Both at home and at work. In this respect I'm a bit of a perfectionist: things need to run smoothly. So, for example, first the kitchen needs to be cleaned after dinner before I can decide whether or not I feel like going for a walk with my boyfriend[462].
Okay, and in this respect, what did our conversations yield?	
	So, in general, I feel like being more aware and asking myself a lot 'do I need to act like this? No that's not necessary.' So that has been really helpful[463]. With respect to leadership, I remember saying in our first session: when I'm working at the client organization and I'm really sure about something, and know what I'm talking about I feel and act pretty sharp. But I tend to be shy when I'm still searching or looking for how things stand. And when I reflect on that later, I tell myself 'they are also just people.' So, I find myself looking up to a manager at the client organization too much. So why am I making myself smaller in relation to her, while I don't even need to report to her. Also, within our consulting firm. My relationship with all partners is pretty good, still I mind what I say while others just say whatever they want[464].
That's interesting. And then we talked about things like 'making myself smaller than necessary' and also that expert knowledge gives you strength.	
	Yes. I find myself thinking 'they pay good money to hire me so they expect me to have the expert knowledge,' while I'm searching how to handle things as well. And I know that my added value is to think processes over while they are having their hands full dealing with their daily business[465].

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461 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

462 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

463 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

464 Audio recording of session 1 with Consultant 9

465 Audio recording of session 1 with Consultant 9

Yes. Then we talked about leadership without being the expert on content, which is also related to facilitating organizational change. And that learning to improve process leadership and bringing all knowledge to the table might be useful[466]…	
	That was interesting. And with respect to making myself smaller than necessary: One session specifically made a big impression. This was when I shared a lot about my youth, how I was raised, my background and my private life. This session made me realize where some of my typical behaviors come from[467]. In this respect a senior partner said he sees me as a pleaser[468]. And he said that I tend to hold back at work. While at home I'm really more dominant. So, if you'd ask both my boyfriend and a colleague to describe me, you would get two completely different stories. That's such an interesting difference! Then I started thinking 'why is that.' This partner said that often these things are related to the way we grew up. So, I was really curious because I didn't have an idea what that could be[469].
I remember we had a good conversation about this!	
	Yes, like I said, In our second conversation we really dived into things. We did look at possible reasons why I show little leadership at work, despite my experience. We talked about how my mother is the dominant person at home and my father is more quiet[470]. Then we looked at the way I act, being more dominant at home and more humble at work. And how that may be related to how I experience specific people. We looked at patterns in interactions and relationships. You mentioned 'transference' as a lens for looking at interactions that keep worrying me[471].
Yes, I did. You said that you respond different to a dominant, forceful woman that you work with. And that you prefer working with men in general because you experience men as more friendly, honest and allowing[472].	

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466 Audio recording of session 1 with Consultant 9
467 Written overall reflection, consultant 9
468 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 1 with Consultant 9
469 Audio recording of session 1 with Consultant 9
470 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultants 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 9
471 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultants 9
472 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 9

	Yes, that was interesting. Do I prefer working with men because of a dominant mother? Do I feel the urge to prove myself because I feel that my sister had been favored? And what about my boyfriend? Is me feeling at ease with him, and being the dominant one of us, related to the fact that he is unsure too? I feel that his insecurity strengthens my irritation and dominance[473].
Yes, we did some nice personal work there. You also shared a story about this, in the context of your consulting work.	
	I did. It was about me doing a presentation for the second time. It was really interesting that my direct colleague at the client organization saw me doing a presentation twice. First in our team and later for the manager of my direct colleague, the woman that I experience as dominant. My direct colleague saw the difference and how I made myself smaller in the presence of her manager. That was really weird because I knew what I was saying, and others had reacted enthusiastically. So why was I positioning myself like this[474]…
I remember you did reflect on this.	
	Yes. It was funny because this woman is known to have this effect on people more often. The team members were people I knew pretty well, and I had good connections with them. They had followed my progress while I was working on it. But I had no direct relation with the manager, although she had to deal with the end product I made, and I was worried that she might think that my work was not good enough. Normally I have no problem with getting feedback because that's how I can improve. I just didn't want to fail… And of course, my direct colleague also needs to approve my work. But she does things differently, easier, or less judgmental[475]…
Yes, and then we connected with the urge to prove yourself. And we already had talked about transference and how you might act in ways that once seemed appropriate, but nowadays may not be helpful[476].	

473 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultants 9
474 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
475 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
476 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9

	Another important thing is pleasing and (not) getting into arguments. For example: there were two possible projects that I could choose from. I liked one more than the other but still reacted with enthusiasm to both. So, I raised expectations about a project I didn't want to do to satisfy others, please them and not wanting to disappoint them[477]. Another example was about our firm. When I see others standing up for themselves it looks pretty normal. I can really admire that in others. I'm often worried about getting in an argument. I think it's typical for me to experience less room to connect with what I need and to express that. Instead, I worry about confronting others and how they might see me. I'm not really used to having arguments, within my family and especially not at work[478].
I remember that we used the Script circle that is used by Transactional Analysts to look at that. And that apparently there is a norm that implies your actions should not result in arguments[479].	
	I remember that, when we were young, my sister and I were crying, when our parents were fighting or simply having an argument. We were thinking that our parents would get a divorce. Somehow that experience came up when we talked about standing up for myself[480].
So according to Berne, our early experiences, things seen through 'children's eyes,' contribute to Script a lot. And of course, being an adult now, you know that an argument can be useful sometimes. But if your Script patterns 'say' it's not, you could find yourself staying away from having arguments or standing up for yourself[481].	
	It was really interesting that standing up for myself is very much influenced by how the other person acts[482].
Exactly, so it's not that you don't have the ability to stand up for yourself. It's about you in relation to others. Then it became a matter of standing up for yourself in relation to whom specifically?[483]	
	That's true. In this respect we reflected on another situation in which I confronted another consultant at the client organization[484].

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477 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
478 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
479 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
480 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
481 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 9
482 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
483 Audio recording of session 3 with Consultant 9
484 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9

I remember. And in this situation, you firmly stand up for yourself, which is different from what you normally tend to do. And we talked about what was different in that context[485].	
	Yes, the difference was that I was confident that my view was right and that she misjudged both the situation and me. Her earlier email had already annoyed me. So that is really different from me making myself small when I'm unsure about myself and how to formulate my message[486].
Again, you got confidence through content[487].	
	Yes. And also, my formal, managing position in the organization. So, in my current project I'm experiencing that I'm not expected to know everything but to monitor our working processes[488]. Also, this consultant did reflect on my feedback when I stood up for myself and she admitted that she hadn't done things really nicely. So, I thought 'Yes, this is what I need to do more often.' But I'm not sure what would have happened if we would have been face-to-face and if she turned out to be a fifty-year-old woman that was intimidating me[489].
A bit like your mother used to do[490]?	
	Yes, that's right[491]. Another thing I'm experiencing in my current project is related to what we talked about earlier: content and expert knowledge: I found out that content and expert knowledge gives me confidence while my role as a consultant is often about the process. I need to balance my urge to close that knowledge gap. In my current role I'm far from an expert on the subject. Normally I tend to work hard on that but now I've started asking the people I work with to explain the things I don't understand. This never turned out to be a problem[492].
That was really interesting. I remember we talked about how you are now working in a process role but still feel you need to know all about content and get expert knowledge before you can talk about process when collaborating with the team you are leading. So, we talked about alternatives to have others help you in dealing with detailed expert knowledge[493].	
	Yes, exactly[494].

485 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
486 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
487 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
488 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
489 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
490 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
491 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
492 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 9 / Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
493 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
494 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9

You also mentioned that you are not an expert on finance, still the client organization wanted you for that role. So apparently, they wanted you for something else than your 'just knowledge'[495].	
	Yes, and you invited me to look into why my client wanted me specifically for this job. I did reflect on this. They were looking for a 'self-starter,' someone who can 'chase people in a good way' and who can work in a well-structured manner. And I am pretty good at offering structure, planning, documenting, involving the right people, assure proper communication. The person who hired me said 'I also don't have expert knowledge. Important is to make sure that the process is monitored, and action is taken when needed'[496].
Sounds like you really do know how to facilitate complex processes while not being the expert on content! I would say we've covered most of the things that came up during our sessions. What do you think?	
	Yes, that's right.
Okay, so to summarize, on some issues you really got something out of our time together. And with respect to other issues the context has changed that much that you experience less problems. And you also do things differently while communicating, which you will take with you when things get back to normal[497].	
	Yes[498].
Great. Now I'm curious how you take all this with you into the future. What do you think about that[499]?	
	Well, I feel more confident now, which is also in part because of the changes in projects that I'm now working on. And because of all the changed circumstances related to COVID-19 and in my private life, I do not really look too far ahead. We'll just have to see what will happen in a few months. I worry less and kind of experience this time as pretty relaxed (except of course that I do miss certain things). I feel more at ease. And this is really different from how I normally want to do things on tight schedules. Haha, my boyfriend always complains about me not being able to do anything spontaneously[500]…

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495 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
496 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 and 5 with Consultant 9 / Audio recording of session 4 and 5 with Consultant 9
497 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
498 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
499 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
500 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9

Haha. So, it is hard to look into the future right now[501]	
	Yes, I guess in the coming months things will be different which also gives me an opportunity to think things over. And I should take my feelings more seriously[502]…
Sounds fair. Let me ask you one more thing. From our forth session onwards, we had to work online. How did you experience that[503]?	
	Yes, in my view online is not perfect for talking in-depth. Also, I get the impression that, because we all work from home now, I feel like experiencing less problems with making myself smaller and caring less about what others may think of me. On the one hand I prefer being in a room together so we can respond to emotions, posture and so on. But on the other hand, I experience myself to be more firm working online[504]. For example, talking in front of a group can be pretty hard and that's different than one-on-one conversations. But now, while working online, I just have a small note next to me as a reminder of what I want to say[505]. To be honest. Things went pretty smooth, not much happened between the fourth and fifth session. Like I said considering everybody working is online[506]. I wasn't running into the problems I experienced at the start the coaching[507]. I was thinking: is this just because of working online or am I handling things differently because of the coaching? I mean we did go pretty deep in previous sessions[508]…
So maybe a bit of both[509]?	
	Yes, I think both indeed. And within our consulting firm I no longer feel like making myself smaller anymore[510].
Well, that's great[511]! Anything else you'd like to add to this conversation?	

501 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
502 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 9
503 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 9
504 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 9
505 Audio recording of session 4 with Consultant 9
506 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
507 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 9
508 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
509 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
510 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9
511 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9

	Yes. Maybe something about the usefulness of this coaching: I see colleagues struggling with the continuous meeting of different clients, engaging in various relationships. The younger and also more experienced consultants find it challenging to relate to people that are really different from yourself. This may be interesting for you, being a coach[512].
It sure is! And exactly this is one of the reasons that I started the project. So great to hear that. And I want to thank you for taking part in this!	

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512 Audio recording of session 5 with Consultant 9

6.5 Full Journey Story Consultant 10

Good morning! How are you? Are you ready to wrap up our coaching sessions?	
	Yes, I am. Time flies! I remember your invitation that we received through one of the partners of our firm. I was interested in your project and at the same time I thought this was a nice opportunity for further development[513].
Do you remember what you wanted to get out of it?	
	In the letter you asked me to write for the first session, I wrote about themes I think I could learn about. Things like my sense of responsibility, wanting to control, pleasing others and the differences I experience when I work with men or women[514].
Right! Just before this conversation I read though your letter again and the goals you had set for our sessions. You wanted to become more aware of specific patterns in your interaction and possibly change some things to become a better, more critical consultant and deepen or intensify the collaborating relationships[515].	
	That's right. To be more specific I wanted to please others less (like taking over too much of their responsibilities and adjusting my schedule to theirs too easily). Of course, people were happy with me and I could control the way things were done. On the other hand, other people may just take less responsivity than they should… So, I wanted to learn to leave more space for others to take their responsibilities. Also, from a consulting training program I've learned that I tend to collaborate with men in a different way than I do with women. This is related to my own assumptions, judgements, and behavioral patterns. I wanted to talk to you about that too[516].
Yes, I remember you said that you prefer to work with men, and put in much effort to solve their problems and that toward women you are more critical. That you can be tempted to 'let them stumble'[517]. So, what is your first, spontaneous reflection about our coaching session[518]?	

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513 Overall reflection, consultant 10
514 Overall reflection, consultant 10
515 Initial letter Consultant 10 about their focus for the coaching journey
516 Initial letter Consultant 10 about their focus for the coaching journey / Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 10
517 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 1 with Consultant 10
518 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

	The journey has been very valuable for me. I've learned new insights and new perspectives on communication, beautiful resources and I have started to experiment with communicating differently. I learned new ways of looking at myself and became more aware of the impact of the way I communicate. Although I didn't have strong expectations upfront, I'm very happy with this journey. If I see myself as a puzzle, this journey helped to identify and connect many pieces. Even though I'm always working on my personal development, I couldn't have done this by myself[519].
That's a nice metaphor. So, what have been important topics that we 'puzzled on'[520]?	
	Well generally speaking it's all about two key themes. First, accepting myself and learning to be mild toward myself. With respect to the Psychopathic character style we talked about the positive sides of using strength and permitting myself to show vulnerability, also toward others that I work with. Secondly, everything that is 'about the other' is also about me. In collaboration and especially when I find myself judging others. I've learned that often when I judge others, it's really about myself. And what is your view about this[521]?
Wow these are strong thoughts that I think can be very useful when collaborating with clients and other consultants. Ehh, I'm very happy about how you were willing to reflect and look in the mirror. And then started with experimenting, doing things differently. I've seen you engage in all this with courage. With the various people you work with. As I see it you went beyond cognition, you really changed your actions and interventions in an honest way. You have taken all this to your work context, which has been noticed by the people around you. And as I have experienced it, you trusted the process we engaged in and are busy finding a new balance in all this, related to strength and vulnerability for example[522].	
	Yes, that's a nice way of putting it: busy finding a new balance, because I'm not there yet[523]…

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519 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher / Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
520 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
521 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
522 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
523 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

I hear you… and maybe it's more helpful to speak of a broader repertoire of resources than look for a new balance. But what would it be like if you 'were there'[524]?	
	Uhmm, I think I would feel more confident when showing my vulnerable side and have less doubts about my 'strength side.' Will that still be there when I need it[525]?
To be honest: when I go against my 'typical character style behavior,' like I did with you in our first session, I always feel some level of fear. What I'm trying to say is that the typical way of acting that we talked about will probably feel more comfortable for some time than the new way we learn to add, which can feel like quite the opposite of what we are used to. For example: me being used to not risking the relationship, offering you feedback that potentially can make you not want to work with me. You, being used to rely on strength and be in control, experimenting with allowing yourself and others to be open and vulnerable[526].	
	Yes, and the interesting part is that my 'typical character style behavior' doesn't feel that comfortable as it used to do[527]…
Well, isn't that nice… So, all I'm hearing here is a woman that is continuing her path of personal growth with courage… No easy ride, but a captivating journey[528]…	
	Haha, yes[529].
Were there moments that moved you during our collaboration[530]?	

524 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
525 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
526 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
527 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
528 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
529 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
530 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

	Well of course there was the moment in our first session where you expressed the appeal to work hard. And my first response of not recognizing that, oops. That was a very important moment. Erh also the insights about character styles and how I recognized myself in reading the book you suggested. It was not really a joy to read but on the other hand the comforting thought that at least I'm not the only one struggling with this. And the pride I'm feeling when I realize that I'm really doing things differently in a way that is effective and at the same time feeling doubt about 'now there is no way back…' and working from a position of not knowing everything upfront[531].
That's put very nicely[532]! We have started off pretty fast today. Maybe to structure this final conversation a bit… we already talked about some important gains you are taking away from our talks. Maybe we could go a bit more in detail later. And of course, I'm also curious about your thoughts about taking all this with you to the future, and about how you've experienced our collaboration.	
	Yes, that sounds nice. Also, the agenda you suggested for today is fine. Maybe it's nice to start with how we collaborated?
Sure!	
	Our first session was nice. I experienced sharing much about myself without being judged. We both experienced a click and I became curious about what this journey could offer[533]. The tone was set in this first session. You told me about how you tend to share your experiences in a conversation as a way of intervening. When I asked you to share your experiences so far with me, this really hit me. You told me that I invite you to work very hard, to do things really well[534].
I remember that! That was an interesting moment. Both for you and me…	

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531 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

532 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

533 Overall reflection, consultant 10

534 Overall reflection, consultant 10 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher

	Yes. And you asked me if I get that feedback more often and I said 'no' convincingly. But when I expressed this 'no' I realized that this wasn't really true. For example, right before we started this session a colleague told me she was tense because I was to attend a meeting at her client organization. I often hear that I set the bar high. And the fact that I easily reach that level myself can scare others off sometimes. I want to bring out the best in people, but apparently that's not what I seem to express[535]. Being confronted with what I seem to express unintendedly, started me thinking. I more deliberately ask others how they see me, how they experience working with me. I take a more critical look at my actions and the way I position myself with others. It was valuable to bring those reflections to our sessions, together with reflecting on important experiences I had had in my life so far[536].
I really like that you combine the things that happened in our conversations and relate that to other experiences and changed things. What helped you to do so?	
	On a practical level I received important resources. The first one was the concept of Character styles, helping me to look at the way of acting and reacting that I had developed over the course of my life. Although I didn't like the word Psychopathic character style, reading this book you suggested made me feel at ease. There was an explanation available, I'm not the only one[537]. Another thing that our conversations yielded was that you suggested alternative possibilities to act that I hadn't thought of. For example: expressing my feelings or telling about the reflex that I have instead of acting out of that reflex. Often it was about opening up about my vulnerability. First, I judged myself for not knowing those new perspectives or not (immediately) understanding them or was a bit scared of them. Now I look at them more of opportunities. And some one-liners are really helpful. For example, 'the fact that you learn new things doesn't imply that the old ways are less useful'[538].
That's right, it's more like expanding possibilities than changing the old way with a new way…. I remember you did struggle with this from time to time, which seems pretty normal to me.	

535 Overall reflection, consultant 10 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
536 Overall reflection, consultant 10 / Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
537 Overall reflection, consultant 10
538 Overall reflection, consultant 10

	Yes.
	Experimenting and acting different works out really well. Being very aware and doing things differently with attention has an effect. Others experience more space and I have to work less hard. However, in the beginning I felt restlessness in my body and experienced doubt. Sure, many good things happened by doing things differently but my old way of doing things was also successful. I have accomplished a lot; my clients are happy with me, and I recently got promoted. What will come next? If I open up to showing vulnerability, can I still work hard, deliver good results, manage crises and lead? This worry was very concrete when I received an email of my mentor that said: 'don't lose all your qualities while learning'[539]. Slowly, I became able to look mildly toward myself. Yes, I'm allowed to learn, feel less at ease and be afraid. And from that I could also look mildly to others. The others too may learn. I can help them but also need to give them space[540].
That sounds like a new, helpful believe!	
	Yes, it is.
	Now that I look back, I experience feeling at ease, looking more mildly to myself. I have learned a lot, and gained new perspectives to look at myself and my actions. I continue to reflect in a positive manner. On a daily level I experience that having a broader range of possibilities to act is useful for me and the people around me. At the same time, it's good to realize that the old way can still be a useful and effective way to act[541].
Nice! By the way, I'm experiencing that we are mixing our collaboration with gains haha. That's no problem of course. Could you share something about how we collaborated? What worked for you and what didn't[542]?	
	Ehm, what really helped is you being honest and not judging. That gave me confidence. Also, this offered a context in which 'all is welcome.' Also writing reflective reports on each session helped. That offered something to hold on and really helped to work on the process with deliberation. It was not only about our sessions but things were set into motion and writing helped to reflect on all that[543].

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539 Overall reflection, consultant 10
540 Overall reflection, consultant 10
541 Overall reflection, consultant 10
542 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
543 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

Great, and indeed you wrote extensive reflections! Anything that were less useful[544]?	
	Uhm there was one session in which we talked a lot about different things which gave me a bit of a restless feeling. I remember writing about that in my reflections. It was about what are we talking about, which track are we on? Although this was not really an obstruction, just a bit less contributing conversation than the others. The following session we talked about our focus and I remember thinking 'ah I'm back again'[545].
Happy to hear this, and good that refocusing helped continuing our way onwards[546]. Anything else?	
	I have felt comfortable all the time. There is nothing that I want to say now that I haven't discussed with you already. I always felt room to say what I thought or felt[547].
What made you feel at ease like this[548]?	
	Good question. I think this is related to you being honest from the start. Like the first tough feedback you gave me, in a pleasant manner. I remember thinking: 'at least an honest person.' Also, you don't judge. I felt no judgment which is freeing[549]. I remember that didn't feel the urge to prepare our first session like I normally prepare meetings (focusing on agenda's, checklists and documents). The most important thing for me was to see if I'd experience a click with you and, learn about your project and see if this could contribute to my further development. I was very much aware of my self-judgments about not having solved my issues yet because I had been aware of them. I was happy with the space I experienced, the absence of any judgements by you and your honesty (for example about how you experienced me in our conversation)[550].

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544 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
545 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 10
546 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
547 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
548 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
549 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
550 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 10

I'm very happy to hear that. In my view it's important to feel at ease, experience space and at the same time receive feedback and questions about why you do what you do… This all seems to have worked nicely for us. I experienced you as open and eager to learn. Also, your written reflections were extensive and you have experimented a lot with doing things differently and reflecting. Maybe now is a good time to get a bit more into detail about this?	
	Sure! An example of experimenting is when one time, at the beginning of a conversation, I offered some kind of manual about me. I said that when I ask for a schedule or something else about structure, that this is about something that I need, not to disqualify the other. This worked out pretty well. The other person said: 'on two occasions I got the impression that I was prepared insufficiently, but then I remembered what you said at the start… And of course, if you like to have this schedule, I'll make it for you'[551]. Other examples are feedback from people I work with. A partner that I work with on more distance said, 'I get the impression that you've become more mild, I'm seeing more of you now.' Another colleague who previously said, 'I'm always nervous when you are around,' now said this has really changed[552]. Your remark at the end of our first session stayed with me for some time. During the days following I had some evaluating conversations with colleagues and I decided to bring this up. Very interesting because some feel positively invited by my speed, energy and ambition, while others feel scared or pressured by that. Someone said: 'when I'm in a meeting with you, I feel like I can never do good enough. I'm not as good you are, make less hours and feel that I cannot meet your expectations'[553].
Wow that must have made an impression!	

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551 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
552 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
553 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 10

	Yes. It was confronting to learn that I have this effect on people. On one hand it's easy for me to judge the feedback (that mostly comes from women, interesting!) like 'consulting means working hard, we need to deliver results, so some pressure is not that bad.' On the other hand, I don't want to give people the impression what my way of working is the norm. Talking about this is one thing, but being an example is another[554]! Also, I experience pressure about this myself. I mean, when people see me as the norm and look up to me, I feel like I can't make any mistakes and expectations are high. I can get insecure about that, especially when I'm not in a nice flow… Food for thought, exciting and a bit scary too[555]…
Great reflection! I remember that in the second session we talked about how you learned to be perceptive, reflexive and strong as a child: 'I will fix it myself.' And we talked about the psychopathic character style as a lens. I became curious about 'what you have learned about leaning on others, asking or accepting support'[556].	
	That's right! We looked at my family system and the mechanisms I developed. It was interesting to reflect on things that had happened in my family (without blaming or judging) and how I related to that. For example, I didn't want my father to worry about me (because he already worked really hard) or hear me complain (because my chronically ill father also didn't complain). Also, I didn't want to be a burden to my mother because she is not that strong. Working hard in school, getting me good results and satisfied teachers kind of got 'addictive.' This attitude of working hard, being independent and in control helped me, and still does. On the other hand: how does this affect others? And how far can I go before I'll collapse? I didn't want to lose the skills related to this but handle them differently[557].
Yes, and then we talked about black and white, and 'the grey area'[558]…	

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554 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 10
555 Written reflection on session 1 by Consultant 10
556 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 10
557 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 10
558 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 2 with Consultant 10 / Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 10

	That was interesting indeed! So, let's say that the black area is a situation in which I need to offer help, when there is a crisis or if something is clearly my responsibility to handle. I have good skills to act in such circumstances. Contrary, over the past few years I have learned to ask for help or support when I really needed it and I couldn't bear things alone anymore. That's the white area. I want to cherish my skills in those situations. But there are of course a lot of grey situations that don't require me to be fully in control or situations in which I'm not powerless myself. In those situations, I think I can benefit from not primarily needing to be strong and successful and trying to be less controlling. After this session I started reading the book De Maskermaker that you suggested. It was nice to have some background information to read[559].
I liked that grey area thinking a lot!	
	In the period between session 2 and 3 I experienced some interesting moments. For example, when one of the partners said I'm anchor for our advisory group, which filled me with pride and pressure…. Reflections about 'what kind of example do I want to be.' Really experiencing the benefits of being strong in a conversation with three board members of a client. And also experimenting with talking about mutual learning goals and insecurities with a colleague. Another interesting insight was that my presumed preference to working with men over women, is not really about gender but about trusting that the person I work with doesn't mess things up, values and respects me. I tend to be impressed by people I work with who are smart, work hard and deliver results[560].
Yes, that was a great insight. And later I asked you: 'how much do you see your father in her'? (a specific client you work with) 'Pretty much' you said. And then we talked about transference and projection as another lens. In our third session we talked about recent experiences. And the qualities that are connected to the psychopathic character style such as being independent and self-confident, knowing how to persevere, showing strength and confidence. And we looked at script-decisions as described in Transactional Analysis[561].	

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559 Written reflection on session 2 by Consultant 10
560 Written reflection between sessions 2 and 3 by Consultant 10
561 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10

	I remember reading in De Maskermaker and recognizing things like 'stop crying, now I need to be strong,' 'preventing to be dependent on others,' 'seeing life as a match' and that 'putting much trust in only yourself, affects others too'[562]. And the script-decision I read about: 'I can do anything, I'm better than the other, I need to do this my myself.' Recognizable[563].
Yes, we dove a bit deeper in that conversation. We talked about when typical actions are triggered. For example, when others tend to panic or worry whether or not things will turn out fine. Or when you find yourself in a 'not knowing' position or are being watched/evaluated[564].	
	I remember. You asked me 'which feelings are you blocking when you 'put on that mask'?' This was anxiousness. You suggested that, in my consulting work, it could possibly be useful to address the worry that I have as an alternative to simply act on that experienced worry[565].
That's right. And you thought of specific things you wanted to focus on in your new project and while communicating in the new created advisory groups in your consulting firm[566].	
	In general, it was nice to reflect on situations that occurred in my consulting context through different lenses such as transference, typical 'mask acting.' For example, the tendency to make myself bigger, taking on a role that is not mine. This feels comfortable, enabling me to prove myself and 'win the match''[567]. Also, I recognized that sometimes people seduce me to making myself bigger, possibly because it's easier for them if I fix things for them or challenging and trusting me[568].
In forth session we also addressed how you have expanded your repertoire of resources for action[569].	
	Yes, celebrating successes is not common for me. Normally I just look ahead to the next task or assume that something is not extraordinary[570]…

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562 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10
563 Written reflection on session 3 by Consultants 10
564 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10
565 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10
566 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10 / Written reflection on session 3 by Consultant 10
567 Written reflection on sessions 3 and 4 by Consultant 10
568 Written reflection on session 3 by Consultant 10 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 3 with Consultant 10
569 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 10
570 Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 10

So here they are! On top of things, you are used to do (such as maintaining overview, delivering results, working hard and being independent) you have grown in using you vulnerability as a resource, pausing more rather than jumping to action, reflecting more and intervening more self-aware and deliberate[571].	
	Yes. I really did benefit from our conversations. That's really great[572]. The setting of our conversations feels trusted and free from judgment. This invites me to open up and dare to also look at myself without judging myself. To me this is a huge victory. Forcing myself to experiment with doing things differently is still tensing though. I find myself making up excuses to stick to the old way… I also experience a switch from restlessness to rest, from 'no I need change everything' to 'let's just see what is coming'[573].
Super that you got so much out of our conversations. I also experienced you as eager to learn[574].	
	In our fourth session we spent much time on taking stock of the process so far. The unrest I felt earlier vanished and I experienced more trust in continuing the path we took. I also noticed that it helps me to talk to my colleagues and my manager about insights and experiences. This helped me to reflect differently and keeping the trust that there is room to do things differently[575].
Yes. This what we addressed earlier right? I mean the unrest you felt about 'the track we were on'… I remember we did focus more on the 'cases' you were working on from then and reflect them using what we've talked about before[576].	

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571 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 10 / Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 10
572 Spontaneous remark in email of 4 February 2020
573 Written reflection on session 3 by Consultant 10
574 Reply to spontaneous remark in email of 4 February 2020
575 Written reflection on session 4 by Consultant 10
576 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 4 with Consultant 10

	Yes. With respect to a consultant I'm managing I'm doing things differently. Holding back longer to give her more space, but at the same time setting clearer boundaries. Also, I give clearer feedback when necessary. It was nice to articulate how I did things different than before and what this yielded[577]. Interesting is that when it comes to pleasing others, we talked about when I'm in a meeting that a partner of the firm also attends, I tend to give up on my independence, making myself smaller than necessary. Another situation we addressed was my leading role in our advisory group. I don't really feel the room to be more vulnerable there. I'm pleasing others there as well or, to the contrary, start demonstrating that I've earned my position. We agreed to make some notes when this happens again and focus on feelings, thoughts and assumptions[578].
I remember saying that when you experience yourself in a tunnel with respect to possible ways of acting toward someone this could be an interesting thing to look at. What is happening? What is this related to[579]?	
	I became more interested in reflecting on the conversations I had. For example, I evaluated our collaboration with a colleague. She admitted that at first, she was tensed to work with me because she saw me as a strong and self-confident woman. But she liked our starting conversation in which we both addressed our development goals. She liked my openness which enabled her to understand things she encountered in our collaboration. Another interesting conversation was when I talked to a client. I was aware that I used to have judgements about her, but in this conversation things went differently. I noticed that I was sincerely interested and was curious about her story. She told me about her position toward the Executive Board and I noticed myself being mild and less judging. This resulted in a great conversation[580].
I remember that your face seemed more mildly as well when you told me this story[581].	

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577 Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 10 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 10

578 Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 10 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 10

579 Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 10 / Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 10

580 Written reflection on session 6 by Consultant 10

581 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 10

	Yes, I was happy to hear that but at the same time hope that my strict face doesn't show too much… I became more and more aware about the way I act, especially with respect to showing vulnerability[582]. Based on my written reflections of interesting conversations we talked about an interesting thing that emerged: my norms and quality standards. I don't think that I should impose my norms on others, although I would like that very much sometimes. I learned three typical things I can do when I'm struggling with my norms. First, I can do nothing (remain passive or lose interest), secondly: taking over, third: share my thoughts or feelings. I tend to take over mostly because I believe I should act or that I can do something best. However, the appropriate action may differ in various situations. For me to choose deliberate action is something I'm learning. For example, in collaborating with another consultant of our firm at the same client organization, we agreed that she takes over the lead sometimes. This fits her learning curve very well. But for me to hold back and let her have the lead feels like a balancing act. On the one hand I see that this supports her development. On the other hand, we need to offer our client good quality so I found myself struggling with that[583].
This was an interesting approach of reflecting on your experimenting and the struggles you meet along the way.	
	Indeed. I also felt unrest related to doing things differently now, there is no way back. Still feeling a bit uncertain about whether or not I can be successful this way and how to deal with strength. From a rational perspective I know that my 'old' qualities haven't disappeared and new ways of acting are being added. But it feels still tensed and uncertain[584]…
Sounds like someone is really learning here! And great that we decided to evaluate that 'balancing act' with your college more in depth the following session[585].	

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582 Written reflection on session 6 by Consultant 10
583 Written reflection on session 6 by Consultant 10
584 Written reflection on sessions 6 and 7 by Consultant 10
585 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 6 with Consultant 10

	This was really interesting indeed. I really tried to have a more open conversation with her about our collaboration at the client organization. I offered my assistance and asked how I could be of help. She said that she didn't need any help and I suppressed my common reflex to help anyway and take over because I felt help was needed. I was very happy that she came back and asked for help a few days later. One thing that helped me to give her the space to develop was being milder about myself and by that also being able to be more mild about her. I was more focused now on what the other asks me instead of saying what I think the best way to go is. It feels more like a real collaboration now[586].
That's a great place to start from! I also remember we talked a bit more specifically about the resources for action that you used[587].	
	That's right. I deliberately listened to her story and actively managed my initial reflexes. Also, I was clear about saying the deadlines that were in trouble and asked how she sees that (instead of taking over without asking her thoughts about it). I asked her 'what do you need to be able to meet the deadline?'[588]
Sounds like really working on it together, and explicitly inviting her. A case well handled[589]?.	
	Yes, it is, to be honest. I didn't expect this to be a 'walk in the park.' For me it was important to be aware of the other person. And that I'm not required to fully understand the other person's situation before being able to offer my help. For a long time, I used to think 'I don't know how the other person thinks, so I'll just take over and do it myself or tell you how to do it.' I was inspired by a podcast where I learned that you can also help others by listening to them and offer help without fully understanding someone. Rather you can help someone to understand herself[590]…
That sounds really useful! What were there things that you found hard to deal with in doing this[591]?	
	Yes, my role is different, less big and more to the background. When you're used to receiving complements and 'thank yous' and you give space and responsibilities to the other, you also give that [reward] to the other. Which is good but also different[592]…

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586 Written reflection on session 7 by Consultant 10
587 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 10
588 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 10
589 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 10
590 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
591 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 10
592 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10

I can totally understand that, especially when we look at the psychopathic character style again. So, when you are used to receiving compliments for all the things you accomplish, this changes when you let other people 'shine'[593]. Your role then becomes more facilitative in the background. Facilitating a professional to do her job instead of doing the job yourself. So that's a different kind of applause than that you are used to. I can really understand that this is different, and probably related to changing roles now that you are a managing consultant[594].	
	I remember that when a director in a client organization turned to me for some acute help, I felt something like 'yess, I'm needed here in solving something important'[595].
Exactly, from a character style perspective, that's a comfortable place[596]…	
	Just like I'm changing my way of working with colleagues like we talked about, this listening, asking questions and focusing on process rather than 'solving the problem' is also useful in working with my clients. Even if they don't ask for that explicitly[597].
That's a nice conclusion. And it feels like we've talked about a lot. To me it seemed that eight sessions yielded a lot to chew on.	
	Yes, for now eight sessions is fine. Different perspectives came together and what I have learned I can bring to the conversations with my mentor. My personal development is all connected, integrated for me, and will continue[598].
I'm very curious, what are your thoughts about the future[599]?	
	Well, to start, there is no way back. Something about my personal development has been set in motion. And I expect that in the near future, my awareness will keep growing, like it did during our sessions. A question then is 'how do I keep a powerful positioning as a consultant while allowing more vulnerability? And how does this all relate to the needs or expectations of my clients and conversational partners? I mean, what does a CFO care about my feelings? This all will generate new questions I think[600].

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593 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
594 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 7 with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
595 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
596 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
597 Audio recording of session 7 with Consultant 10
598 Report of evaluative conversation Consultant 10 and another researcher
599 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
600 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

That's really interesting. And of course, it would probably not be useful to just express all your feelings when you are talking board members. So, then it is about how to use your 'newly developed skills.' For example: in our first session I could have said something like: 'I'm afraid of you.' But that may not have been useful. Instead, I was allowing myself to connect with the short moments of fear that I had experienced in our conversation. And from there I used that as a resource to make a remark that fitted within our conversational setting and could contribute to our collaboration. Success is not guaranteed, but when a certain experience keeps coming up in a conversation this could tell you something about what might be the case. So, I took a chance and told you that I felt invited to work hard and show you that I'm a great coach and asked how you recognized this from other interactions. Looking back, this was spot on and turned out to be an important theme in our coaching sessions, although you could just have stayed with your initial 'no I never hear this.' In your case I can imagine you saying something like: 'I feel the invitation to fix all your problems that I can think of, but something tells me that this won't be helpful for you in the long run.' I remember you told me that you sometimes 'feel seduced' by others, to show your strength[601].	
	That's exactly what we talked about: to what extent am I taking over someone else's responsibilities and how useful is that[602]?
This way you could use your (bodily) experience in a conversation, zoom out and think of an intervention that would contribute to the organization. To continue the example, you could say something like: 'I could spend a year, fixing all the problems, closing the gaps, but then I'm curious what would happen next, after I leave…[603]'	
	Yes, exactly this. Also in my private life I'm showing even more of my vulnerabilities and offer more insight into what's going on with me, for example when I'm in a bad mood. And I'm milder toward others, less judgmental, less completing the assumed picture[604].

601 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
602 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
603 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
604 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

Maybe, before we finish, we can talk a bit more about working online. Due to COVID-19 we had to change things during our journey… What are your thoughts on that[605]?	
	This was not an obstruction. Gladly we had met physically before, otherwise it would have been a bit weird, I think. To be honest, I do think that the whole journey would have been less successful if we had only worked online[606].
I totally agree[607]. I remember that you said that the crisis was making you uncomfortable in the sense that taking action to fight a crisis is a skill that you have. But fighting COVID-19 is not part of your job and you felt restless because your job was of less importance[608].	
	It felt like a forced experiment, not being able to contribute to solving this problem by deploying the strengths that are related to my character style. How to act now and is that effective[609]?
I can imagine that in this situation it might be tempting to take control. So, it's also a great context to learn[610].	
	Probably, haha.
Well, I think we are coming to an end of our last conversation. Is there anything you want to add or ask[611]?	
	Not really. Except that, this has given me many new insights and the energy to continue my development. Also, a little unrest and doubt, but I think that's a good thing. So, I'm really happy that we could have worked together on this. So many thanks[612].
Well, you are very welcome, and this is completely mutual[613].	

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605 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
606 Notes by researcher-practitioner of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10 / Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
607 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
608 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 10
609 Written reflection on session 5 by Consultant 10
610 Notes by researcher-practitioner of session 5 with Consultant 10
611 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
612 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10
613 Audio recording of evaluating conversation with Consultant 10

Appendix 7: Invitation Management Consultants, Phase 2

FOLLOW-UP AANBOD COACHING VOOR [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] CONSULTANTS

Beste consultant,

Tussen november 2019 en december 2020 heb je tijdens een personal coachtraject met mij gewerkt aan het verder verbeteren van je relationeel handelen in je werk als consultant. Deze coaching werd je aangeboden vanuit mijn promotieonderzoek en de ambitie van [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] om mensen en organisaties te laten groeien.

Inmiddels zijn alle 12 coachtrajecten afgerond en kan ik een vervolgtraject aanbieden.

Verstevig de opbrengsten van je coachtraject

In het afgeronde personal coachtraject hebben we samengewerkt aan de toename van je zelfbewustzijn en (reflectie)vaardigheden om (complexe) organisatieveranderingen nog beter te begeleiden. Dit deden we vanuit jullie kantoor, de Hogeschool Utrecht en later vanachter onze laptops. Het vervolg dat ik je nu aanbied beslaat een afgebakende periode van ongeveer 5 weken en is bedoeld om de opbrengsten van de coaching te verstevigen. Concreet kun je daarbij denken aan de vraag: hoe pas je in je huidige consulting-praktijk toe wat je geleerd hebt gedurende de personal coaching? Met mijn 'onderzoekspet op' ben ik geïnteresseerd in stakeholderinteractie bij complexe organisatieverandering en de facilitering daarvan door consultants. Ik hoop met deze follow-up een bijdrage te leveren aan het succes van jouw huidige opdracht(en) en via een proefschrift aan de beroepspraktijk en de wetenschap.

Interessant voor jou?

De follow-up richt zich op het bestendigen of verdiepen van de leeropbrengsten uit je eerdere coaching. Ondanks treffende inzichten, goede voornemens en bewuste initiatieven om dingen anders te doen, kunnen patronen soms hardnekkig blijken. Of het patroon 'gaat net even anders' bij een andere opdrachtgever of in samenwerking met andere collega's. In het follow-up traject kunnen we daar gericht naar kijken. En omdat onze ontwikkeling altijd blijft doorgaan kan het ook zijn dat je inzichten zijn veranderd of verdiept, waarover je nog een keer wilt doorpraten.

Hoe ziet het eruit?

De follow-up is een relatief kort en krachtig traject van ongeveer 5 weken dat je flexibel kunt inpassen in je werk. Ik verwacht ook dat de werkwijze die ik voorstel weinig wordt beïnvloed door de maatregelen ter bestrijding van COVID-19. Nadat we een individueel

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'opstart-gesprek' hebben gehad sta je gedurende 4 weken dagelijks stil bij momenten, gebeurtenissen, interacties die te maken hebben met jouw ontwikkeldoelen rondom jouw relationeel handelen bij je opdrachtgever (en eventuele andere contexten). Deze leermomenten en je reflecties verwerk je in een digitaal 'dagboek' of reflective journal dat je van mij krijgt. Dat is een gestructureerd document waarin je op een efficiënte manier de gebeurtenissen en je reflecties daarover kunt noteren. Het is niet zo dat je 4 weken lang al je dagen volledig uitschrijft, het gaat om het noteren van dagelijkse gebeurtenissen m.b.t. stakeholderinteractie die voor jou belangrijk zijn. Wat mogelijk belangrijke gebeurtenissen zijn bespreken we in het opstart-gesprek en beschrijf je in het begin van het reflective journal. Daarbij kun je je baseren op de uitkomsten van het eerdere coachtraject en hetgeen in je huidige opdracht van belang is. Tijdens het opstart-gesprek maken we direct een afspraak voor een coachgesprek voor na de 4 weken. In dat coachgesprek bespreken we de gebeurtenissen en jouw reflecties. We maken daarin ook de koppeling naar het eerdere coachtraject. Gedurende de 4 weken kan ik ook 1 of 2 bijeenkomsten bijwonen die voor jouw ontwikkeldoelen interessant zijn en waarop je feedback wilt. Bijvoorbeeld een workshop of vergadering die jij leidt en waarin jouw relationeel handelen belangrijk is voor je effectiviteit als consultant. Daarover maken we afspraken in het opstart-gesprek. Uiteraard behandel ik alle gegevens vertrouwelijk.

Voorwaarden voor deelname

- Je hebt deelgenomen aan de personal coaching bij mij en bent geïnteresseerd in een vervolg.
- Het is vooral belangrijk dat je er zin in hebt. Dus zie je het nut ervan in voor je verdere ontwikkeling en ben je bereid regelmatig wat notities te maken, meld je dan aan. Als je ontdekt dat de door mij voorgestelde structuur van het reflective journal voor jou niet werkt, pas het dan aan.
- Je hebt een opdracht waarin jouw relationeel handelen belangrijk is. In de voor mijn proefschrift ideale situatie heb je een 'complexe veranderopdracht'. […] citerend is dat "een opdracht waarvan we vooraf niet weten waar het naar toe gaat en al helemaal niet hoe we daar komen". Met andere woorden: je hebt een leidende rol in een klus waarvan op voorhand geen 'eindplaatje' of manier van werken bekend is en waarin meerdere actoren/afdelingen samenwerken omdat iedereen een stukje van de puzzel heeft. Je bent ook meer dan welkom als jouw huidige opdracht niet precies aan bovenstaande omschrijving voldoet, maar je wel graag wilt meedoen aan de follow-up.
- Je bent ermee akkoord dat ik je reflective journal, de opnames van opstart- en coachgesprek en notities van bijeenkomsten geanonimiseerd gebruik voor mijn promotieonderzoek. Hiervoor maken we weer afspraken via een consent formulier.

Heb je interesse, vragen?

Meld je aan voor 1 mei of neem vooral contact op als je een toelichting wilt of nog vragen hebt.

Met vriendelijke groet,
Joost van Andel

06-430 482 02 of Joost.vanandel@hu.nl

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Beste consultant,

Hierbij nodig ik je uit voor een follow-up van de eerdere personal coaching waaraan je hebt deelgenomen. In de bijlage lees je hier meer over. Ik ben benieuwd hoe het je vergaat met jouw opbrengsten van de coaching en hoe je die meeneemt in de huidige opdracht. Voor mijn proefschrift is dit de laatste grote stap in de datageneratie. Ik heb de opzet van deze follow-up besproken met één van jullie en ook met [ ]. Ik mocht zijn warme aanbeveling vermelden bij dit aanbod. Bij deze!

Ik ben benieuwd naar jullie reactie. Groet!
Joost

PS: ik heb nu 1/3e van alle verhalen over de coachtrajecten afgerond en bij jullie teruggelegd. Het blijkt een nog tijdrovender klus te zijn dan ik al dacht…. De komende weken/maanden blijf ik hiermee bezig en kom ik hierover nog bij je terug. Het staat het opstarten van deze follow-up gelukkig niet in de weg.

J. (Joost) van Andel MSc. | PhD candidate - Coordinator minor Coaching - Teamcoach (HRD) | Institute for People & Business | Utrecht University of Applied Sciences | Padualaan 101 – NL 3584 CH Utrecht | PO box 85397 – NL 3508 AJ Utrecht | +31 (0)88-4819281 or send an email | joost.vanandel@hu.nl

Appendix 8: Consent Form Management Consultants, Phase 2

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.
FACULTY OF BEHAVIOURAL, MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Informatieblad & Toestemmingsformulier Onderzoek

Informatieblad voor onderzoek 'Furthering the professional development of organizational change consultants'

Doel van het onderzoek

Dit onderzoek wordt geleid door Joost van Andel, promovendus bij onderzoeksgroep Change Management & Organizational Behavior. Het onderzoek waar dit huidige formulier betrekking op heeft is een vervolg op een eerder onderzoek waaraan u hebt deelgenomen. Daarvoor heeft u ook een informatieblad en toestemmingsformulier ontvangen en ondertekend.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is bij te dragen aan de persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling van change consultants zodat zij effectiever kunnen bijdragen aan het begeleiden van organisatieverandering. Binnen dit onderzoek wordt u in staat gesteld om gebruik te maken van een reflective journal en personal coaching. Over dit aanbod en de voorwaarden bent u op 20 april 2021, per mail door de onderzoeker geïnformeerd. Deze informatie is als bijlage bij dit informatieblad toegevoegd.

Over dit onderzoek wordt anoniem gepubliceerd in de vorm van een dissertatie en eventueel in de vorm van artikelen in wetenschappelijke of professional tijdschriften.

Hoe gaan we te werk?

U neemt deel aan een onderzoek waarbij u deelneemt aan een follow-up van het traject van personal coaching dat u tussen november 2019 en december 2020 met de coach-onderzoeker heeft doorlopen. Deze follow-up bestaat uit het bijhouden van een reflective journal en enkele daaraan verbonden gesprekken; Hierin zullen we informatie vergaren door:
- Een opstartgesprek met u te voeren, voorafgaand aan het bijhouden van het reflective journalen dit gesprek op te nemen via een audio-opname. Ook zullen korte notities gemaakt.
- Uw leermomenten m.b.t. stakeholder-interactie in uw werk als consultant (en eventueel m.b.t. uw privé-context) en uw reflecties daarop te verzamelen in een reflective journal. Daarin registreert u voor u belangrijke momenten en interacties met bijvoorbeeld bijbehorende inzichten, ontwikkelingen en opkomende vragen.

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Deze leermomenten en reflecties worden gedurende 4 weken door u verzameld in het reflective journal en beschikbaar gesteld t.b.v. het onderzoek.

- Een coachgesprek met u te voeren, na afloop van de periode van 4 weken. In dat gesprek blikt u samen met de coach-onderzoeker terug op de leermomenten en uw reflecties en vragen daarover.
- Indien dat nader wordt afgesproken: observatie en/of opname van gesprekken bij uw opdrachtgever waarin zich voor mogelijke leermomenten kunnen voordoen.

Potentiële risico's en ongemakken

- Tijdens uw deelname aan deze studie kunnen u vragen worden gesteld die u als (zeer) persoonlijk kunt ervaren, vanwege de gevoelige aard van het onderwerp. Wij stellen deze vragen enkel en alleen in het belang van de follow-up van het coachtraject en het onderzoek. U hoeft echter geen vragen te beantwoorden die u niet wilt beantwoorden. Uw deelname is vrijwillig en u kunt uw deelname op elk gewenst moment stoppen.

Vergoeding

U ontvangt voor deelname aan dit onderzoek geen vergoeding.

Vertrouwelijkheid van gegevens

Wij doen er alles aan uw privacy zo goed mogelijk te beschermen. Er wordt op geen enkele wijze vertrouwelijke informatie of persoonsgegevens van of over u naar buiten gebracht, waardoor iemand u direct zal kunnen herkennen. Met de begeleidend hoogleraren wordt alleen op hoofdlijnen over het onderzoek gesproken, er worden met hen geen gegevens uitgewisseld over individuele gesprekken of ingevulde reflective journals. Alleen met de dagelijks begeleider wordt hier eventueel over gesproken en alleen voor zover dit noodzakelijk is voor analyse. Dat gebeurt altijd anoniem.

Voordat onze onderzoeksgegevens naar buiten gebracht worden, worden uw gegevens zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd.

In een publicatie zullen anonieme gegevens of pseudoniemen worden gebruikt. De audio-opnamen, formulieren en andere documenten die in het kader van deze studie worden gemaakt of verzameld, worden opgeslagen op een beveiligde locatie bij de Universiteit Twente en op de beveiligde (versleutelde) gegevensdragers van de onderzoekers.

De onderzoeksgegevens worden bewaard voor een periode van 10 jaar. Uiterlijk na het verstrijken van deze termijn zullen de gegevens worden verwijderd of worden geanonimiseerd zodat ze niet meer te herleiden zijn tot een persoon. De audio-opnamen van

gesprekken worden na het goedkeuren van de dissertatie vernietigd, een geanonimiseerd transcript kan bewaard blijven. De onderzoeksgegevens worden niet ter beschikking gesteld aan personen buiten de onderzoeksgroep, tenzij dit wordt opgelegd, bijvoorbeeld voor een controle op wetenschappelijke integriteit. In dat geval worden gegevens alleen in anonieme vorm beschikbaar gesteld.

Tot slot is dit onderzoek beoordeeld en goedgekeurd door de ethische commissie van de faculteit BMS.

Vrijwilligheid

Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. U kunt als deelnemer uw medewerking aan het onderzoek te allen tijde stoppen, of weigeren dat uw gegevens voor het onderzoek mogen worden gebruikt, zonder opgaaf van redenen.

Als u tijdens het onderzoek besluit om uw medewerking te staken, zullen de gegevens die u reeds hebt verstrekt tot het moment van intrekking van de toestemming in het onderzoek gebruikt worden.

Wilt u stoppen met het onderzoek, of heeft u vragen en/of klachten? Neem dan contact op met de onderzoeksleider.

Contactgegevens onderzoeksleider:
Joost van Andel
Email: j.vanandel@utwente.nl
Mobile: +31643048202

Voor bezwaren met betrekking tot de opzet en of uitvoering van het onderzoek kunt u zich ook wenden tot de Secretaris van de Ethische Commissie van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences op de Universiteit Twente via ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd vanuit de Universiteit Twente, faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences. Indien u specifieke vragen hebt over de omgang met persoonsgegevens kun u deze ook richten aan de Functionaris Gegevensbescherming van de UT door een mail te sturen naar dpo@utwente.nl.

Tot slot heeft u het recht een verzoek tot inzage, wijziging, verwijdering of aanpassing van uw gegevens te doen bij de Onderzoeksleider.

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Door dit toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen erken ik het volgende:

1. Ik ben voldoende geïnformeerd over het onderzoek door middel van een separaat informatieblad incl. bijlage. Ik heb het informatieblad gelezen en heb daarna de mogelijkheid gehad vragen te kunnen stellen. Deze vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord.
2. Ik neem vrijwillig deel aan dit onderzoek. Er is geen expliciete of impliciete dwang voor mij om aan dit onderzoek deel te nemen. Het is mij duidelijk dat ik deelname aan het onder- zoek op elk moment, zonder opgaaf van reden, kan beëindigen. Ik hoef een vraag niet te beantwoorden als ik dat niet wil.

Naast het bovenstaande is het hieronder mogelijk voor verschillende onderdelen van

het onderzoek specifiek toestemming te geven. U kunt er per onderdeel voor kiezen wel of geen toestemming te geven. Indien u voor alles toestemming wil geven, is dat mogelijk via de aanvinkbox onderaan de stellingen.

	JA	NEE
3. Ik geef toestemming om de gegevens die gedurende het onderzoek bij mij worden verzameld te verwerken zoals is opgenomen in het bijgevoegde informatieblad. Deze toestemming ziet, *indien ik er vrijwillig voor kies daar zelf iets over mede te delen*, dus ook op het verwerken van gegevens betreffende mijn gezondheid/ras/etnische afkomst/politieke opvattingen/religieuze en of levensbeschouwelijke overtuigingen/lidmaatschap van vakbond/seksueel gedrag/seksuele gerichtheid.	☐	☐
4. Ik geef toestemming om tijdens de gesprekken opnames (geluid) te maken en mijn antwoorden uit te werken in een transcript.	☐	☐
5. Ik geef toestemming om mijn antwoorden te gebruiken voor quotes in de onderzoekspublicaties.	☐	☐
6. Ik geef toestemming om de bij mij verzamelde onderzoeksdata geanonimiseerd te bewaren en te gebruiken voor toekomstig onderzoek en voor onderwijsdoeleinden.	☐	☐

Ik geef toestemming voor *alles* dat hierboven beschreven staat. ☐

Naam Deelnemer: Naam Onderzoeker:

Handtekening: Handtekening:

Datum: Datum:

Appendix 9: Reflective Journal for Coaching Follow-up

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL VOOR FOLLOW-UP PERSONAL COACHING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS[614]

Introductie, doel en gebruik[615]

Je hebt besloten om deel te nemen aan de follow-up van de personal coaching en daarvoor hebben we een 'opstart-gesprek' afgesproken. De komende weken ga je een reflective journal bijhouden om gericht te reflecteren op interacties waar jij van wilt leren als consultant. Waarover je wilt leren kan een aangescherpt of nieuw ontwikkeldoel zijn naar aanleiding van de eerdere coaching, of een nieuwsgierigheid naar bepaalde interacties die je regelmatig hebt. Kies een focus die voor jou logischerwijs aansluit op de personal coaching en je relationeel handelen als consultant in een of meerdere opdrachten waaraan je momenteel werkt. Met betrekking tot jouw focus beschrijf je gebeurtenissen die jij essentieel vindt om in dit kader vast te leggen (leerincidenten[616]) en verwerk je je reflecties daarover. Je kunt daarvoor de voorgestelde reflectievragen[617] gebruiken of anderszins je acties, gedachten en gevoelens[618] noteren.

Je noteert iets in je reflective journal wanneer iets is gebeurd dat past binnen jouw focus binnen deze follow-up. We hebben over deze focus gesproken in het opstart-gesprek en daarbij ook de link gemaakt met het eerdere coachtraject. Hierna (onder het kopje 'Algemene reflectie…') word je gevraagd deze focus de beschrijven zodat jij en ik weten waar het voor jou over gaat. Het is vervolgens niet zo dat je elke dag in je journal 'moet' schrijven, je schrijft erin als er iets relevants is gebeurd (of juist niet is gebeurd terwijl je dat wel verwachtte). De context die in ieder geval centraal staat betreft je interacties met de betrokkenen bij het project dat je doet (werknemers en andere betrokkenen bij je klantorganisatie). Als er iets gebeurt in een andere context (intern bij [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] of privé) dat voor jou ook te maken heeft met je focus, dan kan je dat ook meenemen. Dat kan interessant zijn, bijvoorbeeld als je merkt dat je privé anders reageert dan zakelijk.

Na de vier weken blik je daar zelf op terug aan de hand van enkele gerichte vragen. Vervolgens hebben we een coachgesprek naar aanleiding van deze leerincidenten, jouw reflecties daarop en daarover ontstane coachvragen.

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614 Footnotes referring to diary studies literature were not included in the version which was distributed to the participants
615 Commitment and dedication (Bolger, Davis & Rafaeli, 2003); Enhance journal entry (Rose, 2020); Provide preparation and support before during and after (Duke, 2012)
616 Shepherd (2004)
617 Offer guiding questions (Rose, 2020); Six reflective questions (Shepherd, 2004, 2006)
618 Rose (2020)

Heb je tijdens of kort na de vier weken een bijeenkomst waarbij je mij wilt uitnodigen om bijvoorbeeld mee te kijken bij een workshop of overleg dan kan dat. Je kan in plaats daarvan ook een opname maken als je dat liever hebt.

Het doel van het bijhouden van dit reflective journal is het actief, regelmatig, en bewust kunnen reflecteren op je relationeel handelen op een manier die voor jou werkt[619]. Ook het opstart- en coachgesprek is bedoeld om daaraan bij te dragen[620]. Het journal is in de eerste plaats een hulpmiddel voor jouw professionele ontwikkeling[621] en in de tweede plaats materiaal dat ik voor mijn proefschrift gebruik. In dit document bied ik je een structuur waarvan ik denk dat die bijdraagt aan beide doelen. De structuur bestaat uit vier weektabellen waarin je per dag je reflecties kunt noteren. Je vindt een kolom voor de interacties in klantcontext en een kolom voor eventuele andere contexten. De reflectievragen zijn bedoeld als uitnodiging en hulpmiddel, niet als dwingend kader. Tip is wel om dagelijks na te gaan wat er te noteren valt[622]. Hierdoor heb je de kortste tijd tussen leerincident en reflectie waardoor ik denk dat je het meeste uit de follow-up haalt. Na de vier weektabellen vind je enkele vragen die je jezelf kunt stellen ter voorbereiding op de coachsessie. Tot slot vind je nog enkele reflectievragen over de hele follow-up (incl. het coachgesprek).

Als je gaandeweg merkt dat de structuur minder goed werkt, neem dan contact op zodat ik kan meedenken[623]. Bijvoorbeeld over hoe we het journal kunnen aanpassen zodat het beter werkt[624]. Ook als je tegen andere zaken aanloopt die belemmerend werken denk ik graag mee.

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619 Broad focus by researcher while participants can describe everyday lived experience (McLeod, 2011, p. 74-75); Purpose must be clear and shared between researcher and participants, from the beginning (Msheilia et al., 2016)

620 Importance of reflective dialogues to better understand events (Shepherd, 2004); Qualitative diary studies can be used to analyze client's participation in psychotherapeutic contexts as a means to improve client's lives in everyday contexts (Mackrill, 2008); Diaries on their own are not sufficient to capture reflection and learning, oral discussion supports reflection that leads to learning and translation to practical use (Msheilia et al., 2016)

621 Benefits of writing to better understand and manage changes in organization (Shepherd, 2004, 2006)

622 Record events in natural settings and minimize the delay between the event and its recording (Krishnamurty, 2008 cited by Rose, 2020)

623 Transfer agency to participants, making them co-researcher (Dörnyei, 2007, cited by Rose, 2020); There is no best way for practitioners to keep a diary; the focus needs to be on ensuring that an AR recording process is locally owned and complements the specific practice setting (Msheilia et al., 2016)

624 Choice of format should be given to participants (Duke, 2012); Diaries should be allowed to evolve (Msheilia et al., 2016)

Algemene reflectie: opbrengsten afgeronde personal coaching

Invuldatum algemene reflectie	
Wat zijn voor jou de belangrijkste opbrengsten van de personal coaching ten aanzien van je relationeel handelen, zoals je ze op dit moment zou beschrijven?	
Zijn jouw inzichten daarover nog veranderd in de periode tussen het afronden van het coachtraject en nu? Zo ja, hoe?	
Hoe heb je deze opbrengsten en inzichten tot vandaag de dag in jouw consulting-praktijk gebruikt?	
Welke uitkomsten heeft dat gehad? Waarom denk je dat?	
Waarop wil je concreet focussen bij het deelnemen aan deze follow-up van de personal coaching? Beschrijf dit in termen van interactie en gedrag/acties.	
Wat hoop je dat deze focus je oplevert?	
Welke situaties en gebeurtenissen in je werk als consultant ga je komende 4 weken centraal stellen in jouw reflective journal?	
Zie je belemmeringen voor het dagelijks maken van notities in jouw reflective journal?	
Zo ja, welke en wat zou daarbij behulpzaam kunnen zijn?	
Is er nog iets anders wat je wilt vermelden voordat je begint met het bijhouden van je reflective journal?	

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Reflective Journal week 1 (identiek voor 2-4)

KALENDER-WEEK: XX	Context: Stakeholder interactie klantorganisatie	Context: Overige interacties (bv intern [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM], privé)
Maandag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen[625]**:** 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:
Dinsdag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:

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625 Shepherd (2004, 2006)

Woensdag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:
Donderdag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:

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Vrijdag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:
Zaterdag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:

Zondag	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?	Vrije beschrijving leerincident(en): wat gebeurde er in de interactie?
Reflectievragen: 1. Hoe voel ik me hierover? 2. Welke gedachten heb ik hierover? 3. Wat heb ik hiervan geleerd? 4. Welke actie neem ik als gevolg van wat ik heb geleerd? 5. Wat heb ik geleerd van wat ik heb gedaan? 6. Wat heb gedaan met wat ik heb geleerd?	Reflectie:	Reflectie:
Notities		

Voorbereiding coachsessie

Invuldatum voorbereiding coachsessie	
Hoe heb je het bijhouden van dit reflective journal ervaren?	
Welke inzichten heb je opgedaan t.a.v. de focus en gewenste uitkomsten die je onder het kopje 'algemene reflectie' hebt geformuleerd?	
Hoe verhouden deze inzichten zich t.o.v. de eerdere inzichten n.a.v. de personal coaching waarvan je tussen 2019 en 2020 gebruik gemaakt?	
Welke punten of vragen neem je mee naar het follow-up coachgesprek?	
Is er nog iets anders dat je hier wilt vermelden, voorafgaand aan het coachgesprek?	

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Afrondende reflectie totale follow-up (na het coachgesprek)

Invuldatum afrondende reflectie	
Welke inzichten t.a.v. je reflecties over de leerincidenten heb je opgedaan n.a.v. het follow-up coachgesprek?	
Wat heeft de gehele follow-up (reflective journal en coachgesprek) je uiteindelijk opgeleverd voor je relationeel handelen en de door jou beleefde effectiviteit als consultant?	
Als je nu je brief erbij pakt die je me stuurde vóór de start van ons allereerste gesprek: waar sta je dan nu t.a.v. deze thema's waarover je schreef?	
Ruime voor overige opmerkingen	

Hartelijk dank voor het deelnemen aan deze follow-up en het verwerken van je inzichten in dit reflective journal.

Appendix 10: Invitation to Member Check and Check Consent for Quote Publication (Phase 2)

Beste […]

Ik heb een verslag gemaakt van het opstart- en coachgesprek van de follow-up op de coaching m.b.v. het Reflective Journal. Dat verslag vind je in de bijlage. Naast dat dit mogelijk ook voor jou interessant is om nog eens te lezen, ben ik erg benieuwd of je je erin herkent. Mis je zaken, of staat er iets dat jij anders bedoeld had? Dat hoor ik graag. Ook als er iets in staat waarvan je liever niet hebt dat ik het quote in mijn proefschrift, geef dat gerust aan. Ik kan die onderdelen dan in overleg met jou herschrijven of verwijderen. Het verslag is geen letterlijk transcript maar komt aardig in de buurt. Ik heb geprobeerd om de belangrijkste zaken die we besproken hebben weer te geven. De tijdelijke codering in de eerste kolom mag je negeren…

Het verslag zelf komt niet integraal in het proefschrift. Wel komen er anonieme quotes in terug uit deze verslagen en mogelijk ook een kernachtige samenvatting van de follow-up. Dit geldt ook voor het ingevulde Reflective Journal zelf. Hoe dan ook, ik vind het belangrijk dat jij je inhoudelijke reactie erop kunt geven en dat je weet hoe ik het verder verwerk.

Ik ben benieuwd naar je reactie!

Groet,
Joost

J. (Joost) van Andel MSc. | PhD candidate - Coordinator minor Coaching - Teamcoach (HRD) | Institute for People & Business | Utrecht University of Applied Sciences | Padualaan 101 – NL 3584 CH Utrecht | PO box 85397 – NL 3508 AJ Utrecht | +31 (0)88-4819281 or send an email | joost.vanandel@hu.nl

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Appendix 11: Items Survey Study per Respondent Group (Incl. Confirmation of Participation and Information Regarding Data Collection)

Vragenlijst: consultant

Als u vragen heeft, of verdere informatie wilt, kunt u contact opnemen met onderzoeker Joost van Andel via joost.vanandel@hu.nl of (+31) 06 4304 8202.

Algemene vragen	
1. Wat is uw leeftijd?	…….. jaar
2. Met welk geslacht identificeert u zich het meest?	Vrouw / Man / Anders
3. Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde opleiding?	HBO Bachelor / HBO Master / Universitaire Bachelor / Universitaire Master / PhD / Anders: ………………………………………..…………………
4. Hoeveel jaar werkervaring heeft u in totaal?	…….. jaar
5. Hoeveel jaar werkervaring heeft u als consultant?	…….. jaar
6. Wat is uw huidige officiële functienaam?	Junior Consultant / Consultant / Senior Consultant / Managing Consultant / Partner / Anders: …………………………………………………………
7. Welk ontwikkeldoel m.b.t. uw relationeel handelen hebt u beschreven in uw brief aan de coach-onderzoeker? (kernachtig)	………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………
8. Wat hoopt u dat het bereiken van dat doel zal opleveren in uw werk als consultant? (kernachtig)	………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………… ………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………
	…………………………………………………………

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Kies één antwoord per stelling:

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
9. Meestal voel ik goed aan waarom ik bepaalde gevoelens heb	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. Ik begrijp mijn eigen emoties erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. Ik begrijp echt wat ik voel	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. Ik weet altijd of ik blij ben of niet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. Ik kan de emoties van vrienden altijd afleiden uit hun gedrag	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. Ik ben goed in het herkennen van emoties in anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. Ik ben sensitief voor de gevoelens en emoties van anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. Ik begrijp de emoties van de mensen om mij heen erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. Ik stel mezelf altijd doelen en doe dan mijn uiterste best om deze te bereiken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. Ik zeg altijd tegen mijzelf dat ik een competent persoon ben	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. Ik ben iemand die zichzelf motiveert	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. Ik moedig mezelf altijd aan om mijn uiterste best te doen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
21. Ik kan mijn humeur beheersen en problemen rationeel aanpakken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
22. Ik ben vrij goed in het controleren van mijn eigen emoties	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
23. Ik kan altijd snel tot rust komen als ik erg kwaad ben geweest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
24. Ik heb mijn emoties goed onder controle	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen? In mijn rol als consultant bij de klantorganisatie(s) […]	In het geheel niet	Af en Toe	Soms	Redelijk vaak	Vaak tot altijd
25. Maak ik betrokkenen trots om met mij samen te werken	O	O	O	O	O
26. Vind ik het groepsbelang belangrijker dan het eigen belang	O	O	O	O	O
27. Gedraag ik me op een respectvolle wijze naar betrokkenen	O	O	O	O	O
28. Roep ik sterk vertrouwen op	O	O	O	O	O
29. Spreek ik regelmatig over de belangrijkste waarden en normen	O	O	O	O	O
30. Benadruk ik het belang van duidelijke doelen	O	O	O	O	O
31. Heb ik aandacht voor de ethische en morele kant van besluiten	O	O	O	O	O
32. Benadruk ik het belang van het hebben van en gezamenlijke missie	O	O	O	O	O

33. Spreek ik optimistisch over de toekomst	O	O	O	O	O
34. Spreek ik enthousiast over wat er gerealiseerd moet worden	O	O	O	O	O
35. Draag ik een overtuigende toekomstvisie uit	O	O	O	O	O
36. Straal ik vertrouwen uit dat de doelen behaald zullen worden	O	O	O	O	O
37. Stel ik vragen met betrekking tot belangrijke veronderstellingen	O	O	O	O	O
38. Zoek ik verschillende invalshoeken bij het oplossen van problemen	O	O	O	O	O
39. Laat ik betrokkenen problemen bekijken vanuit verschillende invalshoeken	O	O	O	O	O
40. Suggereer ik nieuwe mogelijkheden om naar te taakuitvoering te kijken	O	O	O	O	O
41. Besteed ik tijd aan begeleiding en coaching	O	O	O	O	O
42. Behandel ik betrokkenen meer als individu dan slechts als lid van het team	O	O	O	O	O
43. Heb ik oog voor het feit dat betrokkenen in vergelijking met elkaar verschillende behoeften, mogelijkheden en aspiraties hebben	O	O	O	O	O
44. Help ik betrokkenen hun sterke kanten te ontwikkelen	O	O	O	O	O
45. Ondersteun ik betrokkenen in ruil voor hun inspanningen	O	O	O	O	O
46. Maak ik duidelijk wie verantwoordelijk is voor het behalen van doelen	O	O	O	O	O
47. Maak ik duidelijk welke beloning iemand tegemoet kan zien als de doelen zijn gehaald	O	O	O	O	O
48. Toon ik waardering wanneer betrokkenen aan de verwachtingen voldoen	O	O	O	O	O
49. Ben ik volledig geconcentreerd op de afhandeling van klachten en problemen	O	O	O	O	O
50. Vestig ik de aandacht op onregelmatigheden en fouten	O	O	O	O	O
51. Houd ik fouten goed in de gaten	O	O	O	O	O
52. Ben ik waakzaam ten aanzien van het niet behalen van doelstellingen	O	O	O	O	O
53. Begrijp ik de beperkingen van de klantorganisatie(s)	O	O	O	O	O
54. Zie ik wat moet worden veranderd in de klantorganisatie(s)	O	O	O	O	O
55. Zorg ik ervoor dat mijn visie specifiek genoeg is	O	O	O	O	O
56. Vertaal ik de missie in specifieke doelen	O	O	O	O	O
57. Verwijder ik belemmeringen die doelrealisatie door betrokkenen in de weg staan	O	O	O	O	O
58. Zorg ik dat betrokkenen voldoende middelen hebben om hun doelen te behalen	O	O	O	O	O
59. Help ik betrokkenen om te leren van hun fouten	O	O	O	O	O
60. Geef ik betrokkenen constructieve feedback over hun fouten	O	O	O	O	O

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In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
61. Ik ben tevreden over hoe ik me verhoud tot belangrijke personen in mijn privéleven.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
62. Toelichting:	....						
63. Ik ben tevreden over hoe ik me verhoud tot stakeholders binnen [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM].	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
64. Toelichting:	....						
65. Ik ben tevreden over de resultaten die ik in de samenwerkingsverband(en) binnen [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] realiseer.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
66. Toelichting	....						
67. Ik ben tevreden over hoe ik me verhoud tot stakeholders binnen de klantorganisatie(s) waar ik opdrachten uitvoer.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
68. Toelichting:	....						
69. Ik ben tevreden over de resultaten die ik in de samenwerkingsverband(en) binnen de klantorganisatie(s) realiseer.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
70. Toelichting:	....						

Vragenlijst: privéomgeving

Als u vragen heeft, of verdere informatie wilt, kunt u contact opnemen met onderzoeker Joost van Andel via joost.vanandel@hu.nl of (+31) 06 4304 8202.

Algemene vragen

1.	Wat is uw leeftijd?	…….. jaar
2.	Met welk geslacht identificeert u zich het meest?	Vrouw / Man / Anders
3.	Ten opzichte van <NAAM> ben ik:	Partner / Vriend(in) / Familielid / Anders:
		…………………………………..……………………

Kies één antwoord per stelling:

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
4. Meestal voelt <NAAM> goed aan waarom hij/zij bepaalde gevoelens heeft	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. <NAAM> begrijpt zijn/haar eigen emoties erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. <NAAM> begrijpt echt wat hij/zij voelt	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
7. <NAAM> weet altijd of hij/zij blij is of niet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
8. <NAAM> kan de emoties van vrienden altijd afleiden uit hun gedrag	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. <NAAM> is goed in het herkennen van emoties in anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. <NAAM> is sensitief voor de gevoelens en emoties van anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. <NAAM> begrijpt de emoties van de mensen om hem/haar heen erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. <NAAM> stelt zichzelf altijd doelen en doet dan zijn/haar uiterste best om deze te bereiken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. <NAAM> vindt van zichzelf dat hij/zij een competent persoon is	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. <NAAM> is iemand die zichzelf motiveert	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. <NAAM> moedigt zichzelf altijd aan om zijn/haar uiterste best te doen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. <NAAM> kan zijn/haar humeur beheersen en problemen rationeel aanpakken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. <NAAM> is vrij goed in het controleren van zijn/haar eigen emoties	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

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18. <NAAM> kan altijd snel tot rust komen als hij/zij erg kwaad ben geweest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. <NAAM> heeft zijn/haar emoties goed onder controle	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
20. Ik ben tevreden over hoe <NAAM> zich tot mij verhoudt.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

21. Toelichting:

……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

Vragenlijst: [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM]

Als u vragen heeft, of verdere informatie wilt, kunt u contact opnemen met onderzoeker Joost van Andel via joost.vanandel@hu.nl of (+31) 06 4304 8202.

Algemene vragen

1.	Wat is uw leeftijd?	…….. jaar
2.	Met welk geslacht identificeert u zich het meest?	Vrouw / Man / Anders
3.	Ten opzichte van <NAAM> ben ik:	Collega / Direct leidinggevende / Anders:
		…………………………………..…………………

Kies één antwoord per stelling:

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
4. Meestal voelt <NAAM> goed aan waarom hij/zij bepaalde gevoelens heeft	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. <NAAM> begrijpt zijn/haar eigen emoties erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. <NAAM> begrijpt echt wat hij/zij voelt	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
7. <NAAM> weet altijd of hij/zij blij is of niet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
8. <NAAM> kan de emoties van vrienden altijd afleiden uit hun gedrag	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. <NAAM> is goed in het herkennen van emoties in anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. <NAAM> is sensitief voor de gevoelens en emoties van anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. <NAAM> begrijpt de emoties van de mensen om hem/haar heen erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. <NAAM> stelt zichzelf altijd doelen en doet dan zijn/haar uiterste best om deze te bereiken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. <NAAM> vindt van zichzelf dat hij/zij een competent persoon is	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. <NAAM> is iemand die zichzelf motiveert	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. <NAAM> moedigt zichzelf altijd aan om zijn/haar uiterste best te doen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. <NAAM> kan zijn/haar humeur beheersen en problemen rationeel aanpakken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

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17. <NAAM> is vrij goed in het controleren van zijn/haar eigen emoties	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. <NAAM> kan altijd snel tot rust komen als hij/zij erg kwaad ben geweest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. <NAAM> heeft zijn/haar emoties goed onder controle	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen? Beantwoord de volgende stellingen ten aanzien van de uitvoering van 'interne' werkzaamheden van <NAAM> (Binnen [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM], niet binnen de klantorganisatie) <NAAM> […]	In het geheel niet	Af en Toe	Soms	Redelijk vaak	Vaak tot altijd
20. Maakt mij trots om het hem/haar samen te werken	O	O	O	O	O
21. Vindt het groepsbelang belangrijker dan het eigen belang	O	O	O	O	O
22. Gedraagt zich op een respectvolle wijze naar betrokkenen	O	O	O	O	O
23. Roept sterk vertrouwen op	O	O	O	O	O
24. Spreekt regelmatig over de belangrijkste waarden en normen	O	O	O	O	O
25. Benadrukt het belang van duidelijke doelen	O	O	O	O	O
26. Heeft aandacht voor de ethische en morele kant van besluiten	O	O	O	O	O
27. Benadrukt het belang van het hebben van en gezamenlijke missie	O	O	O	O	O
28. Spreekt optimistisch over de toekomst	O	O	O	O	O
29. Spreekt enthousiast over wat er gerealiseerd moet worden	O	O	O	O	O
30. Draagt een overtuigende toekomstvisie uit	O	O	O	O	O
31. Straalt vertrouwen uit dat de doelen behaald zullen worden	O	O	O	O	O
32. Stelt vragen met betrekking tot belangrijke veronderstellingen	O	O	O	O	O
33. Zoekt verschillende invalshoeken bij het oplossen van problemen	O	O	O	O	O
34. Laat betrokkenen problemen bekijken vanuit verschillende invalshoeken	O	O	O	O	O
35. Suggereert nieuwe mogelijkheden om naar te taakuitvoering te kijken	O	O	O	O	O
36. Besteedt tijd aan begeleiding en coaching	O	O	O	O	O
37. Behandelt betrokkenen meer als individu dan slechts als lid van het team	O	O	O	O	O
38. Heeft oog voor het feit dat betrokkenen in vergelijking met elkaar verschillende behoeften, mogelijkheden en aspiraties hebben	O	O	O	O	O
39. Helpt betrokkenen hun sterke kanten te ontwikkelen	O	O	O	O	O
40. Ondersteunt betrokkenen in ruil voor hun inspanningen	O	O	O	O	O
41. Maakt duidelijk wie verantwoordelijk is voor het behalen van doelen	O	O	O	O	O
42. Maakt duidelijk welke beloning iemand tegemoet kan zien als de doelen zijn gehaald	O	O	O	O	O

	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigzins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
43. Toont waardering wanneer betrokkenen aan de verwachtingen voldoen	O	O	O	O	O		
44. Is volledig geconcentreerd op de afhandeling van klachten en problemen	O	O	O	O	O		
45. Vestigt de aandacht op onregelmatigheden en fouten	O	O	O	O	O		
46. Houdt fouten goed in de gaten	O	O	O	O	O		
47. Is waakzaam ten aanzien van het niet behalen van doelstellingen	O	O	O	O	O		
48. Begrijpt de beperkingen van onze organisatie	O	O	O	O	O		
49. Ziet wat moet worden veranderd in de organisatie	O	O	O	O	O		
50. Zorg ervoor dat zijn/haar visie specifiek genoeg is	O	O	O	O	O		
51. Vertaalt de missie in specifieke doelen	O	O	O	O	O		
52. Verwijdert belemmeringen die mijn doelrealisatie in de weg staan	O	O	O	O	O		
53. Zorgt dat ik voldoende middelen heb om mijn doelen te behalen	O	O	O	O	O		
54. Helpt mij om te leren van mijn fouten	O	O	O	O	O		
55. Geeft mij constructieve feedback over mijn fouten	O	O	O	O	O		

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
56. Ik ben tevreden over hoe \<NAAM\> zich verhoudt tot stakeholders binnen [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM]	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

57. Toelichting:
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
58. Ik ben tevreden over de resultaten die \<NAAM\> in de samenwerkingsverband(en) binnen [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM] realiseert.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

59. Toelichting:
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
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……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………

	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
60. Ik ben tevreden over hoe \<NAAM\> zich verhoudt tot stakeholders binnen de klantorganisatie(s).	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

61. Toelichting:
……………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………
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62. Ik ben tevreden over de resultaten die
    <NAAM> in de samenwerkingsverband(en)   O   O   O   O   O   O   O
    binnen de klantorganisatie(s) realiseert.

    ....
    ....
63. Toelichting: ....
    ....
    ....

Vragenlijst: klantorganisatie

Als u vragen heeft, of verdere informatie wilt, kunt u contact opnemen met onderzoeker Joost van Andel via joost.vanandel@hu.nl of (+31) 06 4304 8202.

Algemene vragen

1.	Wat is uw leeftijd?	…….. jaar
2.	Met welk geslacht identificeert u zich het meest?	Vrouw / Man / Anders
3.	Ten opzichte van \<NAAM\> ben ik:	Lid projectteam / Opdrachtgever / Anders:
		…………………………………..……………………

Kies één antwoord per stelling:

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
7. Meestal voelt \<NAAM\> goed aan waarom hij/zij bepaalde gevoelens heeft	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
8. \<NAAM\> begrijpt zijn/haar eigen emoties erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. \<NAAM\> begrijpt echt wat hij/zij voelt	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. \<NAAM\> weet altijd of hij/zij blij is of niet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. \<NAAM\> kan de emoties van vrienden altijd afleiden uit hun gedrag	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. \<NAAM\> is goed in het herkennen van emoties in anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. \<NAAM\> is sensitief voor de gevoelens en emoties van anderen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. \<NAAM\> begrijpt de emoties van de mensen om hem/haar heen erg goed	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. \<NAAM\> stelt zichzelf altijd doelen en doet dan zijn/haar uiterste best om deze te bereiken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. \<NAAM\> vindt van zichzelf dat hij/zij een competent persoon is	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. \<NAAM\> is iemand die zichzelf motiveert	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. \<NAAM\> moedigt zichzelf altijd aan om zijn/haar uiterste best te doen	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. \<NAAM\> kan zijn/haar humeur beheersen en problemen rationeel aanpakken	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. \<NAAM\> is vrij goed in het controleren van zijn/haar eigen emoties	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

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21. <NAAM> kan altijd snel tot rust komen als hij/zij erg kwaad ben geweest	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
22. <NAAM> heeft zijn/haar emoties goed onder controle	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen? De consultant, <NAAM> […]	In het geheel niet	Af en Toe	Soms	Redelijk vaak	Vaak tot altijd
23. Maakt mij trots om het hem/haar samen te werken	O	O	O	O	O
24. Vindt het groepsbelang belangrijker dan het eigen belang	O	O	O	O	O
25. Gedraagt zich op een respectvolle wijze naar betrokkenen	O	O	O	O	O
26. Roept sterk vertrouwen op	O	O	O	O	O
27. Spreekt regelmatig over de belangrijkste waarden en normen	O	O	O	O	O
28. Benadrukt het belang van duidelijke doelen	O	O	O	O	O
29. Heeft aandacht voor de ethische en morele kant van besluiten	O	O	O	O	O
30. Benadrukt het belang van het hebben van en gezamenlijke missie	O	O	O	O	O
31. Spreekt optimistisch over de toekomst	O	O	O	O	O
32. Spreekt enthousiast over wat er gerealiseerd moet worden	O	O	O	O	O
33. Draagt een overtuigende toekomstvisie uit	O	O	O	O	O
34. Straalt vertrouwen uit dat de doelen behaald zullen worden	O	O	O	O	O
35. Stelt vragen met betrekking tot belangrijke veronderstellingen	O	O	O	O	O
36. Zoekt verschillende invalshoeken bij het oplossen van problemen	O	O	O	O	O
37. Laat betrokkenen problemen bekijken vanuit verschillende invalshoeken	O	O	O	O	O
38. Suggereert nieuwe mogelijkheden om naar te taakuitvoering te kijken	O	O	O	O	O
39. Besteedt tijd aan begeleiding en coaching	O	O	O	O	O
40. Behandelt betrokkenen meer als individu dan slechts als lid van het team	O	O	O	O	O
41. Heeft oog voor het feit dat betrokkenen in vergelijking met elkaar verschillende behoeften, mogelijkheden en aspiraties hebben	O	O	O	O	O
42. Helpt betrokkenen hun sterke kanten te ontwikkelen	O	O	O	O	O
43. Ondersteunt betrokkenen in ruil voor hun inspanningen	O	O	O	O	O
44. Maakt duidelijk wie verantwoordelijk is voor het behalen van doelen	O	O	O	O	O
45. Maakt duidelijk welke beloning iemand tegemoet kan zien als de doelen zijn gehaald	O	O	O	O	O
46. Toont waardering wanneer betrokkenen aan de verwachtingen voldoen	O	O	O	O	O
47. Is volledig geconcentreerd op de afhandeling van klachten en problemen	O	O	O	O	O
48. Vestigt de aandacht op onregelmatigheden en fouten	O	O	O	O	O
49. Houdt fouten goed in de gaten	O	O	O	O	O

50. Is waakzaam ten aanzien van het niet behalen van doelstellingen	O	O	O	O	O
51. Begrijpt de beperkingen van onze organisatie	O	O	O	O	O
52. Ziet wat moet worden veranderd in de organisatie	O	O	O	O	O
53. Zorg ervoor dat zijn/haar visie specifiek genoeg is	O	O	O	O	O
54. Vertaalt de missie in specifieke doelen	O	O	O	O	O
55. Verwijdert belemmeringen die mijn doelrealisatie in de weg staan	O	O	O	O	O
56. Zorgt dat ik voldoende middelen heb om mijn doelen te behalen	O	O	O	O	O
57. Helpt mij om te leren van mijn fouten	O	O	O	O	O
58. Geeft mij constructieve feedback over mijn fouten	O	O	O	O	O

In hoeverre bent u het eens of oneens met de volgende stellingen?	Geheel mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Geheel mee eens
59. Ik ben tevreden over hoe \<NAAM\> zich verhoudt tot stakeholders binnen onze organisatie	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
60. Toelichting:	…………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………						
61. Ik ben tevreden over de resultaten die \<NAAM\> in de samenwerkingsverband(en) binnen onze organisatie realiseert.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
62. Toelichting:	…………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… …………………………………………………………………………… ……………………………………………………………………………						

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Bevestiging deelname vragenlijstonderzoek

Geachte respondent,

U ontvangt dit bericht omdat een consultant van [MANAGEMENT CONSULTING FIRM], die deelneemt aan wetenschappelijk onderzoek, u heeft aangemeld als respondent. Als het goed is, heeft de consultant u gevraagd om drie keer een vragenlijst in te vullen over hem of haar.

Allereerst hartelijk dank dat u hieraan wilt meewerken. Dit is waardevol voor zowel de consultant als voor het onderzoek. Daarnaast wil ik graag bevestigen dat ik dit e-mailadres heb geregistreerd, alleen ten behoeve van dit onderzoek. Zodra alle respondenten bekend zijn zal ik u de eerste vragenlijst toesturen. Ik verwacht dat dit midden december zal zijn, of zoveel eerder als mogelijk.

Mocht u hierover vragen hebben dan kunt u contact met mij opnemen via: j.vanandel@ utwente.nl of (06) 4304 8202.

Met vriendelijke groet
Joost van Andel

Verklaring voor deelname aan online vragenlijstonderzoek

U bent uitgenodigd om deel te nemen aan een onderzoek met als titel 'Furthering the professional development of organizational change consultants'. Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door Joost van Andel, van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences van de University of Twente.

Het doel van dit onderzoek is om bij te dragen aan de persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling van change consultants zodat zij effectiever kunnen bijdragen aan het begeleiden van organisatieverandering. Over dit onderzoek wordt anoniem gepubliceerd in de vorm van een dissertatie en eventueel in de vorm van artikelen in wetenschappelijke of professionele tijdschriften. Het deelnemen aan dit onderdeel kost u ongeveer 10 minuten. De gegevens worden gebruikt om te verkennen wat persoonlijke en professionele ontwikkeling van de deelnemende change consultants oplevert in verschillende contexten.

Uw deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig en u kunt op ieder gewenst moment stoppen. Het staat u vrij om een vraag niet te beantwoorden. Naar onze overtuiging is geen risico verbonden aan uw deelname aan deze studie; hoewel er bij online vragenlijsten altijd het risico van een gegevensverlies bestaat. Wij zullen er alles aan doen om ervoor te zorgen dat uw antwoorden vertrouwelijk behandeld worden. We zullen de risico's beperken door gebruik te maken van online verwerking door een betrouwbaar systeem en het onderzoeksmateriaal te bewaren op beveiligde servers, in mappen waar alleen de onderzoeker bij kan.

For respondents, other than the management consultants themselves:

De door u ingevulde vragenlijst kan voor de consultant waardevolle feedback zijn omtrent zijn of haar effectiviteit. Daarom zou ik uw input graag gebruiken om met de consultant op te reflecteren. Indien u daar bezwaar tegen hebt verneem ik dat graag van u (bijvoorbeeld per email).

Voor meer informatie kunt u contact opnemen met: Joost van Andel Email: j.vanandel@utwente.nl Mobile: +31643048202

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Appendix 12: Search Terms and Search Options per Database (Semi-systematic Literature Review)

Below are the exact strings that were used in to search in the selected electronic databases (final run on 13 January 2022):

Academic Search Complete:

Search terms:

("personal coaching" OR "life coaching" OR "personal transformation" OR "leadership coaching" OR "executive coaching" OR "personal development" OR supervision) AND (consultants OR advisors OR advisers) AND ("organizational change" OR "organizational development" OR "organizational growth")

Search options:

Limiters - Peer Reviewed; Published Date: 20000101-; Document Type: Article; Language: Dutch/Flemish, English

Expanders - Apply related words; Apply equivalent subjects

Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

PsycINFO:

Search terms:

("personal coaching" OR "life coaching" OR "personal transformation" OR "leadership coaching" OR "executive coaching" OR "personal development" OR supervision) AND (consultants OR advisors OR advisers) AND ("organizational change" OR "organizational development" OR "organizational growth")

Search options:

Limiters - Peer Reviewed; Published Date: 20000101-; Document Type: Article; Language: Dutch/Flemish, English

Expanders - Apply related words; Apply equivalent subjects

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Search modes - Boolean/Phrase

<u>Science Direct:</u>

Due to the maximum of 8 Boolean operators the search was split up in the following six searches.

1)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND consultants AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational development')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

2)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND advisors AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational development')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

3)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND advisers AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational development')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

4)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND consultants AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational growth')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

5)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND advisors AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational growth')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

6)   *Search:*

('personal coaching' OR 'personal transformation' OR 'leadership coaching' OR 'executive coaching' OR 'personal development' OR supervision) AND advisers AND ('organizational change' OR 'organizational growth')

Changing personal coaching into life coaching: no difference in search outcomes

Search options:

RESEARCH ARTICLES 2000-2021

<u>Web of Science:</u>

Search Query:

(TS=(("personal coaching" OR "life coaching" OR "personal transformation" OR "leadership coaching" OR "executive coaching" OR "personal development" OR supervision) AND (consultants OR advisors OR advisers) AND ("organizational change" OR "organizational development" OR "organizational growth"))) and Articles (Document Types) and English (Languages)

<u>Scopus:</u>

Query:

 TITLE-ABS-KEY ("personal coaching" OR "life coaching" OR "personal transformation" OR "leadership coaching" OR "executive coaching" OR "personal development" OR supervision) AND (consultants OR advisors OR advisers) AND ("organizational change" OR "organizational development" OR "organizational growth") AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2016) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2015) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2014) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2013) OR LIMIT-TO (

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PUBYEAR , 2012) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2011) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2010) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2009) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2008) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2007) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2006) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2005) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2004) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2003) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2002) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2001)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j"))

In this dissertation, the author describes the development of a practice called Relational Coaching for Management Consultants. This practice has been developed as a resource for management consultants who seek to 'take a look in the mirror' with regard to their facilitating role in complex organizational change processes. The author's ultimate aim is to contribute to decreasing the infamous number of 70% of organizational change initiatives that fail to deliver the expected results.

The practice of Relational Coaching for Management Consultants was developed through an Action Research study from a Social Constructionist orientation. In collaboration with an Amsterdam based management consulting firm, the author used psychosocial therapeutic and coaching knowledge bases in co-constructing this practice as a tailor-made development opportunity. The developed practice consists of two distinct phases: a tailor-made coaching journey around management consultants' particular coaching questions, and a coaching follow-up using a reflective journal.

In addition to detailing the coaching process and the particular outcomes for the participating management consultants, the author conceptually describes the practice in an attempt to contribute to Generative Theory. As such, this dissertation may be considered a contribution to the field of Reflexive Management Learning.