Introduction

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INTENTION FOR THIS VOLUME

Given the steady increase in academic coaching literature over the past two decades, coaching appears to be evolving into a scholarly field in its own right. For example, the field now includes four peer-refereed journals that have published a substantial number of conceptual, theoretical and empirical works, along with many influential scholarly texts. In addition, the field has shown an increasing preparedness to engage in substantial dialogue, with robust debates more frequently seen within both journals and at scholarly meetings around the world (e.g. conferences, symposia). Finally, postgraduate-level coaching education and training is being offered in an increasing number of universities worldwide. This is helpful for two reasons. First, it provides an outlet for the growing body of knowledge mentioned above, which ultimately benefits coaching practice. Second, a growing number of these universities run doctoral programmes that not only help to stimulate on-going research but also raise the quality of this body of knowledge (through the use of rigorous scientific methods).

As such, we think the time is right to present an account of this fast developing discipline, to map out where it is going, and to identify the key debates and issues that are influencing coaching practice and its accompanying research. Accordingly, the intention of this Handbook is to provide graduate students, scholars, and researchers with a premier point of contact with the current theoretical and empirical knowledge base, along with many of the established and emerging debates in the scholarly literature.

The work that follows will provide readers with a retrospective and prospective overview of this literature, along with a clear sense of the multidisciplinary nature of the field. It has been assembled using original chapters prepared by leading and emerging scholars

from around the world. Each chapter offers a comprehensive, critical overview of an aspect of coaching, a discussion of the key debates and research, and a review of the emerging issues. Important views are also incorporated from related disciplines and subject areas, in order to acknowledge the systemic and multidisciplinary nature of coaching.

In this Introduction we seek to map the research, theories and conceptual propositions that inform the current state of the coaching discipline. We will also summarise identified problems and conclusions reached within each section of this volume.

SITUATING COACHING

For most of human history, people have drawn support from their immediate social networks to get their physical and psychological needs met. For example, family, friends and other community members (e.g. elders, priests, shamans) have traditionally been the 'helpers' in situations where sense-making was challenged (e.g. after natural disasters), suffering was experienced (e.g. death of loved ones), or life transitions needed to be traversed (e.g. rites of passage). However, more recently, these functions appear to have been handed over to a variety of specialists and professionals that have emerged as part of broader shifts that occurred, particularly in Western industrialised societies. As Naughton (2002) has previously noted:

> … anxiety, ambition, and the challenges of modern life had combined to create a market for men and women who could provide, for a fee, a service that older generations have once performed for younger generations as a part of the social contract. (p.7)

In this light, it is possible to situate coaching within a chronological sequence of evolving professional practices that emerged to meet changing societal demands. Indeed, a *demand and supply* conceptualisation can be used to

reflect upon some of these practices and, in the section that follows, this frame will be used to consider the history of psychotherapy, counselling and, ultimately, coaching. In each case certain *demand* issues can be recognised (e.g. increased social isolation) that were responded to with efforts to create a *supply* to meet such needs (i.e. practitioners with relevant skills). Although not explicitly presented as a demand–supply analysis, Engel (2008) delivers a detailed history of American therapy that accords with such an analytic frame.

As identified by Engel (2008), the emergence of psychoanalysis in the early 20th century constituted the first prototype of a 'talking cure'. Backed by Freud's highly influential works on psychodynamic processes, the psychoanalytic method became dominant in clinical psychiatric treatments for many years. However, the proliferation of this method created an important precedent. That is, it helped to legitimise the use of 'human treatments' or, more specifically, approaches that relied on the power of human relationships to address the psychological concerns of patients. Whilst its popularisation can be seen as a demand-creation factor in itself (as improvements could be seen by others), public demand for other forms of 'helping by talking' had its roots in a variety of other sociocultural and historical factors.

A key demand catalyst for psychotherapy was the need to support military personnel before, during and after the Second World War (WWII). More specifically, the psychological devastation experienced by returned servicemen (and women) created a desperate need for accessible, affordable and practical treatments in the years following WWII (Engel, 2008). As traditional psychoanalysis met few of these criteria, WWII can be seen as a bifurcation point in the history of 'human treatments', with several different forms of psychotherapy developing quickly through this period, along with practitioners who could help meet the needs of traumatised military personnel. It is also during this

period that practitioners (e.g. psychotherapists) began to move their treatments away from medication-based formulations (as was characteristic of psychiatry) and towards understanding the psychological nature of human dysfunctions and identifying personal resources for dealing with them.

The growth of psychotherapy since WWII has clearly shown that 'helping by talking' can do much to help alleviate or manage past traumas and acute psychological dysfunction. Indeed, researchers have long noted its general effectiveness (Smith & Glass, 1977) and the continued documentation of its efficacy has led to formal recognition within prominent professional bodies (Campbell, Norcross, Vasquez & Kaslow, 2013) and improvements in public attitudes towards mental illness and support seeking (Schomerus et al., 2012).

The early success of psychotherapy also opened up possibilities for using similar approaches in situations where one's psychological equilibrium is (moderately) impacted by adverse life events. In these cases, which many now associate with 'counselling', it is the desire to cope with challenging situations that primarily motivates clients, with less emphasis placed on exploring psychological root causes or finding cures. The more pragmatic, e.g. solution-focused, orientation of counselling opened up possibilities for utilising 'helping by talking' beyond traditional clinical settings, with counselling services now provided for dealing with issues related to managing general health, drug and alcohol use, career decision-making, workplace challenges, financial affairs, grief reactions, and/ or relationship dislocations amongst others. In demand–supply terms, the emergence of counselling (and counsellors) can be seen as creating a supply of practitioners capable of meeting a demand that might best be described as 'latent' (insofar as it relates to more ubiquitous human concerns). Not surprisingly, in the second half of the 20th century an independent professional status for counselling was established in many countries around the

world, which helped to distinguish it from psychotherapy and permit a reliable supply of good quality support to those trying to cope with various challenges of life (Corey, 2009; Dryden, 2008; Nelson-Jones, 2010).

We consider the emergence of coaching to be the next step in this trajectory. That is, as individuals recognised that the 'helping by talking' approach need not be limited to healing dysfunction or coping with challenges (as with psychotherapy and counselling), the utility of using such methods for facilitating human growth and development seemed obvious. Indeed, as illustrated by Spence (2007), some of the foundations of coaching can be detected in the activities of the human potential movement (around half a century ago) and its diverse collection of practitioners that sought to help individuals, groups and organisations to become more high functioning and successful. In large part because of its potential to enhance organisational and workplace performance (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), coaching appeared to 'boom' (Naughton, 2002) around the turn of the 21st century.

However, as was noted by many at the time (e.g. Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001), it was uncertain if coaching would become 'more than the last management or life style fad' (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004, p.12). Notably, almost two decades on, the steady development of the coaching literature could lead one to conclude that coaching is now more than a fad and has matured to a point where it might be legitimately deemed to be an emerging profession. Whatever its status, personal and organisational interest in coaching appears to have remained consistently high, with sponsorship of coaching within private and public-sector organisations continuing to drive demand and, by extension, its supply.

We undertook the job of producing this Handbook because we believe that a new profession of coaching is emerging, one that will be supported by the work presented in the following pages. Of course, as clearly shown in the discussion of psychotherapy, counselling and coaching presented above,

humanity's needs continue to develop and diversify over time. With the changing and complex conditions of life it is expected that the needs of individuals and organisations will also change and become more complex. This makes things challenging for practitioners as they seek to internally and externally adapt to the demands they encounter. To make matters worse, substantial bodies of knowledge are being generated about many aspects of human experience, including the requirements for satisfying human needs, stimulating personal and professional growth and how they can all be influenced by meaning-making processes at individual and collective levels. Naturally such knowledge requires significant time to explore and process, with practitioners challenged to gather the skills and experience needed to integrate such learning within their service offerings.

Fortunately for coaching, the evidence shows that public acceptance of professional services is growing (e.g. Schomerus et al., 2012), in lieu of attempts to cope without support. To return to the opening point, this may merely reflect the fundamental importance of supportive social networks for human beings. Even so, the demand for coaching services may continue to be strong for a very long time to come, albeit perhaps within more individualistic, industrialised societies where traditional social structures are less evident. Whatever the case, the ability of practitioners to deliver valued services will rest upon the existence of a rich and textured knowledge base that can provide good and relevant guidance for practitioners. Our hope for this Handbook is that it will stimulate the conceptual discussions, theoretical debates, research questions and empirical work needed to create just such a knowledge base.

OVERVIEW OF CURRENT DEBATES

In reviewing the chapters in this Handbook, we were able to identify a number of debates and contentious issues that seem to concern researchers, educators and academics in the field. These include questions such as:

- Can coaching be defined? Given that it draws from a wide range of knowledge bases and is applied across multiple contexts, is it possible to precisely define what coaching is, even if only for research purposes?
- How are power and value differentials best to be handled in coaching? Given the recognition that coaches often work within contexts that are 'messy' (due to, for instance, cross-cultural factors), is it possible for coaching to be practised value-free? Relatedly, can coaching research be conducted value-free?
- How much additional effort is needed to demonstrate that coaching 'works'? How will we know? Using what evidence? What kind of research is most important for the future of the discipline?
- What constitutes an appropriate approach to goal setting and outcome achievement in coaching? Based on recent additions to the coaching literature (David, Clutterbuck, & Megginson, 2013) and our observations in the field, there seems to be widespread dissatisfaction with traditional approaches to goal setting (e.g. SMART goals) and their suitability to the systemic realities of coaching clients. Indeed, questions are now being asked about the extent to which coaching can be conducted 'goal-free'.
- What are the boundaries of coaching? Whilst coaching scholars and practitioners have long demarcated coaching from other forms of assistance (most notably counselling and psychotherapy), recent applications of coaching are raising questions about whether these boundaries are absolute or arbitrary.

Whilst each debate is substantial and worthy of considerable attention, we will limit ourselves to a brief discussion of the definitional debate that continues to surround coaching (the first of the debates noted above). In doing so, we hope to prime readers for the work that follows, thus preparing the ground for a rich exploration of the field. Of course, it should be noted that the above list is by no means exhaustive and that other debates and contestable issues are to be found in the following chapters.

Defining Coaching

Nearly every text published on coaching begins with an attempt to define the concept and its practice. This is reasonable given that it provides readers (usually practitioners) with an early indication of the author's viewpoint on the fundamental question: What is coaching? Needless to say, these positions differ significantly and, as a result, the definitions influence how the purpose, target market and core processes of coaching are articulated. This is not surprising considering its diverse origins and multidisciplinary nature. However, a number of authors argue that arriving at a common definition of coaching is important if the image of professionalism is to be presented (e.g. Sherman & Freas, 2004).

It should be noted that this book is not primarily focused on advancing the professionalisation of coaching. Rather, its primary aim is to stimulate development of the knowledge base for coaching, thereby making a contribution to further establishing coaching as an applied discipline. As such, this Handbook requires no unified definition of coaching, irrespective of how desirable that might be in principle. Free of the usual preoccupation with defining coaching, the Handbook is able to present an open inquiry into the nature of coaching, along with an examination of whether, and to what extent, such a unified definition might be possible.

Our discussion of this particular debate is organised around the following questions:

1   Is a unified definition of coaching necessary?
2   Why is coaching difficult to define?
3   Is it possible to define coaching using empirical means?
4   What are the implications of not achieving a unified definition?

Question 1: Is a unified definition of coaching necessary?

A number of arguments have been made in relation to the achievement of a unified definition of coaching. Often these are expressed in terms of eliminating problems that stem from its absence. For example, it is quite common to hear concerns about coaching lacking an identity, that it merely blends different approaches and uses theory eclectically, which creates uncertainty, unnecessary mystique and leads to the denigration of coaching as atheoretical (Peltier, 2009; Ellinger, Hamlin & Beattie, 2008). The identity argument is sometimes also associated with being underdeveloped empirically, which makes it difficult to judge the value of coaching (Robson, 2011). Furthermore, an extension of these arguments might be that the absence of a clear definition makes research findings less transferable and, ultimately, less impactful.

Other arguments in favour of a unified definition include the contention that establishing clear boundaries with other disciplines permits more effective training for coaches and clearer guidelines for practice. For others the argument is couched in terms of the need for standards, with the adherence to specific criteria seen as critical for self-regulation within an unregulated industry (Lane, Stelter & Stout-Rostron, 2014). The counter-argument to this is that the establishment of coaching as a discrete area of practice would be problematic and unnecessarily restrictive (Cavanagh, 2009), as the commonalities with counselling and other related professions enrich the practice of coaching.

Question 2: Why is coaching difficult to define?

The starting point for addressing this question is considering what a good definition of practice would entail. According to Bachkirova and Kauffman (2009), two criteria are particularly important for a definition of practice: *universality* and *uniqueness*. The criterion of universality includes an indication of the elements (or features) that are common to all the various types, genres and approaches to coaching. In contrast, the criterion of uniqueness would identify those elements of coaching that would clearly differentiate it from

other forms of professional assistance (such as training or counselling). When Bachkirova & Kauffman (2009) applied these criteria to various attempts to define coaching as a professional practice, four types of definition were identified. These included definition focused on purpose (i.e. what coaching is for); process (what coaching involves); context (where it is conducted), and clientele (what population(s) it serves). They concluded that none of the definitions identified could satisfy the universality and uniqueness criteria, as the conceptualisations of coaching under study varied too substantially in terms of coaching types and genres (Bachkirova and Kauffman, 2009).

Theoretical incompatibilities are another factor that may have made precise definitions of coaching hard to come by. As mentioned earlier, some authors have argued for the need to recognise and appreciate the flexibility of coaching rather than aim for 'clear-cut' definitions (e.g. Cavanagh, 2009). This accords with the growing emphasis on the utility of complexity theories in coaching and construal of coaching engagements as complex adaptive systems (Stacey, 2003, 2012; Cavanagh & Lane, 2012; Bachkirova & Lawton Smith, 2015). The difficulty with this construal is that it does not easily marry with the desire to construct a precise definition of coaching. Another source of resistance to universality can be found in the emergence of more pragmatic, postmodern perspectives on coaching. Not only do these perspectives provide tacit advocacy for the existence of diversity in coaching, and recognise the influence of complexity and context, they also provide a substantial critique of the desire to apply fixed rules and regulations to the coaching industry (Garvey, 2011; Western, 2012; Bachkirova and Lawton Smith, 2015).

Question 3: Is it possible to define coaching using empirical means?

One way to approach the task of clarifying a definition of coaching is via the use of scientific methods. In contrast to the traditional approach of reviewing and analysing relevant literature, with the aim of formulating a plausible descriptive statement, the use of empirical means is more complicated, requiring the articulation of a research question, the development of a research design, the collection of data and its subsequent analysis. Within the coaching literature, a precedent for this approach has been provided by Bachkirova, Sibley and Myers (2015). In their study, a specifically designed instrument was used to explore the process aspect of the four criteria outlined earlier. Forty-one coaches from different coaching orientations were asked to describe an imagined coaching session using an instrument based on Q methodology. The findings revealed the existence of a shared perspective in the way that coaching sessions are described, a consensus that was achieved despite the diversity that existed within the sample. As such, a relatively uniform definition of coaching may at least be possible, something that future researchers may wish to explore using other empirical methods such as Delphi methods or grounded theory.

Question 4: What are the implications of not achieving a unified definition?

The implications of not achieving a shared definition of coaching would seem to vary for different stakeholders. For example, current research has revealed that experienced coaching practitioners are aware of the complexity of their field and relatively pragmatic in the way they deal with definitional issues and boundaries with other disciplines (Maxwell, 2009; Baker, 2015). As such, the absence of a unified definition is of less concern to them. For novice coaches, however, this absence is more problematic, as they may struggle to position themselves within an uncertain professional domain. Whilst the unresolved nature of this issue is generally easily accommodated within postgraduate coaching programmes, short-course programmes are likely to find it more unsettling

(as their preparation of coaches is more compressed) and is likely to be overlooked through the adoption of a well-cited definition that is easily found in the literature.

Another stakeholder group likely to be troubled by the absence of a widely accepted definition of coaching is potential consumers who lack an experience of being coached. These people will tend to be confused about what coaching is (until they experienced it) and are unlikely to be interested in the nuances of the issue. In the case of organisational consumers, many are developing a more sophisticated understanding of the field (and tend to articulate this through the creation of coaching policies, practitioner panels, etc.) and generally seem to find ways of resolving definitional problems through these efforts. However, the lack of clear definitions may well diminish the field in the eyes of members of other professions and so there seem to be good reasons to continuing exploring this basic issue.

A final concern relates to potential obstacles for developing the knowledge base of coaching. Until a reasonable way of conceptualising coaching is proposed, the onus will continue to fall upon researchers to provide clear descriptions of the coaching interventions they study, in order for their findings to be comparable to others. Whilst this transparency would contribute to the pragmatic intention of building on something that is sufficiently explicit, it would also help to create a rich multidimensional picture of the way coaching is conceived and practised in the real world.

OVERVIEW OF THE SECTIONS

Part 1: Positioning Coaching as a Discipline

The aim of this opening section is to position coaching as a developing discipline of knowledge amongst other disciplines: both applied and pure. As such, it could be said that this section focuses on coaching as externally facing rather than on the intricacies of the field. There are at least two reasons for coaching to be externally facing. First, it attracts scholarly work that is required to secure recognition of coaching as a discipline in its own right. Second, it keeps the field connected to bodies of knowledge that are both relevant and critical to high quality practice and research. In some chapters of this section the authors discuss the coaching discipline with a view to negotiating the boundaries with other fields, whilst other chapters focus on how coaching discipline is profoundly influenced by other fields of knowledge.

Being external facing also implies appreciation of how coaching is affected by wider discourses in societies as well as social, political and environmental issues. For example, as explained in Chapter 3, whilst the 'psychological expert' and 'managerial coaching' discourses both influence the practice of coaching, the differing assumptions inherent to both create a number of tensions and can be a source of incoherence and confusion. It is also important to note here that chapters in this section demonstrate how coaching can actively contribute to some broad societal concerns and wider areas of inquiry into human nature and practice.

Seen through the lens of the external representation of the coaching discipline in this section, it is possible to recognise the progress being made by coaching scholars in conceptualising the relationship of coaching with other fields and in claiming its place amongst other applied disciplines. At the same time it is possible to identify a number of debates that are of importance to establishing coaching as a field of knowledge. In the brief chapter descriptions that follow, some of these debates are identified and indications are provided about how these debates are addressed by various authors.

The intent to build and expand the knowledge base of coaching requires consideration

of questions of the most generic nature, such as 'what is knowledge?' and 'what constitutes valid knowledge?' As such questions reveal significant variations in epistemological positions, their consideration will inevitably give rise to disagreements and tensions. For example, some debates are direct extensions of the 'paradigms war' evident in other disciplines that, as described in Chapter 2 by *Tatiana Bachkirova*, typically divides academic communities into either modernist or postmodernist positions. Although this chapter presents pragmatism as a 'pacifying', alternative perspective, the main message advocates for an appreciation of diversity in research and theory building. It should be noted that this important debate also emerges in other chapters throughout the book and, when it does, the philosophical positions of the authors should be clear to see.

In Chapter 3, *Simon Western* highlights a similar debate about the incompatibility of various approaches to coaching as a function of differences that exist in the professional discourses that underpin them. The focus of the chapter is to illuminate how wider cultural and societal discourses are translated into distinct approaches to coaching, which creates an incoherence in the way that coaching is presented to the wider world, conducted in practice and assessed for its value. Whilst the author defends an attempt to integrate these discourses into a unified model, the real value of the chapter resides in illuminating an important debate on coaching as a discipline.

Coaching as an 'evidence-based practice' is the focus of Chapter 4 by *Anthony Grant*. One of the field's longest standing debates, this chapter focuses on how coaching is presented to a largely modernist external world, with the primary aim to enhance the reputation of the growing discipline. However, the issue of what constitutes 'evidence' remains a subject of much debate, particularly through the lens of competing epistemological attitudes. It is notable that Grant, one of the most recognised advocates of

evidence-based coaching, has taken a more inclusive approach to understanding evidence, including highlighting the value of qualitative research, alongside the contribution that can be provided by traditional outcome studies.

Another of the long-standing debates in coaching has concerned the establishment of boundaries between the related disciplines of counselling and psychotherapy. In Chapter 5 *Trevor Crowe* notes that although various stakeholders of coaching seem to require the explicit delineation of coaching from psychotherapy, some specific differentiations (e.g. according to population of users) are largely illusory. He examines the increasing overlap of their characteristics, aims and practices and argues for ways to operationalise inter-professionalism informed by active and ongoing needs assessment and client feedback.

In Chapters 6 and 7 the focus changes to an exploration of the interplay between the emerging discipline of coaching and two established fields of knowledge: theories of learning and theories of adult development. In Chapter 6, *John Bennett* and *Francine Campone* seek to demonstrate a correspondence between the principles of coaching and the tenets of the main theories of learning. They make a case for the inseparability of coaching from this field of knowledge, which is important as it allows coaching to claim a solid theoretical foundation. In Chapter 7, *Paul Lawrence* begins with a similar intention (this time related to theories of adult development), and also provides an overview of the debates surrounding this area of knowledge. Whilst acknowledging the growing popularity of these theories, the author highlights some concerns about this body of knowledge and challenges readers to examine the state of knowledge about coaching in light of the implications that follow from adult development theories.

The last three chapters in this section explore the potential for coaching to positively impact areas of practice such as leadership development and social change. These

chapters demonstrate how the coaching literature already contributes to the above disciplines and identify where there are opportunities to advance the synergy. For example, in Chapter 8, *Konstantin Korotov* argues that not only do the disciplines of leadership development and coaching share similar concerns (and inevitable limitations), they also share an opportunity for mutual enrichment.

In Chapter 9 *David Drake* and *James Pritchard* look at coaching through the lens of organisation development. In so doing, they make the case for coaching as a systemic and scalable tool for addressing issues such as learning and development, culture and change in organisations. They argue that coaching is now an essential element in organisation development as an applied field of knowledge. As such, scholars and practitioners in the two disciplines are helping to drive the next generation of scholarship across both disciplines. They close with a look at integrative development theory as an example of the next stage in the evolution of efforts to understand how organisations learn and develop and the role of coaching in the process.

Finally, in Chapter 10, *Hany Shoukry* presents a compelling argument for extending the use of coaching for individual and organisation development to address the issues of importance to societies as a whole. He describes how coaching can contribute to social change when it does not shy away from the needs of the marginalised and oppressed in the world and those who care about more humanised workplaces, essential rights and the environment. In order to coach in this way, practitioners may need to become more socially aware and (rather than adopting a neutral position) be more explicit about where they stand in respect to social issues. Whilst the chapter raises questions that not all in the coaching industry will welcome, they are questions that coaching scholars and researchers should engage if coaching is to become a potent agent of societal level change.

Part 2: Coaching as a Process

A variety of factors influence what occurs in coaching conversations and how those conversations unfold. Taken together these factors represent a set of alternative lenses through which to understand what happens in the coaching relationship, creating backdrops that can help to make sense of the work. This section assembles some of the more prominent process-related themes currently reflected in the coaching literature. These include some well-established topics such as working with the coaching relationship, the role of emotions in coaching, and working with the narratives of the client (and the coach), along with emerging topics, such as working with diversity in coaching, understanding physicality, and recent questioning of the role of goals in coaching.

In the process of presenting these chapters, some debates have been raised that are worthy of mention. One such debate (addressed in Chapter 12 concerns the role of goal-setting in coaching and the extent to which goal-setting is an essential part of the process, or more provocatively, whether it is possible to work 'goal-free' with clients. Another debate (addressed in Chapter 17 concerns the use of feedback in coaching and the role that coaches can or should play. Whilst coaches are often used as 'objective' messengers of feedback, such a role can create a sense of dissonance for coaches as their participation in an evaluative, judgemental process may clash with their humanistic intentions to be non-directive and client-centred.

Given the collaborative and interpersonal nature of coaching, the section commences (appropriately) with an examination of the coaching relationship. In Chapter 11, *Erik de Haan* and *Judie Gannon* review key components of the coaching relationship, along with a summary of past research that has attempted to better understand its essence in workplace, sports and executive contexts. This discussion also focuses on recent developments in attempts to understand the extent

to which the historical term 'working alliance' is synonymous with the notion of the coaching relationship.

One of the most identifiable aspects of coaching – goal setting and goal striving – is addressed in Chapter 12. In this chapter, *David Clutterbuck* and *Gordon Spence* begin by acknowledging the existence of an extensive literature on goals, whilst also noting that coaching practitioners and scholars have generally failed to take full advantage of the richness of this literature. More specifically, they challenge the orthodoxy of SMART goal setting in coaching by noting that specific, concrete goals are often an inappropriate response to the challenges of dynamic, complex environments where personal control and predictability are low.

In Chapter 13 *Sunny Stout-Rostron* tackles the multi-faceted topic of working with diversity in coaching. After noting the centrality of 'inclusion' to current perspectives on diversity management, the author illustrates the challenges associated with being inclusive as a consequence of interpersonal variations in gender, race, ethnicity, culture, personality and a variety of other factors (e.g. sexual orientation). As such, there is much for coaches to understand on this topic, yet very little coaching-specific research has been published to date. Nonetheless, some practice-oriented models are identified and discussed, with recommendations made for the benefit of future researchers.

In Chapter 14, *Peter Jackson* presents a compelling account of the little discussed topic of physicality in coaching. In order to extend the topic beyond a simple understanding of physicality (as mere improvements in one's physical status), a broad and inclusive definition is presented. It encompasses the variety of ways that coaches may notice their own (or their client's) physiological state and use it for the benefit of the coaching process and/or outcome. By being so inclusive, the author effectively embraces a wide variety of perspectives and embodied practices. These perspectives – which include somatic,

integral, existential, behavioural, cognitive-emotional and physical environmental – are organised into an integrative framework designed to act as a reference point for the development of practice and future research (with possible questions presented).

In Chapter 15 *Elaine Cox* provides an account of what is meant by 'working with emotions' in coaching by drawing on sociological, philosophical and psychological theories and emerging research on concepts such as emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, empathy, and emotional labour. Whilst these bodies of work constitute a rich and textured knowledge base, the author notes that relatively little work has been reported on the role of emotions in coaching and, as a stimulus for future research, the chapter concludes with the presentation of an emotional climate inventory for coaching.

In Chapter 16 *David Drake* describes how the telling of stories and the construction of narratives are a natural process that people use to make sense of themselves and the surrounding world. He argues that what emerged from the narrative turn in the social sciences has much to offer coaching practice. Specifically, literary theory, the humanities and psychology offer valuable insights about the structural, socio-cultural and developmental aspects of people's narratives and identities. As such, working with narratives in coaching offers an approach that bridges the personal and the social. He outlines the importance in coaching of working with the client as narrator, utilising the narration process as a resource for change. The author concludes with an integrative process for working with narratives in coaching, which also offers potential for stimulating further research in this area.

In the final chapter of this section *Alison Maxwell* explores literature related to the use of feedback within coaching. In a wide-ranging analysis, it is argued that coaching practice has proceeded with little recognition of feedback theory and research and, as a result, the practice-based literature often lacks

coherence. For example, it is pointed out that whilst it is common for coaches to act as conduits for 'external' feedback (e.g. 360-degree feedback), this function can subtly but powerfully undermine the non-directive, non-judgemental stance that many coaches wish to maintain with their clients. As such, the author challenges coaches to find their own stance towards feedback by presenting a review of different types of feedback, along with a range of theoretical perspectives on how coaches can approach this aspect of their work and inform future research.

Part 3: Common Issues in Coaching

In a natural extension of the process-oriented chapters of the previous section, Part 3 focuses on six topics that are getting an increasing amount of attention in the coaching literature. These include chapters on values, resilience, strengths, mindfulness, post-traumatic growth and career transitions. The distinctive characteristic of these topics is not that they are intrinsic to all coaching engagements, but that they often become a focus of coaching conversations by choice of one or both parties. A possible explanation for this is that the topics draw increasing attention because they represent current discourses in societies and coaching communities that emphasise a positive orientation to self and personal growth. The influence of these discourses is evident in the coaching literature and in professional development programmes.

One of the noteworthy aspects of this collection of topics is that they are of equal relevance and importance to coaches as they are to coaching clients. For example, whilst many authors have noted that the exploration and clarification of *values* in coaching is critical if one is to be an authentic leader, it seems equally important for coaches if they are to practise in an authentic way. Similarly, many consider a client's capacity for *mindfulness* to

be vital to effective self-regulation and goal attainment, yet a coach will struggle to be helpful if they cannot dispassionately notice a developing desire to be liked by their client or fail to detect their avoidance of a difficult issue. As such, these topics can be thought of as applied to two sides of the same coin. Where practical suggestions are offered or future research directions are proposed, they will often carry potential benefits for both parties. This makes these chapters of considerable potential benefit and, it is hoped, they will provide a catalyst for furthering work in each of these areas.

In Chapter 18 *Reinhard Stelter* argues that values are a central issue in coaching because they provide clients with an implicit foundation for action and assist in navigating the hypercomplexity of modern life. Drawing on a rich body of values-based scholarship, the author presents coaching as the art of *lingering*, the practice of which allows values to naturally emerge from a deeply reflective, collaborative dialogue. The chapter also explores some interesting questions, such as whether values reside as latent resources within people or are socially co-created, and concludes with three value-reflecting coaching approaches (i.e. existential, protrepic and third-generation), along with their various implications for future research.

In Chapter 19, *Carmelina Lawton-Smith* notes that coaching is ideal for cultivating resilience because it can help individuals work with their assets (e.g. problem solving skills) and access social support (e.g the coach) as well as encourage a more nuanced analysis of and sense-making about the system in which the client is operating. Whilst she notes that recent research suggests that coaching does enhance resilience, it is also noted that considerable fragmentation exists within this literature due to the variety of different conceptual lenses that are used to understand resilience (including perspectives derived from cognitive psychology, mindfulness, and narrative theory). As such, future researchers are encouraged to seek greater

conceptual clarity and integration across perspectives, along with empirical testing of models using cross-sectional and longitudinal designs.

In Chapter 20 *Alison Zarecky* and *Sophie Francis* provide a comprehensive overview of the strengths literature as it pertains to coaching. After defining the construct, acknowledging a growing body of empirical work and briefly considering relevant theories, the authors move on to a critique of literature focused on the identification, use, development and integration of strengths (including rare discussions of weaknesses and shadow sides). The chapter concludes with brief descriptions of strengths work within a variety of coaching contexts (e.g. executive coaching, mental health), along with an array of helpful suggestions for strengthening empirical work in the area.

In Chapter 21, *Travis Kemp* provides a stimulating analysis and discussion of mindfulness and coaching. After acknowledging the historical significance of mindfulness and its deep practical importance, the author notes that coaching and mindfulness share a symbiotic connection, oriented as they are towards the creation of healthy and flourishing lives. Whilst noting obvious potential for integration, the author also notes that traditional perspectives on coaching seem to constrain such integration because ownership of the coaching agenda is generally reserved for the coachee, whereas the sustained cultivation of mindfulness seems to require a movement towards 'teaching' and 'education'. As such, the chapter outlines an *anthrogogical* approach to mindfulness and coaching, which provides a flexible approach to learning and permits teaching to be a legitimate component of coaching. Recommendations for future research are based on testing for the effects of an anthrogogical approach to coaching and mindfulness.

In Chapter 22, *Gordon Spence* and *Stephen Joseph* acknowledge the human capacity to find benefit in profoundly challenging circumstances or, stated differently, experience post-traumatic growth (PTG). After delineating different responses to traumatic experience, the authors introduce the concept of PTG and review a variety of literatures to ascertain the extent to which coaching might be an appropriate response to the devastations of life. Despite the existence of little published work in the area, enough relevant research was found to make a case for such a response – provided that the coaching response cultivates a strong sense of hope, focuses on the satisfaction of basic psychological needs and is oriented towards the construction of new personal narratives (that incorporate past traumatic events). The chapter concludes with numerous suggestions for future research.

In Chapter 23 *Polly Parker* considers literature related to coaching for role transitions and career change. This is done against the backdrop of highly volatile, complex contemporary employment markets, where role transitions and career changes can occur quickly and unexpectedly, requiring career actors to be increasingly agile and resilient. The author takes readers on a guided tour of change and transition theories and notes that, while many have relevance to coaching, very little empirical work has been conducted to establish their utility within coaching contexts. Recognising the psychological challenges associated with career transitions, the final sections of the chapter recognise the potential that coaching has to facilitate adult cognitive development, concluding with a call to develop more coaching-specific theories of career change and transition.

Part 4: Coaching in Contexts

Much of the emphasis in coaching and coaching research is on what transpires in and through coaching sessions. Perhaps to distance itself from psychotherapy's focus on understanding the development history of individuals, and organisational development's focus on the future to which people

will return, coaching has tended to focus on the individual's development and achievement in the process itself. One of the aims of this section is to advocate for the importance of context in conceptualising and studying coaching. It reflects an increased appreciation of the role that contextual factors play in shaping people's narratives, behaviours and outcomes. It also highlights the need to better understand the different ways that coaching is delivered, as determined by context. Without an appreciation of context, individuals who experience personal change through a coaching process may become dissatisfied if it is not matched by congruent changes in their environment.

The chapters in this section set the stage for a much richer understanding of the role of context for both coaches and coachees. In particular, they raise four important issues. First, they consistently advocate for more definitional clarity of coaching and the development of a taxonomy of coaching that encompasses its different contextual applications. Second, they highlight the need to augment the personal focus in coaching with greater attention given to relational and contextual factors, especially since the coaching literature tends to underestimate the role of context in human learning and development. Third, many of the chapters express concern that traditional ways of conceptualising evidence do not match the nature of coaching and the realities of many contexts in which it is offered. Finally, many of the chapters highlight the importance of developing ways to address the systemic pressures that affect the people they coach. For example, Chapter 29 raises the issue of provider burnout within healthcare. While coaching can be used to modify a range of personal factors (e.g. increase resilience, narrative reframing, new approaches to work), the reality is that burnout is also influenced by a variety of contextual and systemic factors. The complexity and interconnectedness of our world will only make these issues more important in the future. The chapters in this section not only articulate the current landscape for coaching in their context, but they also provide some important new markers to chart a course for the road ahead.

In Chapter 24, *Christian van Nieuwerburgh* introduces us to the need for interculturally-sensitive coaching. He starts by defining culture and focuses on the role of culture in the interplay *between* coaches and coachees. He outlines two classic sets of dimensions for differentiating between cultures and explores more broadly the implications of defining people as 'the Other' and cultures in terms of their differences. He then goes on to advocate for cultural proficiency and intercultural sensitivity as two critical areas of development for coaches and the practice of coaching. He closes with some best practices and challenges for coaches in working this way and, in so doing, provides a useful link between theory and practice.

In Chapter 25, *Geoffrey Abbott* and *Raija Salomaa* address cross-cultural coaching as an emerging practice. They begin by looking at the nature of coaching, particularly its Eastern and Western influences, and the demands on coaches and leaders in working in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. They offer current survey instruments, models and approaches for coaching across cultures. In so doing, they advocate for a holistic approach that highlights the broader cultural influences that are in play in a given situation, more than the details of the specific cultures that are involved. They close with various examples of studies on cultural issues in coaching, many of which offer insights about how it is done well.

In Chapter 26, *Andrea Ellinger*, *Rona Beattie* and *Robert Hamlin* provide an overview of the history and use of coaching in a Human Resource Development (HRD) context. They note that both HRD and coaching have wrestled with issues related to definitional boundaries both within themselves and in relation to one another. They outline different ways in which coaching can be deployed internally and externally within organisations

and consider key challenges for each. This represents a contribution to the broader dialogue about what coaching means and how it can be best applied in all of its forms. They note that this is increasingly important for organisations, as coaching is increasingly incorporated within HRD as a capability and a practice. Recommendations for future research focus on the use of coaching in action learning and on requirements for (and drawbacks) of managerial coaching.

In Chapter 27, *Sean O'Connor* and *Michael Cavanagh* offer a solid introduction to groups and teams as a context for coaching. Early on they pose a critical yet under-examined question: Where does change take place in coaching? In other words, what is the fundamental unit of analysis that is relevant to group coaching? In seeking to address this question, the authors identify three sets of relationships across three levels of systems, each of which affects both the process and the outcomes of coaching with groups and teams. In so doing, they propose that individual performance is typically more a function of team dynamics than the other way around. This not only affects how coaching is conducted in this context, but it also has broader implications for how we conceptualise and address people's issues in any coaching context. They offer a good overview of the current research on group and team coaching and the issues faced by leaders who engage in coaching.

In Chapter 28, *Christian van Nieuwerburgh* and *Margaret Barr* outline the critical issues related to coaching in educational contexts. They too acknowledge the challenges posed by the lack of definitional clarity for coaching. One way they address this issue is by providing a chart of the four primary ways in which coaching occurs in education (i.e. leaders, teachers, parents and community, and children and youth). They describe how coaching is typically conducted within each area and how these applications might collectively inform coaching more broadly. They close with a section on ways to further embed

coaching in education and offer a global framework as a resource to do so. This chapter, like the one that follows, offers important glimpses into how coaching can be used to advance institutions, those who work in them and those who are served by them.

In Chapter 29, *Ruth Wolever*, *Margaret Moore* and *Meg Jordan* provide a helpful introduction to the current state of coaching in health care and its future opportunities. A notable contribution of this chapter is that it presents a chart of a vast field, something that will be an invaluable guide for those working and researching in this area. Like Chapter 30, the authors identify three primary applications of coaching: leaders, providers and patients (also known as the Triple Aim). They address the challenges health care faces as it undergoes fundamental, structural shifts – and the implications for coaching as an increasingly important resource. They also identify challenges in determining how qualification decisions are made within health care (and by whom), and what these decisions entitle coaches to do. They close by citing samples of the current research in the area, particularly in respect to health behaviour change, and outline a possible agenda for future research.

In Chapter 30, *Yossi Ives* makes the case for coaching in relationships as a distinct genre. In so doing, he outlines the key issues related to working with singles, couples and parents in coaching. He offers initial thoughts on how to define coaching in relationships, including positioning it as a blend of personal development activity, goal focused work and therapeutic concerns. The author also joins with others in highlighting the relational nature of both coaching and development and the need for greater focus on this perspective to counteract a lingering bias in coaching toward individualist frames. Whilst some practice-based models of coaching in relationships are presented, there was little empirical work to review as the genre is new within coaching. Finally, some useful reflections are offered on the similarities and differences between

psychotherapy and coaching as strategies for addressing relational issues and enhancing relational capabilities.

Part 5: Researching Coaching

Although all chapters in this volume engage with relevant research in exploring specific themes and aspects of coaching, there are issues that are pertinent to all researchers of coaching. For example, for anyone engaged in researching the effectiveness of coaching the issue of coaching outcomes is central to their inquiry. On the other hand, qualitative researchers are typically interested in coaching processes and in research methodologies appropriate to those types of investigations. There are also areas of coaching that draw heavily on particular research outputs (e.g. neuroscience and psychological assessment) and are important to recognise for the interest they have to many coaching scholars. Therefore, this section of the book discusses issues and methodologies related to the empirical investigation of coaching outcomes and processes. In addition, recent insights have been gathered from contemporary neuroscience and psychological assessment research, as examples of the emerging dialogue between coaching and relevant fields of research.

The section begins with Chapter 31 and a focus on the research of coaching outcomes. It is presented first as an acknowledgement that this type of research was most needed when coaching was attempting to establish itself as a new discipline. It was a response to the belief that the growth of coaching was contingent upon the confirmation of its effectiveness. In this chapter, *Siegfried Greif* highlights a number of issues that exist with coaching outcome research, the most prominent of which is its heterogeneity. Considering that coaching is intangible, complex and co-constructed (with clients), difficulties abound with its evaluation. *Greif* argues that, given these circumstances, it is important to reduce clients' 'informational deficit' when evaluating coaching outcomes and encourage their contribution to the research on coaching effectiveness. This chapter also presents a critique of various research methodologies for outcome studies, along with a set of criteria for evaluating coaching outcomes.

In an extension of the discussion presented in the previous chapter, Chapter 32 moves beyond questions focused on the efficacy of coaching and towards questions more concerned with *how* coaching works (given that coaching outcomes studies seem to suggest that it does). In this chapter *Adrian Myers* starts with a definition of the coaching process and the importance of this focus of inquiry. He draws parallels with the development of process research in psychotherapy, which has made some significant advances of relevance to coaching research. In reviewing recent process research in coaching, the author separates studies into three different categories: hypothesis-testing studies, descriptive studies and theory-building studies. He goes on to suggest that future research into the coaching process could either extend previous work within these categories or develop completely new methodologies. The overarching message of this chapter of relevance to all researchers is the importance of examining their values and beliefs and the role they play in the choices made in the research process.

In Chapter 33, *Angela Passarelli*, *Ellen Van Oosten* and *Mark Eckert* introduce an area of study – neuroscience – that has attracted strong interest from coaching practitioners in recent years. Whilst the availability of (seemingly) relevant findings from a 'hard science' appears attractive to many coaches, very few could claim sufficient understanding and ability to accurately translate such knowledge into coaching practice. In a helpful chapter, the authors provide readers with an overview of the current state of the field and give a fair and balanced representation of what can be realistically claimed from neuroscience at this stage. This overview will

also potentially be helpful for researchers in other generic disciplines who are looking to extend the impact of their empirical studies into applied fields such as coaching.

The section concludes with Chapter 34 and *Almuth McDowall*'s examination of the use of psychological assessment in coaching research and practice. In contrast to the very recent explosion of interest in neuroscience, the use of psychological assessment in coaching practice is as old as coaching itself. Similarly, using psychological instruments in coaching research is also not new. Despite its long history, the use of psychological assessment instruments in coaching is an area that is under researched and their use in research has not been widely examined. The discussion commences with an overview of psychological assessments currently available, moves on to some of the most prevalent debates in the field and then analyses the (surprisingly) limited studies in this area in coaching. The chapter concludes with a number of helpful ideas about advancing coaching research through the use of psychological assessments.

Part 6: Development of Coaches

While there has been a proliferation of programmes to educate and develop coaches over the past two decades, little has been done to assess them or the strategies that are being used. As the field continues to both mature and spread, there seems to be a need to better understand how to develop more mature and masterful professional coaches through university-level programmes or other training providers. There also seems to be a need to better understand how to develop the wide variety of professional and non-professional people who wish to incorporate coaching into their commercial and non-commercial offerings. The challenge, as well articulated in these chapters, is that there is currently no consensus on how best to achieve these aims. In large part this reflects the postprofessional and postmodern nature of work. Even so, the authors in this section make a concerted effort to outline how this area might be advanced by presenting some of the key critiques, important variables and potential frames for future work.

From the work presented in this section, four key issues have emerged. First, coaching is largely an applied discipline that is only just developing its own knowledge base. As such, it draws from other bodies of knowledge to varying degrees, depending on the orientation and/or application. One of the consequences of this is that the potentially conflicting interests of the main stakeholders create a mismatch of intentions (e.g. to practise in an academically informed way, to be commercially viable and to seek to administer coaching as a profession). The challenge ahead will be to find better ways of aligning these areas of interest. Second, addressing this challenge will require new strategies given that the concept of a 'profession' has become increasingly fragile as a result of losing their monopoly on knowledge. Third, the lack of clarity and consensus about what coaching aspires to become can be seen as both a strength (as it has helped the field grow quickly) and a weakness (as it strives to mature). The question then becomes, where can larger questions be raised for the co-development of new pathways forward? Finally, the pace of technological change continues to outstrip our capacity to understand its impact or adapt to its possibilities. As such, it seems that developing more robust and fitting discourses and epistemologies will be essential for addressing these four areas as well as developing and educating coaches.

The section commences with Chapter 35 and a provocative look at the education and training of coaches. In this chapter *David Lane* argues for a reformed approach to education, one that transcends the use of 'competence' (the frame often required by professional coaching bodies) and advocates instead for developing approaches based on capabilities. The author goes on to

discuss the value of four theories that could be better utilised for educating and training coaches: developmental, excellence, practice and professional learning. He also considers how three areas of knowledge (i.e. decision sciences, case formulation, and the scientist-practitioner models) could usefully inform coach education. The chapter concludes with an observation that universities and representative bodies continue to lack alignment on matters related to education and training, which (if it continues) may have serious implications for the future of coaching.

In Chapter 36, *David Gray* provides an update on the current state of supervision in coaching. His discussion focuses on two important questions. First, what is the role of supervision in the education of coaches? Second, what are the essential elements of effective supervision? As these questions are explored, the author draws upon developmental, psychotherapeutic and social role models and attempts to fill a gap in the literature by proposing an integrated, systemic model of coaching supervision. The model is accompanied by a description of how it could be used in various supervision settings and the value of situating supervision in a systemic context (within, between and around coaches and coachees). He also calls more broadly for a research agenda that generates a stronger evidence base for supervision in coaching and suggest specific questions that need to be addressed.

A discursive perspective on the assessment and accreditation of coaches is presented by *Bob Garvey* in Chapter 37, with a particular focus on the challenge posed by the psychological and managerial discourses that, according to the author, shape much of coaching. This perspective is influenced by Aristotelian distinctions drawn between *techne*, *episteme* and *phronesis* as forms of knowledge, with the author arguing that the dominant discourse exhibits a strong bias towards the first two epistemologies. He also suggests there is often a significant mismatch between the discourses used in coaching and

those used by the coaching bodies, leading to dissatisfaction with policies related to accreditation and assessment processes. The use of adult learning theories – specifically those framed as phases, stages and journeys – is also evaluated to augment the standard conceptualisations of, and approach to, assessment and accreditation. The chapter concludes with an argument for an approach to assessment and accreditation of coaches that is more dynamic, contextual, inclusive and phronetic.

In Chapter 38, *Ioanna Iordanou* and *Patrick Williams* take a historical perspective on developing ethical capabilities in coaches. They observe that because the landscape of ethical standards in coaching is muddled, coaches are left to rely on their own devices regarding the development and maturity of their ethical capabilities. They then go on to explore what that means for practitioners and for the field and what might be done individually and collectively. In so doing they raise the fundamental question of whether a sufficient and unified code of ethics is possible given the pluralistic range of coaches and diverse applications of coaching. As a foundation for these discussions, they trace the development of Western ethics and the ethical frames that have emerged in the process. They use two case studies to illustrate some of the key ethical issues faced by coaches, as well as utilising them as a lens through which to look at the current state of play in coaching. The chapter concludes with the presentation of a framework for making ethical decisions in coaching and developing better ethical capabilities.

Working with new technologies in coaching is the focus of Chapter 39. In this chapter, *Stella Kanatouri* highlights two key technological trends that are affecting coaching: the drive toward more self-directed learning and the presence of more socially-connected learning. The author cites an array of empirical technological research and explains its relevance to coaching. She makes a strong case that coaching practitioners would benefit

from a greater understanding of how different communication media (and supporting tools) potentially affect the coaching intervention from both the client's and coaches' perspective. The chapter also reviews some of the early stage technologies that were purpose-built to enable or support coaching, and highlights what sort of technological innovations might impact coaching in the future. Given the complex and dynamic nature of this area, readers should find the material covered in this chapter to be helpful for informing future decision-making about which technologies to use and for what purpose.

In the final chapter of the section, *Annette Fillery-Travis* and *Ron Collins* provide a thorough historical examination of whether coaching is a discipline, profession or industry (or something else), and how present choices might shape its future status. Similar to the earlier chapters by Lane (Chapter 35) and Garvey (Chapter 37), important points are raised about the larger issues facing coaching and the consequences of choices that the coaching community makes (or does not make) individually and collectively. One of the most interesting propositions they offer is that coaching may not need to keep striving to become a profession, assuming it could ever become one. Instead, the industry may continue to flourish and develop as a service underpinned by a growing discipline. The chapter concludes with some suggestions about possible futures for coaching, including its existence as an independent, eclectic, sub-discipline or new discipline.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Throughout this Introduction we emphasised that the emerging discipline of coaching is characterised by a range of positions, approaches and different visions of its future. There are also differences in the concerns and priorities of academics and researchers on the one hand, and practitioners and professional bodies on the other. We have drawn attention to complex relationship that exists between the needs of the industry at its relatively early stage of development and the academic aspirations to create as solid a foundation as possible. These struggles were noticeable in the process of redrafting a substantial number of chapters in this volume. Despite the explicit academic orientation of this book (concerned with mapping the field and critiquing the knowledge base), many authors seemed to be naturally oriented towards addressing the needs of practitioners, through recommendations for practice, rather than stimulating the creation of knowledge through thoughtful analysis of the literature and recommendations for further research.

Indeed, this practice orientation was so strong in some cases that we had to – with huge regret – recommend alternative outlets for publication (as they did not meet the requirements of this Handbook). Whilst this was, on the one hand, disappointing for the purposes of this volume, on the other hand we were encouraged that the field is blessed to have a good number of impressive thinkers who can also write persuasively about matters related to coaching practice. As a result, we feel reassured about the future of the practice-based coaching literature, as the field appears to be well stocked with thoughtful, capable authors.

Our task as editors was made more challenging by the diversity that exists in regards to the multi-disciplinary nature of the field and the different perspectives taken on what constitutes 'knowledge' and 'evidence' (based on different epistemological standpoints). As such, it seems there is no single authority on what is 'right' or 'wrong' when evaluating coaching knowledge. Had we been able to use an agreed framework to review our contributors' chapters, our task would likely have been more straightforward. However, on many occasions we were glad that our own epistemological attitudes were different from each other, as this permitted a 'fair' treatment of the presented material. What we were in general

agreement about (and tried to communicate to the contributors) is that each chapter needed to present a comprehensive overview of each topic, along with an attempt to integrate different perspectives (where possible), and proposals for advancing knowledge. We hope that the reader will be able to use this Handbook as a clear, comprehensive and reliable guide for navigating this exciting, evolving, and (at times) confusing body of knowledge.

For us this project was both challenging and rewarding in equal measure. It was a privilege to be involved in the development of such a rich and textured volume. We were aiming for the most comprehensive map of the knowledge on coaching, and sought to cover as many themes and perspectives as were practically possible. In doing so, we also hoped that we might create a 'go-to' academic resource for those who become inspired to undertake empirical investigations in any of the topic areas. When considering a composite of the contributions contained in this Handbook, it was tempting to imagine a bright future for the coaching discipline, to make bold predictions and/or generate ideas to influence its future trajectory. However, we have resisted this temptation. In the spirit of coaching, we will leave these exciting opportunities to the reader and to all those who will participate in making this future happen.

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