Obstacles to executive coaching during planned radical organisational change

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Abstract

There is currently limited research on either coaching in organisations or executive coaching in Planned Radical Organisational Change (PROC). The research that does exist on these subjects focuses primarily on whether coaching is considered efficacious, and there has been no research on the obstacles preventing the adoption of executive coaching to assist divisional, functional and central leaders during PROC as part of change implementation programmes. The primary aim of this research was to uncover the reasons why executive coaching is not used in these situations, including whether some senior PROC leaders may block such investment because they are Machiavellian or not change-ready.

The research uses a mixed-method design. Two hundred and sixty-two high-ranking executives were surveyed on their attitude towards executive coaching, their Machiavellianism and their change-readiness. Details about their previous roles in PROC, their rank and current employer were also collected. Nearly half of these leaders were in organisations with more than 10,000 employees and over three-quarters in organisations of more than 1,000. Over three-quarters were chief officers or directors. Hierarchical regression was used to create three models to understand the relationship of these variables with the attitude of senior executives towards coaching. Quantitative analysis informed the next step of the sequential mixed method, and 12 executives were interviewed. These were systematically chosen from the survey respondents, based on their Machiavellianism score and role in PROC. These semi-structured interviews examined the results from the survey analysis and other potential issues relating to the procurement of coaching. Qualitative analysis was used to uncover underlying themes from interview transcripts. The quantitative and qualitative elements were then synthesised.

A key qualitative finding was the belief among senior executives that, although coaching was valuable for an individual, its benefits for the organisation could not be quantified and, thus, any predicted return on investment was not reliable or credible. They found it impossible, therefore, to put forward or approve business cases for significant coaching investment as a routine part of change programmes. Another key finding, in both the quantitative and qualitative results, was that Machiavellianism and low levels of change readiness in PROC leaders are associated with less favourable attitudes towards executive coaching in PROC.

This research adds to the discussion by finding that, although coaching is often considered efficacious by executives, as suggested by previous coaching researchers, there are still significant obstacles to its widespread adoption in PROC. This research contradicted the prevailing view that return on investment is either not relevant to coaching or has been accepted as having been proved sufficiently for those people preparing or approving business cases. It enhances the theoretical knowledge of executive coaching during PROC by producing a diagram of the obstacles to executive coaching procurement in PROC situations.

This research has particular relevance to coaching practice, including to Executive Coaches and HR directors. With an increasing number of organisations restructuring following disruptions caused by technology changes and the recent pandemic, overcoming obstacles, including more coaching in

change programmes and improving the PROC success rate are important to individual companies and the economy. This research had further value due to the involvement of very senior business executives, a population not greatly researched in large sample sizes in the coaching field, due to the difficulties in gaining access on this scale.

1 Introduction

1.1 Research genesis

Imagine the scene: it is autumn 2008 and, in a wood-panelled, top-floor office overlooking the Thames in London, a short meeting between the programme leader and one of his staff members is just ending at the end of a two-year organisational change programme.

Leader: "We've banked $100m of savings. I'll take that."
Staff: "That's great, but I suspect we still left ten to twenty million on the table."
Leader: "How?"
Staff: "Well, we know many of 'our' team members were not entirely on our side. They're stuck between what we want them to do and what their other bosses, the division and country directors want."
Leader: "What would you do next time?"
Staff: "Include in our standard implementation programme a step that offers all of them external one-to-one coaching. If they believed the coaching was confidential, then they might use it. They might handle the pressure and do a better job for themselves but, importantly, also for us. That could have been worth a lot to our numbers."
Leader: "I'm not sure. I think we simply should have used a bigger stick to keep them in line!"

I was that staff member, and this meeting sowed the first seed of an idea that would eventually lead to this thesis. At the time I merely wondered if adding a one-to-one executive coaching programme to the standard steps in our change methodology would help businesses deliver more value but did not feel the need to take any action. However, many years later the chance of undertaking this doctorate provided me with the opportunity to explore whether this thought was worthy of further research.

1.2 Research aim and contribution

The term PROC – planned radical organisational change – (Huy, Corley and Kraatz, 2014) is a useful encapsulation of the top-down, large and dramatic change programmes which it was decided lie within the scope of this research. It has been suggested that coaching could facilitate organisational transformation (Stober, 2008) and that its use would increase (Grant *et al.*, 2010). However, it appears that the growth in its use has been limited and that organisations would benefit from its greater use (Carter, 2015). Although executive coaches believe that coaching in change management could deliver more value than in other situations (Sherpa, 2019), it still appears to be underused in this context (Nanduri, 2017). It is also suggested that this area has not been given sufficient consideration and would benefit from further research (Grant, 2014; Nanduri, 2017).

It is intriguing that the above literature supports the view that executive coaching should be extensively used in organisational change programmes, yet there is no research into why it has not

been implemented as extensively as might have been expected. The more interesting challenge at this point is, if it is such a good idea, then why is executive coaching not already a standard part of the methodology of any change programme? Something or things must be getting in the way. Based on this, the research aim of this study is:

> "To investigate the obstacles reducing the use of executive coaching in PROC implementation programmes"

Focusing on the obstacles may appear a narrow approach, but it is of value as PROC programmes have significant financial impact on organisations. Overcoming these obstacles and enabling executive coaching to be used could potentially, even with only a slight improvement in PROC performance, significantly improve profitability and the likelihood of business survival. The literature suggests an acceptance of the value of coaching and its use in change (Cosstick, 2010; Bickerich, Michel and O'Shea, 2018). If it were standard practice in business, adding a team of executive coaches to the change team would frequently be a step used in the change implementation methodologies used by companies, potentially providing coaching to tens of senior executives for the duration of each PROC. However, the literature does not suggest that this is the case, and this absence suggests the existence of obstacles. Hence, this research focuses on this knowledge gap rather than merely confirming that executive coaching appears to be a good idea.

The anticipated contribution of this research is to enhance our understanding of what makes leaders more or less favourable towards using executive coaching in planned radical organisational changes. The research makes a valuable contribution to organisational coaching literature, an area that is currently under-researched. It also aims to develop professional practice by identifying the perceived obstacles that practitioners must overcome to successfully propose executive coaching programmes in these circumstances.

1.3 Executive coaching, organisational change and types of leaders

The review draws on literature from both organisational coaching and organisational change. The organisational change literature is reviewed to understand large change programmes. This part of the review first investigates theories of organisational change, how different types of change are classified, what change models are available and what management actions could be seen as alternative interventions to executive coaching. The next element examined is to learn how significant these programmes are, how they are structured and how successful they tend to be. At this stage, it is necessary to establish whether previous research suggests a need for a coaching service in PROC implementations: the lack of a business problem to solve would be the ultimate obstacle to the use of coaching. In other words, if they no longer form part of business life, there would be no need to improve them. Similarly, if they had an excellent success rate and were reliably and regularly delivering on time, on budget and with quality, there would be no room to add executive coaching to improve their results.

Having investigated the frequency and success rate of PROC programmes, the literature is examined to understand how these implementation teams are organised and staffed. Such understanding

helps indicate the decision-makers and influencers who decide to use executive coaching in these situations. PROC coaching programmes require considerable investment and are usually authorised and funded differently to individual executive development. Descriptions of typical team structures are also valuable in understanding which PROC roles may particularly benefit from coaching. This knowledge is helpful when considering whether coaching would be a viable solution.

The organisational coaching literature is reviewed to understand the current research on coaching within change programmes and, since this is a limited field, coaching within organisations more broadly. The organisational coaching literature indicated that executive coaching was considered valuable in organisational change. However, it was not entirely clear whether coaching was sufficiently valuable to justify the investment needed to provide coaching to a large team of executives. If the benefit is only moderate, this could be an obstacle. To become standard practice in change programmes, coaching solutions need to be appropriate for the problems facing the executives implementing the change programme. To investigate this, the next stage of the literature review continues to draw on both the PROC literature and coaching literature to explore whether the problems of PROC fit the solutions brought by executive coaching; only limited overlap would present a problem. Of particular note here are the descriptions of the conflicting pressures faced by senior executives leading and implementing change in a strategy created at head office but which they need to execute locally. The three challenges described by Bryant and Stensaker (2011) illustrate vividly how these individuals struggle to implement the change itself while simultaneously keeping head office satisfied and maintaining a good relationship with their anxious employees. Examining this literature about the pressures faced by executives highlighted the significant degree of political and Machiavellian behaviour that could potentially be present. This does suggest that there are sufficiently challenging and high-value problems faced by executives that could be solved by one-to-one coaching. The potential obstacle of insufficient value opportunity, therefore, appears unlikely.

The review then looks for literature suggesting other possible obstacles relating to the personality of PROC leaders, in case the 'bigger stick' approach, as identified in the opening paragraph, was typical. It seems not unreasonable to assume that if the decision-makers at the top are, for whatever reason, not favourably disposed towards coaching, they are less likely to authorise spending tens – or possibly hundreds – of thousands of dollars on it. It appears possible that procurement authorisation for significant coaching investment could be blocked if faced with a particularly Machiavellian leader or influence from executives who do not themselves have a change-ready attitude.

The literature provisionally implied that individuals' attitudes towards coaching may be positive if they have a higher degree of readiness to change (Grant, 2014). It also tentatively suggested that highly Machiavellian leaders may not be favourable towards coaching (Greer, Van Bunderen and Yu, 2017). Overall, the literature review indicated that the potential difficulties may concern the procurement process and attitudes of leaders more than the delivery of the coaching product. Careful research design was needed, as simply asking senior executives whether they are Machiavellian or lack a change-ready attitude was unlikely to yield reliable answers. With this in mind, the final stage of the literature review examined some previously created quantitative scales for consideration in the research design stage.

1.4 Outline of the methodology

The traditional metaphysical paradigm (Guba, Lincoln and Others, 1994; Morgan, 2007) often described in terms of ontology and epistemology felt a poor fit for my worldview. The first part of the methodology chapter explains how a pragmatist paradigm was selected as an acceptably robust and appropriate approach for this research. Having established pragmatism, a design process suggested by Morgan (2007) generates a mixed-method approach with a survey followed up by interviews.

The methodological chapter then continues with an explanation of the quantitative method. The research aim is to investigate the obstacles limiting the use of executive coaching in PROC implementation programmes. The literature had previously shown that one group of obstacles may have been caused by decision-makers or those influencing the decision-makers. It is not unreasonable to assume that those decision-makers who had an unfavourable view of coaching would be less likely to approve its procurement, especially given the large sums potentially involved. The research question related to this group of potential obstacles was formed as

> *How does favourability towards coaching vary according to the PROC executive's Machiavellianism, change readiness, or experience?*

This question is answered by a survey, since asking, "How Machiavellian are you?" in an interview is less than likely to generate a helpful answer. The literature had revealed some suitable scales found to have acceptable accuracy by other researchers (Grant, 2010; Rauthmann, 2013; Vakola, 2014). Favourability to coaching was planned as the dependant variable, the aim being to model how this changes as the Machiavellianism and change readiness of executives varies. The 'experience' referred to in the question included other measurable features about the executive that might correlate with lower favourability to coaching, including seniority, age, size of organisation, number affected by PROC, experience of coaching, and whether the executive had led a PROC implementation.

This research is relatively unusual because the participants are very senior individuals in large organisations with a declared interest in change. The methodology explains how such a group was recruited. Most have 'director', 'chief' or 'vice president' in their job title and represent companies with more than ten thousand employees. It was important to include senior decision-makers and influencers, as the literature on PROC team structure indicated that these are the people who make the decisions. Individuals who work as external advisors, such as management consultants or coaches, were not recruited, as the research focuses on the views of corporate executives, not consultants or coaches who may bring a sales agenda or other bias.

The literature suggested that any obstacles were less likely to be due to a view that coaching is a poor solution or to an absence of problems to solve. However, this group of obstacles cannot be ruled out at this stage. With this in mind, a mixed methodology approach was chosen in the iterative design stage, enabling interviews to be conducted to investigate obstacles missed in the quantitative analysis. The second research question, to cover this potential group of obstacles, is formulated as:

What do executives think prevents organisations from hiring a team of executive coaches as a standard step in PROC implementations?

The Explanatory Sequential Design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) was chosen to investigate the two questions and used the results from the quantitative phase to inform who should be interviewed. The online survey captured respondents' answers as well as their contact details if they volunteered to be interviewed via a final question in the online questionnaire. After the survey analysis was complete, executives were invited for an interview based on their scores on the most important features. Two hundred and sixty-two senior executives responded to the survey, while an exceptionally high number of 124 offered to be interviewed, from which 12 were selected.

1.5 Consideration of personal experience, research question and bias

The research problem must unavoidably be shaped by my personal experience, as the two fields it is located in – executive coaching and planned radical organisational change - are areas in which I have some experience. Concerns about a researcher's personal agenda appear to beg the question 'how much is too much?' or as Galdas (2017, p. 1) puts it "how much of a researcher's values and opinions need to be reflected in qualitative study questions, data collection methods, or findings for it to constitute bias?" However, Galdas suggests this is not the right starting point and suggests the concern should be whether the researcher is transparent and critically self-reflective. To consider this risk of bias and to aid transparency, I want to reflect on this issue now.

Insider research is carried out within an organisation or a community where the researcher is a member (Fleming, 2017). Although this research was not carried out within a single organisation I am a member of the community of executive coaches and also that of professionals who have undertaken change programmes within an organisation. In addition, my main employer, a large business advisory consultancy, kindly paid my study fees; this is an organisation that undertakes frequent internal reorganisations and also provides its clients with advice on their transformations. As such some of the concerns that apply to insider research apply in this situation. Mercer (2007, pg 7) suggests the insider's extra expertise and understanding of context can be "a double-edged sword" as it can make it too difficult to spot new things and what is seen is just the expected patterns in the data. This risks premature conclusions being made through confirmation bias. Fleming (2017) states that while premature conclusions are not unique to insider research there is a greater risk when the researcher is close to the situation. Like Galdas (2017), Fleming suggests that in such a situation, to help the credibility and trustworthiness of the research it is important to start by acknowledging such circumstances and providing the maximum transparency on who the researcher is and how they may have influenced the research process.

To help provide this transparency I will use a simple three-stage reflective model which first asks "what?", and then "so what?" and finally "what now?" (Driscoll, 2006). The initial "what?" stage, requires a description of what happened, without judgements or conclusions. As recounted at the beginning of this introduction, I was a staff member on a successful medium-sized change program.

Although I had experience with change programmes and executive coaching these were not been my primary career activities, which had been focused on strategy, operations, finance and more recently, data science. However, on three occasions I have been on the core central team in planned radical organisational change programmes involving hundreds of millions of dollars. Also, I have a small 'side business' that provides executive coaching for business leaders. When offered the chance to do a professional doctorate it seemed an opportunity to revisit a question that had occurred to me some years before, in areas that were interesting to me but outside my main line of work.

During these change programmes, I had noticed how challenging it was for those co-opted onto the change team as representatives of lines of business: they were tasked with 'presenting the change' to their divisions and then making it happen. Subsequently, they found themselves caught between the head office, their divisional leadership and their staff. I saw talented executives become ineffective, even in well-run programmes using the most prestigious and expensive advisors with 'proven methodologies'. In practice, these 'proven methodologies' focused on items that could be measured as milestones such as organisational structure changes, standing up governance and project management teams. However, other than some high-level communication plans they did little to aid the executives implementing and cascading the change through the organisation. In contrast, my experience of coaching executives in large corporations frequently found us focused on intransigent colleagues, internal politics, the stress of unpleasant decisions or persuading other people to do things they do not want to do. On the face of it, these seem somewhat similar to the challenges faced by change team executives as they cascade the change from head office down into their operating units but without any proper personal support from the programme.

Also relevant is that this research was being carried out as part of a professional doctorate. Like a PhD, the professional doctorate requires sound research, but in addition, it must be grounded in practice and the practical. Guccione (2021) notes that professional doctorate students "come from practice with their research interests or more specifically, practice problems and issues they wish to better understand and find research solutions for." Similarly, the Oxford Brookes website specifically notes the existing expertise of students and their professional practice, stating "The Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring programme develops the capabilities needed to become a researcher and leader in the field and foster excellence in your practice. We will challenge you to build on your existing expertise and push the boundaries of your knowledge" (*Oxford Brooks University website*, no date). Others back this up claiming that professional doctorates such as the DBA are promoted as "hands-on" and encourage candidates to more applied outcomes than PhDs (Sarros, Willis and Palmer, 2005). Evidently, within this is some recognition that the researcher brings knowledge and something of themselves to the work. Despite this, although the pure positivism perspective that the only 'objective' research is that which is done by 'outsiders' (Chavez, 2008; Hellawell, 2006) may be less common nowadays, there are still some researchers who still have a concern about researchers being 'too close' to maintain objectivity (Fleming, 2017).

The second 'so what?' stage suggested by Driscoll (2006) is an opportunity to reflect on my reaction and feelings to these background factors. While carrying out change programmes, I was disappointed by leaders who talked about how vital senior executives are in making these changes but then did virtually nothing to help them implement them. On the other hand, I feel rather unfair

in thinking that - as possibly those words were said with good intentions but those leaders were simply never given the tools by the consultants to do the complete job. That thought then tends to lead me to some irritation with consultants in general and their lack of humility and claimed certainty that their trademarked proprietary methodology is always the only way to help the client's situation.

I notice my curiosity about why coaching is not used in these situations is tempered by ambivalence about change programmes. Several years after the change programme mentioned in the opening story, I had no choice but to again be at the heart of a PROC, this time involving the merger of two global divisions impacting over 10,000 people. After that successful but challenging experience, I decided that would be my last PROC. True to my word when later asked to transfer roles internally and work on an even bigger global reorganisation, I refused. In contrast to change I enjoy coaching and am reluctant to turn away coaching assignments. However, the upside from a research point of view, is that this ambivalence to change makes me somewhat indifferent about how well coaching emerges from the research as an intervention for these situations. Although it could potentially open up a new market niche, I already have sufficient coaching work. On the other hand, I know I would be unlikely to turn down a coaching assignment where a client is involved in a change programme and they felt it would be helpful. On balance, I believe I feel rather indifferent to what the research finds, which should help somewhat with issues of bias but I still have to acknowledge my experience in the field may be a factor.

The sponsorship from an employer who does change work for clients appears more of a factor than it was. A particular department in the firm simply agreed to pay the majority of my study fees. They did that just to show their appreciation for my help in coaching some partners and directors in addition to my normal workload which was leading a data science team. It was not sponsored by or known about by anyone or any department involved in client-facing organisational change work. The firm was supportive of me but not interested in the research itself, did not ask for input and has not asked for any updates or seen any drafts.

The final 'what now?' stage provides an opportunity to reflect on what does the foregoing mean for the research? Can it still be valuable given my prior experience? Given how the question arose from a practical situation there must be some risk of a premature solution and confirmation bias. There is some mitigation in that I felt indifferent to the outcome as neither change nor coaching was my main job. Being reluctant to directly work again in the change space and not needing to prove a coaching result to get more coaching work reduces pressure to force coaching to be the answer.

Although not working within one organisation I have some practical expertise and so could appear too close for some positivistic researchers who require complete separation between researcher and subject. While I cannot reach that fully objective bar (and it is hard to see how many doing a professional doctorate could be so completely) I do believe that being aware of these risks I can take an approach to ensure the research has value, benefits from my preexisting knowledge and look to be a 'scholarly professional' as opposed to a 'professional scholar' (Gregory 1997).

By the time I get to start my research, my previous history is outside my control. Here I have reflected on it and how it could potentially bias the research. It showed care would be needed to maintain quality and this was done through careful planning, completing detailed records and honesty in reporting. Even if I was not keen on personally being involved in change programmes anymore I was aware that I believed they are 'necessary evils' to maintain the health of organisations and the global economy generally. In reading around the subject and the literature review I attempted to control for this by ensuring I searched for evidence that change was needed less and that the PROC programmes were now more successful than in the past. Also, as someone who does coaching, I believe it is a useful intervention. To mitigate this possible bias I looked for literature that was negative towards coaching, although perhaps because it is a newer field of research, most papers were determinedly upbeat in tone. Other interventions were also examined in case any of these were more suitable than coaching, which would have allowed the research to pivot to incorporate those instead. This found that while the alternative people interventions may well have a valuable place in organisational change, they tended to be weaker in terms of confidentiality, executive time requirement and applicability to PROC challenges. This suggested coaching should be left as the subject to be investigated rather than replacing it with another type of intervention. Open-ended questions were used in the qualitative interviews and on the two occasions it was appropriate to use less open-ended questions this was noted in the text. Also to avoid leading the interviewees care was taken to put the questions in a neutral style and tone. In the quantitative work, substantial sample sizes were obtained and the survey sample excluded coaches and consultants as they may have been over-enthusiastic about their subjects. With regard to outside influence, although my employer paid towards the university fees I was in the fortunate situation that it was a very arm's length transaction and had no influence at all on the research or my attitude towards it.

For the research to be credible Fleming (2017) suggests researchers "acknowledge who they are and how they may have influenced the research process" and in this way, trust may be established. Through this section, the design, the reporting of results and the acknowledging limitations I suggest there is sufficient transparency for any bias to be understood and there to be value in the research findings.

1.6 Introduction to remaining chapters

Following the introduction, literature review and methodology chapters, the remainder of the thesis presents the quantitative findings, qualitative findings and discussion. The paragraphs below briefly explain what these chapters will cover.

The survey data are analysed in the quantitative findings chapter. The variables' descriptive information is presented first. T-tests are then used to investigate hypotheses on how executives' previous PROC experience is related to their attitude towards coaching. Next, correlation analysis examines how some other personality traits are related to executives' attitudes to coaching. Then a hierarchical linear regression model is built to explore the explainability strengths of the different variables. Finally, the statistical elements used to help select interviewees are reported.

The qualitative findings chapter aims primarily to give insight into elements that the survey cannot cover and also to pursue interesting findings from the statistical analysis in the previous chapter. This chapter starts by giving short introductions to the interviewees while protecting their identities. Four main themes are explored in the analysis. The first addresses these executives' experiences of PROC and coaching, for comparison with the literature review that suggested that coaching is effective and should be appropriate in large-scale change situations. Next, themes arise which are related to issues from the earlier quantitative analysis. Finally, open-ended questions generate new insights into other classes of obstacles that hinder the approval of large coaching projects.

The discussion chapter considers each quantitative and qualitative finding in turn. For each, it states the answer, then the relevant results and considers the degree to which they are consistent with or contradict previous work by other researchers. It also includes a section bringing the mixed methods together via a diagram depicting all the important obstacles on one page. The conclusion section of the chapter then brings the output of the study together. The multiple results are condensed into three key findings and the significance and contribution of the thesis are discussed in more detail. Then the limitations are acknowledged along with suggestions for future research and the implications for practice. The discussion chapter and the thesis ends with a reflection on how the researcher has developed while carrying out this investigation.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter introduction

This literature review is arranged in five sections. It starts with organisational change literature, examining various aspects of change, interventions, change programme failure rates and staffing arrangements. The next section reviews organisational coaching literature, looking at coaching specifically in organisational change and then coaching in organisations more broadly. It also looks at reasons previously reported on why the use of coaching may be held back in organisations.
The third section examines the effects of PROC on senior executives to understand the overlap between the problems they face and those that executive coaching can address. Then the personality traits of change leaders are considered to see if they could potentially be an obstacle to the procurement of coaching. The final element of the review considers whether the literature suggests this is a genuinely valid area to study and suggests potential research approaches.

2.2 Organisational change

At a high-level organisational change can be defined as the movement of an organisation away from its present state towards a future desired state (George and Jones, 2012). The need for organisations to undertake these changes is to survive external environment alterations or internal issues (Myers, Hulks and Wiggins, 2012). While it might seem a trivial statement to claim that change is the only constant, few today would disagree that in corporate life this is now completely true (Burnes, 2017).

2.2.1 Classifying change

With organisations having differing degrees of success in their change programmes this field has generated vast amounts of research, yet the picture of what is a standard view is still unclear. Hughes (2006) suggests that the lack of precision in the concept of change management is why so many competing theories exist, although he claims such variation is useful as it challenges any thought that change management should be simple. Burnes (2017) is also somewhat sanguine about this complexity and suggests that rather than ask for one model, practitioners should embrace the saying by George Box that “all models are wrong, but some models are useful”. However, it might be questioned how well change leaders, under immense time and other pressures, are going to be satisfied with that approach.

It would be somewhat ironic if organisational change as a subject was static. It is not and according to Burnes (2017), the focus of change theory has so far passed through four main stages. It started with the mechanical rational classical stage, which was followed by the cultural excellence, Japanese and organisational learning stage. After these came the social perspectives of the human relations stage and more recently there has been contingency theory. Burnes suggest it is frustrating that each of these stages in turn argued that their way is the one best way, and that dogma tends to reduce managers' flexibility to adapt to their circumstances. Other changes over time have been

identified by Francis *et al* (2012) as 'shifts'. These recognise how the requirements that change theory must satisfy have altered. Seven of these requirement shifts have been identified – for instance, change now needs to be understood as potentially being continuous in unstable contexts, rather than the earlier view of it being solely a discrete event within a stable environment. Another example of a 'shift' is the planned approach transitioning to a flexible approach – a perspective adjustment that generates alternative paths ranging from planned radical change (which we will focus on shortly) to unplanned incremental approaches. Francis *et al* (2012) also describe a shift from a contingency approach to one that includes complexity, chaos and even quantum theory. However, given that organisations are at a macro scale and not fundamental particles this last one might well be considered unlikely by some.

Change management encompasses theories from operational management, psychology, sociology and economics (Hughes, 2006) so there are multiple viewpoints for observing organisational change and there has been considerable discussion on how to classify the different types of transformations. This should be considered a subject strength although it does complicate the picture with multiple approaches all claiming to be change management. In response, Hayes (2014) offers the 3D model of change strategy as a framework for simplifying the location of models under different viewpoints which, in theory at least, may help practitioners think about and select suitable interventions for their circumstances. In this 3D model any change approach is considered across the three dimensions of duration (short vs long), type (incremental vs discontinuous) and support level (dictatorial vs collaborative). However, other classifications, some with a degree of overlap, may also be appropriate. These include top-down change led by leaders and high-level managers vs the bottom-up change led by first line managers and employees, radical vs incremental, transformational vs transactional, episodic events vs a continuing flow, strategic vs operational (Wilson, 2005; Hughes, 2006; George and Jones, 2012).

Much of the literature available to practitioners on how to carry out change in their organisation focuses on top-down planned approaches. But before going into more details on those, it is worth first mentioning two alternative classes in particular, that could be suitable if the strategy for a change had settled on an extended time frame aimed at incremental changes in a collaborative mode. The first of these classes is the emergent approaches which regard change as an ongoing process of responding to events (Burnes, 2017). This envisages managers changing from controllers to facilitators with employees taking on the responsibility for identifying defects and implementing improvements. While attractive in some respects this also has drawbacks. According to Burnes with this emergent approach, it is impossible for a few managers at the top to actively drive forward to a new organisational state. From a leader or shareholders point of view, it is less attractive as it can appear passive and reactive to events rather than proactively taking control. These weaknesses have resulted in the emergent school's relative failure to develop the tools, techniques and practitioner base compared to the planned approach. Another relatively widely discussed alternative to a dramatic planned reorganisation is a cultural change program, because culture, according to Boonstra (2013), is the process that forms the identity of the organisation via the way people work and live together. Like the emergent approach, this change is rarely a tightly control top-down affair but is more usually gradual and iterative. The support in practice for this approach is a common belief, that "culture eats strategy for breakfast" (often accredited to Peter Drucker), although there is limited scientific evidence of this.

2.2.2 Radical Organisational Change

While it is true that organisational change in some circumstances can be slow, incremental and collaborative (Hayes, 2014) much research has been carried out at the more dramatic end of transformations. Dunphy and Stace (1993) classify different scales of change, starting with subtle adjustments and gradual increases, through division or unit conversion, with the corporate transformation the largest. Grundy (1993) describes the most dramatic change as being discontinuous, with a rapid variation in strategy, configuration or culture, and sometimes all of these together. Others define successful transformations as large changes achieving substantial and sustainable long-term performance improvements (McKinsey & Co, 2017), while Reeves *et al* (2018) refer to the dramatic enhancement of performance and shift in an organisation's trajectory. Planned radical organisational change (PROC) has been suggested as an appropriate term that captures the various key elements – it is centrally planned and has a radical impact on the whole business (Huy, Corley and Kraatz, 2014). When implemented towards the larger end of the scale, it is evident that organisational change, in the form of PROC, has a significant effect on a business, its leaders and its people.

How often PROC occurs and the risks involved are important factors. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) claim that organisations frequently have to undergo a rapid, painful change implemented via sweeping management action, following technological, resource, regulatory, legal, competitive and political changes. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) suggest most companies – or divisions of significant sized corporations – find that they must undertake major changes every four or five years. Indeed large-scale change may be the only option when facing extreme circumstances (Miller and Friesen, 1980). While Reeves *et al* (2018, p. 1) note that these large transformations should ideally be undertaken before a crisis arises, in practice, they are much more common as a response to a testing situation and, as such, are a "fundamental and risk-laden reboot of a company". PROC is not a straightforward process – it needs to be undertaken frequently; it may occur at an inconvenient time and carries significant risk.

2.2.3 Change models

Many of what are described as change models in the literature are describing concepts or classifications. However, the are some process step like models that give a slightly more specific direction for implementation. Lewin's (1947) three-step model of unfreeze-change-refreeze is generally accepted as the first of these. Although criticised as being too simplistic and less applicable now that change is continuous (Kanter, Stein and Jick, 1992), it still gives a macro view of other change models used today and its planned approach still has relevance (Burns, 2004). The Judson (1991) model for implementing organisational change consists of five phases: 1. Analysing and planning the change, 2. Communicating the change, 3. Gaining acceptance of new behaviours, 4. Changing from status quo to a desired state, 5. Consolidating and institutionalising the new state. At around the same time, Cummings and Worley (2000) also developed a five-part process for managing change, made up of motivating change, creating the vision, developing political support, managing transition and sustaining momentum.

The well-known Kotter model (1995) gives a bit more granularity than the previously mentioned approaches and recommends eight steps: 1. Establishing a sense of urgency, 2. Forming a powerful coalition, 3. Creating a vision, 4. Communicating the vision, 5. Empowering others by changing structures, systems, policies, and procedures to implementation, 6. Publicising success to build momentum, 7. Consolidating and aligning existing structures, systems, procedures, and policies with the new vision, 8. Institutionalising the new approaches. Shortly afterwards Galpin (1996) proposed an alternative model comprised of 1. Establishing the need to change, 2. Developing and disseminating a vision of planned change, 3. Diagnosing and analysing the current situation, 4. Generating recommendations, 5. Detailing recommendations, 6. Pilot testing recommendations, 7. Preparing recommendations for rollout, 8. Rolling out recommendations, 9. Measuring and reinforcing. Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) identified two issues with all organisational step models. First, the change process takes multiple steps and time to do and yet skipping any of the steps often damages the final result. Second, mistakes in any step slow down the overall process of change or can even reverse any progress to date.

The above models are likely to appeal to executives looking for understandable, 'common-sense' approaches that can be initiated and driven top-down from the centre. It is also noticeable how similar they are and that there is relatively little about interventions that help individuals make the necessary changes. Although easily understood these models are limited in their insight into how organisational change takes place at a detailed level and how the various components are related to each other. The Burke-Litwin model (Burke and Litwin, 1992) attempted to understand this by specifying the relationship between long term, operational and short term factors. However, its success has still primarily been as a diagnostic tool as it does not detail the precise means by which organisational change can be driven forward (Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999).

The McKinsey 7s model is less step based and assumes that seven elements within an organisation must be effectively aligned for the achievement of the organisation's objectives. These elements are Strategy, Structure, System, Shared Values, Skills, Style and Staff. Although sold as a model for implementing change, in many cases it is again more of a diagnostic tool (Handy, 2007) to analyse the gaps for which consultants are then brought in to close. Nonetheless, Todnem (2020) suggests McKinsey's model be used as part of his five-step process, although the actual implementation only takes place as step four, so again this model is not particularly granular.

A change model that focuses more directly on the people side of things is ADKAR. This assumes that organisational change only happens when individuals change, with the anagram standing for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement. Although originally conceived by Hiatt as a tool for verifying change outcome (Das, 2019) its potential use as a people-focused change model was confirmed by Wong *et al* (2019). In their work, the Awareness step included a series of town halls, while the Desire step had surveys and focus groups. Then in the Knowledge stage, a training curriculum was developed. After that, the Ability step included staff training and team cohesion sessions, and finally, Reinforcement included centre support and unit cohesion meetings.

Although it looks similar to the Lewin model, the Bridges model of transition (Bridges and Bridges, 2017), does introduce a much needed focus on the individuals or groups in the change programme

who are described as psychologically going through a three-phase process. This starts with the letting go phase from the old normal, followed by a neutral zone phase during which the old ways may have gone but the new way is not comfortable yet, and finally a new beginning phase accepting the new way of doing. Hayes (2014) has expanded this transition into seven phases - shock, denial, depression, acceptance, testing, reflection and finally internalisation.

The people or 'soft' aspects of change implementations are reported as being particularly difficult, much more so than the 'hard' elements such as strategy and structure (Handy, 2007). When change management is described simply as the process that deals with people altering their ways of working because of organisational change (Gollenia, 2012), it may sound straightforward. However, this cannot be true when even on the 'winning side' there are "those who are wounded, those grieving what they lost, those whose loyalties and ethics have been compromised – and turn hostile, self-centred and subversive." (Bridges and Bridges, 2017, p. 151). Given this, it is not surprising that people, their skills and aims, have been described as the biggest unknown in business transformation (LaClair and Rao, 2002) and that the players' relative power, employee resistance and internal politics are widely discussed. If these soft aspects are indeed more difficult to implement, possibly that would explain why it is reported that one-third of senior managers ignore the people aspect in a change program (Woodward and Hendry, 2004). This is despite change only happening because the majority of people alter their behaviour - including those doing so unwillingly and under duress (Conner, 1998).

Although there may be an impression from much of the literature that employee resistance is innate and illogical, this can be challenged when resistance is positioned as a logical political act to defend personal pay, conditions and status (Burnes, 2017). Burnes categorises theories of resistance into cognitive dissonance, the breaking of the psychological contract and the disposition of the employee. Cognitive dissonance is the frustration of being asked to carry out mutually exclusive tasks simultaneously, for instance, improving customer service, while cutting service staff headcount. The psychological contract describes the unwritten implicit expectations between management and staff, and if it is perceived that the employer has reneged then this strikes at the employees' sense of fairness, dignity and respect. The disposition resistance element is the assumption that some individuals are essentially more likely to be awkward and resist than others. In addition to these, Burnes suggests a depth of intervention factor proposing that the 'deeper' the impact the change will be on the employee then the more focus is needed on employee participation during the programme.

While it is not assured that employees will always resist change, it is dangerous for researchers and practitioners to assume employees are passive or even keen receivers of change (Knights and Willmott, 2012). Although 'fear of change' can often be put forward as the single factor causing resistance, and which places the fault with the employee rather than the change leader, Knights and Willmott point out that this cannot be entirely true because if it were, there would be no resistance to management during times of stability, which is clearly not the case. Resistance can be seen as internal political action and it is repeatedly reported that political behaviour is ever-present in organisations but it comes to the fore in change. These power struggles slow down decision making as it is unavoidable that changes will always benefit some at the expense of the others (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; George and Jones, 2012; Hayes, 2014; Burnes, 2017). According to Recardo

(1995), over 70 per cent of resistance is covert. Employees express support publically but secretly they are against it and try to stall progress without this being obvious. Ricardo suggests that the common techniques used to do this are to repeatedly ask for more information and analysis and by appointing committees and subgroups in attempts to lengthen decision making and slow progress until momentum stalls.

2.2.4 Change implementation

While much of the literature has concentrated on alternative theoretical frameworks, the practitioner will want to consider models they can implement, especially when it comes to the people aspects. There is rather less in the academic literature on the various interventions and their impact on the outcome of change than might be expected when held in comparison to the multitude of frameworks outlining the theory. The actions, or change interventions, an organisation leader might consider are grouped differently by different authors but can cover both people and non-people elements. Perhaps the most intuitive is Handy's (2007) summary of the 7 S methodology between the 'Hard S' items (strategy, structure and systems) and 'Soft S' (staff, style, shared values and skills). Cummings *et al* (2000) suggest grouping interventions into four - strategic, technology/structural, human process and human resource issues. Whereas Francis *et al* (2012) segment interventions into individual, management or whole organisation levels. Burnes (2017) suggests that before choosing interventions, leadership consider if the change focus is on the system, group or individual, and also separately target those who are likely to resist.

In terms of 'Hard' S interventions restructuring is a common high-level action that simplifies the organisation structure by eliminating divisions, departments, levels of management or undertaking other types of downsizing (George and Jones, 2012). The divisional structure often switches back and forth between the three main orientations of product, market and geography, each of which has its own set of benefits and drawbacks. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) is another 'hard' intervention that focuses on a radical redesign of business processes aiming to produce dramatic improvements (Hammer, 1990). However, it should be noted that BPR has been reported as not being as successful as originally claimed. Also, it was initially proposed as a radical organisation-wide approach but now there is a debate if in some cases it can be used in an incremental or localised way. It does appear to be difficult to do well as it has a particularly high failure rate (Hughes, 2006). According to George and Jones (2012) among other large scale interventions available are e-engineering by switching to the latest IT for efficiency improvements, innovation focus to come up with new products or efficiencies and Total Quality Management (TQM) which aims to continually reduce manufacturing or customer service errors.

Another important system-wide action is the communication of the change. This is directed broadly and is not an individual-level intervention. Although top leadership can often behave as though broad high-level messaging has covered the task of dealing with individuals, Myers *et al* (2012) are clear that the limits of formal communications need to be recognised. Burnes (2017) suggests that first, urgency be generated by telling people of the pressure on the organisation to change and then giving regular feedback on performance reinforcing this pressure. Once pressure has been increased then take action to understand the fears and concerns generated and then maintain momentum by

publicising any successful changes created. In a similar vein, French and Bell (1984) suggest obtaining broad people feedback through the use of large scale surveys as a firmwide intervention.

2.2.5 Individual or group interventions

In addition to undertaking actions aimed at changing structures or systems, leaders must also consider how to make people change at an individual level. Although the 'Soft S' actions may tend to be less addressed by leadership they are arguably more important, and this avoidance may partly be a factor in the high failure rates of programmes which will be discussed later.

Francis *et al* (2012) suggest leaders need to be clear whether they are acting at a whole system, management or individual level as the specific OD interventions are different for each. The interventions that potentially could be alternatives to executive coaching are at the management and individual levels. At the management level, there are multiple options suggested that are primarily concerned with helping people work better together and which include action learning, action research, conflict management, group problem solving, meeting design and facilitation, talent management, team building and team development. Similarly, at the individual level, Francis *et al* propose executive development and executive coaching as possible interventions. The executive development heading can be expanded out to show multiple options including short training courses, secondments and longer qualification courses such as MBAs (Wilson, 2005). These potential people interventions are each considered briefly below, starting with those at the management level.

Action learning is a group activity, where around six people are brought together as an 'action learning set'. These members are ideally drawn from diverse roles and departments throughout the organisation, to work on a real problem, sharing ideas in a trusting supportive environment (Revans, 2011). Frequently a learning set is facilitated by an expert, which is a change from the original Revans' model, where the groups were self-managing. The advantage of action learning is that it avoids a 'one size fits all' approach that training programmes tend towards. It claims to put the problem into the hands of the people who have to live with the solution and are better placed to understand the practical complexity and avoid 'irrational' processes pushed down from above. Reported problems with this approach focus on people being uncomfortable in the process and the likelihood of action being abandoned if there is insufficient 'cover' from top management. Where used, the role of the facilitator is arduous and political and requires a risk-taking approach (Pedler, 2011). There are reports of action learning project failures where internal politics, sensitive issues, 'turf wars' and feelings of challenges to individual authority were present (Oliver, 2008).

Action research aims to carry out both scientific research and to solve a problem in an organisation at the same time, through a joint effort between academic researchers and organisational practitioners. As such, it aims to add to scientific theory rather than just apply scientific knowledge (Rapoport, 1970; Clark, 1972). Different approaches vary the focus between the researcher's agenda of finding new knowledge and the organisation's aim of solving its problem. The term was first used by Kurt Lewin in 1944 and since then a variety of approaches have developed, many of which have a reflective basis and have a greater focus on improving the organisational situation rather than making scientific observations (Midgley, 2003). Its strength is that when focused on a researcher's

agenda it can get to underlying causes and so enable future predictions. When balanced towards the participants' needs it uses self-reflective techniques to improve their own situation, similar to other group interventions. Compared to other pure research approaches action research can be more attractive to organisations than techniques that only promise to expand the literature (Kemmis and Carr, 1986; Avison, Baskerville and Myers, 2007). An issue with action research is that it can often fail to commence because researchers and practitioners cannot find any mutual ground for a project that meets both their needs. The researcher may not find an opportunity for discovering new knowledge and the practitioners may not see the project as solving their immediate problem (Kock, 1997).

Conflict management is a term that describes approaches for improving group outcomes where there is disagreement, resentment and tension between team members, which can arise due to differences in opinion, competition, negative perceptions, poorly defined role expectations or lack of communication (Ellis and Abbott, 2012; Bradley *et al*, 2013). The appropriate interventions to resolve the conflict depend on the specific source of the issue but include problem-solving techniques, changing team members, team building and job redesign. Managers may also use their authority to quell the situation although as this suppression does not eliminate basic causes the conflict may reoccur at a later date (Kiitam, McLay and Pilli, 2016). More formal approaches are arbitration or mediation which utilises an independent person, who often may listen separately to the parties first and then bring them into a joint session. As well the situational circumstances, the specific approach used can also depend on the participants' habitual way of handling themselves during a conflict. To help with this a common first step is to use trait personality measures such as Myers Briggs (Carlyn, 1977) or the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument (Womack, 1988), which is specific to conflict management and evaluates an individual's propensity to collaborate, compete, avoid, accommodate or compromise during a conflict.

Group problem solving is frequently used in organisations and brings together stakeholders to work on an issue for which they are jointly responsible (Chiu, 2000). It is often facilitated by a manager or a consultant and in many ways appears closely related to team coaching. The benefits of group problem solving or team coaching is that it tends to evaluate a diverse set of solutions and actions, is grounded in a better understanding of the practical problems of implementation and through the process starts to generate ‘buy-in’ and credibility to the final outcome (Raison, Lukshin and Bowen-Ellzey, 2020). A weakness, when compared to one to one interventions, is that team members will be reluctant to disclose too much to colleagues or to admit weaknesses to their superiors. Trust may vary and yet, for progress to be made, it has to be present in some form (Clutterbuck, 2020).

Meetings are a management tool that enables the allocation of resources, questions and answers, planning, role clarification, new idea generation and the promotion of organisational change (Thomsett, 1989; Schaffer and Thomson, 1992). They can also reinforce the perceived importance of participants who are entitled to attend certain senior meetings that are prestigious and referenced within the organisation. However, there is a common belief that meetings are too frequent, insufficiently productive and often waste time (Romano and Nunamaker, 2001; M. A. Cohen *et al.*, 2011). A study by Cohen *et al* (2011) examined 18 design characteristics' effect on participants' perceived meeting quality. Of the nine found to be significant four concerned the physical environment such as lighting, meeting space, refreshments, and temperature. Starting and finishing

on time improved perceived quality while increased participant numbers was inversely related. Interestingly, adding a facilitator had no correlation with perceived quality and although circulating an agenda beforehand was significant, simply handing one out at the start did not seem to add any value. Other researchers have suggested that minutes and action follow-up add to meeting effectiveness (Thomsett, 1989; Romano and Nunamaker, 2001). There appears to be little downside in improving meeting design in PROC as well as general organisational life as effective design adds relatively little cost and should not prevent or require the removal of other interventions. However, until there is more evidence it may not be worth the expense of routinely adding extra external facilitation.

The precise definition of Talent Management is still being debated with Lewis and Heckman (2006) identifying four main approaches in the literature. The first approach is that it is simply being used as a new label for HR, while the second considers talent pools and progression tracks, which builds on previous manpower and succession planning approaches. Other literature takes it to mean differential attention to employing top talent, aiming for an organisation with just 'A graded' performers throughout and managing out those judged as average and below. More recently, according to Lewis and Heckman, talent management has been described as the process that identifies organisations' future people needs, especially in key positions, combined with activities to fill those requirements through development, recruitment and retention strategies. Talent Management gained considerable interest among senior practitioners, as a way to strategically differentiate, following McKinsey's 2001 book The War for Talent (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2001). At that time McKinsey suggested the supply of sufficiently skilled executives was about to decline by up to 15%, while the need for these executives would continue to grow rapidly. Since then evidence suggests some corporate boards are questioning the approaches adopted as the activities can be considered expensive, time-consuming, disruptive and slow, and that due to the degree of frequent reorganisations the talent requirements have usually changed by the time the actions deliver (Coulson-Thomas, 2012).

Teambuilding interventions focus primarily on the interpersonal relationships within teams rather than efficiency or problem-solving (Klein *et al.*, 2009). They aim to enhance trust and relationships via collaborative tasks and a wide variety of options are offered to organisations by specialist suppliers, ranging from indoor activities such as quiz nights or cocktail making events, to outdoor ones like half-day raft building competitions up to multi-day wilderness treks (Team Building, 2020). The benefit of focusing on trust enhancement between team members is that increased levels have been suggested as improving collaboration and the overall performance of project teams (Herzog, 2001; Chiocchio *et al.*, 2011). However other research suggests effects can be short-lived and in particular little is known about what aspects of the different team-building options are most beneficial in practice (Pollack and Matous, 2019).

Team development often refers to the process of new teams learning to work effectively together. A common model to describe the stages that groups need to go through is Tuckman's (1965). This claims the four stages are forming, storming, norming and performing and this outline is used by facilitators to intervene, explain and guide. In the forming stage, the group understands the task and establishes rules and boundaries. In the second stage, storming, there is disagreement within the team and hostility towards facilitators as members experience emotional responses where the

team goals require a personal change from them. By the third stage roles and norms are established and accepted and shared mental models start to enable working and the avoidance of conflicts. The performing stage is the point at which the team is operating effectively – as what Tuckman described as a 'problem-solving instrument'. Despite the great popularity of the model, limitations have been identified. In the original research, therapy groups were overrepresented and therefore the storming stage may not always be as present in other groups (Cassidy, 2007). Also, it has been suggested that group development is more complex than a simple linear model which questions the assumption that groups will always move forward along the same path to the final stage (Miller, 2003; Bonebright, 2010).

Having outlined some possible management level interventions, the three individual level executive development interventions of training courses, secondments and long training qualifications will now be considered. It has been suggested that training courses may be preferred by some HR directors to coaching as they believe they give them better control and measurement (Rekalde *et al.*, 2017). There are multiple methods available to help measure training return, three of the most well known being the Kirkpatrick Taxonomy (1996), the Phillips ROI Model (1998) and the CIPP Evaluation Model (Stufflebeam, 1983). Care needs to be taken when considering some claimed successes as according to Jacobs and Hruby-Moore (2008) case studies of human development programmes almost invariably report favourable outcomes which they suggest may be because practitioners feel any admission of failure might harm their professional reputation. Training transfer in this field refers to the training being taken from the classroom and effectively applied on the job (Baldwin and Ford, 1988). When this is taken into account there has been research that suggests perhaps only 20% of training investment results in performance improvement. When extending training to change implementation situations Huczynski (1983) notes this is a particularly complex and difficult process and this problem has historically been underestimated by designers of management training. To counter this Huczynski suggests that the training planning needs to start with consideration of the organisational change required rather than selecting the types of training inputs (which tends to be the habit amongst some trainers) and they need to be particularly clear about what function or behaviours they want to change or reinforce. To 'institutionalise' the change or make it sustainable for the long term, Jacobs and Hruby-More (2008) suggests 'cascade training' be used in change situations. In this approach, the training is not just directed at those who are leading the change but cascades the training down to lower-level staff to link training outcomes to the broader goals. In each stage of the cascade, there is a need to reclarify what is the purpose of the change before asking what training outcomes are required for each group of employees.

A development secondment is focused on the secondee's improvement with the intention that they will return to the parent organisation. This is the most common type but there are other situations where secondments are used (Barkworth, 2004). These can be to temporarily cover a skill shortfall in the recipient unit or organisation, or to stop a conflict between existing staff by moving one of them, or to keep a key person 'safe' while their unit is downsized or to help an individual gain new skills before they are made redundant. Other than these last two uses there is little mention in research about using secondments specifically as an intervention in PROC. In normal circumstances, Croneri (2018) suggests the parent organisation will benefit from new ideas brought back and improved secondee performance, while the secondee may benefit from experiencing different cultures and methods of working which can challenge them in a helpfully creative way. The CIPD (2003) has

suggested that internal secondments are particularly useful in offsetting the limited development opportunities caused by the flat hierarchies of modern organisations, without forcing people to change jobs. However, Croneri (2018) cautions that for the parent organisation secondments can be an expensive form of development - especially if they are cross-border, and there may also be a risk of top performers being poached. It has also been found that external secondees to joint ventures in the energy sector score lower on engagement and retention than all other groups of staff and their performance declined over time with secondees suffering from confusion over primary loyalty, development and repatriation to the parent company (Walker, Bhargava and Bamford, 2021). Croneri (2018) claims risks to the secondee can include the chance that their hoped-for development may not take place if they are used at a low level in the recipient organisation and also that they may not be able to return to their role due to restructuring or other changes in their parent organisation. This is consistent with secondees' concerns about missing appraisals and bonuses while away and their insecurity about their ability to return to the original organisation reported by Barkworth (2004).

Some organisations pay for and sometimes provide time off for employees to undertake long-duration senior qualifications such as part-time executive MBAs. As a widely recognized postgraduate qualification, MBAs are generally considered value-added for individuals wishing to be highly skilled managers (Baruch and Leeming, 2001). Although popular there has been debate whether the MBA meets expectations (Connolly, 2003; Kumar and Jain, 2010) and critics of these programmes question the return on investment when considered against the study effort, study fees and opportunity costs (Boyde, 2014; Bradshaw, 2017). The cost to the organisation is high both in terms of financial expense but also in executives' attention. Executives may struggle to maintain their high work hours along with their health and mental sharpness at their previous levels throughout the length of the course. Estimates for the hours that an executive studying part-time will have to find vary but generally range between an extra 15-30 hours a week, these will mean stopping leisure activities outside work but also potentially saving some time from inside work as well. Course durations vary from 18 to 36 months, with fees in the multiples of tens of thousands of pounds. Should the executive stay with the organisation it will hope to get a payback in the years following course completion and to aid this some companies put fee clawback terms in place to encourage retention; which means the employee has to repay the university fees paid by the employer if they resign from the organisation within a contractual timeframe (Long, 2004).

Clearly, while executive coaching is on the intervention list it is just one of many actions that potentially could be used in a successful organisational change. Possibly one might argue that PROC could be improved more effectively via increases in one of the other people interventions, suggesting that other intervention should be researched rather than executive coaching. This is a valid point to consider but to do it fully the remaining change and coaching literature needs to be examined first. That will enable this question to be considered in the context of the personal challenges faced by executives during PROC. Therefore, this question of the validity of researching coaching will be revisited in the conclusion of this literature review in section 2.6.1.

2.2.6 Failure rates and approaches to in PROC implementation programmes

Organisational change has been a factor of corporate life for many years; it is, therefore, startling that the failure rate is high and has not improved over time. Although the numbers vary, the general claim is that success rates for change programmes are low and have been so for decades. Strebel (1996) claimed that change management was not effective, noting that, by some calculations, the success rate across Fortune 1,000 companies was well below 50%, and possibly as low as 20%. Beer and Nohria (2000) describe the failure of most change initiatives as a 'brutal fact'. Others put the failure rate between 60% and 90% (Raelin and Cataldo, 2011). More recently, just 26% of executives claimed that transformations in their organisations had been very or completely successful (McKinsey & Co, 2017). However, some argue that this high failure rate is a myth that does not stand up to testing: (de Waal and Heijtel, 2016) counter that 75% of change interventions are effective or very effective. The consensus, however, remains that change programmes have considerable scope to improve.

Despite the long history of change management research, many elements remain unresolved. Aiken and Keller (2009) observe that change management, as a field of study, has used much paper but has not reduced the failure rate of planned change programmes. Stensaker and Langley (2010) claim that, although the high failure rates are often attributed to poor change management, there is no agreement in the literature about what constitutes good change management. Despite a substantial amount of practitioner advice, there is little serious research using the recommended approaches for change management (Pollack and Pollack, 2015). Huy *et al.* (2014) claim that most research is too focused on the early stages of change programmes and not sufficiently on the challenges that follow. Even recently, studies still report that the research supporting the design and execution of corporate transformations is still unexpectedly lightweight –- the advice is anecdotal and little more than (very plausible-sounding) beliefs (Reeves *et al.*, 2018). In general, criticism from researchers concerns the lack of evidence for the 'common sense' approach of practitioner advice and the failure to cover the whole lifecycle of change programmes.

There is a historical difference between the practice of change management and how it is defined by researchers (Saka, 2003). Researchers reject the management consultants' methods, but this criticism has little impact on most organisations' approach. The step-by-step models are particularly criticised for their similarity to a simple checklist. Some 20 years ago, Caldwell (2003, p. 138) reported a pushback against large-scale "programmatic change driven by outside consultants". He accused management consultants of being fixated on mechanistic, project-driven, expert advice. While this may well have been true, there is little evidence that the pushback he noted in 2003 has had much effect to date in organisations or on how large consultancies deliver their 'methodologies'. In 2009, others still felt that the consulting models caused problems because, as managers implement a checklist, they miss "predictably irrational" aspects of human nature (Aiken and Keller, 2009, p. 100). Ansari (2009) reported that the Kotter approach was not effective in a specific initiative without other frameworks added and Appelbaum *et al*. (2012) suggested that Kotter's path was popular due to its 'direct and usable' approach rather than any objective measure of its success rate. By 2015, the situation had still not changed significantly: Kotter's change management model was still criticised as unscientific but acknowledged as popular because it was easy to understand

and its structure was easy to use (Pollack and Pollack, 2015). Academic and practitioner change management groups continued to have very different views.

It appears from this literature that PROC implementations do not consistently deliver their full planned value and, therefore, have the potential to be improved. Whether this can be achieved by adding executive coaching as an extra step in the implementation is not yet clear, although their failure is frequently related to human nature and interactions, which suggests that they could be affected by coaching. It is, however, apparent that any additions need to fit with the common-sense, step-by-step checklist approach preferred by organisational leadership. If such additions do not pass that obstacle, they will remain simply good ideas that should work but are ultimately unused, as is the case with other change research. None of the step-by-step PROC approaches currently explicitly include an executive coaching programme.

2.2.7 Staffing of PROC teams

Executive coaching in PROC is delivered to numerous people, but just one – or very few – individuals authorise the programme investment. Whether executive coaching is approved as a step in PROC implementation depends on the people managing those programmes and how the organisation is structured.

While the detail may vary slightly, the overall picture is reasonably consistent when looking at organisational structure. McKinsey & Co (2017) describe seven roles vital for change: CEO, senior leaders, Human Resource Directors, programme-management office lead, transformation initiatives leads, line managers, and change agents. In medium organisations, De Waal and Heijtel (2016) describe a change structure that manages with just the CEO as sponsor, a temporary project manager overseeing overall organisation, and leaders of different functions managing the transition. However, larger companies will require teams of experts if significant change is to be achieved while maintaining the day-to-day running of the organisation during the transformation (Caldwell, 2003). External consultants or interim managers can take on these roles when internal senior managers do not (PA Consulting, 1998). Transformational change is often led by a ‘transition management team’ or ‘guiding coalition’, reporting to the chief executive (Kotter, 1996). These senior leaders, especially the CEO and the programme-management leader, are the key players in deciding on the structure and steps to be put in place and whether extra interventions such as executive coaching are worthwhile. These leaders and other change agents are also potential recipients of any added executive coaching.

Other views of the roles needed can become complicated. Atkinson (2016) describes four categories of change roles, the first being the sponsors or project hosts who own the key issues needing transformation. The second category contains facilitators or consultants, internal or external, who design and deliver change by ensuring coordination and interaction in the broader change team. The third comprises stakeholders – internal and external suppliers and customers – and, finally, implementers bring about – and ideally have some involvement in – the change design. Ottaway (1983) discusses three classes of role: change generators, implementers, and adopters, while Beatty and Gordon (1991) compare idea creators, patriarchs, and evangelists. Evangelists are those who

implement, but the very fact that this term needs explanation perhaps suggests that it may not fit well outside the US. Clearly, the roles involved can be described in many ways, especially as broader stakeholders are brought into the picture. Sponsors or project hosts stand out as those who could decide in favour of additional coaching interventions. However, it is less clear that these definitions help identify which roles would generate the best return to the business with extra coaching.

'Change agent' is also a problematic term: it is used in business and is common throughout the change literature but what it actually means varies by the author and model being used. According to Caldwell (2003, p. 131), "change agents play significant roles in initiating, managing or implementing change in organisations". Caldwell summarises the different approaches to the term as four separate change-agent models. Under 'leadership models', change agents are seen as the top leaders setting, sponsoring and initiating strategic change. In 'management models', change agents are envisioned as middle managers and experts in specific functions who customise and implement critical change within units or operations. Under 'consultancy models', external or internal consultants are the change agents; they provide advice, expertise and facilitation at any level of the organisation. Finally, in 'team models', change agents operate at all levels below the top executives and include any employee type, as well as consultants.

Caldwell's (2003) classification of the different uses of the term 'change agent' is useful in that it suggests how miscommunication can quickly happen, presenting another obstacle to implementing extra coaching. Suppose the idea is presented in terms of 'additional coaching to change agents'. This could be interpreted as affecting entirely different roles by the seller of the coaching and the PROC leader appointing external advisors. One may be thinking of coaching the top executive under the 'leadership model', while the other may believe it to refer to coaching for junior staff because they think of the change agent through the lens of 'team models'. Even if the misunderstanding is cleared up, it still damages credibility and, if organisations do not think that the advisor understands the way they think, they will not buy.

The PROC literature showed that such changes are discontinuous, aiming to achieve substantial, sustainable performance improvements. Their implementation programmes are often laden with risk and do not perform as intended. Given their size and importance, any incremental improvement has a high value. There is currently a gap between the research ideas for improvement and the ideas picked up as appropriate, practical solutions by organisations; whether executive coaching could be one of these additions is not clear from this part of the literature. The findings that it is still underused suggest that it is one of many ideas that are good in theory but, for some reason, do not appeal to those influencing or making the purchasing decision. Change is certainly an area where good ideas can fail to be adopted, as evidenced by the fact that PROC is still mainly presented by management consultants as an established step-by-step process despite the alternative views in research. 'Change agent' does not appear to be a helpful term to target additional coaching due to its varied interpretations, which may cause an obstacle to implementing coaching because of the likelihood of miscommunication.

2.3 Organisational coaching

2.3.1 Coaching literature referring to organisational change

Within the last two decades, researchers have started to examine the use of coaching in organisational change. However, the literature is not extensive. Early work suggested that executive coaching could play a part in project management (Berg and Karlsen, 2007). In 2008 it was claimed that coaching could facilitate organisational transformation, although there had been little debate up to that point about how coaching could be used in this way (Stober, 2008). Two years later, it was again predicted that coaching would be increasingly used to further organisational change, and it was expected that research into the use of coaching in this area would continue (Grant *et al.*, 2010). Yet, in 2015, it was judged that the use of coaching to aid organisational change was still not widespread and that organisations could improve with greater use of coaching (Carter, 2015). While researchers suggest that coaching should be valuable in supporting organisational change, there is doubt that its use has grown as much as was expected.

Alongside these predictions of increased use of coaching, there are still gaps in both research and practice. For instance, Carter (2015) noted that there was little evidence for the prevailing view among coaches that, because their work improves an executive's effectiveness, it will, over time, benefit the broader organisation. Grover and Furnham (2016) confirmed this gap in the literature, reporting that the majority of research had concentrated on the benefits of coaching to the individual and not on the benefits to the organisation. Despite this lack of research, there is also a belief in practice that executive coaching in change management can deliver more value than in other coaching situations (Sherpa, 2019).

The literature implies that this is an area waiting for growth in practice and theory. In 2014, it was suggested future research be conducted on using coaching for leaders in organisations undergoing change, and that both qualitative and quantitative data would be helpful (Grant, 2014). Although some further qualitative work has been completed, Nanduri (2017) found that the use of coaching in the implementation of organisational restructures has still not been given as much consideration as it deserves. This current position suggests space for new research, including an investigation of why the use of executive coaching is not widespread in change programmes, a gap which this thesis hopes to fill.

It has been suggested that executive coaching could help executives to improve their thinking and behaviour, abilities needed to achieve their desired goals within the turmoil of organisational change. It also provides an opportunity to pause from the routine – to carry out the flexible, strategic thinking required to handle new, unpredictable issues (Grant, 2014). Kilkelly (2014) claimed that change professionals would benefit because they often focus disproportionately on minor details rather than leading effectively because of a fear of failure. Kilkelly also contended that, while this group would benefit, resistance from them could be expected, as they may not value the interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence provided by coaching to overcome barriers to change. A meta-analysis by Theeboom *et al*. (2013) indicated that coaching could be used effectively as an intervention in organisations as it increased participants' hope and optimism. While suggestions

have, therefore, been made as to why coaching should help executives during change, they are not specific on exactly how or by how much it improves an organisation's programme delivery. The reported disdain for emotional intelligence on the part of change professionals may hinder coaching growth if it stops them from hiring executive coaches for their change programmes.

Some researchers are slightly more specific in their recommendations, starting to indicate how coaching might help organisational transformation but also hinting at another possible obstacle to its use. Cosstick (2010) emphasises that traditional change management approaches disregard the individual, interpersonal and other side elements (for example, the informal corridor conversations, the personal networks and the personality clashes) of organisational change. Based on this, Cosstick suggests that, in organisations undergoing change, the CEOs, senior and middle managers receive one-to-one coaching support. Bickerich *et al*. (2018) suggest that coaching helps with the 'turbulence' of change programmes by assisting in three areas – the executive's self-management, the change management of others and change leadership specific to the strategic objectives of the change itself. These insights start to show that help is needed in situations which do not form part of the formal plan, organisational structure or are even readily discussed, which may, in fact, make justifying its need to the corporate leaders who control budgets more difficult.

Reports on how executive coaching in significant change programmes has worked, rather than how it should work, are still rare. Where recent feedback exists, it has been positive: Conbere (2017) reports that leaders and managers were enormously thankful for individual coaching during a change process. Nanduri (2017) notes how an HR business partner in the midst of a downsizing process valued coaching because "I also needed some support, somebody that I could be talking to … because internally there was nobody I could share with …". Bickerich *et al*. (2018) found, after interviewing both executives and coaches about their experience, that executives benefit from personal development during organisational change. It seems that executives' opinion so far is favourable, but more research, particularly quantitative or focused on the organisation (Grant, 2014), is needed.

Noticeably, the research has focused on whether coaching is effective, rather than what is preventing it from being adopted. It may be that its effectiveness has to be proven first, or that there is an unconscious assumption that if it is shown that executives enjoy it, it will automatically be taken up by business. This assumption may not be valid. Grant (2010) acknowledged this and noted that "managers of coach training programs explicitly address ways to overcome barriers to adopting coaching behaviours, rather than primarily promoting the benefits of workplace coaching". It would be naive to think that, simply because coaching practitioners have built a better mousetrap for improving PROC, there are no further obstacles to its procurement.

With a relatively new field such as coaching in organisational change, a critical view of the previous research conclusions is particularly important. As such the nearly universally positive views of coaching expressed above need to be treated with some care and the limitations of the studies and any counter results considered. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) suggest that the early phases in a new research area will focus on exploring the practitioner experience and concentrate on case studies and small scale qualitative research. Much of the literature on coaching is in this stage with only limited meta-analysis or quantitative work appearing yet. Consistent with this the papers from

Naduri (2017), Cosstick (2010), Kilkelly (2014)and Conbere (2017) are primarily based on those authors' experiences, and while the Bickerich *et al* (2018) paper is more robust it is still based on a relatively small qualitative case study. Grant (2014) employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches although it has a relatively small sample size of 31 executives. Theeboom *et al* (2013) is a meta-analysis, although that again has some limitations due to the small number of papers included. In terms of the results that do not support the efficacy of coaching in organisational change remarkably few were reported, although that might not be a surprise on experience-based papers. However the research of Grant (2014), found that coaching had no significant impact from coaching on executives' stress, anxiety or workplace satisfaction, which provides some balance. Also his varying effect sizes in the other results indicated that coaching should not be considered a panacea. Another mixed result was found by Beckrich *et al* (2018) who discovered an expectation difference between coaches and executives, where the executives wanted practical support on how to lead change and deal with employee resistance, while coaches wanted to focus on personal reflection. Continuing the theme of caution needed in relation to coaching research, Theeboom *et al* (2013) noted that the outcome measures were self-reported and this does tend to overestimate the effect of coaching. Despite these weaknesses this literature overall does tentatively suggest adding executive coaching to organisational change programmes is a feasible idea that warrants more research. Indeed, despite their concerns, Theeboom *et al* (2013) conclude that their meta-analysis indicates that coaching can be effectively used as an organisational intervention and go as far as suggesting that research attention should be more on how coaching works rather than does it work.

2.3.2 Coaching literature referring more broadly to executive performance

Various definitions of executive coaching have developed over the past 20 years. A recent description is given by Ennis and Ottor (2015, p. 8):

> Executive coaching is a one-on-one individualised process to benefit the leader and his/her organisation. Working with goals defined by both the leader and the organisation, a qualified and trusted coach uses various coaching methods and feedback data to develop the leader's capacity for current and future leadership. This coaching is guided by a coaching partnership to achieve maximum impact and the highest level of learning.

This explanation is helpful in that it is short and easy to follow, although it may sound rather too much like a sales pitch for some.

Peterson (2011) provides a list of frequently mentioned executive coaching criteria and, usefully, contrasts these with those features which do not apply to executive coaching. Thus, it is one-on-one coaching, not team coaching; relationship-based, not syllabus-based and uses techniques within a process, not just feedback and advice. It is provided by a professional coach, not a manager or a peer, and takes place over multiple sessions, not one or two. It involves the whole organisation, not just the coach and coachee. Finally, it is tailored to the individual, not formulaic or overregulated.

Peterson (2011) also observes that many parallels exist between coaching and consulting. He claims that coaches do provide content and process, so the distinction is not as simple as consultants offering answers and advice while executive coaches do not. A possible dividing line is that coaches aim to enhance organisational performance by changing executives' abilities while consultants solve problems through processes rather than new skills.

In addition to the somewhat limited coaching literature focused on change programmes, other research has examined how coaching can help executives to reach their general goals in the workplace and improve their performance. As implementing organisational change may be part of an executive's role, this literature also has relevance. Passmore (2007) claims that coaching can modify behaviour at work, generate objectives and evolve action plans. Feldman and Lankau (2005) note that, although coaching was previously seen as a tool to remedy executives' faults, it is now seen as a way of improving executives performance. Wasylyshyn (2003) describe how 56% of coachees, out of a sample size of 87, reported becoming better at building relationships and leadership, noting increased optimism, greater confidence and more ability to motivate others. The study also found that coachees were more likely to set explicit goals and receive better ratings from their reports and superiors. It is plausible that the improvements noted here would also be helpful in a corporate change situation.

It has been argued that coaching helps executives to be more effective leaders as a result of improvements in personal awareness and insight. Gill and Johnson (2002) claim that effective leadership of others requires the leader to have good personal insight – that is, knowledge of their thoughts, feelings and behaviour – and Gravel (2006) suggests that coaching increases such understanding. Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) state that coaching can stimulate the participant's self-awareness and personal responsibility through "Socratic-based future-focused dialogue", while Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) claim that executives gain self-awareness and self-esteem and achieve better communication with peers and subordinates, leading to increased morale, productivity and profits. Day *et al*. (2008) propose that coaching encourages reflexivity, helping executives to stand back from the daily disagreements in business and use the flexible, critical thinking needed to address strategic problems. The benefits claimed in terms of executive abilities do appear to have some degree of overlap with the challenges faced by change leaders.

Another suggested use of the coach is as a trusted independent advisor. Witherspoon and White (1997) observe that leading a business or a significant function can be a lonely activity; an executive coach acts as a confidant, offering insight, perspective and constructive feedback on the executive's ideas. They explain that the coach – as an objective outsider and sounding board – is free to question and offer feedback to the executive in a way that insiders cannot, especially when the executive feels overwhelmed. Similar to this feeling of being overwhelmed, Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) claim that coaching can help organisations to manage stress and improve resilience and performance. The idea of the coach as an outside confidant to the executive fits well with the political and stressed environment of a change programme, as discussed later (2.4).

While there does appear to be justification for using coaching in organisations, care should be taken as research and theory lag behind coaching practice. As a result, while there appears to be evidence that coaching is useful overall there is still a considerable lack of insight at a more granular level

(Peterson, 2011). In addition, there are issues reported with the research that has been done. Small sample sizes and retrospective participant self-reporting abound (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; Mackie, 2007). Practitioners have produced studies that appraise their own coaching, while some studies are from graduate students who have only a theoretical understanding of coaching and generally much of the evaluation is based on subjective measures (Peterson, 2011).

Despite these issues, a number of papers do add evidence that coaching helps executives. Senior executives of an Australian not for profit were shown to improve their transformational leadership – that is their ability to engage and influence their followers – after six sessions with experienced external coaches (MacKie 2014). This research is particularly germane for two reasons. First, it measured a directly relevant business outcome, the MLQ (multifactor leadership questionnaire) which was a previously established instrument within leadership theory. Secondly, the measurements were not just from the coachee themselves. Superiors, peers, and subordinates also completed the MLQ, with, on average, over nine people rating each executive's performance. Despite these strengths, there are still some limitations to be considered. The sample was of limited size, with just 14 executives in the coached group. Also, the selection of who was coached was not random but specified by the organisation, although other tests before the start of the programme did establish that the coached group and the control group were very similar. Another piece of research that concentrated on the outcome measure rather than a view on the coaching process itself, looked at 469 managers, split roughly equally between the coached and control group, in a large government agency. This found an improvement in the managers' self-view of their involvement, consistency and mission-focused leadership behaviours (Nieminen et al. 2013). However, no improvement over the control group was noticed by the other raters of the coached managers. This may be felt to be slightly disappointing to those looking for a direct business return, although there is likely still value in the managers considering themselves to be more effective.

A recent paper by De Haan, Gray and Bonneywell (2019) looked at what it termed coaching effectiveness and found that coaching was effective in helping senior female leaders in a global healthcare organisation. A very strong effect was found for ratings from both the coachee and from others in this large, fully randomised, project with 180 leaders split between coached and control. However, some might question slightly the business applicability of the independent variable scale used for coaching effectiveness. Although it had the benefit of having been used by previous researchers, it might not be considered particularly business outcome-focused with one of its four items being “I have been successful in creating reflective space for me” and another being “I would consider this coaching journey successful.” While these may well be necessary states to create business change they might not be particularly persuasive to a return on an investment focused budget holder. Interestingly, this positive result was seen even though the coaches were internal with some having had just three days of training. Research by Smither et al (2003) looking at 404 senior managers in a large multinational reported much weaker effects when examining different coaching effectiveness questions. When rating themselves the senior managers were found to have set more specific as opposed to vague or general goals and sought more feedback. However, with other raters no effect was noticed on goal setting, and while there was an effect on seeking feedback it was very small. These small effects were even with the use of experienced external coaches. Another relatively small sample investigation looked at 30 coached managers, with 30 in the control group, in the Netherlands federal government (Evers, Brouwers and Tomic, 2006).

This considered coaching effectiveness in setting goals and acting in a balanced mindful way and used external coaches with up to eight meetings over four months. Only self-reported effects were included so there was no objective viewpoint. Even with self-reporting and external coaching, out of the six measures tested only two showed improvement - 'outcome expectations with respect to acting in a balanced way" and 'self-efficacy beliefs with respect to setting goals' - were found significant.

A number of other papers are less directly applicable to the effect of coaching on leadership actions in a business setting but they still have some relevance as they show coaching increases cognitive hardiness and movement toward goals. Green, Grant and Rynsaardt (2007) study showed self-reported increased hope and reduced depression, anxiety and stress in school girls when coached by teachers trained for just two half days in solution-focused coaching. In a similar paper (Green, Oades, and Grant, 2006) another set of self-reported results showed increased goal striving (planning and action towards objectives in daily life). In this case, the subjects were volunteers from the general public while the coaching consisted of group and peer to peer coaching. Another paper looking at volunteers from the general public by Spence and Grant (2007) found positive results on goal striving although no effect was found on wellbeing. This research also found greater engagement from coachees assigned a professional coach compared to those who had coaching sessions with peers. While care has to be taken due to these studies' self-reported, non-objective measurements and non-business subjects or settings, these studies do still suggest some coaching effects that could be helpful in a business setting.

A study with a different approach used a standard instrument to screen 8,603 employees, across two universities and a health care centre, to identify those at extra risk of taking sick days (Duijts et al. 2008). After some 39 people either withdrew or refused to be included, this resulted in 37 employees being coached, with 75 in the control group. These 37 received six to nine one hour coaching sessions over six months to see if it would later reduce absenteeism. Interestingly, unlike other situations where self-reported results were more likely than objective measures to favour coaching, in this research, the self-reported figures did not identify a drop in absenteeism, whereas the objective figures using sickness records from the personnel departments did show a reduction in time off and a positive effect from the coaching. Overall, this and the preceding papers are helpful in providing initial evidence that one-to-one coaching is effective. However, while such coaching effectiveness research is progressing, it is not yet conclusive. To date, there has been less measurement of objective third-party views and more focus on the executive's internal feelings rather than financial business outcomes. In addition, studies have tended to be either small or had to compensate for non-random selection or had a focus on just one gender.

Given its popularity and some evidence that coaching works, some might argue that is enough to justify its adoption. However, a survey of 140 leading executive coaches showed they disagreed over why they are hired, what they do, and how they measure success (Coutu *et al.*, 2009). Against this background, it is difficult to imagine that the use and effectiveness of executive coaching are being optimised and suggests further research is needed to both prove its effectiveness and, importantly, what changes in its delivery are likely to improve it. There is little research on why or how coaching should work, under what circumstances and on what behaviours coaching is likely to have success (Feldman and Lankau, 2005). Wasylyshyn (2003) believes it is not understood and would be valuable

to know which executives will profit the most from coaching and for how long any behavioural changes are maintained. Also, it is not clear which coaching approach is the most effective, while simultaneously credibility and understanding is not helped by the huge claims made by advocates for branded methods (Berglas, 2002; Peterson, 2011).

The guidance on the matching of a coach to coachee is contradictory, which must be a problem as it is thought that the coaching relationship is vital (Peterson, 2011). Some claim the coach and coachee should have similar backgrounds to aid the initial relationship, while others think different histories will mean the coach will ask more fundamentally challenging questions (Underhill et al., 2007). 'Chemistry sessions' are common best practice, yet Cox (2008) finds chemistry is usually a vague term and that trying to match on this basis is not useful. It is not clear that the time and effort of the matching process is not wasted. Although the coaching relationship is taken to be the biggest factor in explaining good outcomes, just 9 out of 114 executives felt there was unhelpful chemistry with their coach (Thach, 2002). As Peterson (2011) suggests even if a process of chemistry sessions is invested in, as executives do not know how to evaluate coaches, they just choose the person they like best.

Parallel to the matching problem is a lack of proof about what makes the best coach and what the best potential background is in terms of experiences and skills. While practitioner experts are confident that active listening and communication skills, assessment and feedback skills, integrity, and empathy are essential, there is limited evidence from research that these are the abilities that make a difference in a coach's effectiveness (Peterson, 2011). In terms of previous experience, there are different opinions on whether coaches need to be psychologists. Wasylyshyn (2001) considers that non-psychologically trained coaches will not be able to change dysfunctional behaviours and Berglas (2002) suggests they will ignore the psychological problems and such coaches can make a bad situation worse. However, others are against a psychological background for executive coaches such as Filipczak (1998) who suggests therapists, who are without business experience, are simply moving into executive coaching because of the lack of earning potential in mental health work. Coaches who come from the business world may be sceptical of Wasylyshyn's (2001) suggestion that psychologists can make up for their lack of experience simply by reading business literature and doing some training.

2.3.3 Why coaching may be held back in organisational settings

The lack of insight into how coaching works or which type of coach or process is more effective, can cause executive coaching to be seen as a "black box" (Feldman and Lankau, 2005). It may not be surprising that potential consumers of coaching can be sceptical about the benefits claimed (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009) and several surveys suggest many organisations believe they are not extracting the maximum benefit from executive coaching (Earley & Masarech, 2009; Jarvis *et al.*, 2006; McDermott *et al*., 2007). Another issue undermining buyer confidence is that it is too easy to call oneself an executive coach. Somewhat worryingly, Peterson (2011) claims that many coaches have launched their business with a weekend's study and Wellner (2006) suggests that hairdressers face much tougher licensing requirements. Some organisations have countered this uncertainty by only considering certified coaches but this is undermined somewhat by a lack of generally accepted standards for qualification (Peterson, 2011).

Coaching may be held back in organisations due to coachee resistance. Goldberg (2005) claims that coaching is popular, but its effectiveness has been questioned as executives are frequently unwilling to be coached. Despite this reluctance, Goldberg suggests that executive coaching can be an effective management and organisational development tool. Coaching may not suit everyone – Jacobs *et al*. (2018) looked at a sample of teachers and found that 20% were resistant to coaching. Ellam-Dyson and Palmer (2011) found that executives who turned down the opportunity for coaching had significantly lower unconditional self-acceptance than those who wanted to be coached.

Related to coaching resistance is the suggestion that certain executive types are 'uncoachable'. These types include those instructed to have coaching who do not trust the coach or the system or are concerned that the coaching is a covert form of performance management (Naficy and Isabella, 2008). Bacon and Spear (2003) proposed a scale of uncoachability, at the more difficult end of which were categories that included executives who were narcissistic, one of the dark-triad personality types along with Machiavellianism and psychopathy (Paulhus and Williams, 2002).

Grover and Furnham (2016) indicate that coaching is perceived as expensive in absolute terms, with a six-month course of coaching costing between $15,000 and $75,000. Coaching can suffer from allegedly incorrect value comparisons with other interventions: McLellan (2008) reviewed coaching across the UK government and found unhelpful "incorrect" beliefs, including a perceived lack of return on investment in comparison with training courses or an assumption that there is no evidence of coaching effects on the financial results Theeboom *et al.* (2013) also found that doubts about coaching result from the lack of empirical research, the high costs of coaching and the lack of a direct link to a financial benefit.

Against this background, some coaching practitioners have attempted to measure projects' return on investment (ROI); debate continues as to whether this is beneficial. Some believe that the value of coaching should be measured by examining the improvement in business results (Parker-Wilkins, 2006). However, Grant *et al.* (2012) believe that ROI is not an accurate measure of coaching benefit, as shown by the wide range of reported values, from 221% to 788%. Grant also remarks that the ROI literature does not consist of academic studies but marketing material produced by the HR professionals who organised the coaching or the coaching companies providing the service. Burt and Talati (2017) suggest measuring performance indicators alone on coachee performance rather than risk the reputational damage of producing inaccurate ROI numbers. This area remains unclear in the literature. Much of what Grant refers to as ROI 'marketing material' is still being created; this may be counter-productive if the purchasing executives do not believe it. Conversely, business will remain sceptical to investing in significant coaching programme purchases if no bottom-line benefit can be demonstrated.

The attitude or access of HR departments is another area where potential obstacles can arise. HR has a critical role in advising executives to obtain coaching help (Petra, 2012). Rekalde *et al.* (2017) believe that the confidential nature of coaching can prevent purchasing because some human resource managers prefer executive training courses which they believe give them better control of the content and process. These authors also suggest that even though coaching is more effective, its

expense causes HR leaders to prefer training for routine work. Thompson and Cox (2017) found that many project managers had not been made aware that coaching was available and, thus, did not consider using it to help with their programmes. McKinsey & Co (2017) note an access problem for HR that could stop coaching being presented to PROC leaders as a useful additional intervention in change programmes. Although HR departments recognise coaching as a useful development action for top managers, Mckinsey found that HR plays only a small role in radical organisational change. Their survey of 1,657 company executives who had gone through a transformation within the previous five years found that only 56% of HR leaders were seen as visibly engaged, compared with 85% of other senior leaders.

Thus, suggestions have been made as to why coaching should help in organisations and change situations, but there is little evidence of a direct impact on the organisations' bottom line. Despite the lack of directly relevant current research, the literature implies the type of obstacles that may prevent organisations from buying coaching during change programmes. The procurement barriers to executive coaching by organisations include the perceived risk of coaching resistance, the high cost and the inability to prove that it provides value for money. HR is also important: often the gatekeepers to this service, its officers sometimes prefer other interventions that they can control more directly. In relation to organisational change specifically, HR is often not close to the planning of these programmes and so cannot suggest adding executive coaching. Coaching reluctance at an individual level also suggests a difficulty. PROC leadership may assume that, if the problematic executives are change-resistant, they are also likely to be resistant to coaching, in which case it would be a waste of money to provide them with coaches.

2.4 Executive coaching and the pressures on the senior executives implementing PROC

This section aims to check that the problems facing PROC leaders are of a type suitable to be resolved or reduced by executive coaching. It will examine the critical issues faced by senior executives implementing PROC to identify how much they overlap with those addressed by executive coaching. This is important as, if there is no suggestion as to why or how coaching might be applicable, then it would be no surprise that executive coaching is not more widely used.

A very few top managers set the change strategy. Out of the seven roles mentioned by McKinsey & Co (2017), few decide on the overall design and target allocation. Most people involved in PROC are focused on implementation, taking orders from above, executing them and then cascading decisions to the next level. As these executives are placed between the CEO and staff, the literature refers to them as 'middle managers'. However, that is a somewhat misleading term for this study: in the large organisations considered in this research, many PROC executives will be leaders of divisions, national organisations or global functions. This research will use the term 'senior executive' to avoid the 'middle manager' label which risks implying a more junior role with a downstream reporting line of just ten or twenty staff.

2.4.1 Balancing act

The senior executives perform a balancing act between three conflicting tasks, with critical roles in goal attainment, employee relations and reporting to the corporate level (Stensaker and Langley, 2010). They must implement the change under local conditions, communicate upwards to keep their senior leaders satisfied and maintain a good relationship with their anxious employees. Simply indulging senior leaders and forcing through the change in an inappropriate way can lead to troubled employees, whose fears are not adequately heard. However, focusing solely on keeping staff happy could hinder the implementation of the necessary change. Stensaker and Langley (2010) believe that executives are most effective when they partly resist corporate demands; in this way, they initially achieve similar results with less local disruption and turmoil, and ultimately obtain corporate approval. If divisional leaders fail to achieve this balance, it damages both them and the change.

The difficulty and importance of correct upward management are consistent with the findings of Doyle (2002), who reported that prioritising relational concerns above implementation and political considerations can lead to the executive being regarded as disloyal and change-resistant by senior leadership. Caldwell (2003) found that change significantly affected these senior divisional executives, as they are both directly affected as a result of the change and also the people who must make it happen. To complicate matters further for these executives, Caldwell also notes that managers today have less direct authority and must engage in more enabling and empowering.

Bryant and Stensaker (2011) believe that to carry out this balancing act, managers need to acquire change management skills in addition to their traditional professional roles. These new skills help them manage competing demands in negotiating how work is to be organised with leaders above them, staff below them and peers jostling alongside them. An executive quote illustrates how some well-judged pushback to leadership worked in the medium term:

> *I told corporate management that we would not be going as far as we first had described. They frowned on this at first, but then it matured a little ... we got support, and they wished us good luck. We felt we had the support from the whole system, and we had expected more resistance from corporate.*

During PROC, divisional leaders are placed in difficult positions, as a result, Bryant and Stensaker (2011, p. 356) claim, of unfair expectations: they are expected to behave as change leaders while remaining 'loyal implementers', which could be 'possibly unfair'. Atkinson (2016) suggests that a mistake often made by sponsors is to believe that everyone is as committed to the change as they are. This belief is usually erroneous, and it is the change agents initiating the transformation further down the line who meet the resistance first. Atkinson (2016) claims that this causes changes to fail because too much is imposed on those expected to live with the changes without their agreement.

It is difficult for these divisional leaders in PROC to maintain high levels of personal motivation. They are expected to stay positive about change even though it could damage their future employment (Dopson and Neumann, 1998). Strebel (1996) claims that too few top managers acknowledge that change is disruptive and neither sought-after nor welcomed by many in the structure beneath them. Although change programmes are often originated and organised by top leaders, the implementation must allow for emerging issues as other levels navigate local issues, differing

concerns and interpretations. These problems start to show the messiness in the detail of PROC implementation and suggest that a subtle approach is needed from these senior executives to improve the likelihood of success (Balogun *et al.*, 2005).

Molinsky and Margolis (2005, p. 256) describe an "intense internal drama" for executives when they are required to perform "necessary evils", defined as "tasks in which an individual must, as part of his or her job, perform an act that causes emotional or physical harm to another human" to accomplish some seemingly greater good. Redundancies are a typical example: Clair and Dufresne (2004) describe change managers as "playing the grim reaper" in deciding who lose their job in a downsizing exercise and then carrying out the necessary action. They then have to manage the adverse reactions to these decisions. Clair and Dufresne noted, in particular, the conflict that occurs when change agents are required to keep a future downsizing confidential when planning who is to be laid off: amid frequent rumours, they are forced to deceive and lie to others. Bryant and Stensaker (2011) described how top leaders create the change strategy, but how executives one or more levels down have to announce and push through changes in which they may not believe. In this situation, these executives feel conflicted and deceitful, expressed by one as, "You know you're sort of speaking out of both sides of your mouth."

2.4.2 Executive self-care without coaching

While implementing PROC, it is difficult for senior executives to do the right thing while looking after their own mental health. These divisional-level leaders need to find ways through this maze of pressure, unfair expectations and, sometimes, the unenviable task of firing their staff. They need to find a way to keep their equilibrium and mental wellbeing – both for their own good and to be effective for the organisation. This requirement was noted in the PROC literature, but there is little advice on achieving it.

One technique used by executives in the literature is to continuously analyse and judge their superiors' statements and actions to determine their incentives, aims and abilities. These interpretations can influence executives' attitudes to the whole change programme (Huy, Corley and Kraatz, 2014). Wright and Barling (1998) emphasised that, in the face of the personal overload caused by downsizing others, executives face social and organisational isolation and a decline in emotional wellbeing and family functioning. In response, they often resort to searching for meaning in what they are doing. Bryant and Stensaker (2011) also noticed that managers are likely to try to rationalise their actions, seeking to protect their self-esteem and wellbeing. However, this self-protection may result in executives not taking action at all. In some situations, according to Molinsky and Margolis (2005), executives avoid giving unpleasant messages, instead offering pleasantries and comforting reassurance. Although the manager may rationalise this as being sensitive to the staff member, in fact, they are simply protecting their own feelings. This behaviour is consistent with the view of Modell (2012) that managers pursue self-interests which can conflict with the strategies required to deliver shareholder value.

Bryant and Stensaker (2011) suggest strategies from management literature to help these executives in the middle cope with the squeeze created by pressures from multiple directions: they recommend that managers grow informal horizontal networks for advice and support instead of looking to

superiors, and actively celebrate small wins. In addition, they may handle brutal power and relationship concerns by addressing these one at a time; if juggling multiple roles is too hard, they might tactically decide to do less or ask senior leadership to explicitly state the deliverables, deadlines and logic of the change objectives. Perrewé and Nelson (2004) suggest that political skill can help these executives survive the stresses caused by the conflict between and within roles during change. Overall, the advice suggested in the literature appeared unlikely to provide a solution on its own for executives caught in the middle of these conflicts. Without such a solution, executives protect themselves first rather than the programme, particularly if, as discussed next, the top managers are using harsh, political and possibly Machiavellian techniques to maintain the pressure.

2.4.3 Internal politics in change programmes

Experienced change managers use 'direct methods' to save time and manipulate plans to completion. Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) find that, although support is helpful when fear and anxiety are causing resistance, seasoned managers often avoid this approach because supportive methods can be expensive and time-consuming.

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979) describe co-option as a standard manipulation in change programmes. Co-opting an individual involves giving them a high-status role in the change but, importantly, not to gain their advice but purely their endorsement. Kotter and Schlesinger next describe coercion, which exerts pressure to accept change by threatening employees with loss – for instance of a promotion, being transferred or fired. In addition to these coercion and co-option techniques, manipulation can be used in the specific interpretation of facts, creating a narrative that frightens people into changing. Also available is negotiation: offering inducements, which is particularly suitable when dealing with dominant individuals or groups who will lose out after the change.

Buchanan (2008) cites common tactics of "networking, leveraging 'key players' support, charming power brokers, bending the rules, and self-promotion", and notes rarer tactics, such as the use of misinformation, rumours, and compiling 'dirt' for threats. Crouzet (2014) suggests that, although resistance can be managed with negotiation, manipulation or intimidation, these can have lasting consequences. They report political tactics ranging from networking and building allies through to more underhand methods such as co-option, coercion and hiding motives. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) explain how underlying motives can be disguised by how they are framed: cynicism can be presented as realism, arrogance as authoritative knowledge, and callousness wrongly described as the 'thick skin of experience'. Newman (2007) identifies claiming that those opposing change agents are inept as a political approach to undermine change.

Some of the more extreme direct methods described above may be considered as at one end of the internal political spectrum. McAllister *et al*. (2015) claim that politics at work is neither bad nor good; it is merely a neutral and permanent work-life feature. At the same time, Hartley *et al.* (2015) summarise political astuteness as a valuable set of capabilities. Rather than focus on whether such tactics should be present and are ethically justifiable, researchers have focused on pragmatic aspects.

The consensus is that senior executives need a degree of awareness and political skills to be effective during PROC. Buchanan (2008) surveyed 252 senior and middle managers and found that most managers accept that change agents must be politically capable. Only 9% agreed with the statement "Change agents who avoid organisational politics are more likely to succeed in their roles." Buchanan suggests that 'only innocents' believe they can ignore organisational politics; those who believe that they deserve respect for avoiding politics will become an easy target and will fail to get things done. Dorrow and Blazejewski (2003) believe that political behaviour is inevitable in change and is useful in aiding radical transformation. Antal-Mokos (1998) found that 'micro-political' actions by change agents during PROC were a key determinant of success or failure. Similarly, Atkinson (2016) emphasises the importance of understanding the undercurrents of culture and politics in an organisation, as this will impact how the transformation evolves.

Direct and internal political approaches are a fact of organisational life, and executives may do well to increase their skills in these. Perrewé *et al.* (2000) argue that increased political acumen helps senior leaders to reduce role stress as it expands relational competence, feelings of effectiveness and confidence. Baddeley and James (1987) also claim that political skills are prized among managers. However, Buchanan (2008) notes that, although change agents use political tactics, only 20% have had any training in this area. Arguably, this leaves a gap that could be filled by executive coaching support in PROC.

Although 'office politics' is the commonly used term, Machiavellianism is at the heart of this behaviour and precedes political actions (Ferris *et al.*, 2002). It has been linked with command and power (Christie and Geis, 1970), and some suggest that psychopathic traits, of which Machiavellianism is one, can help executives reach the top (Landay, Harms and Credé, 2019). Furnham (2018) notes that the more aggressive type of office politics has often been considered equivalent to Machiavellianism. There is a suggestion that not all political managers are Machiavellian but that some are "savvy managers" who use these techniques in an ethical way. However, even Deluca (1999), who introduced this concept, finds that while 80% try to avoid politics, of the 20% who are politically active, just 5% act with this 'savvy' integrity. It appears that the degree of overlap between internal politics and Machiavellianism is significant, and if Machiavellianism is measured then, to a large extent, so is political ability.

2.4.4 Executive coaching suitability given the challenges of PROC

Researchers' claims that executive coaching aids organisational change, as discussed in 2.2, become more robust when considered in the context of the pressure and challenges on senior executives in PROC highlighted above. It can be seen how the specific issues in PROC are suited to executive coaching interventions. Being enabled to step back from the pressure and think through options strategically, as described by (Grant, 2014) could help executives who find themselves caught in the middle of these situations. Executive coaching would give the opportunity to address the individual, interpersonal and other side elements mentioned by Cosstick (2010). The indication from Theeboom *et al*. (2013) of increasing hope and optimism appears all the more critical given the personal overload and family impact that have now been described. The HR director quote cited by Nanduri (2017), concerning the coach as a safe confidant, fits the social isolation and self-esteem issues caused by being deceitful about redundancies. Bickerich *et al.* (2018) suggest that coaching helps

with the turbulence of change programmes by assisting in three areas, and these fit with the balancing act described by (Stensaker and Langley, 2010).

When considering professional survival in the face of direct or political pressure, coaching appears to be a feasible solution. Hartley *et al.* (2007) recommend that coaching is one of the steps put in place when considering leading in a political environment, while Doldor (2011) suggests that the mindset with which individuals approach internal politics can be a "major obstacle" in developing the required political dexterity. Working on an individual's mindset to expand their political skill is better suited to coaching than training. Surprisingly, there is little empirical comparison between training and coaching, but Losch *et al.* (2016) found that coaching was more effective than training in addressing this type of issue.

The literature claims that coaching should help PROC implementation to appear reasonably robust and suggests it be added to PROC. The difficulties faced in PROC by senior executives imply a good fit for coaching interventions. It also appears that, despite PROC projects being vital for continued corporate performance with large sums at stake, they are still not delivering quite the results they should. Given the above, it is curious that more evidence has not been found of extensive executive coaching programmes for extended PROC leadership teams, as an additional step in PROC implementation programmes.

This somewhat puzzling situation indicates a need to validate with senior executives how they experience PROC and whether they have seen or could envisage additional executive coaching providing increasing profit during change programmes. The literature hints that examining the influence of HR in coaching procurement and including people in coaching programmes in the context of PROC would be helpful. Moreover, the balancing act between the three aims of goal attainment, employee relations and relations at the corporate level suggests itself as a promising model to explore with senior executives. Qualitative fieldwork would allow an investigation of these points and would also offer the opportunity to ask open questions of these leaders to discover the factors that, from their senior business perspective, may be stopping executive coaching from being added as an extra step in PROC implementations.

2.5 PROC leaders' personality traits as potential obstacles

If the purchase of coaching is sometimes blocked, it would be helpful to determine what is influencing the decision-makers. It is not entirely clear from the literature who authorises executive coaching programmes in PROC. Often, executive coaching is suggested and arranged by the HR department (Petra, 2012) and is a routine operation. However, PROC is a dramatic situation, different from the norm, and Van der Valk *et al.* (2009) note that non-purchasing specialists usually buy the most strategic non-routine services. This implies it is less likely to be carried out by HR. Another departure from routine business processes is that PROC implementation is led by a team of senior leaders at the top of the organisation (Kotter, 1996) who decide how the programme will be run and the specific steps to be taken (Atkinson, 2016). Unlike personal development coaching, which is routine and purchased through HR, in PROC, it is the organisational change leaders who sign off the addition of a coaching program. As the PROC leader decides whether executive coaching is

added, it would be informative to investigate any particular attitudes or personality traits that influence these executives' opinion of coaching.

To approve the coaching investment, the PROC implementation leaders need to be satisfied that external specialist help is essential, not merely desirable, and can be justified to their peers if the need arises (Bäcklund and Werr, 2008). In order to measure quantitatively the attributes associated with PROC leaders approving coaching investment, the question needs to be presented appropriately. A straightforward question along the lines of "How likely are you to authorise a coaching programme in PROC?" may not produce sufficient or accurate responses, but a scale previously created and tested by other researchers – and focused on this question – would represent a more robust approach.

There are no pre-existing scales to measure how likely leaders are to buy executive coaching for PROC. However, on the reasonable assumption that if a leader does not think highly of coaching, they are unlikely to approve large sums of money to add it to their PROC implementation, then a scale finding their favourability to coaching would be an adequate substitute. There is a surprising lack of pre-existing scales measuring coachees' favourability towards coaching, as previous work has primarily focused on whether coaching beneficiaries are more or less effective in their work after coaching rather than on their attitudes about whether benefits outweigh costs. However, Grant (2010) developed a 'decisional balance' scale for measuring executives' perceived attitudes about the benefits and costs of workplace coaching. This research focused on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these executives incorporating coaching into their management style. Although it did not consider the direct costs of hiring external coaches, it did consider costs in terms of time spent, the potential interference with other work objectives and how it compared with different influencing approaches. Grant's scale comprised 12 items on a 7-point Likert scale with a Cronbach alpha of .80.

The earlier part of the literature review concerning PROC revealed how change implementation teams were staffed. The section on the balancing act for executives highlighted the difference in the pressures felt by an executive in head office initiating the change and one leading a division, obliged to interpret directions from above and implement them locally. At the same time, the organisational coaching review suggested that people who had been previously coached reported favourably on the experience. This offered a number of variables for possible inclusion in a survey should a quantitative approach be selected in the method and design exercise. In addition to these single-item questions, the sections discussing why change programmes fail and internal politics suggested that the attitudes of the senior leaders could be important and offer an opportunity to use scale questions on their readiness to change and Machiavellianism.

A lack of readiness to change is frequently cited as a problem and often framed as the reason for PROC failures (Denis *et al.*, 2001). Definitions of change resistance vary, but Lines (2004) proposed that resistance to change creates behaviours that slow – and sometimes stop – transformation efforts. The internal politics in PROC discussed in 2.4.3 showed the lengths to which leaders will go to overcome change resistance and the significance they place on it. In this context, it is worth considering how influential senior executives, who may not be entirely change-ready, would feel

about adding executive coaching to the implementation programme. The earlier review noted the pressures that PROC places on executives, so it is feasible that some will covertly be less enthusiastic about undertaking the turmoil of change again. Grant (2010) found that people with higher levels of wellbeing at work perceived less value in coaching, but no research has been conducted on whether higher change readiness impacts the favourability of an executive towards coaching. Vakola (2014) suggested that, depending on their personality, some people are predisposed to welcome organisational change, whereas others perceive it as a threat. As part of her study, she developed a scale to measure an individual's readiness to change. It comprises just six items but still reports a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .70.

The literature highlighted a certain direct political toughness in many leaders of PROC. It is intriguing whether this characteristic indicates any personality trait likely to make them predisposed towards or against hiring on 'their' budget external coaches to help other leaders or other leaders' team members. An individual with power has substantial control, independence and wellbeing; top teams can be particularly political and it is not uncommon for high-powered executives – paranoid about other team members plotting – to oppress or side-line lower-ranked members or even those of the same rank (Greer, Van Bunderen and Yu, 2017). A leader with absolute power in a change programme may not see the need for additional coaching: weighed against increasing the ability of other executives to push back and resist them, Machiavellian change leaders may prefer direct 'bigger stick' approaches to investment in an executive coaching solution. This, they hope, will bring similar results with less long-term political risk to themselves from peers who have been made more capable through executive coaching.

A number of robust Machiavellian scales are available. The MACH-IV 20-item scale (Christie and Geis, 1970) was the original measure of Machiavellianism, used in the majority of early studies and considered valid and reliable. Those who score highly on this scale have been found to focus on selfish goals and use manipulation to achieve them (Rauthmann, 2013). Rauthmann developed the MACH Trimmed scale, which had a Cronbach alpha of .77, comparable with the MACH-IV, but which included just five items, which is useful as it helps reduce the number of questions in a survey overall.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

2.6.1 Validity of research area

Having considered the change and coaching literature it is now worth pausing to reflect on whether this has any impact on the preliminary choice of coaching in change as a suitable intervention to research. This is relevant following the reflection on the risk of researcher bias discussed in section 1.5, taking account of the source of the research problem and the fact that executive coaching is not the only available intervention (2.2.5). In other words, is it apparent from the literature that coaching in PROC is still worthy of research? The first question to consider is whether this literature has suggested that there is still a problem with change programmes and that further research in the field would be of value, rather than merely being of interest to the researcher due to his work

background. The second question to examine is are the problems within change programmes suited to executive coaching or are other interventions so much more appropriate that they should be investigated instead.

With regard to the first question, it does seem clear that there is still space for the performance of change programmes to improve and given their size this is important generally. While the level of dissatisfaction experienced by the commissioners of change programmes is unlikely to be exactly the 70% failure rate, which is frequently suggested, there is evidence that these change programmes have plenty of opportunity for improvement. Although the review found there are multiple ways of describing and classifying organisational change, improving PROC in particular matters as it is towards the more dramatic end of these changes and is often "a fundamental and risk-laden reboot of a company" (Reeves *et al.*, 2018).

With regard to the second question, many of the problems identified within change programs relate to people issues. In particular, the distinction between how well 'Hard S' subjects are handled compared to the 'Soft S' subjects (Handy, 2007), plus the claim that one-third of leaders may just ignore people issues (Woodward and Hendry, 2004) suggests more help is needed on the people side of change. There are multiple possible people interventions available, but which would be appropriate in these situations does need to be considered specifically against the precise PROC challenges faced by change leaders. This is to ensure they are helping with the actual problems faced and not just adding another activity to peoples' workloads. Senior executive leaders in PROC face significant and distinct pressures. They must deliver the change in their unique local circumstances, push back appropriately against top leaders without gaining the reputation of being change resistant, and they need to maintain a relationship with anxious employees, while likely having to hide facts from them, break promises to them and probably fire some of them. At the same time, they are likely to be worried about losing their own jobs, while also aiming to make the most of any new opportunities for advancement as other executives are removed and new divisional structures are created. Their workload is likely to be even higher than usual and it all will be against an internal political background where they will have incomplete and inaccurate information or will not be able to fully trust their peers. The appropriate interventions must help manage those specific challenges, not take excessive amounts of executive time and be fully confidential.

Executive coaching and other potential people interventions were considered earlier. The question is not whether one of these other interventions should be replaced by executive coaching, just whether any of the others are evidently so much better that the research should pivot to one of those. The 'management level' OD interventions described were action research, action learning, conflict management, group problem solving, meeting design and facilitation, talent management, team building and team development. They all have value and arguably should be part of change programmes but they are not confidential. For all their strengths this lack of complete personal confidentiality in these interventions is a serious drawback in such a political environment. The alternative individual level OD intervention was executive development, which was described as interventions such as short training courses, longer qualification courses and secondments. While these interventions are better at protecting confidentiality, they lack direct applicability to the specific executive challenges faced in PROC. Another problem with some is that they use up a lot of executive time. Short training courses are perfectly appropriate to reskill staff in specific tasks but

less useful for the senior leaders as they implement the change. Issues with 'training transfer' and the historically poor focus on organisational rather than individual outcomes, especially during organisational change is also a potential weakness of relying purely on training courses. Secondment would be seen as a risky move for any executive during a PROC – if someone is away during change it is likely there will not be a role for them to come back to afterwards. The longer-term training courses have an innate value but in a PROC situation, they will likely put extra time pressure into an already hectic period, are expensive and are unlikely to be directly applicable to the immediate problems and specific circumstances.

This comparison suggests that both the 'management level' and personal development interventions have drawbacks for senior PROC executives concerning their direct applicability, confidentiality and time requirement. Executive coaching has less of these issues. Executive coaching has professional ethics and contracting to protect the confidentiality of anything discussed (Brennan and Wildflower, 2010). It usually would take on average less than an hour a week of the executive's time (Kauffman and Coutu, 2009). Whether it is directly applicable to the challenges faced by PROC executives depends on what is agreed upon in the contracting process and the coach's ability, but the earlier literature gives some insight into what could be covered. According to that literature, it is an intervention that enables executives to pause from the routine, to step away from the 'turbulence' of change and to carry out the flexible, strategic thinking required to handle new, unpredictable issues (Grant, 2014). It also helps keep the focus on strategic matters, to put the fear of failure aside and to avoid fixation on minor details. In addition, it has been suggested as a way to increase an executive's political awareness, manage their self-esteem and self-worth and keep sufficient levels of hope and optimism (Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson, 2001; Day *et al.*, 2008; Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). In summary, while the alternative people interventions may well have a valuable place in organisational change, executive coaching has advantages specifically for senior executives during PROC in terms of confidentiality, executive time requirement and applicability to specific PROC challenges. Hence, while being mindful of how the research question came into being, the literature review does not support removing coaching as the subject to be investigated and replacing it with another intervention.

2.6.2 Potential research approaches

In summary, change literature shows a consistent high failure rate for PROC programmes and that they have room to improve. Coaching literature claims executive coaching is effective in PROC but its use is not growing as much as expected. This suggests something else is preventing the procurement of executive coaching in PROC, so what is that? Rather than further research about coaching efficacy, this suggests a study aiming to uncover some of these obstacles would be valuable. Although at this stage the research design is not finalised, the literature review has indicated some areas of interest to guide any qualitative work and also some potential hypotheses should quantitative methods be used.

The literature highlights several areas that could potentially be incorporated into a questionnaire to aid the researcher if undertaking structured or semi-structured interviews. The classification, models and implementation literature leads to questions about what PROC implementations the executives'

have been in, how did they do it and how did it go? The literature on the typical challenges leaders face during change suggests questions to see if those were pressures experienced by participants and if so, how they dealt with them. While the organisational coaching and the coaching in PROC literature prompts questions about how they experienced coaching and in how it helped or not and the involvement of HR departments. The politics and Machiavellian aspects and attitudes of executives could also lead to interesting research questions. Some of the literature claimed coaching to be so relevant to PROC that it is curious it is not in universal use there. This suggests a general question to the participants about whether they noticed that and what factors if any, do they think could be an obstacle to the use of coaching in PROC. Although it is not certain at this stage that a qualitative approach will be used, if it is, such a question might be expressed *as "What do executives think prevents organisations from hiring a team of executive coaches as a standard step in PROC implementations?"*

Turning to potential quantitative work, the literature suggested that within the political nature of change, some personality traits in PROC leaders or other senior executives could cause barriers to coaching procurement. If the PROC decision-makers are not favourable towards coaching it is not unreasonable to assume that would stop the procurement of a change coaching programme. Due to this possibility, three survey scales were reviewed in section 2.5 that might potentially be useful in quantitative field research. How this could work is illustrated in Figure 1. In the centre is the dependent variable 'favourability to coaching'. It is suggested the lower this is, the less likely it is that PROC decision-makers will approve the purchase of a coaching programme. This would be measured by one of the scales discussed in 2.5. To the right are the two independent measures of Machiavellianism and 'change readiness' which it is hypothesised are linked to coaching favourability. Potential scales to measure these were also discussed in 2.5. In the figure on the left-hand side are independent variables relating to the executives' PROC previous experiences. It is hypothesised that these previous experiences could also influence executives' attitudes towards coaching in PROC. These should be measurable by individual questions and do not require scales.

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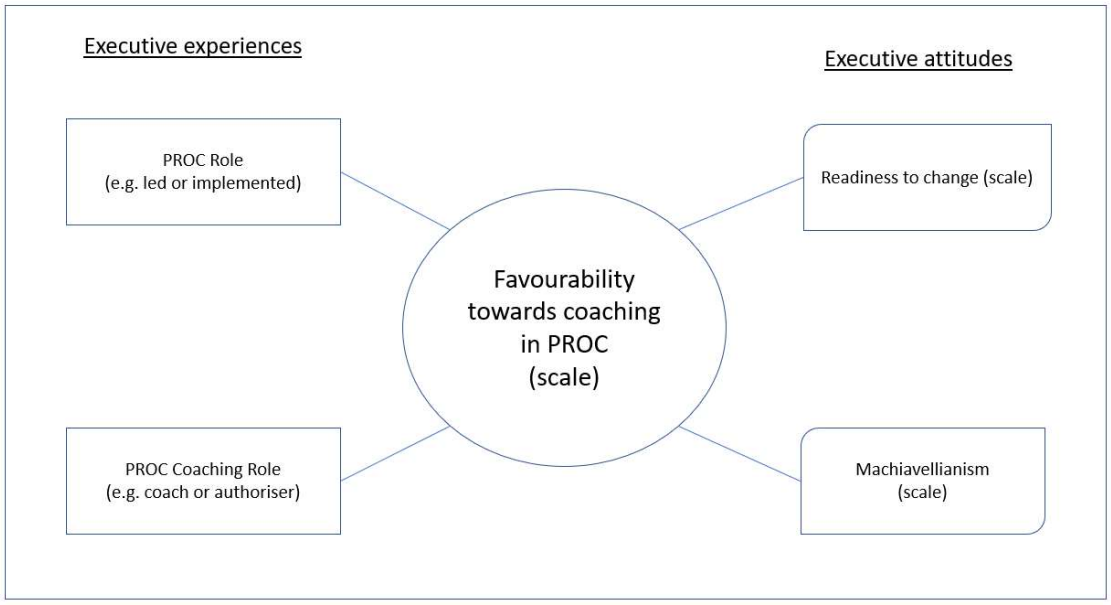

Figure 1. Potential factors associated with favourability towards coaching in PROC

Using Figure 1 it is possible to construct a research question and related hypotheses on how leaders' favourability towards coaching can be influenced by their previous PROC and coaching experiences and their Machiavellianism and change readiness.

The question can be written as "*How does favourability towards coaching vary according to the PROC executive's Machiavellianism, change readiness, or experience?"* with the following four hypotheses:

- H1. Executives who have previously led PROC will be less favourable towards coaching.
- H2. Executives who have not previously been involved in PROC coaching will be less favourable towards coaching.
- H3. Executives who are less change-ready will be less favourable towards coaching.
- H4. Executives who are more Machiavellian will be less favourable towards coaching.

3 Methodology

This chapter will cover the research paradigm and, as the research uses a mixed methodology, the quantitative and qualitative designs. The paradigm section includes why pragmatism was chosen, and how it impacts the design thinking and design process which led to a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative element explains participant selection, the critical aspects in the survey design and the quantitative analysis methods. The qualitative section covers how the interviewees were selected, the questions asked in the interviews and the qualitative analysis steps.

3.1 Paradigm

3.1.1 Influence of personal history on my worldview

As this section concerns my personal viewpoint of the world, it is written in the first person. The narrative will revert to the more conventional third person when discussing the design process. When, decades ago, I completed my undergraduate degree in physics, the course included no meaningful discussion about the philosophy of science. It was just a given. The 'scientific method' was drilled into me as the only possible way; any other ways of thinking were not science, let alone physics. Non-measurable attributes were referred to in a lecture on one occasion as 'metaphysics', but quickly dismissed and never mentioned again. Consistent with this approach, the only compulsory part of the course was lab work, in which the method depended on testing hypotheses with repeatable steps. As students, our understanding of the philosophy behind what we were doing was somewhat like this story from a speech by David Foster Wallace (2009):

> There are these two young fish swimming along, and they happen to meet an older fish swimming the other way, who nods at them and says, "Morning, boys, how's the water?" And the two young fish swim on for a bit, and then eventually one of them looks over at the other and goes, "What the hell is water?"

On entering the business world, my next level of experience and qualifications took me away from experiments and towards just 'what worked'. Chartered Accountancy believed that debits are shown on the left – and as long as everyone followed that system, it worked well. My MBA course focused on what worked to increase shareholder value. I had been schooled in empirical testing, and then to follow rules and create codes to obtain results that worked. Very little consideration was given to the nature of reality or science, because it was not necessary; it was all about being pragmatic. Twenty-five years of employment in large multinational businesses reinforced my habit of focusing simply on 'what works'. I found that what worked in that particular environment was not being right or having the most logical or true arguments. These did not matter; what did matter was reading people and adapting how I persuaded them based on that reading. Evidence in terms of numbers was less important than might be assumed. What mattered in practical terms – what was actually

perceived as truth – was what the people in the meeting believed, either as a group or sometimes just HiPPO (Highest-Paid Person's Opinion).

While studying for this doctorate, I am still working part-time at one of the largest business advisory firms in the world and have a side-business coaching senior executives in other companies. As a result, somewhat alternating view of the world: sometimes I am thinking very hard about what people believe and perceive and how they can change their viewpoint and that of others. At different points in the week, I am immersed in numbers, reviewing AI output. It can become confusing, but this little bit of background helps explain my paradigm, the design approach described below and the discussion and reflective work that come later.

By the time I started the doctorate, I had been schooled first in 'the' scientific method and had then had to change my approach and consider that what mattered in business life was not the truth but how other people perceived situations. If challenged, I might have said that one truth still exists, but the nature of reality was not something that I had to think about much; just pragmatically managing each issue as it arose seemed to work well enough. This pragmatic approach worked well as a practical way of navigating problems in an empirical degree course, a professional qualification, and a demanding work environment. It worked while I was leading a data science team. It still worked while I was acting as an executive coach. However, I certainly hit a problem with this approach when I started this doctorate.

3.1.2 Paradigm and design thinking

I was troubled to find that, at the doctoral level, the starting point is traditionally to decide on the nature of reality. That decision would then determine how I could approach the research question and would restrict the methods I could employ. It felt an arbitrary restraint.

Morgan (2007) refers to the paradigm described by Guba *et al.* (1994) as the metaphysical paradigm. This standard paradigm is based on a hierarchical view and then a sequential approach and is currently the most common way of approaching these discussions. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) outline the key terms as:

- Ontology – assumptions about the nature of reality;
- Epistemology – assumptions about how we know the world, how we gain knowledge, the relationship between the knower and the known;
- Methodology – a shared understanding of the best means to gain knowledge about the world.

A metaphysical paradigm is a top-down approach, according to Morgan (2007). It begins with ontological assumptions about the nature of reality which then restrict subsequent epistemological assumptions about the character of knowledge; in turn, these then limit the methodological assumptions about generating learning. Morgan claims that although Guba *et al.* (1994) suggested ontology, epistemology, and methodology were equally significant, in practice, the top-down orientation emphasised metaphysical questions about the nature of reality and the possibility of

truth. As ontology was considered first, this naturally limited the steps below. Reinforcing this point, Searle (2008, p. 443) asserts that ontology has to precede methodology because "unless you have a clear conception of the nature of the phenomena you are investigating, you are unlikely to develop the right methodology and the right theoretical apparatus for conducting the investigation". Within the metaphysical paradigm, therefore, beliefs about the nature of reality drive the whole research design process. This would not be problematic if researchers agreed on the nature of reality – but they do not. Guba *et al.* (1994) explain that a positivist view sees the universe as having permanent, physical laws and rules of cause and effect; thus, positivists believe that an impartial approach and objective, reproducible results are vital elements of their experiments. In contrast, interpretivist researchers believe there is no universal truth; maintaining complete impartiality is therefore seen as impracticable as a researcher can only analyse from their own viewpoint. These worldviews differ vastly from one another.

The effect of these different beliefs is that they encourage the researcher to go down one of two paths, with different benefits and drawbacks. The interpretivist paradigm enables researchers to gain depth in their findings by looking at experiences and perceptions within a particular social context. The positivist paradigm, on the other hand, allows researchers to use statistics, enabling generalisation, sometimes leading to universal laws and findings (Alharahsheh and Pius 2020). Positivism relies on quantitative techniques and its drawbacks are related to this strict focus on pure data - which can prevent an in-depth understanding as the opportunity to explore and understand the intention and actions of individuals is likely limited. In contrast, interpretivism relies on qualitative techniques. With a belief that reality is subjective and differs for different individuals, this implies each data set is dependent upon the specific people and circumstance it is collected from, making it poorly generalisable (Scotland 2012). According to this philosophy, these separate researcher beliefs about reality – universal or subjective – drive assumptions about how to find out about the world and therefore the methodology to use. This might be satisfactory if I strongly believed in either positivism or interpretivism, as in either case, the drawbacks of the paradigm chosen and the benefits of the one foregone would be less relevant. However, as someone who does not believe either extreme very much and ideally would like to avoid both sets of drawbacks as much as possible, this is not a satisfactory approach.

I was initially perplexed as to why social science tied itself into these complicated knots. Morgan (2007) described the conversation as started by researchers who believed in qualitative techniques but were held back by the assumption that high-quality research must be quantitative. To challenge that assumption, they (rather brilliantly in my view), moved the discourse up a level to address the nature of reality rather than continuing to argue over the relative merits of qualitative and quantitative methods. In creating the metaphysical constructs of ontology, epistemology and methodology, they enabled a new argument. As ontology represented a belief, researchers could then follow either a quantitative or a qualitative route depending on their view. From a constructivist perspective, this change in the conversation was effective. Indeed, this technique of 'changing the playing field' is one I have seen in business negotiations. Although the history related above is a simplification, it gave me a useful perspective. Now I understood its origin, my view was that perhaps the top-down metaphysical approach was not the only way; perhaps I should consider using a pragmatist paradigm.

A paradigm in social science, according to Abbott *et al.* (2004), is used as a device to help decide how to research a problem. Pragmatism is put forward as a paradigm that enables mixed methods and provides a way to avoid the "false binary distinction between quantitative and qualitative" (Creswell, 2011). Betzner (2008) places post-positivism and constructivism at either end of a paradigm continuum, implying a form of compromise. However, seeing pragmatism as a compromise in the middle of the metaphysical paradigm hints at a fudge and feels unsatisfactory. Morgan (2007) suggests treating it as a separate paradigm that concentrates on the nature of experience, in contrast to the metaphysical paradigm that targets the nature of reality. Approached thus, pragmatism is not a compromise within the metaphysical paradigm but a separate, alternative and equally valid approach.

Having found my way to pragmatism and being content with this approach, I next considered what this meant for my methodology. The importance given to the research question in pragmatism means that research that brings together quantitative and qualitative analysis is feasible and even desirable (Bryman, 2006). That said, although the use of mixed methods may be increasing, it is less well-established than other approaches. Alise and Teddlie (2010) note that quantitative methods and the underlying post-positivistic paradigm are prevalent in articles in elite journals. While the use of mixed-methods research is higher in applied disciplines, it still comprises only 16% of papers and just 6% in pure fields. The use of a pragmatic paradigm and mixed methods appears, therefore, to need more justification than, for example, a post-positivist and quantitative approach. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) suggest that, in practice, many investigators address their research questions through any methodological device available, using the pragmatist credo of 'what works'. They claim that, for most researchers aiming for a comprehensive examination of a research problem, the methodology is less critical than the research question itself; their worldview is only relevant, theoretically and, even then, has little impact. Kaushik *et al.* (2019) summarise this as the ability of the pragmatist researcher to select the research design, including the methodology, that is most effective in addressing the research question. These attributes led to the pragmatist paradigm becoming established as a favoured method for practical-oriented researchers, often combined with mixed methods (Biesta, 2010; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011). 'What works' as a credo certainly fits my approach and personal history, and mixed methods appeal as being most likely to enable a thorough investigation of the question.

3.1.3 Design process

Kaushik *et al.* (2019, p. 8) highlight research design as playing "a crucial role in bridging the gap between research questions and research method". This section will explain the design process used. Morgan (2007) describes a number of steps undertaken in pragmatic, iterative research design: in this approach – that often reflects reality – the researcher goes through several rounds of designing the research: selecting the methods, reflecting on the choices made and reconsidering the research question. The design process followed these rounds and the steps laid out in Figure 2.

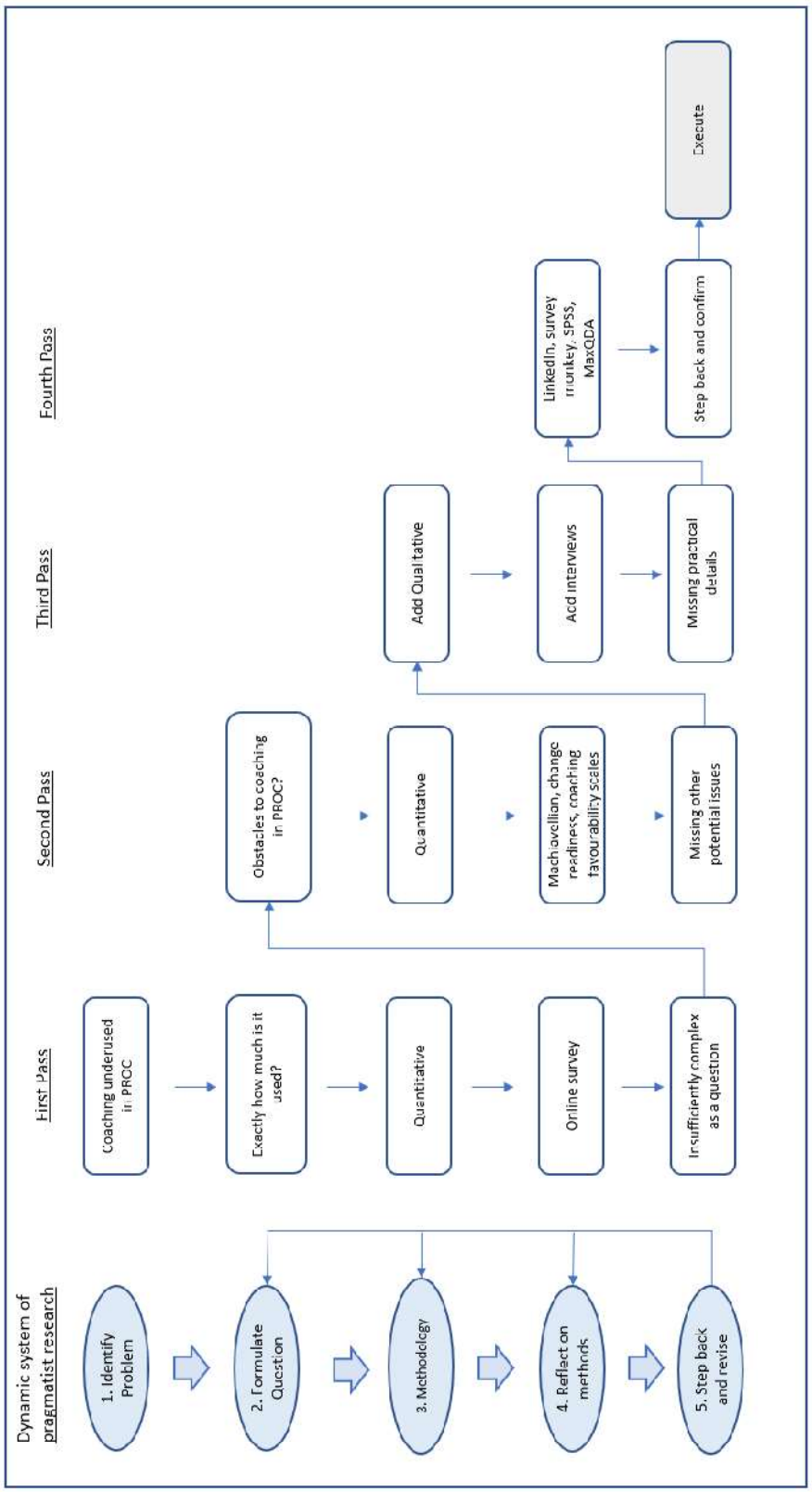

Figure 2. The design process

Following Morgan (2007) Dynamic system of pragmatist research

In Step 1, the researcher encounters a situation and recognises it as a potential research problem. The literature review had implied that executive coaching would be beneficial in PROC; yet at the same time, it was underused. This suggested executive coaching in PROC as a potential research problem.

In Morgan's second step, the pragmatic researcher reflects on the problem using their existing beliefs, leading to the formulation of a problem statement. The initial question, shown in the 'First Pass' column of Figure 2, concerned the claimed underuse of coaching in PROC. The search for quantitative evidence to support that claim defined the research question at this stage as 'How much coaching is there currently during PROC?' Although this was still a draft question, the third step in the First Pass considered possible ways to address this 'how much' question, which led to a quantitative methodology. With this established, the fourth step in the First Pass chose an online survey as a suitable method.

The fifth step was to reflect on the choices made. Morgan (2007) observes that, in a pragmatic approach, the research is guided by the researcher's own beliefs and also by the experiences and opinions of other researchers in the same field. This step can lead to a revision of the design, even to the extent of reformulating the research question. Since advice from other researchers was that the question of 'how much' was insufficiently complex for a thesis, for the second pass, the question was reformulated as 'what are the obstacles to executive coaching in PROC?'

The literature review suggested a degree of plotting and paranoia between leaders, with the more Machiavellian senior executives not favourable towards executive coaching and potentially blocking its use. This factor added a Machiavellian scale to the survey design. The literature review also found that not all executives will favour radical change, which could impact how PROC is planned, so a readiness to change scale was added to the survey requirement. The review also suggested that executives with different ranks, PROC roles or coaching experience could have different views on the value of coaching. The design, therefore, incorporated questions related to these prior experiences. These design additions can be seen in Figure 2, in Step 4 of the second pass. At the end of the second pass, the reflection stage generated a realisation that this research should focus on all the obstacles to executive coaching in PROC implementation, not solely those due to the mindset of senior leaders. This realisation was based on the literature that discussed other factors, such as the high cost of coaching or the preference of some HR professionals for training over coaching interventions.

This broadening of the research design required a reconsideration of what would be the most appropriate methodology. Whether the benefits and drawbacks of the quantitative would outweigh those of a qualitative approach in this situation as either would be acceptable under a pragmatic paradigm. It had become apparent through the literature review and the design process so far, that while it was likely there were several factors potentially influencing the use of executive coaching in PROC, the theory behind why that might be is relatively limited as this is a new field of research. As a quantitative methodology relies more on predetermined hypotheses, a qualitative approach is more useful for 'unravelling the unknown' and so is helpful when there is less theory about the data (Eyisi, 2016; Leedy *et al.*, 2019). Qualitative research is also well suited to examine real-life situations

within a social context, including human thought, reasoning and behaviour. The experiences of the participants have the opportunity to be understood and their 'voices heard' only in qualitative work. While with quantitative the direction of the research is defined before the start by the researcher – possibly missing other important insights from participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Eyisi, 2016; Leedy *et al.*, 2019). These factors suggested strong arguments in favour of using qualitative methodologies for this research because as well as this being a relatively new field, it is based around political situations where the leaders' reasoning is important and it would be a missed opportunity if their insights were not heard.

On the other hand, there would be considerable benefits to a quantitative approach. According to Eyisi (2016), quantitative is intuitively understood as being scientific in nature because of its use of statistical analysis and 'hard data' measurable figures. Considering this with regard to the senior executive element of the potential audience, while many of these may be intrigued by stories from leaders like them, they will still claim to act on data. To this non-researcher group, the quantitative appearance of being more scientific could be appealing (putting aside any discussion about whether qualitative research is not scientific as that will rightly be strongly disputed by qualitative academics). Also as it uses numbers it is easier to simplify without oversimplifying, unlike the unstructured findings with qualitative (De Vaus, 2013; Leedy *et al.*, 2019). Rather than the, perhaps minor factor, of attractiveness to lay audiences, quantitative has other benefits over qualitative. The ability to generalise is an important difference. While qualitative work benefits from being dynamic (Johnson *et al.*, 2012) this can limit the generalisability of findings beyond the immediate group studied (De Vaus, 2013). This is much less of a problem with quantitative methods and, with this approach, findings made from one group, when based on a good design, can be taken to be generalisable with others (Eyisi, 2016).

Replicability is another issue with qualitative approaches. Qualitative research is open to criticism that as it consists of reports of personal views and feelings the data is not reliable and inconsistent compared to quantifiable numbers (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Also, with a less structured procedure and reliance on the researcher's interpretation, there is a risk that the same qualitative research could be redone but a different result would be found by another researcher (Bryman, 2012). Maintaining researcher objectiveness is easier in quantitative work due to the way information is collected, for instance, as numerical data via a survey. This was particularly attractive given the apparent closeness of this researcher to the subject and the risks of bias as discussed in the introduction. However, these benefits of objectiveness do come at the expense of a more distant relationship to the phenomena which can make it difficult to understand in depth what is occurring (Eyisi, 2016).

In summary, there were potential benefits to both approaches in this study. The qualitative methodology would enable exploration of applies to real-life contexts and can incorporate human thought and reasoning and get to hear the voices of the participants. This is an applicable situation here – it is a completely real-life human practical situation where how senior executives reason is an important factor. Plus with the credibility of doing a doctorate while also being in a prestigious global consultancy, this was an opportunity for the researcher to get access to many top managers and it would seem wasteful if their voice and insights were not fully heard. But the quantitative methodology also had many strengths that would be useful for this research question. Quantitative

outcomes would be generalisable, replicable and arguably more objective. These would be important benefits. Also, it may be easier to simplify the findings while not oversimplifying. And finally, perhaps not as important from a research point of view, but recognising this is a professional doctorate, the ability to potentially produce work that would be intuitively understood by business leaders as scientific and possibly actionable was attractive.

This stage in the design process demonstrated that choosing one of the two standard methodologies over the other would lose at least some of the respective benefits discussed above. To avoid this the mixed-method approach, referred to as the third methodological movement (Tashakkori et al. 2003), was considered as Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, p. 8) suggest it is an option when "one data source is insufficient … and there is a need to obtain more complete and corroborated results". These authors also suggest mixed methods as being suitable for researchers working under a pragmatic paradigm, which is the case here.

Creswell and Plano Clark describe three core designs depending on the sequencing of the qualitative and quantitative stages. What they term the 'convergent design' collects both sets of qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, which is why it can also be referred to as a concurrent or parallel design. Their 'exploratory sequential design' collects qualitative data first and then quantitative while the 'explanatory sequential design' does things in the opposite order and collects quantitative first and then qualitative. There are different primary intentions to each arrangement. The intent of a convergent design is "to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic". While this has the benefit of compressing the timeline it does create problems in merging numerical data and text data into one database. The intent of an exploratory sequential design is for the qualitative stage to develop the quantitative method and is often used where there is no guiding framework or theory and when instruments need to be developed and tested. The intent of an explanatory sequential design is to use the qualitative element to shed light on why the quantitative results occurred and how they might be explained. It also lends itself to the researcher using quantitative results about participants to guide purposeful sampling for the qualitative phase (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

The difficulty of handling qualitative and quantitative data in parallel, with the risk of overwhelming workload plus the challenge of bringing them together in a meaningful way as the work progressed made the convergent design less attractive. When considering the two sequential approaches, the literature review had suggested some hypotheses and possible instruments that could be used so there was less of a need for the exploratory sequential design. However, the explanatory sequential design was attractive as it would enable insight into interesting or surprising quantitative results (assuming that there were going to be some). It would also help ensure that the participants chosen for an interview were the most relevant ones, given the interesting or surprising results from the quantitative work, again assuming at this stage that there would be some.

There are some integral limitations with the explanatory sequential design. One difficulty is that this design takes longer to implement due to its two phases, which have to be carried out one after the other. While this was unhelpful it was decided it was still possible to complete in time. A second issue is that the interview questions cannot be finalised until the survey results have been analysed. This is a problem when securing ethical committee approval before field research can begin but it

can be overcome by tentatively framing the questions and accepting that amendments may potentially need to be resubmitted if they materially change after the quantitative analysis. The final issue caused by the sequencing is that the selection criteria of individuals for interviews cannot be specified until after the survey stage. In this case, this was mitigated by asking all survey participants if they would be prepared to be interviewed if later selected.

Therefore, because of this reflective part of the design process, rather than a purely quantitative approach, it was decided to use mixed methods with an explanatory sequence design. The purpose of using mixed methods was to add a qualitative element to hear the voices and insights of the senior executives for more complete and corroborated results. Using an explanatory sequence gave the opportunity for qualitative insight into the quantitative results and to use the quantitative results to pick the most relevant participants for the interviews. With that determined the appropriate methods could be decided upon.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) give examples of mixed-method data collection techniques. These include sourcing quantitative data from existing records (such as health files), surveys, experiments or observations. With qualitative data, interviews and focus groups are often cited, although case studies and artefacts such as books or board minutes could also be an option. Focus groups were considered but rejected because of the lack of confidentiality, which could be an issue given discussions would cover substantial, commercially sensitive topics. Surveys and interviews were achievable within the time and access level available to the researcher and so, as part of Step 4, these were chosen as the methods for data collection. Also decided upon at this point was the use of thematic analysis for the qualitative work, while the quantitative data would be examined via standard statistical enquiry aided by the use of a statistical package.

Having made those changes to the design, the final, fifth pass determined the software tools to be used and confirmed that the overall design was satisfactory. Now that a mixed methodology, its sequencing, and data collection tools had been decided upon, it remained to choose the most appropriate approaches to use for the quantitative and qualitative analysis. The decision concerning the quantitative approach was straightforward in that it would be driven by the hypotheses suggested in 2.6.2 and depended on the types of variables being examined. The question in 2.6.2 was “How does favourability towards coaching vary according to the PROC executive’s Machiavellianism, change readiness, or experience?” The associated four hypotheses can be described operationally as shown below, by expressly including the variables of interest and their relationship to each other (Burns and Dobson, 1981).

Hypothesis 1, that executives who have previously led PROC will be less favourable towards coaching, can be operationalised by comparing the average score on coaching favourability for executives who had previously led PROC, to the average coaching favourability score for those executives who have not led PROC. Similarly, Hypothesis 2, that executives who have not previously been involved in PROC coaching will be less favourable towards coaching, can be operationalised by comparing the average score on coaching favourability for executives who had been involved in PROC coaching to those executives who had not. The required testing of two groups against a continuous variable suggests t-tests as a suitable approach for these two hypotheses and this is discussed more in the quantitative analysis method section 3.2.3. Hypothesis 3, that executives who

are less change-ready will be less favourable towards coaching, may be expressed as an operational hypothesis that change readiness scores will be positively correlated with favourability towards coaching scores. Similarly, Hypothesis 4, that executives who are more Machiavellian will be less favourable towards coaching, can be operationalised as Machiavellian scores being inversely correlated with coaching favourability scores. These two hypotheses required testing of two continuous variables suggesting linear correlation as a suitable approach, as discussed in 3.2.3.

The design of the qualitative analysis had to enable further insight into the quantitative results and also address the wider question of "What do executives think prevents organisations from hiring a team of executive coaches as a standard step in PROC implementations?" There were a number of options that would provide the required flexibility to understand people's experiences and views. However, given the researcher's closeness to the subject, it also was important to not choose a technique that was known to be particularly susceptible to researcher influence or bias. With these references to the question and the researcher in mind the techniques of qualitative content analysis, narrative analysis, grounded theory, IPA and thematic analysis (Seale et al. 2004; Jansen 2020) were reviewed.

Qualitative content analysis, which counts word, phrase or idea frequency was ruled out for needing a more specific question and not being suitable for exploratory work. Narrative analysis was initially appealing because the interviews would consist of listening to people telling stories to analyse what was meant. However, this technique is known to be suspectable to researcher bias and so was not considered suitable. Grounded theory suffers from the same problem and in fact, is said to work best when the researcher knows as little as possible regarding the research question and population. This is not the case in this study, so this method was rejected. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was seriously considered as it is designed to help understand the personal experiences of a person concerning a major life event, which a PROC probably is. The other serious contender at this stage was thematic analysis which looks for meaning in the content by grouping data according to similarities (themes). This is useful for understanding individuals' experiences, possibly in a slightly more general way than the specific personal way of IPA, and with less risk of personal bias. So having come to the final possible qualitative techniques of IPA and thematic analysis, intending to keep the chance of researcher bias to a minimum and to be most applicable for the research question, the final design decision was to choose thematic analysis as the technique for qualitative analysis. How this was implemented is expanded upon in 3.3.3.

In summary, one research question will be answered using both quantitative and qualitative methods and one by a solely qualitative approach. The first research question "How does favourability towards coaching vary according to the PROC executive's Machiavellianism, change readiness, or experience?" will initially be considered through a quantitative lens. With favourability towards coaching as the independent variable, this analysis will use the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to examine Machiavellianism and change readiness, while t-tests will consider whether any differences in the average scores of executives who have led PROC or have been involved in PROC coaching are significant. These results will then be followed up qualitatively in the subsequent interviews. The second question "What do executives think prevents organisations from hiring a team of executive coaches as a standard step in PROC implementations?" will be examined qualitatively through semi-structured interviews with questions that seek to find out whether

executives think coaching could be useful in radical organisational change, whether they have seen it used or experienced it themselves and what, if anything, they think is holding back its use in such situations.

3.2 Quantitative design

The research aim is to find obstacles to the use of executive coaching in PROC. The literature suggested that leaders who are less favourable towards coaching are less likely to support or approve its commissioning, which would be a severe obstacle to its use. Figure 1 illustrated possible relationships between this favourability to coaching and other influencing variables. These will now be used to guide the quantitative design.

3.2.1 Participant selection

Participants needed to have high-ranking roles and an interest in organisational change, as this is the group likely to influence decisions in the creation of PROC implementation programmes and be in a position to create obstacles to the use of executive coaching in transformations. The advanced search capability of LinkedIn was used to target this senior executive type. Using this software, potential participants were selected based on the following criteria: of senior rank, UK-based, working in a large enterprise, having interest and potentially influence in organisational change programmes. Senior rank, in this case, was denoted by job title: CXO, Director, Partner or VP. Large organisations were defined as those with a headcount of 10,000 or more. Potential interest in organisational change was identified by membership of LinkedIn groups associated with organisational change. Two hundred and sixty-two people fully completed the survey, representing a response rate of 18% of the 1,451 invitations sent. The number of responses (262) was considered adequate for statistical analysis in this research, meeting the generally accepted standards relating to sample size of more than 30 for correlational analysis and more than 200 to reduce issues with assumptions for parametric tests (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013).

To ensure that suitable people were targeted, individual invitations were used rather than open invitations to associations. The search for participants started by identifying relevant LinkedIn groups – virtual forums linking people with similar interests – for the researcher to join in order to contact potential participants in these groups. Paid advertisements were also considered but rejected due to uncertainty over response rate and cost. To ensure the participants were as independent from the researcher as possible, only people not previously known to the researcher were approached; the only connection with them was through LinkedIn for the purpose of this research. Suitable groups were found using the keyword ‘change management’ and then reviewing the ‘about this group’ description to ensure it focused on PROC.

Table 1. LinkedIn groups used to identify survey participants

LinkedIn Group	Members 000s
Association of Change Management Professionals	15
Business Improvement, Change Management, Corporate Culture and Performance Management	73
Change Management Forum	11
Change Management UK	37
Integrated Leadership and Change Management	26
Organisational Change Management & Business Transformation	8
Organisational Change Practitioners	75

Having joined the groups, an online search was carried out within these groups to find individuals suitable for the survey. The LinkedIn Navigator advanced search features allow for detailed targeting; the search criteria are explained below.

- Company headcount was set to find people at businesses with more than 10,000 employees. This limit was chosen in line with the research's focus on large organisations which have the most extensive and high-risk change programmes and are more likely to have the budget to hire outside consultants and coaches.

- Company type was set to filter out the major consulting firms, because the research aim was to target people working within the business and those making the purchase decision, not outsiders, such as consultants and coaches giving advice.

- Seniority was set to choose the top ranks available (CXO/Partner/VP) plus Director, as the procurement sign-off for significant outside help will be at a high level. To further ensure seniority, the work experience filter was set at a minimum of ten years' experience.

CXO is used here as an abbreviation for Chief X Officer where the X can stand for a number of roles – e.g. Chief *Executive* Officer, Chief *Finance* Officer, Chief *Operations* Officer etc. While other senior titles such as Vice President or Partner were included in the survey, these were all grouped in the data analysis as CXO for simplicity and ease of understanding.

Despite the careful focusing of requests, some surveys were returned from people outside the target population. The survey asked the location of the participant's role during the change: corporate, division, unit/branch or external. As this study aimed to understand the thinking of executives inside the organisation, not outside advisors, the 47 surveys that came back with the external box ticked were excluded and are not included in the 262 responses analysed.

3.2.2 Survey design

The online survey comprised 35 questions, as shown in Appendix 8.1. After the introduction pages, the first section incorporated questions about the participants and their change and coaching

experience. The second section contained the scales measuring participants' favourability to coaching, their degree of Machiavellianism and their change readiness. All the scales questions used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The survey ended by thanking participants and asking them whether they would like to be interviewed.

3.2.2.1 Scales

The scales needed to be concise in order to enable the entire survey to be completed in 20 minutes or less; as the length of the survey increases, the response rate decreases, especially amongst business people (Sheehan, 2001). This duration effect was likely to be particularly relevant, as this survey was targeted at very senior executives.

The most established Machiavellianism measure is the MACH-IV scale (Christie and Geis, 1970). However, with 20 items it was considered too long for the purposes of this study. The MACH trimmed scale (Rauthmann, 2013) was selected, as it has internal consistency and validity comparable with MACH-IV but contains just five items. Rauthmann's paper developing the MACH trimmed scale showed a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .77. The five items in this scale are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. MACH trimmed scale

1	Anyone who completely trusts anyone is asking for trouble
2	It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance
3	Most people are basically good and kind (reverse)
4	Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so
5	The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught

A scale for favourability to coaching was not directly available; it was therefore decided to adapt a scale developed by Grant (2010) to investigate coaches' opinions in favour of or against coaching. The original scale in Grant's paper had a Cronbach alpha of .80.

The questions were modified to a non-coach perspective, shortened and clarified as shown in Appendix 8.3. To shorten the scale, near-duplicate questions were removed; for instance, "Learning better ways to coach and communicate would improve my work performance" was omitted as it was similar to "It would help me fulfil my potential if I improved my coaching and communication skills." The clarification step adopted the wording for CXOs and Directors thinking about their organisations overall. It also removed references to communication from the original scale; for example, "It would help me to fulfil my potential if I improved my coaching and communication skills" was modified to "It helps people fulfil their potential if they are coached". Six questions were included in the final survey. When the survey results were received, Cronbach alpha tests were used to remove questions that reduced that measure below .70. The final questions used to generate the favourability to coaching score are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Favourability to coaching scale

1	If people are coached, they get better results
2	It helps people fulfil their potential if they are coached
3	Using coaching to increase ability is a waste of time (reverse)

The readiness to change scale was developed by Vakola (2014). This scale had six items and is reported in the literature with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .70, which meets standard requirements and is high for a short scale. The Cronbach alpha score for these six questions when used in this study was just below .70; one item was therefore removed from the final scale used in the analysis, which consisted of the five questions shown in Table 4. This final scale had a satisfactory Cronbach alpha score of .70.

Table 4. Readiness-to-change scale

1	When changes occur in my company, I believe that I am ready to cope with them
2	I usually try to convince people in my company to accept change
3	When changes occur in my company, I tend to complain about them rather than deal with them (reverse)
4	I believe that I am more ready to accept change than my colleagues
5	When changes occur in my company, I always have the intention to support them

3.2.2.2 Distribution and testing

An online survey was chosen over a paper-based approach for three reasons. First, with a high number of potential participants based in different individual locations, distributing and collecting a paper-based survey would have been time-consuming. Secondly, retyping the paper returns into SPSS would have risked introducing keying errors and, thirdly, it was more user-friendly for participants: skip logic meant that participants did not have to answer irrelevant questions, and the survey could be completed on mobile phones, which some may have found convenient.

Fellow students and my supervisor reviewed the initial draft survey. A pilot study, comprising 150 survey invitations, was conducted on people in the target population. This high number of invitations was due to uncertainty around the response rate. The invitations to participate included an additional online link to a feedback questionnaire on the design. This questionnaire was simple consisting only of a yes/no question on whether the survey was clear and straightforward, and a text box provided for comments from those who indicated it was not clear.

Twenty-one feedback responses were received, with 95% saying the survey was clear and straightforward to use. Four respondents had suggestions, including, for example, *"A lot of the questions were on the mindset, I assume this supports your hypothesis, but they seemed out of place to me. At the risk of introducing bias, context for these questions would be useful."* The respondent was correct in noting that Machiavellianism and change readiness scales were used, and that there was a desire to prevent 'gaming' or bias in the answers by not explaining the context in great detail. Another example of feedback received was, *"Clear questions, although closed questions did minimise opportunities to expand on point of view".* The closed questions were required for the quantitative

analysis. The overall design included follow-up semi-structured interviews, which would allow the opportunity for a more detailed perspective to be expressed. The comments received were carefully considered and it was decided that no changes to the survey were required. The 95% positive score indicated that the survey was easily understood by the great majority of potential participants. The final survey design was unaltered from the pilot and sent as soon as the decision was made that no changes would be made. As the survey was unchanged and sent to the same overall population, at effectively the same time, the 21 responses from the pilot were considered valid to be included in the final data, to prevent any data loss.

3.2.3 Quantitative analysis method

The final survey data were downloaded from the online software as an Excel file. Excel was used to simplify the formatting to make it suitable for SPSS. The data were loaded into SPSS, and descriptive statistics run to ensure the information was complete.

Those people who identified themselves as external advisors were removed from the data. After this step, with 262 fully completed surveys, the final response rate was 18%. The reversed questions in the scales were recoded in the correct direction, and total average scale scores were calculated for the three scales – favourability to coaching, Machiavellianism and change readiness. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure scale reliability and no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. Multicollinearity between change readiness and Machiavellianism was tested for and confirmed as not occurring.

H1: Executives who have previously led PROC will be less favourable towards coaching. In the design stage, 3.1.3, it was noted that this can be operationalised by comparing the average coaching favourability score for executives who have led PROC to those who have not. When contrasting the mean score of a continuous variable of two different groups, an independent samples t-test is the method of choice (Pallant 2016).

H2: Executives who have not previously been involved in PROC coaching will be less favourable towards coaching. This required that the favourability to coaching mean score for executives who had been involved in PROC coaching be compared to those who had not. As with H1, this comparison of the mean score of a continuous variable for two groups indicated an independent samples t-test as the preferred method.

H3: Executives who are less change-ready will be less favourable towards coaching. In 3.1.3 this was stated operationally as suggesting change readiness scores will be positively correlated with favourability towards coaching scores. Investigation using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient is a recommended way of examining this for two continuous variables (Pallant 2016).

H4: Executives who are more Machiavellian will be less favourable towards coaching. This was earlier stated operationally as suggesting that Machiavellian scores will be inversely correlated with coaching favourability scores. As with H3, examining two continuous variables indicated Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient as the preferred method.

To indicate how much the factors examined in hypotheses H1 to H4 (PROC coaching involvement, Led PROC, high Machiavellian and low change readiness) could explain the overall variations in favourability to coaching, and how their relative importance compared, required a linear regression model. A relatively high R-squared value from the model would indicate that the factors were important in explaining a comparably large element of the variation, and the coefficients in the model would indicate the relative effect of each variable when they are considered together rather than separately. A hierarchical multiple linear regression approach created three models. The first used the leading change variables, related to hypothesis 1, while the second added the coaching role variables, related to hypothesis 2. These were binary categorical variables and so were re-coded using simple dummy coding before entry into the model. The final model added the Machiavellianism and change readiness scale results, relating to hypotheses 3 and 4.

3.3 Qualitative design

Explanatory Sequential Design (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) had been selected during the design process as a suitable research approach, as explained in 3.1.3. One-to-one interviews were chosen as the method for the qualitative data collection in this part of the design. These are widely used to gather information about participants' views and beliefs on a specific phenomenon (Lambert and Loiselle, 2007) and allow in-depth data to be collected from selected participants. These advantages are reflected in claims that interviews are the most commonly used data collection tool in qualitative research (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002).

It was necessary to be able to link those who volunteered to be interviewed with their survey responses. To this end, one of the survey questions asked whether the participant was prepared to be interviewed and, if so, to include their email address in the answer box provided. The benefit of not ensuring anonymity of data was that interviewee selection could be targeted. However, there were two potential drawbacks to this approach: the disclosure in the survey had to be longer and more explicitly accepted by the respondent and, secondly, there was some concern that this additional disclosure and reduced anonymity would lower the number of people volunteering for an interview. However, this problem did not materialise as, out of the 262 surveys completed, 124 executives (47%) stated that they were prepared to be interviewed, justifying the decision not to make the data anonymous.

3.3.1 Qualitative sourcing and sample size

Consistent with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) recommendation for mixed-method explanatory sequential design, interviewees were selected from executives who had already completed the

survey. The alternative to asking executives who had already been surveyed would be to do another exercise to find completely new participants for interviews. The drawback with that would be the time and effort to find these new participants while ensuring they had the attributes selected by the quantitative work. With existing volunteers who had completed the survey, all this information was already available along with their contact details

Some previous researchers using this mixed-method approach have followed up with all respondents from their surveys (Baumann, 1999), while others have interviewed as few as just four (Ivankova and Stick, 2007). In this case, as not all survey respondents had volunteered to be interviewed the qualitative sample size could not include everybody from the first stage. Also, it would not be practical to interview all 124 who had volunteered. The decision was made to interview a small number, which is consistent with Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) recommendation that qualitative data collection is from a much smaller sample than the initial quantitative stage. A sample size of twelve was chosen as this would be sufficient to allow 'meaningful themes' (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018) to be developed. This number was consistent with the view of Guest et al (2006) and fell appropriately within the guidelines given by Smith et al (2009) of between 3 and 16 – who suggested the smaller numbers for undergraduate projects, reserving the higher end of the range for larger endeavours.

With an explanatory sequential design, the specific areas to follow up on and qualitatively investigate cannot be determined precisely until after the quantitative phase is complete (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Therefore, the exact criteria on how the 12 interview participants would best be selected from the 124 volunteers could not be fully specified at this earlier design stage. Consistent with this, and to avoid jumping ahead to the quantitative results, the selection criteria for the interviewees are set out after those results, in section 4.6.

3.3.2 Interview design

Semi-structured interviews were considered the optimal way to provide consistency across the discussions and yet still allow sufficient flexibility to explore individual viewpoints. The open-ended questions allowed unexpected or spontaneous issues to be examined, and also enabled follow-up clarification questions (Ryan and Golden, 2006). One hour is sufficient for detail to be covered but still fit within business peoples' timetables and would not cause too many invitations to be rejected.

The interviews were recorded and were conducted by telephone for pragmatic, logistical reasons. The interviewees were located across the UK, and two were overseas at the time of the conversation. The travel time and cost for face-to-face meetings would have been prohibitive. There is evidence that telephone interviews work as effectively as face-to-face interviews (Cachia and Millward, 2011). Although there is a perception amongst some researchers that the lack of physical presence and visual cues inhibit rapport building, Cachia and Millward believe that experienced interviewers compensate by explicitly asking questions about the participants' emotional state; moreover, in telephone interviews, the interviewee has control over the setting. I am an experienced executive coach and, for the past 15 years, virtually all my coaching has been by telephone, so I was confident I would be able to compensate for not interviewing face-to-face.

The interview schedule is shown in Table 5. Key concepts derived from the literature informed its design, and the same design was used for all interviewees. The questions were ordered to start in a comfortable, relaxed manner, with the items needing more profound thought placed towards the end, after rapport and trust had been created (Trochim, 2005). To thoroughly examine the executives' challenges during PROC and Machiavellian behaviour, two questions were included that could be considered somewhat leading (Q3 and Q7). The dangers of this were carefully judged, but it was deemed necessary to take this approach to ensure that these topics were covered. Care was taken to ask these questions neutrally, including in tone of voice, and not to lead the response.

Table 5. Interview schedule

Number	Question
Q1	Please tell me about a time you were involved in radical organisational change.
Q2	What was the most difficult or interesting part of that?
Q3	Some commentators say the most challenging position during change is being a divisional or unit manager, stuck between the three conflicting elements of delivering the change, managing the messages to head office and supporting their people. Does that resonate with you?
Q4	Did you ever find yourself dealing with these three different elements yourself? Can you tell me about that?
Q5	What do you think managers could do to help themselves deal in this position?
Q6	To what extent do you think internal politics play a part in implementing organisational change?
Q7	Other research suggests that where organisational politics plays a part, then the more Machiavellian leaders are not always enthusiastic about getting their people fully equipped to understand what is going on or push back. Does that seem likely to you?
Q8	Do you see a similar situation arising with leaders who are not change-ready?
Q9	Have you been involved in implementing change programmes? How?
Q10	Have you been involved in coaching in your role in change programmes or in general? How?
Q11	Do you think it is realistic to bring in coaching for these change projects, or would that approach be a waste of money? Why is that?
Q12	What do you think might be the obstacles stopping more coaches from being hired to support organisations with their radical organisational change?
Q13	Is there anything else I've not asked you yet that I should have?

3.3.3 Qualitative analysis method

The recorded interviews were transcribed into Word by a third-party service. The Word documents were checked for accuracy by the researcher and then loaded into MaxQDA, a Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), for more efficient data coding and retrieval (Hoover and Koerber, 2009). In terms of raw data, was just over 100,000 words were now in the system, ready to be analysed.

Braun and Clarke (2012) note that thematic analysis is flexible, and there are different ways to carry it out. The exact process used followed that set out by Löfgren (2013). Once all the transcripts were in MaxQDA, the first step was to read the transcripts. The first read-through was quick, simply to gain an overall impression. Notes were made about first impressions. The documents were then read again, more slowly and carefully, one by one and line by line.

The next step was to use the CAQDAS system to highlight and code. These labels were sometimes extended segments but were generally kept to a sentence or a paragraph. Although 'a priori' themes were not created, as it was important to not overlook any material, the decision on what to code was influenced by the literature review, question schedule and research aim. Coding was also performed where items were repeated either within the same interview or across interviews. Unusual items, and those particularly emphasised by interviewees, were highlighted. The coding at this stage was liberal – if there were any question about whether an item should be coded, it was captured as the CAQDAS would enable sorting and consolidating later. If it was unclear whether a phrase needed a new code or fitted within an existing one, a new code was created. It was considered better to capture codes at a high degree of granularity at this stage, as the software allowed codes to be dragged and dropped under others later. Working at this level ensured that no signal was missed, but codes could be easily consolidated in MaxQDA if, on later review, they were found to refer to the same phenomenon.

The third step was to create categories. Codes were consolidated in the software by dragging and dropping sub-codes under a preeminent code. This action took place at the code level in the hierarchy of theme -> category -> code, with code being the lowest. The final theme, category and code structure is shown in Appendix 8.7. As well as considerable consolidation, at this stage in the process, many codes were grouped as irrelevant and not used in the final analysis. This extra work was a consequence of the liberal use of codes earlier but it ensured that no signal was missed.

With the codes simplified and clarified, it was possible to create categories. These were influenced by the codes previously created, ideas from the literature review and the interview questions. The categories were created in the software by generating new codes, giving them a new colour and dragging them above the existing codes. This built a structure of a list of categories with codes indented beneath. Memos were added to the categories to record why they were created and their implications (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This was an iterative process in which different categories were tested until the final picture started to emerge. This development was made easier by the drag and drop facility in the software and its ability to save different project versions and recover earlier versions if a particular iteration was ineffective. Related categories were then ordered together, and memos added to recall the connections being considered between them.

Next, in the analysis, these categories were grouped into just a few themes. This approach of refining each category before looking across categories follows the recommendation of Rubin and Rubin (2012, p. 241). These themes would create the structure for reporting the qualitative findings. The final step was to step back and consider the design and connections in relation to the research aim of finding the obstacles to executive coaching in PROC. Multiple iterations took place at this stage, not just at the theme level but also in changing categories and moving and renaming individual codes, until the overall picture satisfactorily showed the participants' perspective of their experiences and insights into potential obstacles. This was consistent with the pragmatic approach and the 'recoding and recategorising' described by Saldana (2009, p. 10).

3.4 Limitations

All research designs have some limitations. It is important to understand them so the research results are considered within that context. The limitations of this specific design are discussed below.

A limitation of this research is that it is not generalisable to all change situations in all organisations. The survey findings came from high-ranking leaders interested in organisational change in large UK businesses or government departments. The organisations were all large and many were multinational; thus, the quantitative results may be generalisable to senior executives in all Western-style multinationals with an interest in change. However, they may be less generalisable to junior staff, smaller organisations or those based in significantly different business cultures to the UK, although elements of the findings may still apply to limited-scope initiatives, such as restructuring within an individual local team. The research targeted PROC and may be less generalisable to other types of organisational change, such as gradual, continuous improvement.

Another limitation with a survey of this type, carried out at a single point in time, without an intervention, control group, and later retest, it is impossible to claim causation. Correlation and an element of prediction are possible, but the presence of another non-measured confounding variable cannot be completely ruled out.

Qualitative research is generally not considered generalisable and this limitation must be considered for the findings derived from the interviews. The qualitative findings can only be guaranteed for this group of interviewees in their specific situations. However, it is valid to consider whether qualitative results can be applied or transferred to other groups or individuals (Noble and Smith, 2015). The researcher suggests that these qualitative findings would apply to senior executives considering PROC programmes in any large, Western, multinational organisation, although the final judgment on transferring the results to different situations must ultimately be made by the research users (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

A limitation of this mixed-method design is the increased risk of unconscious research bias. Although bias exists in quantitative work, for instance through the phrasing of questions, survey rubric, treatment of any outliers or the statistical tests chosen, this mixed-method approach adds to that risk through the use of interviews and qualitative data analysis. Inevitably, choices made by the interviewer influence what is discovered. While a researcher with relevant background and experience may enable more to be revealed, it is possible that the interviewer may react differently to different points leading to participants elaborating less on some points than others, potentially suppressing relevant data. In carrying out the thematic analysis the researcher's pre-existing knowledge and experience of large change programmes, dealing with senior executives in those situations and coaching them in others had the potential to bias outcomes.

Another limitation with the design is there will be some degree of unavoidable survey respondent and interviewee self-selection bias. Although the survey requests were directed to senior executives interested in change, the invite had to mention coaching for ethical reasons. It is possible that those who particularly disliked coaching would not want to answer questions about it and ignored the

invite. Possibly those who were indifferent to change but still in similar senior positions would have had a different viewpoint. Similarly, the more Machiavellian individuals would not see what was in it for themselves to answer a survey with no direct reward and so may not have replied.

Small sample sizes are often limitations of research. In this case, the survey numbers were large but a design of just twelve interviewees, while of a generally acceptable level (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Smith, 2009) means it is possible that they were not representative of the whole and different research participants would have provided different data.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The research was designed and carried out in a way that minimized the risk to participants. The aim was to avoid harm - either mental distress or damage to their position with employers or others. The risk was reduced by considering informed consent, confidentiality, deception, the right to withdraw and what support for respondents needed to be in place.

3.5.1 Informed consent

At the end of the survey participants were invited to take part in interviews by entering their email addresses. As a result, not all the survey responses would be fully anonymous, unlike many surveys where the respondent is not identified. This issue was mitigated by the addition of an extensive participant information page section at the start of the survey. The message to people who said they would complete a survey reiterated the importance of the participant information and that they should not proceed if they had any doubts at all about it. The survey would not progress past the information section until participants answered a question confirming that they had read, understood and accepted this information. If they answered in the negative the survey did not try to pressure them to continue but went straight to a thank you page and exited.

After guidance from the Ethics Committee, the final question in the survey that asked executives to enter their email if they were prepared to be interviewed, was modified. This change added more consent information which made it clear that the interviews would be by telephone and take approximately one hour.

With some participants going on to take part in interviews, informed consent was required more than once. The volunteers selected for the interview were emailed and it was explained that attached was a personal information form, privacy notice and a consent form and exactly what the executives should do with each if they wanted to take part.

As the telephone interviews were likely to be carried out during work time the Ethics Committee felt that these executives should formally get permission from their employers to use paid for time in this way. The researcher disagreed and suggested that insisting participants did this risked harm to the reputations of the researcher, participants and the university business school. The reason for

this was that these interviewees were all senior executives. They would be expected to manage themselves, and to do as many hours as necessary to get their jobs done. If they asked for permission it would look unusual and unconfident. The risk to the researcher and the business school would be by asking this it would indicate we did not know who we were talking to or how their world worked. After these discussions, it was agreed with the Ethics committee that if it was a junior person being interviewed then they would be required to get permission from HR or their line manager. In the event, none of the interviewees was of a junior level.

The researcher put an effective follow-up process in place to ensure a scanned signed copy of the consent form was returned by interviewees before each meeting started. Ensuring these were in place reemphasised the importance of executives considering what they were agreeing to. These were busy people and so in many cases, follow-ups were required. No interviews went ahead without the signed consent being returned in advance.

3.5.2 Right to withdraw

For participants completing just the survey the ability to withdraw was simple and came at various stages. After they had agreed to help, they could ignore the link to the survey, they could reject the survey on the information page at the start or simply drop out at any page. Only questionnaires that were completed to the end were used in the analysis. The participant information page also pointed out they had the right to contact the researcher at a later date to have their unprocessed responses removed from the data. There were a few withdrawals on the information page and during the questionnaire. No one completed the survey and then later asked for their responses to be removed.

The interview participants were given more opportunities to withdraw to ensure they were continuing to give informed consent. They had an opportunity to withdraw by simply ignoring the email thanking them for offering to be interviewed. However, as these were busy people, likey to miss emails, a follow up was sent to non-respondents, in case they had simply missed the first communication. This follow-up reiterated it was absolutely fine if they had changed their mind or were too busy and no explanation was needed. Only one follow up was sent to ensure there was no coercion. There were some non-replies and two at this stage said they did not now have the time.

Before each interview started the researcher made sure people were comfortable to continue and that the recording was about to start. The interview participant information sheet also explained that they were free to withdraw any unprocessed data at any time without giving a reason. There was only a limited incentive for participants to take part to help keep it easy for them to withdraw without difficulty. No payment was offered, the upside suggested for participants for taking part was merely supporting the furthering of knowledge of how organisations apply coaching during a change.

3.5.3 Confidentiality

It was considered how anonymous to make the survey. Surveys can be completely anonymous, where the researcher cannot tell who answered and which answer belongs to whom. However, with a methodology that planned to suggest interviewees types based on the survey findings, the research would be improved if interviewees were selected from their survey responses. It was decided to give the executives the choice whether to be entirely anonymous or not. They could decide whether to answer a final question asking for their email address. This was included at the end, rather than the beginning - so by that point participants knew what they had answered and if they were content with that being known. It was also only asked from people who were volunteering for interviews to avoid it being collected unnecessarily from the others. This was the balance chosen between absolute confidentiality forced on survey participants or giving them a choice and enabling better results.

The online survey software had the capability to block duplicate entries by participants. This was put in place by the original programmers to stop individuals from distorting the results. This worked by recording the IP address of the computer and preventing more than one response from that address. The IP address does not give the name of the respondent but does broadly indicate where they are located. There was an option for the researcher to turn this on or off. Leaving it on reduced the risk of distorting the results, turning it off increased confidentiality. The decision made was to leave this at the default setting and for the researcher to not look at or download this metadata.

To ensure confidentiality during the telephone interviews, the researcher found a room where they could not be overheard and advised the interviewee to be in a location on their own where they would not be disturbed or overheard. For maximum confidentiality, it would be better if no recording or notes were taken. However, that would not produce reliable research so the interviews were recorded. These were sent by a secure password-protected time-limited link to the third party transcriber. The transcriber signed a non-disclosure agreement. After transcription was complete the transcriber was required to securely destroy their copies of recordings and transcriptions and then to confirm in writing they had done this. Electronic files were protected by the use of passwords and the computer with access to these files is password protected and encrypted. In accordance with the University's policy, the data generated will be kept securely in electronic form for five years after the completion of the research project.

The interview documents were anonymised. Pseudonyms were used in the write-up. These identified gender but were not related to the real names, for instance, John would not have been used to replace Jonathan. Some particular idiosyncratic phrases and terms were not used in the quotes, even though they were particularly informative, because of the possibility of them being identifiable. All names of companies were removed to protect confidentiality even though these may have given more weight, credibility and impact to the interviewees' points. To put interviewees responses in a context for the reader, the results section included a table of short descriptions about each executive. This could have risked confidentiality and so the descriptions were deliberately kept short and broad to prevent any chance of identification. These confidentiality changes might have reduced the enjoyability of the thesis read but not the overall quality of the results.

3.5.4 Avoid deception

There was no deception in the research. The invitations and information statements explained the research was about coaching and change and that this data would be collected by survey and interview. This did create a risk that rather than a cross-section of senior executives involved in change, the mention of coaching in the invitation would cause those with little support or interest in coaching to drop out, biasing the sample. This was considered but given the focus of the research, it was decided it would not be ethical to not mention coaching in the invitations.

There was a risk that participants would be uncomfortable showing themselves as machiavellian and this would distort the results. However, to avoid deception it was still necessary to explain what the different sections of the survey were about. The balance found here was to provide a rubric that was sufficient in explaining what was being asked while not going into too much detail about the specific scales being used.

3.5.5 Support

The researcher was mindful that the interview discussion of change might invoke unpleasant memories for the executives of being made redundant or having to fire others. So the researcher was ready to use their experience as a coach to determine a supportive response if it was required. It had also been identified as part of the Ethics Committee process that these large companies would often have employee counselling helplines that individuals could refer themselves to. It was also known that these were experienced, senior executives used to dealing with difficult situations which suggested that although there may be a risk, it was remote. There were no instances of participants experiencing emotional difficulties.

4 Quantitative Findings

4.1 Descriptive data

The data collected from the survey is analysed in this chapter following the methodology set out in 3.2.3. The first table summarises the sample demographic variables while the next two tables show the distribution of change or coaching roles in PROC and then how the frequency and the number of people affected by the change programmes varied. Finally in this section are descriptive tables and graphs for the Machiavellianism, change readiness and favourability to coaching scales.

Table 6. Descriptive data – demographic variables

Variable	Count	%
Age		
Under 35	8	3%
35 to 44	76	29%
45 to 54	133	52%
55 to 64	41	16%
	258	100%
Gender		
Male	188	72%
Female	73	28%
	261	100%
Rank		
CXO	75	29%
Director	133	51%
Manager and Staff	54	21%
	262	100%
Organisation Size		
10,000+	122	47%
1,000 - 10,000	78	30%
1-999	62	24%
	262	100%

Table 7. Descriptive data – PROC experience 1: roles

Variable	Yes	Yes %	No	No %	Total
Change role during PROC					
Led change programme	126	48%	136	52%	262
Implemented change	88	34%	174	66%	262
Head office based	147	62%	91	38%	238
Full time on change	103	43%	134	57%	237
On receiving end of change	48	18%	214	82%	262
Coaching role during PROC					
Coach	136	52%	126	48%	262
Coachee	77	29%	185	71%	262
Coaching organiser	98	37%	164	63%	262
Coaching authoriser	62	24%	200	76%	262

Yes = did that role, No = did not do that role

As explained by the survey rubric 'Implemented change' refers to the role of making the change happen at a local level. While 'Led change' is setting the change strategy or leading the overall project and 'On the receiving end of change' refers to individuals with no input into how PROC was carried out. With regard to the coaching roles, the survey rubric explained a coaching organiser finds the coaches, agrees on price and matches coaches with coachees, while the authoriser approves the business case or decides that the funds can be taken from a particular budget. In some cases, executives can hold multiple roles.

Table 8. Descriptive data - PROC experience 2: size and frequency

Variable	Count	%
PROC size by people affected		
Below 1,000	94	39%
1,000 to 7,000	67	28%
Above 7,000	81	33%
	242	100%
Times involved in PROC		
Under 3	131	54%
3 to 5	57	23%
Above 5	56	23%
	244	100%

The organisation and PROC size input fields in the survey could contain any number. They are shown above in binned categories because outliers reduced the usefulness of the original form.

The descriptive data for the three Likert scales are set out below, including the overall average numbers for each. These scores were given on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Table 9. Scale 1: Favourability to coaching

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Favourability to coaching scale			
It interferes with a person's work when they spend time being coached (reversed)	254	6.36	.80
It helps people fulfil their potential if they are coached	254	6.24	.79
If people are coached, they get better results	254	6.01	.83
Favourability to coaching	**252**	**6.21**	**.64**

Table 10. Scale 2: Machiavellianism

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Machiavellianism scale			
It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance	259	2.19	1.16
The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught.	255	2.00	1.21
Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.	260	1.82	1.03
Most people are basically good and kind (reversed)	255	2.51	1.00
Anyone who completely trusts anyone is asking for trouble.	258	3.20	1.54
Machiavellianism	**245**	**2.35**	**.82**

Table 11. Scale 3: Change readiness

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Change readiness scale			
I usually try to convince people in my company to accept change	259	6.05	.86
When changes occur in my company, I believe that I am ready to cope with them	261	5.99	1.02
When changes occur in my company, I always have the intention to support them.	256	5.69	.99
I believe that I am more ready to accept change than my colleagues	256	5.59	.98
When changes occur in my company, I tend to complain about them rather than deal with them (reversed)	261	6.24	.82
Readiness to change	**251**	**5.91**	**.63**

As the sample size is relatively large it is reasonably 'tolerant' of any normality issues in the data (Pallant, 2016, p. 208). The following three histograms show how the scores for each were distributed.

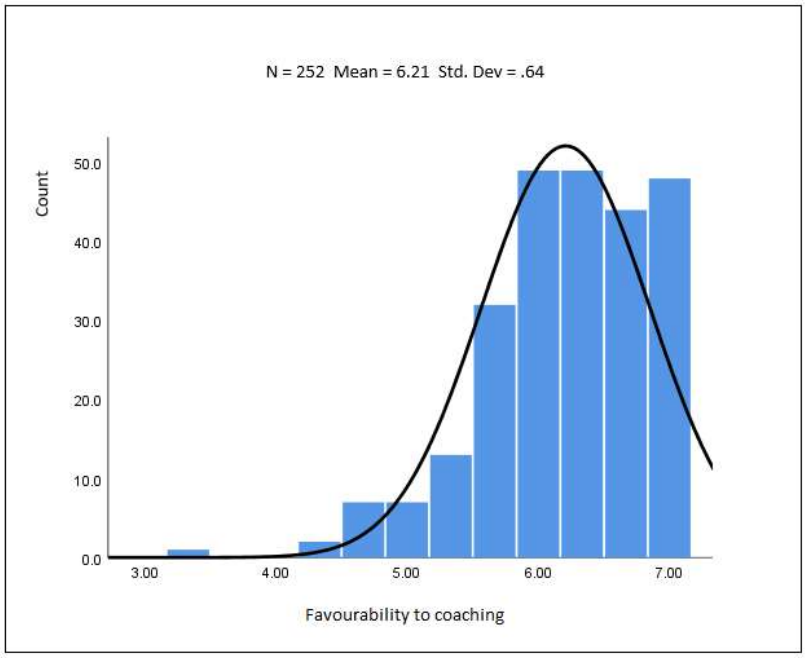

Figure 3. Favourability to coaching histogram

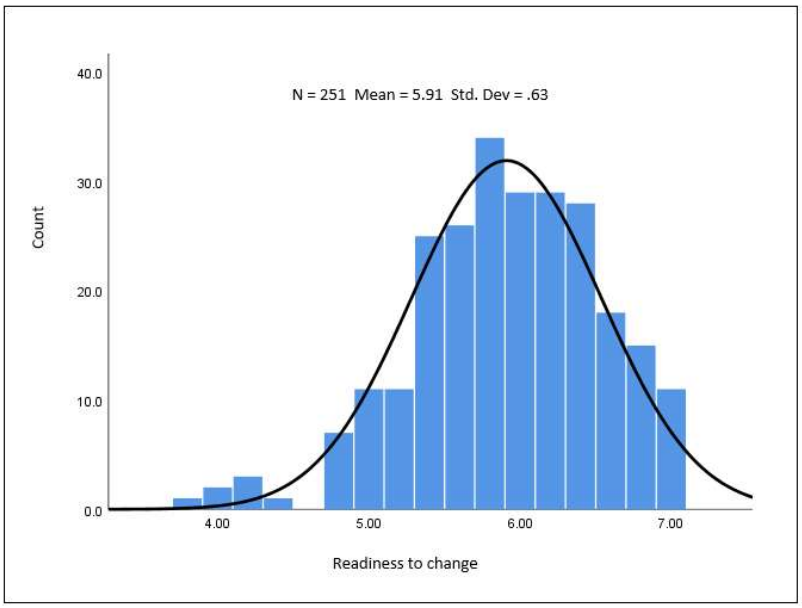

Figure 4. Readiness to change histogram

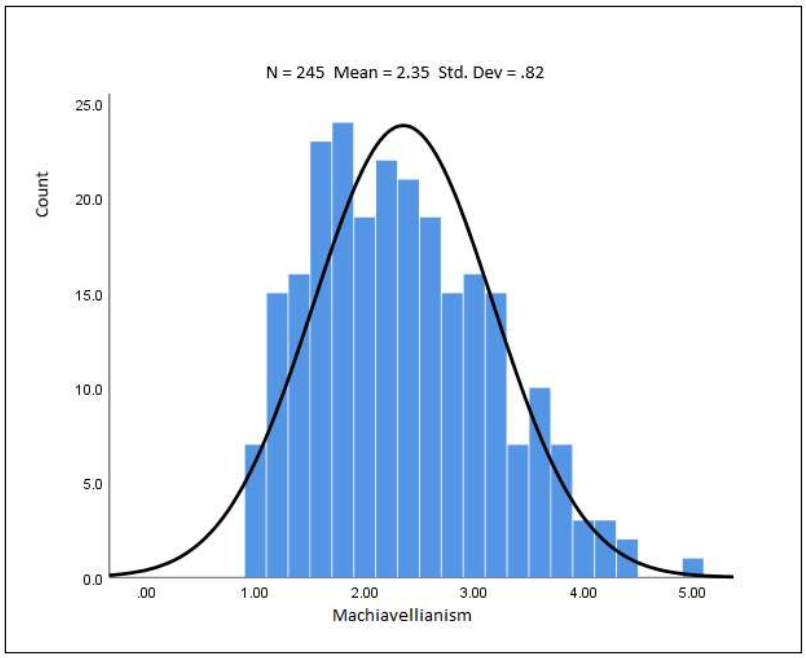

Figure 5. Machiavellianism histogram

These scales have a negative skew (shifted to the right towards 'strongly agree') for favourability to coaching and change readiness and a positive skew (towards the left and 'strongly disagree') for Machiavellianism. Favourability to coaching has relatively high kurtosis or peak, while change-readiness and Machiavellianism have a slightly more even distribution. The large sample size renders the kurtosis tests too sensitive to use (Pallant, 2016, p. 57). However, the histograms indicate a

sufficiently normal distribution given that risks to normality are mitigated in parametric tests, where, as here, the sample size is greater than the 200 specified by (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013, p. 80).

4.2 Independent T-test to investigate hypothesis 1

Following the literature review, in section 2.6.2, it was hypothesised that executives who have previously led PROC will be less favourable towards coaching. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the favourability towards coaching for executives who had led change and those who had not. This found there was a significant difference in scores for those who had led PROC (M = 6.32, SD = .56) and those who had not (M = 6.10, SD = .69; t(250) = 2.79, p <.05, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (eta squared = .03). The classification as small is based on eta squared being below .06 (Cohen, 1988).

Although this was a significant result, it was in the opposite direction to the hypothesis, with executives who had previously led coaching being more, not less, favourable towards coaching and therefore the hypothesis is not supported.

- H1 result: The hypothesis that executives who have previously led PROC will be less favourable towards coaching is not supported.

4.3 T-test to investigate hypothesis 2

Following the literature review, it was hypothesised that executives who have not previously been involved in PROC will be less favourable towards coaching. The survey captured data on coaching involvement in the form of four questions that asked whether or not an executive had acted during PROC as a coach, organiser of coaching, authoriser of coaching or had been coached themselves. Four independent-samples t-test were conducted to compare the favourability towards coaching for executives who had been involved in coaching in these different ways and those who had not.

Acted as coach: There was a significant difference in scores for those who had acted as a coach during PROC (M = 6.36, SD = .56) and those who had not (M = 6.03, SD = .70; t(250) = 4.04, p <.005, two tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was medium (mean difference = .33, eta squared = .06). The effect can be classified as medium due to the eta squared number falling between .06 and .14 (Cohen, 1988).

Organised coaching: There was a significant difference in scores for those who had organised coaching during PROC (M = 6.40, SD = .52) and those who had not (M = 6.09, SD = .68; t(250) = 3.78, p <.005, two tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was medium (mean difference = .31, eta squared = .06).

Authorised coaching: There was a significant difference in scores for those who had authorised coaching during PROC (M = 6.36, SD = .65) and those who had not (M = 6.36, SD = .65; t(250) = 2.07,

p <.05, two tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was small (mean difference = .20, eta squared = .02).

Coachee: There was no significant difference in scores for those who had been coached during PROC (M = 6.25, SD = .51) and those who had not (M = 6.19, SD = .69; t(250) = .6, p = .53, two tailed).

As three of the tests showed executives not involved in coaching activities were less favourable towards coaching and one test had no significant outcome the hypothesis was supported.

- H2 result: The hypothesis that executives who have not previously been involved in PROC coaching will be less favourable towards PROC coaching is supported.

To test whether H1 and H2 were missing any significant variables concerning executives' PROC experiences, further analysis was undertaken. Independent T-Tests examined for differences between executives who had worked full-time on the PROC rather than part-time, worked in head office rather than in a division during PROC, and males versus females. Then ANOVA one-way between-groups analyses of variance explored for differences due to age, organisation size, rank, the number of people involved in the PROC, and the number of times an executive had been through a PROC. None of these variables showed a statistically significant difference between groups, suggesting that H1 and H2 were not missing any major significant variables related to previous experience.

4.4 Correlation analysis to test hypotheses 3 and 4

It had been hypothesised that executives who were less change-ready will be less favourable towards coaching. It was also hypothesised that those who were more Machiavellian will be less favourable towards coaching. The relationship between favourability to coaching and readiness to change and Machiavellianism (as measured by the previously described respective Likert scales) was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. As shown in Table 12 a statistically significant positive correlation was found between favourability to coaching and readiness to change (r =.39, n = 251, p<.005), while a significant negative correlation was found between favourability to coaching and Machiavellianism (r = -.31, n = 245, p<.005). As these correlations are in the range of r =.30 to .49, this indicates a medium relationship strength in both cases (Cohen, 1988).

Table 12. Correlation between Likert scales

Variable	N	Mean	Std Dev	Std Error	1	2
1) Favourability to coaching	252	6.21	.64	.05		
2) Readiness to change	251	5.91	.63	.04	.39**	
3) Machiavellianism	245	2.35	.82	.05	-.31**	-.36**

*p<.05 **p<.005

Multicollinearity between Readiness to change and Machiavellianism was tested for and confirmed as not being present. Following the cut-off points suggested by Pallant (2016), the correlation between the two variables was not too high at .36 (less than .7), the tolerance was sufficiently high at .84 (not less than .10) and the VIF sufficiently low at 1.1 (below 10).

As there was a statistically significant, positive, correlation between executives' change readiness score and their favourability to coaching this supports the idea that less change-ready executives have a lower favourability to coaching score.

- H3 result: The hypothesis that executives who are less change-ready will be less favourable towards coaching is supported.

As there was a statistically significant, negative, correlation between executives' Machiavellianism and their favourability to coaching this supports the idea that more Machiavellian executives have a lower favourability to coaching score.

- H4 result: The hypothesis that executives who are more Machiavellian will be less favourable towards coaching is supported.

4.5 Linear regression model

A linear regression model was used to explore how much of the overall variation in favourability to coaching could be explained by the factors examined in hypotheses H1 to H4. It also identified their relative importance when considered together rather than separately as tested in H1 to H4. A model was generated (shown in Table 13), first using the PROC role variables of 'Led change' and 'Implemented change'. This model had an R-squared value of only .04. The second model added in the remaining role variables that related to coaching. Adding in Coach, Coachee, Organiser and Authoriser increased the R-squared value by .07 to .11. All these were binary categorical variables and were re-coded using simple dummy coding before entry into the model. The final model included the previous executive roles plus the Likert scale results on the executives' Machiavellianism and change readiness.

Adding in the continuous variables of readiness to change and Machiavellianism increased the R-squared value by a further .13 to an overall R-squared value of .24 for the final model. As a general rule in social science, R-squared effects of .02 are 'small', .13 'medium' and .26 'large' (Cohen, 1988), which suggests this is an adequate model. It explains 24% of the variation in favourability to coaching through the continuous variables of readiness for change and Machiavellianism, added to the binary variables for having held previous PROC change or coaching roles.

Table 13. Regression models

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Change role during PROC			
Led change	.16*	.09	.02
Implemented change	-.12	-.15*	-.12*
Coaching role during PROC			
Coach		.18*	.13
Coaching organiser		.15*	.13
Coachee		-.02	-.01
Coaching authoriser		-.01	-.00
Attitude			
Readiness to change			.28***
Machiavellianism			-.17**
R^2	.04*	.11**	.24***
Adjusted R^2	.04*	.09**	.22***
Increase in R^2	.04*	.07**	.13***
Overall F(2,238)	5.39*		
Overall F(6,234)		5.00***	
Overall F(8,232)			9.22***

* P<.05, **p>.005, *** p <.0005

All three models were significant overall although only the final one explained close to a large effect. The most significant variables in the final model were readiness to change with a coefficient of .28 (p<.0005), followed by Machiavellianism with a coefficient of -.17 (p<.005) and implemented change with a coefficient of -.12 (p<.05).

4.6 Analysis to select interviewees

The explanatory sequential design meant that only once the quantitative work was complete could it be used to inform the final criteria for the selection of interviewees. The hypotheses testing had now shown that leading PROC, involvement in PROC coaching, Machiavellianism and change readiness were all significant. However, while leading PROC and involvement in PROC coaching were already known in a binary fashion for each potential interviewee the Machiavellianism and change readiness were on a continuous scale and a cut-off point or a method of segmentation was now needed if they were to be used for participant selection

To create a measure of whether or not a participant had a relatively high or low Machiavellianism a new data variable was created separating participants into those who were above the median average Machiavellianism and those below. Independent samples t-test were conducted which found there was a significant difference in favourability to coaching scores for those who had above average Machiavellianism (M = 6.03, SD = .68) and those who were below average (M = 6.37, SD = .53; t(239) = 4.43, p <.005, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was medium (mean difference = .34, eta squared = .08). A similar exercise was carried out for change readiness, separating executives into relatively high and low groups. This found there was a significant difference in favourability to coaching scores for those who had above average change readiness (M = 6.38, SD = .61) and those who were below average (M = 6.01, SD = .63; t(245) = 4.72, p <.005, two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means was medium (mean difference = .37, eta squared = .09).

Following the explanatory sequential design, a decision then had to be made on how to use these results to select interviewees (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Full stratified random sampling across all of the possible groups (Robinson, 2014) was considered but rejected in favour of a purposeful group stratification. The full stratified random sampling would have been relatively complex across the 16 groups (4^2) and suffered from having four groups with zero or just one volunteer (who then could not be directly replaced if they changed their minds about being interviewed). A purposeful group stratification did not have these drawbacks and had the benefit of allowing the focus to be given to variables that were considered by the qualitative researcher likely to give the most information-rich interview cases (Palinkas et al., 2015). Out of the experience-based variables, a researcher judgement was made to use led PROC but not coaching involvement as the PROC leaders were considered, as decision-makers, more likely to give the most important answers about coaching procurement obstacles. Similarly, a judgement was made out of the personality type variables and Machiavellianism was preferred to change readiness because it was more prominent in the literature when discussing obstacles to change within senior teams, while a lack of change readiness was more commonly discussed concerning more junior staff. Within each of the now four groups – Led/Not Led PROC and High/Low Machiavellianism - (2^2), three participants were selected randomly as a convenience strategy to find the previously decided design total of 12 interviewees (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). Alternative methods considered were to choose from within each group using a further criterion such as rank or number of times in PROC but this would have added complexity for little, if any, gain. Replacements for the five individuals approached who had changed

their minds and declined to take part were chosen using the same method on the remaining volunteers from within appropriate groups.

5 Qualitative Findings

Following the methodology design, the interviews were to investigate the research question "What do executives think prevents organisations from hiring a team of executive coaches as a standard step in PROC implementations?" and to understand further the quantitative results that arose from looking at "How does favourability towards coaching vary according to the PROC executive's Machiavellianism, change readiness, or experience?" The interviews were analysed thematically using the qualitative approach described in the methodology section 3.3.3. The first theme considered was the risk that executive coaching simply may not be helpful in PROC situations. This potential obstacle was not found to be a problem; indeed, initially there appeared to be strong support for executive coaching as a standard step in PROC implementation programmes. However, on closer examination, serious concerns become apparent: three themes emerged that suggested obstacles likely to reduce the adoption of executive coaching in these types of transformations and provide further insight into the results identified earlier in the quantitative findings.

5.1 Interviewees

In accordance with the Explanatory Sequential Design, interviewees were selected from the survey participants after the quantitative stage. Table 14 provides a summary and selected data for each interviewee. Names, companies, nationality and locations have been disguised for reasons of confidentiality. The executives' relative Machiavellian position, whether higher or lower than the median for survey respondents, is shown first as this was one of the selection criteria. This is followed by whether or not the executive led PROC – the other selection criterion.

Several other data points are included in the table to provide further background for each interviewee, indicating the individual's level of influence and the business environment they have experienced. These points are rank, organisation size and whether the role was located in the corporate head office or a division during the PROC. Rank is included as a point of interest because more senior people are likely to have more influence over the decision to add executive coaching to a PROC programme. This research benefitted from access to senior executives. The interviewees all identified as CXO or Director apart from one who self-declared as a manager.

Organisation size in terms of employee numbers was included as the largest companies have the largest PROCs and budgets for outsider advisors, and will gain the greatest benefit in absolute terms. This data also informs seniority: a CXO in a company with more than 10,000 employers is more senior than a CXO in a company with less than 1,000. The executives' location during PROC is included as there is potential for different perspectives to develop: head office may be more focused on planning the PROC and authorising budgets for coaching investments. At the same time, those based in divisions have to implement the change, accept and use the coaching.

Table 14. Interviewee descriptions

Jeffrey is now UK-based but was originally from continental Europe. He is a banker and most of his experience is in Asia. He led a restructuring that closed many offices across the world following the credit crunch.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*Yes*	*CXO*	*10k +*	*Corporate*

William runs a product team within a large telecoms manufacturer. His primary change experience has been within a six-year turnaround/restructuring programme. He is predominantly UK-based but with extensive overseas responsibilities.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*Yes*	*CXO*	*10k +*	*Division*

Thomas has spent his career as a turnaround specialist or interim CEO. His turnaround work has been for private companies owned by billionaires rather than public listed entities. Much of his work has been based in the UK or North America.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*Yes*	*CXO*	*1k – 10k*	*Corporate*

James' career has been in Westminster, where he is a senior grade civil servant, implementing ministers' instructions and policy.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*No*	*CXO*	*1k – 10k*	*Corporate*

Mary's background is in banking and financial services and she now works in one of the large professional services firms. Her most extensive change experience was replacing the performance management system across an international bank.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*No*	*Director*	*10k +*	*Corporate*

Karen is an IT leader and has change experience in banking and industry. Her most significant change was moving all locations onto one SAP ERP system – a global change programme with total costs running to hundreds of millions of dollars.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
High	*No*	*Director*	*1k – 10k*	*Division*

Tessa's experience is in large building and consulting companies. Her change experience was holding an influential role in a merger that doubled the business size. That merger brought in Asian and US companies, and required multiple cultures to be brought together.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*Yes*	*CXO*	*1k – 10k*	*Corporate*

Richard is a qualified lawyer working in government. He still does some legal work, but promotions have led him to concentrate on management and leadership. His change experiences were merging competing departments with different cultures and opinions.

Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*Yes*	*Director*	*< 1k*	*Corporate*
Michael started in investment banking and now works in international retail banking. He has experience of bringing together two cultures via a merger following the credit crunch. He is British of Far-Eastern descent.				
Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*Yes*	*Director*	*10k +*	*Corporate*
Suzanne works in sizeable high-tech engineering organisations. Her largest change experience was a European merger where her role was running the re-engineering of the sales process. She has an engineering-focused, technical approach to projects.				
Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*No*	*Director*	*10k +*	*Division*
Robert was in the military, with direct command of hundreds of soldiers, including in Middle-East war zones. He implemented the restructuring of units as the army downsized.				
Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*No*	*Director*	*1k – 10k*	*Division*
David had a long career in the military with roles that included liaising with politicians. He now specialises in IT programme management and facilitation along with senior leaders. He has experience with large logistics change programmes in oil and gas and international retail banking.				
Mach	Led PROC	Rank	Org Size	PROC Locale
Low	*No*	*Manager*	*10k +*	*Division*

5.2 Executive coaching in PROC

The literature indicated that adding executive coaching to PROC would be advantageous. This section explores whether senior executives agreed with this view through questions focused on their experiences of coaching and PROC. Although the overall research aim is to find obstacles, sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 focus on understanding the perceived benefits of using coaching in PROC. This is a necessary step because, if none exist, that in itself would be a significant obstacle to coaching use. While the full list of interview questions has been set out in 3.3.2, the primary questions asked to investigate this element were first “Tell me about a time you were involved in radical organisational change” and “Have you been involved in coaching in your role in change programmes or in general?” Following the semi-structured interview approach, these were followed up with appropriate questions to gain informative answers.

The degree to which senior executives agree or disagree with the Bryant and Stesaker (2011) model is also discussed. This model proposed three challenges facing executives, in particular during PROC: communicating with head office to manage expectations without being labelled as a blocker to change; implementing the change itself in a local environment that may be different to that envisaged by head office when they set the overall strategy and managing unsettled staff. The purpose of looking at this model was to identify any reason why coaching might be particularly

useful in PROC compared to other possible means of support, as these three challenges appear to align closely to the problems often described as being aided by coaching (Grant, 2014). The primary enquiry, in this case, was, after briefly explaining the three challenges, to ask participants if any of those resonated with their personal experiences and then to enquire more deeply into their responses.

5.2.1 Executives' experiences in coaching and PROC

Executive coaching is generally well-received, according to the literature. The interviewees agreed, although few had been coached simultaneously with PROC. Overall, it emerged from the interviews that senior executives see great value in coaching in these circumstances. Tessa had considerable enthusiasm for coaching, felt she had benefitted from coaching during her transformation programme and claimed to be a better leader in her post-PROC work. The executives' comments suggests that past experience of coaching during change can make leaders more favourable to coaching. They also offer some insight into how coaching is relevant to the problems faced:

> *I got a huge amount of value out of it and wouldn't be the leader that I am without it. It was a painful process. And it dug up so much. Right back to the way that your paradigms are created, at the different stages of childhood and all of those things. I recognised the huge power in that, because I genuinely believe you can't change an organisation unless you're willing to change yourself. I genuinely believe that it helped. My cultural transformation programme was a success because I'd sorted my head out. So yes, it was really powerful.*
>
> *Tessa*

The change reference here was undoubtedly large, across a company of thousands over several years. Whether it was "a fundamental and risk-laden reboot of a company" (Reeves *et al.*, 2018) is not entirely clear, but it was certainly essential to the success of the company. If coaching is beneficial in a way that other, cheaper, interventions are not, then it could be worthwhile. Tessa noted that what was most important was what was happening inside her head. This is a distinct and different benefit from the type of advice that consultants bring when they are hired to help with PROC.

Tessa also explained how the coaching she received had a subsequent impact on the directors reporting to her and then on the other staff on her team:

> *I'll tell you where it really helped, Terry. Where it really helped was getting my people through this. That's where it really helped because of course people were really scared; they were under pressure as well. What it did is arm me with an insight into ways in which I can turn into a mentor and coach for my people, to get them through this change. I think it really helped with that.*
>
> *Tessa*

In this case, the benefit was much wider than just the individual being coached: it also enabled more junior staff to cope with the high pressure and their fears for the future during the PROC.

Jeffrey also found executive coaching relevant during PROC. He recalled the benefit he got from his coaching while he led a dramatic restructuring, closing many offices and laying off thousands of employees. In his comments, Jeffrey reflected on the benefit of being given an opportunity to step back and take a logical view of the problem:

> *We dealt with how you personally adjust your management style when the situation changes. It's just a mess much more frequently in a complex change. Well, therefore, an executive coach who can be independent of the day-to-day stuff which goes on, I found this extremely, massively useful.*
>
> *Jeffrey*

'Extremely, massively useful' reflects Jeffrey's strong belief about the significant benefit he gained and stands out from his other comments, which generally tended to be less effusive. The specific mention of the independence and detachment of the coach from the everyday issues highlights a distinct advantage of coaching over consulting advice. Like Tessa, he referenced changing situations that are addressed more effectively via coaching than training:

It was clear from the coding for Jeffrey and for other participants that not only was coaching applicable but it was also distinctive to other interventions. Perhaps the clearest example of this came from William, who spoke about a situation when he was not a coachee but an outside advisor. As he discussed that engagement, he noted that someone with coaching skills would have been valuable, to add to his consulting expertise:

> *I came in as the consultant for the change. I gave some ideas on the change that was already partially developed in my sponsor's mind, and I came in to support them practically. In this case, actually, coaches would have been useful because individual managers were resisting the change because they couldn't cope with it mentally.*
>
> *William*

William has the perspective of being both a consultant and then a coachee. He had a personal coach help him in a later job when two-thirds of the business reporting to him was sold off. William notes that his remit as a management consultant was 'practical support', but that may not be enough to help the internal managers cope with the mental pressure. With the perspective he has now, he can see that coaching could have been helpful. His comments do not preclude engaging a coach to work alongside the consultant and suggest that coaching can aid decision-making during PROC as an alternative to leaders being given advice or training or being left to work through issues themselves.

The majority of interviewees had experienced coaching separately from their PROC experience. Despite this, they were prepared to postulate that coaching was likely to be helpful in PROC. Mary saw it as clearly beneficial:

> *I have been involved in leadership programmes, delivering and designing them, and also being the coach. But when it comes to change programmes, I think coaching is, yeah, it's a*

must-have in order to help leadership navigate the change, so they can help people navigate change effectively.

Mary

Michael drew on issues he had experienced when leading a change programme. The benefits he wanted from coaching were improved listening and creative thinking. However, he offered somewhat conditional backing – he would support such a programme only if coaching influences the mindsets of peers and subordinates:

It would be very, very useful if coaching influences people's mindset and their behaviour to think out of the box. When we speak to someone whose mindset has been opened up, they will be able to listen better than someone who decided not to listen. It will definitely help. I will be very supportive of such initiatives.

Michael

It is not entirely clear whether Michael, as the leader of PROC programmes, was thinking primarily of his subordinates listening better to him, or whether he also thought that it would help his peers to think 'more out of the box'. From a different perspective, Robert thought about the benefits to less senior staff, commenting on how coaching could enable better communication up to the leader by giving people confidence through discussing issues first in a lower-risk environment:

People tell the executive sponsor what the sponsor wants to hear and not what is going to be delivered. In terms of externally provided coaching, I think it's a win-win for everybody. It gives people the confidence who might not have been engaged in that sort of change at that pace or scale before. They'd want to not expose themselves within the business but are quite happy to have the conversation outside of the business.

Robert

Robert understood the difficulties facing executives in sharing their concerns within the organisation and the potential problems caused. This point also highlights the difficulty executives have with trust during PROC and the challenges that scale and pace introduce. Confidential conversations with an independent person can help in this scenario because, as Robert points out, executives are happy to be more honest in this situation.

5.2.2 Executive coaching and PROC challenges

Not all the interviewees had had executive coaching experience during PROC, although they had all been involved in PROC. This section attempts to draw out other reasons why coaching might be beneficial in PROC by considering the challenges PROC brings. When considering how executive coaching might help PROC, the literature review found that senior executives implementing change had to balance three aspects (Bryant and Stensaker, 2011), simultaneously:

1. Satisfying head office (which may not want to hear about any difficulties);

2. Managing their own state of mind and implementing the change (which will have to be adapted to their local conditions);
3. Maintaining relations with their anxious employees (who may either think them a traitor or ignore them as being out of touch).

Bryant and Stensaker suggest that, if the balance between these elements is not maintained, the overall PROC could fail. The analysis showed how all interviewees talked freely about how hard they had found this situation, even though they were senior and experienced. As regards the first element – keeping head office satisfied – while top managers were frustrated that the next level down did not tailor their message, those communicating upwards thought top managers were not sufficiently supportive of either the individual or the whole project. Richard found this situation when he was leading a complicated, medium-scale merger:

> *Wheeling in there once a month to the review meeting was daunting. They both were fairly formidable individuals, but worse, they were flanked by their other sharp-shooters. No matter how well you think you've prepared for something in terms of detail, invariably there'd be something out of sync somewhere. And, even though these were their projects and they were the sponsors, it sometimes felt like it was a bit of a trial by fire. You didn't always think that they were actually supporting the very things they'd commissioned.*
>
> *Richard*

Richard was accomplished enough to survive this. In the interview, he sounded less frustrated at the unfairness of sponsors apparently ducking their responsibility but, rather, resigned and accepting of the situation. At least Richard had regular contact with top managers; in contrast, James, who was not leading change but implementing it, struggled with a lack of interaction with the core team:

> *Messaging the corporate centre above me was really hard because you go up against radio silence. Do they want to brief me on what to do? We could run around marketing our recent triumphs, but in the lack of a well-planned change programme, there isn't actually any forum for that, so upwards becomes very hard. Downwards, similarly, your staff are looking at you, saying, "What's going to happen to us?"*
>
> *James*

James starts by talking about the first challenge – keeping head office satisfied – caused by head office's failure to respond to difficulties. In an interesting reflection of how these issues build on one another, he then shifts quickly to describe the third challenge of supporting anxious employees. Executive coaching may be relevant in this situation, not because the coach will have the answer, but because coaching provides a confidant and someone to work with to create a plan.

The coding found many comments from others that resonated with this communication challenge. David noted that inexperienced people often failed to pitch their message at the right level for the board, giving too much detail. William agreed that top managers are interested only in headlines and, in a candid comment, revealed that he had to be economical with the truth and take great care passing news to his unpredictable boss. Jeffrey noted the dilemma of timing difficult messages correctly: if managers gave warning too early before all the facts were known, they would be

criticised; however, if they went too late, he commented, “It's why the heck did nobody know this in advance? Why are you coming up with this down the line and presenting us this challenge now?” As someone who travelled between offices and countries trying to smooth the implementation of significant change, Suzanne saw the effect on both sides:

> *There was a lot of anger in head office, who thought they were just being messed around with – and then they didn't want to listen. And there was a lot of confusion in the countries as to what exactly head office wanted. They all thought they had submitted the documents right.*
>
> *Suzanne*

This analysis of the challenge of upwards communication confirms the executives’ experience and attempts at different approaches to handle the difficulty. As coaching can help with upwards communication (Grant, 2014), this highlights another area in which executive coaching is relevant.

With respect to the second challenge of looking after themselves sufficiently, so they can implement the change in their local environment, the interviews did suggest that executives are under pressure when implementing PROC. Different executives can react differently to the same situation, so the support needed may vary. A high Machiavellian CXO and a low Machiavellian director describe similar challenges but characterise their processing differently and feel very differently about them. Richard, who has led change and scored low on the Machiavellian scale, recalled starting the process of letting people go. He framed it as being deceitful:

> *A decision has been made at a senior level, and I'm the bearer of the tidings. This is the tail end, all the usual human emotions, and you're trying to sell a positive timbre to disgruntled people who feel they've been kind of sold off.*
>
> *Richard*

Richard said that repeatedly conducting these meetings took its toll. It is striking to compare this response to that of William. He also had led change, but was the CXO and, thus had more power and control. He scored high on the Machiavellian scale. He rationalises the situation differently, framing it as a renewal:

> *I think if I'd just thought I was pushing people over a cliff, then I'd feel pretty fed up with it. But, actually, knowing that many of them would go on and get good jobs and would even feel renewed, that was good.*
>
> *William*

The internal stories that Richard and William related to themselves differ and leave them in very different states. This coding goes some way to explaining why the executives believe that coaching is beneficial – helping coachees to express unhelpful beliefs and reframe them in a credible but more positive form is common coaching practice (Stober, 2008).

The analysis of the coaching fit in PROC regarding the second challenge of wellbeing did not show anyone claiming to enjoy the pressure. However, equally, the coding did not find any comments about the difficulty in maintaining mental wellbeing. What it did show was a significant degree of

acceptance and the need to appear in control. Tessa explained how she feels everyone needs to put on a façade:

> *Some of us secretly have insecurities, but you'd never want to reveal that at work because you'd see that as a weakness. And you don't want to be perceived as weak because there will be someone there sitting ready to take you down.*
>
> Tessa

Within this part of the analysis, the comments made by the participants tended to suggest more superficial problems. These problems were less concerned with the effect of PROC on executives' wellbeing but more with the help they needed on practical issues of balancing priorities. The most common issue was that divisional directors are hired primarily to deliver business as usual. They are in their role because they are good at squeezing out growth and profit through continuous improvement and efficiency drives in a steady state. This does not fit well with the skills needed to simultaneously implement radical change. This challenge of delivering the change was identified as a common issue:

> *Particularly when you get divisional unit directors leading that change, I think there's a bigger tension between what they see as business as usual (delivering the annual plan and any profit that's related to that) and this thing that is called transformational change that doesn't quite seem to be their daily job. That means we've got two contradictory things going on because, on the one hand, we're trying to do this, and then the strategy's telling us to do that.*
>
> *Suzanne*

Overall, the problems identified in wellbeing and implementing change locally uncovered issues that could respond to coaching interventions, such as working through balancing priorities. There were some issues around self-care, but these interviewees could cope, even if the experience were slightly unpleasant.

Concerning the third potential challenge of handling staff, the interviewees' comments did show this to be a concern in PROC. Numerous issues were raised, although there was not a great deal of concern about being unpopular. William was unconcerned that he was seen as a 'hatchet man' when he first joined his current employer and even that he now faced greater resentment from staff about recent layoffs as, as time had passed, they had assumed he was one of them. Rather than staff bitterness, a more frequent concern was the lack of authority in an uncertain situation:

> *If you don't make it like upper management know what's going on, the staff smell it very quickly and lose faith in their own line managers, i.e. me. They would say, "Mate, from what we're hearing, this isn't going to go on any longer." So, you lose mojo and you think, "Shall I back myself in this situation or shall I lie low until it blows over?"*
>
> *James*

In these cases, power is lost as soon as people detect weakness. James also illustrates the decisions that middle directors have to make about how much and when to expend their personal

reputational capital. These are decisions that can be difficult to make with no one to confide in. Richard points out that, in PROC, sometimes executives are trying to influence change across wider teams, and that can be even harder.

> *It gets more bloody when you're trying to leverage people that don't directly work for you, and arguably their motivations aren't the same as yours, or the take from their lords and masters aren't the same as yours. You almost feel like you've got no real authority or power over anything that's happening. Your people are probably looking to you for answers that you may well feel you simply don't have. You often feel that you're getting it from all angles. Not a desirable place to be.*
>
> *Richard*

Others echoed Richard's view that lack of direct influence was difficult. Like William, they could cope with being disliked, but having no way to deliver on demands from above was much worse. In PROC projects, work can cut across the established organisational structure. Richard's comment about "their lords and masters" illustrates how politics – what other leaders want – can get in the way.

The analysis in this section has examined whether executives thought that coaching was helpful in PROC. To investigate why coaching might be worth adding as support in PROC, it also questioned whether interviewees recognised the challenges suggested (Bryant and Stensaker, 2011) as these appeared to be problems suitable for mitigation through coaching. The findings indicate that there is value in coaching in PROC, which negates the potential obstacle that executive coaching was simply not helpful in PROC situations. Other obstacles must exist to the procurement of coaching as an aid in PROC, and these are discussed next.

5.3 Lack of a demonstratable ROI

Earlier, interviewees said how much they valued the coaching for themselves and that they could see it being a valuable part of a PROC programme. However, when asked whether they thought coaching in PROC would increase in the future, they were sceptical. The primary questions from the interview schedule for this section 5.3 and the following section 5.4 were "Do you think it is realistic to bring in coaching for these change projects?" and "What do you think might be the obstacles stopping more coaches from being hired to support organisations with their radical organisational change?"

One theme apparent in the literature was the high perceived cost of coaching and this was reflected in the analysis. Karen commented that she did not believe that many organisations would add executive coaching to PROC. They might conduct group coaching because of the lower cost but, in her organisation, individual coaching is rare and mainly used in remedial interventions for behavioural problems. Mary echoed this view and explained some of her leadership's beliefs about coaching:

> *It is really rare because, firstly, just as a resource, they can't afford them. They don't want to spend money because they think this should be straightforward. Secondly, they think leaders should know how to do this anyway. And then, thirdly, they don't understand the value of coaching and what it can bring to the organisation.*
>
> *Mary*

The analysis found how difficult it is to overcome that obstacle of cost as seen against value because of a belief that coaching benefits are intangible. The coding work showed a category about the belief that executive coaching is expensive, or at least felt to be costly by decision-makers. Budget holders viewed it not in terms of value or return but primarily as a per-hour cost. Coaching was principally regarded as a way to help individuals, not as an input in the implementation of organisational strategy, so the opportunity to generate value was restricted. The interviewees made these comments with a degree of resignation or frustration; sometimes they claimed that they disagreed but were realistically describing the situation in their environment.

Of these issues, the 'intangibility' of the coaching benefit emerged strongly from the data analysis. It was taken to be a truism by the interviewees that coaching benefits could never be calculated in terms of organisational bottom-line impact. Even those who had personally benefitted from their coaching had little to suggest about measuring value:

> *For me personally, I got a lot of value out of my coaching but probably could not translate it into a dollar amount. It's an intangible number, I think.*
>
> *Tessa*

Although interviewees had been previously been clear about the benefits to them, perhaps surprisingly, they struggled to draw a demonstrable line from those benefits to improvement in business performance. David reiterated, “It's not tangible; you can't put a measure on it.” He then went on to explain the outcome: “Some of the directors will just look at it and say 'well, we'll just be throwing money away’.” This is a pragmatic comment: executives will not risk their personal reputations by making high-risk suggestions when they have no responsibility in their role to promote coaching.

‘Business case’ was a code within this category; a pattern emerged suggesting that, to gain a foothold, executive coaching needs a robust and clear business case as it falls outside the normal personal development domain. Suzanne explained why she saw it as impossible to invest in an extensive coaching project compared to other large programmes:

> *Coaching is not necessarily seen as directly impacting the business. I'm not entirely sure why – I never really thought about it. I'm not going to buy coaching in the same way that I would buy SAP[1]. I know that [product] because that's a tangible thing, and I've seen it working in other businesses. Here is their case study, and this, that, and the other. Coaching is tempting, but it's invisible in other organisations. It's far more difficult to do that sort of 'Wow, look at the value of this coaching at this time of radical change and what it genuinely did.'*

[1] SAP is enterprise software that frequently costs millions of dollars to buy and install.

Suzanne

Coaching is often considered not to have a direct impact on the business. While it may be appealing, it is not vital. This comment highlights how these executives want evidence, ideally where coaching has previously been effective. Ironically, despite the comment above, SAP software is not tangible; it is simply a copy of code. Suzanne thought of it as tangible because the benefits it brings – for instance, reduced headcount – are tangible. Michael makes a similar point about management consultants; they are, in reality, selling time, which is also not a physical entity but have, intriguingly, managed to make it seem tangible:

> *In comparison with consultants, I think the problem is that in the tangibility of the outcome, and the results and the value. With consultants, I think there's always a financial outcome behind it. The last few slides of a stock presentation from them show how much money is to be spent on this program initiative, how much money you're going to get back as annual cost savings, etc.*
>
> *Michael*

This lack of tangible value creates a problematic combination for executives who support coaching. They are proposing something that is not understood at the top levels, is presumed to be expensive and allegedly does not convert into tangible value for the business case. Business leaders are uncomfortable investing on that basis:

> *I'm not able to put my finger on it and place a value on it. It's all right to invest this money because I believe that it will deliver value. But the benefits are very intangible. It can improve my leadership or my ability to lead the organisation through this change but will it put anything tangible on the input or the output? It still feels a bit like just a belief.*
>
> *Kimberly*

Even interviewees who believed in executive coaching were sceptical of its systematic adoption during PROC due to this perceived lack of a tangible outcome. This intangibility reduces the ability to build a business case and is a significant obstacle to executive coaching growth within PROC.

5.4 The idea is not reaching PROC decision-makers

The literature review found that HR leaders were less involved in setting the PROC strategy than leaders from other functions. The involvement of HR in coaching and PROC was a theme within the analysis. All the executives who had received coaching had done so as a result of arrangements made through the HR department. This confirmed that HR's approach to coaching and PROC is influential. There were occasions where one-to-one coaching was requested by the executives and arranged by HR as a one-off. More typical were HR programmes for specific situations (such as 'fast track', 'leaders of the future', 'women leaders', etc.). These were the standard way to receive one-to-one coaching.

When an individual was identified as being in one of these specific categories, they would almost automatically receive coaching. It was possible to take advantage of this process to receive coaching that helped with PROC. Tessa was one such example: she wanted investment in her development, ideally non-executive director training, but funding for this was not approved. She then found that the company had a programme for female leaders, so she used that instead to obtain coaching support for her development and, subsequently, for the organisational transformation that she was leading.

Most interviewees were content with HR actions concerning coaching. Kimberly believed, despite claims to the contrary, that most companies had a focus on transactional HR that does not value a strategic outlook. Richard's coaching was obtained through an HR leadership programme, but he suggested that HR used coaching less now.

> *Who I work for now, they do some stuff in partnership with the Oxford Business School. They have a future leaders' programme, so they do a bit of that. But what I tend to find more of now is that HR and OD departments have shrunk their coaching a bit, to mainly a technical level to provide support to people doing a functional job. They don't have the capacity or maybe the investment budget anymore.*
>
> *Richard*

Kimberly and Richard accepted this level of performance from HR and showed no significant disaffection with its lack of strategic involvement. In contrast, Thomas, a turnaround specialist hired to improve profits and growth in struggling companies, was less tolerant. In his role, the outlook of HR and its ability to shape employees were high priorities. He claimed that, without a doubt, he would look at costs and cut out unnecessary expenses. However, he also claimed to be passionate about finding better performance through his people and was not prepared to carry an HR department that was purely transactional:

> *When you do that turnaround, and you find you've inherited someone who is a personnel manager from 1972, they are generally the first person I walk out. That's when I will bring in an experienced HR person, on a consulting basis, to bring that value to the business. We've got to have an HR person that understands the organisation design and development. That's required to execute the strategy.*
>
> *Thomas*

An analysis of Thomas's comments illustrated how HR is vital in obtaining an executive coaching budget and applying it effectively. He noted that, even if the CEO believes coaching is valuable and has authorised funding for it, unless the money is used well, it is wasted. There is some doubt as to whether all HR leaders can make that argument or whether top managers understand how the spend can make a strategic impact:

> *The fundamental issue here is that when the CEO gets on his feet and says, and actually believes, that coaching is imperative to grow a business, then with the wrong HR, you're still just going through the motions. People will come and pitch training that gets a, 'yes fine; it's in your budget, just do it'. But there's no comprehension. So, when I'm working with HR,*

they'll come and present, and I'll say, well, okay, can you explain to me what outcomes we want to achieve by putting that in that department. We challenge it; we actually tease it out because I'm not going to sign off on training or coaching for the sake of it.

Look, we're a company that empowers our people. I truly want to know that training or coaching is impacting the overall strategy of where we want to go. In my experience, many people at senior level don't have an engaging conversation with the OD or HR's overall strategy person.

Thomas

This analysis highlights how, except for occasional one-off assignments, coaching allocation takes place through HR programmes. Yet where HR is focused on transactional work rather than strategic change, it appears less likely that they will introduce a plan that supports PROC. They are more likely to continue in their usual comfort zone of personal development programmes. The lack of a PROC coaching programme introduced by HR means coaching is unlikely to be provided even when a need is identified. It also suggests that coaching is more often initiated in change circumstances by the PROC leader or the turnaround CEO.

This lack of HR involvement may be surprising given the popularity of strategic HR management (SHRM), where "the fundamental aim of SHRM is to generate strategic capability by ensuring that the organization has the skilled, engaged and well-motivated employees it needs to achieve sustained competitive advantage" (Armstrong, 2008, p. 44). It is possible, but perhaps unlikely, that none of the interviewees came from organisations purporting to follow SHRM, but there was no evidence of an SHRM approach initiating executive coaching for PROC among the interviewees.

No code was necessary to capture examples of interviewees explaining 'we now always put in a step in the PROC implementation plan for an executive coaching programme', as no examples were found. Although this group of interviewees are influencers and decision-makers in planning PROC, the option of including coaching in their PROC activities is not currently put to them.

Suzanne commented that coaching is not sufficiently prominent in terms of leadership awareness because "it's not blowing its own trumpet about value". All three of the interviewees who were on PROC programmes and had simultaneously received executive coaching had valued the coaching but, in each case, obtaining the coaching had been entirely serendipitous. Tessa had not initially thought about using coaching to help with PROC; it was her second choice, compensation for not getting what she initially wanted and available because of her gender, not her PROC role.

I wanted some development, and I wasn't getting any training. I initially asked for training with the Institute of Directors because I want to be a NED [Non-Executive Director]. That couldn't give the critical EBITDA [Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation], and so they couldn't invest. Well then, what about coaching? They did a thing for women over here; I knew that they had talked about that before, and yes, I got my coach.

Tessa

Her comments reinforced the need for a business case in these large companies or for the executive's circumstances to match an existing programme. In Tessa's case, non-executive director training did not support the business case but, fortunately, as she put it, there was this 'thing for women', and Tessa could leverage that. However, if HR had also arranged programmes for PROC executives, she could have accessed that directly.

Jeffrey explained that the prompt for his coaching was his move from Asia to London: "It was just a happy coincidence". Fortunately, his employer had a programme that was automatically offered to senior executives moving cultures and, as a result, he happened to get the benefit for the PROC that he was now leading. Similarly, William was on a fast-track scheme organised by his employer in partnership with the London Business School. As is typical in these courses, a short series of external one-to-one coaching was attached, mainly to help him implement the classroom learning when back at his desk. He had to have the coaching, as it was mandatory to complete the course successfully, but coincidentally it particularly helped him with PROC.

The 'reason I got coaching' coding for the executives confirmed that, in most cases, coaching was implemented where executives fitted predefined criteria, such as future leader development. However, in two cases, it was to resolve behaviour points. Both cases appear to involve issues of management style, and one had more success from the coaching than the other.

> *I've been executive coached several times. Less about change, but about personal progression. To be fair, I never got promoted in the end. That coaching was great about getting to know myself better. But I didn't have a problem. The only reason was they didn't like me very much, because I'm a sort of hard bastard programme director.*
>
> *James*

> *I got word that I was seen as aggressive, that I was confrontational, that I was, you know, they weren't used to somebody like me. We worked on how I could adapt my style, particularly dealing with the Americans. That really helped me and my profile in that company.*
>
> *Karen*

The analysis in this theme showed that no one in HR had suggested to these change leaders the idea of using executive coaching as a PROC step. Executives had gained places on programmes previously arranged by HR but there was no evidence that any coaching programmes had been set up by HR specifically to help executives involved in PROC implementations.

5.5 Negative attitudes of leaders

The primary questions from the interview schedule for this section 5.5 were "To what extent do you think internal politics plays a part in implementing organisational change?" and "It has been suggested that where organisational politics plays a part, then the more Machiavellian leaders are not always enthusiastic to get their people fully equipped to understand what is going on or able to push back. Does that seem likely to you?"

5.5.1 Political Machiavellian leadership

The analysis showed that no one denied that politics is part of organisational life. Interviewees ranged in their stance from extreme dislike to those who saw politics as a vital part of getting anything done. Richard saw political support as vital in completing change and weathering the inevitable difficulties on the way. He had led transformations, and a lack of political 'air cover' had negatively impacted him personally:

> *You know, you look at Kotter's change model or almost everybody else's, and you can't get away from the fact that you need people in seniority who are going to be supporters and be there when the going gets tough. Without that, you really are doomed.*
>
> *Richard*

Similar to Richard, the coding for the impact of politics on change identified Mary as another executive who had been disadvantaged. As she put it, it "panned my whole project" after two years of work plus significant investment in consultants and other resources. In a more positive light, a favour from someone who can influence others was able to keep things moving. Although Suzanne disliked politics because of the resentment it caused, and which she had to resolve, she could see it could have some use as well. She saw politics as undesirable but did consider some 'lighter' aspects as beneficial:

> *Not an enabler when I think about it with the word politics attached to it. But if I think about some of those same things in terms of the influence of individuals in the organisation, then yes. When I have somebody who's in a senior position who just opens doors or gives permissions or just kind of leans on people to crack on and do, actually, politics can be an enabler.*
>
> *Suzanne*

William noted the presence of politics among the more senior managers: positioning and lobbying were rife. The interviewees also combined the political model with the view that Machiavellian leadership was a problem in their work. Mary's comment agreed particularly with the literature that claimed the existence of politics at the top level was denied even when it was evident:

> *There are Machiavellian types, especially in senior positions. They try and hide it, but it's fairly obvious to their team members that they've got a different agenda. It comes out; they show their true colours in how they relate to the team members and to each other. And that can be a big blocker in change.*
>
> *Mary*

Mary claimed she was aware of what was happening despite Top Manager (TM) attempts at camouflage. She scored relatively high on the Machiavellian scale so, arguably, she noticed that behaviour because she tended to think in the same way. James, with similarly high Machiavellian scores, likewise felt that the politics in the environment he worked in was expressed in a particularly Machiavellian way:

> *In [organisation], my instinct is we're all Machiavellian, so we're always on the lookout. We're always on the lookout for Machiavellian behaviours by others, and no outcome prospers that we don't put down to some Machiavellian brilliance.*
>
> *James*

Interviewees saw this behaviour as a potential obstacle to implementing executive coaching. Robert, unprompted, said he thought that with respect to coaching programmes during PROC, "a block might exist where you've got senior executives not wanting the benefits of coaching to go too far down because then the competition increases." Jeffrey claimed that very few people behave illogically in his country division, and their behaviour is guided purely by personal gain: they only help others if it helps them directly. William believed that a controlling CEO who likes to govern through direction and fear would not want coaches in the business. Thomas described a CEO he once removed:

> *He was a perfect example; he didn't want to share the numbers with anybody, didn't want the people to be coached, didn't want to share too much, whilst sitting in his office all day. For one specific reason. These people at the middle management level, divisional managers, could do his job with their eyes closed. He knew that, he realised. And often, leaders who don't want to empower their people feel threatened because they realise there are people there that can actually take their job.*
>
> *Thomas*

These comments, coded to motivation and threats, give some insight into the motivation for this behaviour. Although these political aspects are not discussed with peers within companies, interviewees were keen to take the opportunity to talk in confidence to the researcher about them. William gave an example of this blocking behaviour, recalling how he justified not authorising coaching for a senior manager in case it caused further problems for himself:

> *He's the guy who maybe could do with a coach to explore his thoughts. The only problem with him, I think is, my suspicion is, he wouldn't listen carefully, and he'd think this coach was telling him to pursue even more aggressively these other options. So, I suppose I'm frightened about what he might think he hears when working with a coach.*
>
> *William*

The data emerging from the interviews showed that political or Machiavellian behaviour was confirmed as existing in these large organisations, generally and in change situations. While this could be taken as support that coaching procurement may be blocked by leaders acting for selfish reasons, the evidence is not conclusive that this is a major factor.

5.5.2 Lack of change readiness

A lack of change readiness was identified as a potential obstacle to coaching support in the literature review and participants were asked if they saw "a similar situation arising with leaders who are not

change-ready?" However, the qualitative data arising from this, in contrast to the Machiavellian obstacle, showed only limited concern that leaders who were less change-ready would present a hurdle. It was not sufficiently influential to be classified as a particular theme but was more appropriate as a category. The feedback was that, if a PROC were underway, change-resistant leaders would be moved out or side-lined through political measures:

> *I think many blockers will have to do something else and we will find someone who's not going to block. That's at the top. But the middle and bottom layers, I think that they have to adapt and then make the change.*
>
> *Michael*

When asked about change readiness, interviewees wanted to talk about resistance in junior roles rather than at senior levels. Unlike with the TMs, the pragmatic view is that there are too many staff resistant to change further down the organisation to side-line all of them. It was recognised that conflicting forces could prevent managers from being ready to make the PROC a success:

> *I do think it is often taken for granted that the managers will come on side. Their own teams and, indeed, their own roles may be compromised by this change programme. They're supposed to be leading the way by example, etc., which is great, and which is what you would expect and hope of your leaders. But, that said, I think it's often underestimated that there's not that much in it for them.*
>
> *Karen*

Karen's comments are not about political behaviours aiming to prevent a change programme, as discussed above, but an explanation of why people will not necessarily be enthusiastic and ready for change. Within the change readiness category, staff resistance was a common frustration. Richard referred to his experience with militant trade unions where he said, "The answer's no, what's the question?" Other items in this code discussed overseas labour relations and formal feedback mechanisms to strike deals. Despite the frustration, nothing here from the interviews appeared to be an obstacle to adding executive coaching in PROC.

5.5.3 Resistance to coaching

Another point, not from a direct question, but arising from the change-resistance discussions, was that some interviewees mentioned coaching resistance from other executives as a perceived block to executive coaching. This was surprising, as these executives had spoken about how they favoured coaching and their positive personal experiences. However, in these examples, they were now talking about how they believed other executives thought, rather than themselves.

James had noticed that even where he had offered to arrange coaching or mentoring, the offer was rarely accepted. He was frustrated that some were "so scared to have expert input and expert help". Karen also thought some might see it as a threat:

I think some leaders are also very scared, it's a bit like a lifeline, but I think they can find it quite threatening too. Some people embrace that sort of support. And other people don't. I think there's probably also resistance from leaders because they often say that's a bit threatening. In this, there is some assessment purpose as opposed to a development sort of focus. And I think, you know, it's probably about what is the purpose for. Is it an ongoing relationship to build up your own course of leadership skills, or is it geared to a specific project or piece of work?

Karen

This comment suggests, for some, the threat lies in the prospect of being evaluated, which could cause particular concern during a restructuring. Karen also seems to suggest that executives would make a different judgment if the coaching were purely for the executive's own development, which would be the more common use of executive coaching, rather than if it were primarily targeted for a specific business activity, which is precisely what a PROC is. The fear that they are also being covertly assessed is consistent with earlier comments that senior leaders prefer external coaches rather than internal ones from within the HR department.

Another cause of coaching resistance put forward was a fear of it being used as evidence that executives do not have the required job skills. Mary explained this fear and also how coaching was used instead of corrective instruction:

I think, for some, asking for a coach is an admittance of incapability, almost incompetence, because you need to be taught how to do something. And you know, to make it sound a little bit softer, they say 'coach'.

Mary

It appears that some organisations misuse the word 'coach', using it as a less confrontational way of telling an individual that they need training. Given how this use has been associated with 'incompetence', it may be rendering the term more negative than it is. Susan felt that some senior executives simply do not believe they need an executive coach and think, "I know what I'm doing." She described a director who was on track to be CEO who had coaching forced on him:

He was not happy about it. He thought he was brilliant by himself – he didn't need coaching. He was saying he was perfectly capable of being a CEO. But he was not a people manager. He always behaved really embarrassed about the coaching. So, I think maybe that's also where my thinking comes from.

Susan

Although this future CEO claimed there was no problem to solve, Susan saw it differently. Distinguishing whether people who resist coaching do so because they genuinely feel it is unnecessary, or because they do not want proof that they do need help, is not always easy.

6 Discussion

6.1 Chapter introduction

This research aimed to examine the factors affecting and potentially reducing the use of executive coaching in PROC. This work was important because executive coaching appears to be underused in PROC programmes, given its potential to help these high-value projects deliver on time, on budget and with quality, and this suggests that something is holding coaching back in these situations that is not yet understood. No previous research had been conducted specifically on these obstacles.

6.2 Discussion of quantitative findings

6.2.1 Machiavellianism and favourability to coaching

The current study suggests that executives with higher levels of Machiavellianism are less inclined to have a highly favourable view of coaching. The quantitative analysis comparing executives' Machiavellianism and favourability to coaching found a statistically significant medium-strength negative correlation between Machiavellianism and favourability to coaching.

This finding is a small step towards exploring if Machiavellian PROC leaders could be a factor in slowing the growth in the use of executive coaching during PROC. It seems consistent with literature that suggests change leaders prefer to use direct methods to save time and cost rather than 'softer' people development approaches. These direct methods are therefore unlikely to encompass coaching but can include manipulation, blackmail, rumours, misinformation and can appear to be quite Machiavellian (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Newman, 2007; Buchanan, 2008; Crouzet, 2014). A finding of more Machiavellianism being related to less enthusiasm for coaching is also in line with what might be expected from the research on power struggles in top teams and that some leaders undermine and do not develop others who could become threats to their position in the future (Baddeley and James, 1987; Greer, Van Bunderen and Yu, 2017).

It is important to bear in mind that this is the first study looking at the relationship between these two variables and therefore these results need to be interpreted with caution and would benefit from further research. Another source of uncertainty concerning the research aim is that this has only looked at one element of Machiavellian leaders blocking executive coaching. While these leaders do usually control budgets for hiring outside advisors during PROC (PA Consulting, 1998; Caldwell, 2003; McKinsey & Co, 2017), the effect is still somewhat hypothetical in that it is unclear how much any unfavourability would translate into coaching procurement obstruction in practice.

While these findings do provide an interesting result, which is supported by the qualitative interviews in this study, this is still early-stage research and quite theoretical in relation to the

research aim. Despite these encouraging results questions remain unaddressed. For instance, there is currently no quantitative understanding of what proportion of PROC leadership is as Machiavellian as suggested by some of the change literature or implied by claims that psychopathic traits can help people reach the top (Landay, Harms and Credé, 2019). Similarly, it would be important to understand how often in practice such leaders would decide not to block coaching when they are not in favour of it themselves but others are.

6.2.2 Readiness to change and favourability to coaching

The current study suggests that executives with lower change readiness have a less favourable view of coaching. The quantitative analysis comparing executives' change readiness to their favourability to coaching found a statistically significant medium-strength positive correlation between change readiness and favourability to coaching.

This finding represents some progress in investigating whether a lack of change readiness in the PROC leadership team could be a factor slowing the growth in the use of executive coaching in PROC. While it might be hoped that all PROC team members are change-ready this certainly will not be the case with co-opted members (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979) or covert resistors (McAllister *et al.*, 2015). Potentially this could be a group of executives who might act against the procurement of coaching in PROC as a lack of change readiness does appear to correlate with a relative unfavourability towards coaching.

While there has been no previous literature on how prior change readiness relates to attitudes to coaching there has been research indicating coaching can increase staff members' change readiness, hope and optimism (Grant, 2013; Theeboom, Beersma and Van Vianen, 2013). This current finding that higher change readiness is correlated with higher favourability to coaching is not inconsistent with this previous research. Similarly, it would not be a surprise if a change-ready individual described by Vakola (2014) as someone who expects to succeed and thinks of the advantages of change has a relatively positive view toward coaching.

A note of caution is due here in that although this is a statistically significant finding it only goes a limited way towards demonstrating a potential obstacle to coaching procurement during PROC. As a group, these change-resistant executives may have less power than, say, a Machiavellian leader. The co-opted members have been brought into the team to control them, not for their advice (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979) and the covert resistors will have to be careful in their objections less their true colours become apparent. That said, the co-opted members are senior and usually influential individuals and the covert resistors can be skilled at using requests for more analysis or working committees to effectively slow progress while still pretending they are in favour (McAllister *et al.*, 2015). Another source of uncertainty is that the qualitative analysis did not indicate a lack of change readiness amongst leadership as a problem. Therefore, while it is an interesting finding, care should be taken at this stage from concluding that a lack of change ready executives within leadership is a block to executive coaching in PROC until more research is carried out.

6.2.3 Impact of previous PROC leadership experience

This current study suggested that senior executives who have not previously led change hold a less favourable view of executive coaching in PROC than those who have. A t-test found a small significant difference between executives split between those who have led PROC and those who had not.

It has been suggested that experienced PROC leaders focus on harsh or direct methods rather than the people side of change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Handy, 2007). However, this current finding does not support the hypothesis that this would mean these PROC leaders would be unfavourable to coaching. In fact, it shows a relationship in the other direction. A possible explanation for this might be that once executives experience the difficulties of leading a PROC they realise that something was missing from the people side of change and see the advantages of coaching being added as an intervention, at least for themselves. This tentative explanation would be consistent with previous researchers' suggestion that leadership difficulties would be mitigated by access to executive coaching. This alternative explanation would further support claims by Cosstick (2010) who suggests that coaching can close the gap where traditional change management disregards necessary interpersonal elements and Kilkelly (2014) who suggests that a coach could help change leaders to focus on empowering the team and be less distracted by fear.

These results need to be interpreted with caution as the effect found by the t-test, although significant, was only small. That this was not a strong relationship was confirmed by a regression analysis in which Leading PROC was not found to be a significant factor when included in a model along with Machiavellianism and change readiness, both of which were shown to be more important and statistically significant.

6.2.4 Relationship with previous coaching experience

The final quantitative finding was that executives who had previously had involvement with coaching during PROC were more favourable towards coaching than those who had not had that experience. A t-test found a medium significant difference in the favourability towards coaching for those who acted as coaches versus those who had not. The same result was found for those who arranged the coaching. A t-test comparing those who had authorised coaching found a significant difference, although it was only small. However, those who had been coached showed no change in their view of coaching, as the reported difference was not significant.

This current result might be expected from previous quantitative research that reported overall positive findings for coaching, with increased leadership skills, effectiveness and ability to deal with change (Wasylyshyn, 2003; Grant, 2014). Similar viewpoints were found in qualitative research into executives' experience of individual coaching during organisational change (Conbere, 2017; Bickerich, Michel and O'Shea, 2018). This study is slightly different to previous research in that it compares executives' attitudes towards coaching rather than previous research which focused on

the impact of coaching on executives' abilities. Given that previous studies found coaching increased skills for PROC, it is consistent for those involved in this situation to have witnessed this effect, as this may have reduced any previous concerns they may have had and for that to then be reflected in their slightly higher favourability to coaching scores.

However, the lack of higher favourability from those who had been coached during PROC is somewhat surprising. A possible explanation is that executives already have a high expectation about being coached in PROC and when coached that expectation is simply met. This rationalisation is not inconsistent with this study's qualitative research in which executives previously coached outside of PROC also believe coaching would have helped them in a PROC situation. Another possible explanation for this unexpected result might lie in the specific wording of the survey. The survey rubric described coaching as "a series of conversations to unlock a person's potential to maximise their performance, helping them to learn rather than teaching them." Whitmore (2002). While this is a popular definition regrettably it failed to mention any requirement for coach formal training or accreditation. This leaves the possibility open that some participants interpreted this as including some 'coaching conversations' with their line manager. Arguably, while being managed in a coaching style is likely valuable in a steady-state high trust environment it may be less so for the subordinate in the uncertainty and political circumstances of PROC.

The use of these results may be somewhat limited by the uncertainty in how participants interpreted the definition of coaching in the survey and the lack of a significant result for those coached. However, with that caveat in place, it does suggest that coaching did not lose favour amongst those who have tested it in PROC situations and no indication that the experience would put them off from employing it again.

6.3 Discussion of qualitative findings

The interviews were designed to understand what lay beneath the quantitative results and give the opportunity to uncover any other serious blocks that had not already been identified.

6.3.1 Executive coaching is potentially useful in PROC programmes

The first qualitative result in the current study found that senior executives believed one to one executive coaching is a beneficial intervention during PROC. This finding contributes to the currently limited amount of coaching literature focused on organisational change by adding support to previous claims that executive coaching is valuable during large organisational change.

The support for coaching appeared to derive primarily from executives in these interviews seeing it as a practical intervention to solve their leadership and prioritisation issues. This is consistent with Bickerich *et al* (2018) who found that executives in a radical change programme sought practical support on how to lead change, which, interestingly, was different to the coaches in that study who wanted to focus more on personal reflection. As such, the findings from this current study does not support, in PROC situations at least, the view of earlier researchers such as Wasylyshyn (2003) and

Berglas (2002) who put more importance on psychologically trained coaches than business experience.

Executives appreciated the ability to step back from the everyday pressures of PROC and have the opportunity to think and prioritise. This is consistent with claims about executive coaching in organisations more generally made by Day *et al* (2008) and Grant (2014), who mention coaching as an opportunity to be flexible and strategic when thinking about new issues. Another factor underlying this positive result was executives having someone independent and confidential to talk to in a situation where they have to be careful who they trust. This further supports similar suggestions by Conbere (2017) and Nanduri (2017) which are specific to change situations and appears consistent with Witherspoon and White's (1997) observation that being a CEO is a lonely job and an executive coach often acts as a confidant in that situation. Executives reported they cannot afford to appear weak or uncertain, which along with the confidentiality issue, goes a little way towards explaining Clutterbuck's (2020) observation that, unlike in one to one coaching, members are generally careful to not disclose too much in team coaching or group problem-solving environments.

While coaching was seen as a route for personal development, there was perhaps less evidence that executives felt they needed coaching to protect their self-esteem. Most of the participants had been in the difficult situations suggested by Clair and Dufrense (2004) and Bryant and Stensaker (2011) and most had performed the 'necessary evils' (Molinsky and Margolis, 2005) of not being entirely honest to their staff and then firing them. However, they reported challenges rather than anything equating to Molisky and Margolis' 'intense internal dramas'. The reason for this is not clear but possibly it could be a function of these being particularly senior people which would have filtered out any who did not have a certain degree of toughness. Or possibly their responses were not entirely accurate as the situations being discussed were sufficiently in the past that they had time to forget unpleasant details or that they still had the habit of not showing weakness. This needs to be interpreted with caution but again supports the idea of Bickerich *et al* (2018) that executives in PROC look to coaching for practical support.

The present study was designed to investigate the obstacles reducing the use of executive coaching in PROC implementation programmes. This current result eliminates the potential obstacle that executive coaching might not be thought applicable to change situations by senior PROC executives.

6.3.2 Lack of ROI is a clear obstacle to implement coaching

An important finding was the perceived lack of a clear, measurable and credible methodology to predict a return on investment (ROI) for the executive coaching in a PROC business case. This appears to be a significant obstacle to the use of executive coaching in PROC on a large scale.

Although they did not doubt that executive coaching was useful, these senior executives were sceptical that the value of executive coaching could be expressed as a credible financial number. Integrating executive coaching into a PROC programme by coaching tens of senior executives throughout the change implementation process is a significant investment. Without a robust,

defined numerical benefit, a business case cannot be produced to show a return on this considerable cost and without that, even supportive influential executives cannot propose or approve the idea without reputational risk to themselves. Not gaining business case support from executives is a significant obstacle to the use of coaching in PROC. This outcome is consistent with statements made about general organisational coaching by Theeboom *et al.* (2013) who stated that doubt about coaching derives from the lack of empirical research and the difficulty of attributing financial benefit.

This research finding is in line with those who have argued that a positive ROI from coaching is the most important outcome measure as an organisational aim is to make a profit (McGovern *et al.*, 2001; Anderson, 2012). However, the question of ROI in coaching is a contentious one with differences of view between those claiming to have measured coaching ROI with repeatable methodology (McGovern *et al.*, 2001; Parker-Wilkins, 2006; Anderson, 2012), while others suggest the measurements had issues and that coaching is intrinsically not suited to ROI measurement and different metrics should be used instead (De Meuse, Dai and Lee, 2009; Grant, 2012). This current research would suggest that the work of those who claim to have a robust method for measuring ROI is not yet persuading senior executives. It is not clear if that is because these coaching ROI calculations are not reaching these executives or if they are simply sceptical of the methods proposed. Certainly, these senior executives are used to evaluating proposals with a critical commercial eye so the methodology would need to be robust.

While some of the concerns, such as the difficulty in comparing the ROI between different studies or a search for a single 'coaching ROI' number are unlikely to be considerations for executives building a business case, two of the problems are likely to cause a sceptical senior executive to pause. The first is that the distance between the coaching intervention and the financial results makes it hard to demonstrate a causal link and to eliminate other factors (Feldman and Lankau, 2005; De Meuse, Dai and Lee, 2009). This issue closely matches with the executives' stated concerns in the interviews. The other significant matter is that the current methods tend to measure the return after the fact, which may be acceptable in steady-state situations or in pure research to answer the question of what was achieved by investing in coaching, whereas what is needed in these PROC situations is a predictive number to go into the business case to compete with other adviser proposals for budget as the PROC is planned. Grant (2012) notes that the claims for high ROI in previous use cases would have been created by the coaching vendors and therefore would be unreliable or at least suffer from unconscious bias. While that certainly is a problem for academic knowledge it is likely less of a problem in the PROC as the predicted benefits and costs will have to be recalculated and judged internally, as each situation will be unique.

Some approaches deliberately underestimate the financial return by adding in 'confidence factors' to produce a prudent estimate (De Meuse *et al*., 2009; Parker-Wilkins, 2006; Phillips, 2007). This is a problem for scientific knowledge as between studies comparison becomes difficult, however, that is less of a concern in a one-off business case and, as it does give a worst-case number, it might be more credible. Another issue when researching a single ROI number for coaching is that so much varies on the issue being coached. As De Meuse *et al* (2009) state each ROI computation is context-specific and the return depends on who is being coached. They illustrate this by considering the return when coaching executives working on million-dollar deals compared to others working on billion-dollar deals. However, again this would be less of a concern for a one-off business case,

where these factors are known. As PROC can sometimes be a “fundamental and risk-laden reboot of a company” (Reeves *et al.*, 2018, p. 1) it seems possible that even a highly discounted ‘prudent’ predicted return could show a sufficient ROI to be considered, given the size of the stake involved.

This current finding does not undermine the need for other more complete measures for coaching return such as Grant’s (2012) well-being and engagement framework. Those sorts of measures would be useful for post-project reviews and research, but this finding does highlight that those alternative measures cannot replace the requirement for a predictive financial ROI. De Meuse *et al* (2009, p. 125) suggest “We are not stating that it is impossible to compute ROI, but it certainly is very, very difficult to do so”. While ROI may or may not be so vital a factor in individual development coaching, this current study shows that to support the increased use of coaching in PROC this is a practical research subject that would benefit from further investigation, despite the known difficulties.

6.3.3 The option of coaching is not reaching PROC decision-makers

The third qualitative finding was that the option of implementing executive coaching for change leaders as part of the PROC was not in senior executives' minds and was not being presented to them as an option by HR or external advisors. Coaching for executives was routinely arranged by HR as part of leadership development programs but there were no examples of coaching put in place to help an individual about to play a significant role in PROC. Where executives were being coached at the same time as being involved in PROC this had just been a coincidence. In those instances, the coaching had been arranged by HR as part of other development programmes and without any consideration towards PROC. While executives themselves retrospectively thought coaching in PROC was a good idea, none of them in a PROC situation without a coach had considered requesting that an external executive coach be provided to them.

This finding suggests that Carter’s (2015) comments that the use of coaching to aid organisational change was still infrequent appears to still hold true, although caution must be applied as this was a relatively small sample size. It also matches the findings of Thompson and Cox (2017) who found that many project managers had not been made aware of coaching available and, thus, did not consider using it to help with their programmes. Although the Thompson and Cox research was looking at lower-level employees than the current study the communication issue appears similar. These results are consistent with suggestions that HR continues to play a critical role in helping executives obtain coaching (Petra, 2012). However, as the HR coaching support reported in this study appeared to be focused on supporting normal steady-state leadership development programs, this result does not conflict with McKinsey & Co (2017) that found HR has a relatively small role in radical organisational change strategy. In this situation, leadership seeing coaching as being solely the responsibility of HR is not particularly helpful in integrating it into radical change programmes.

This finding is somewhat disappointing given the support for executive coaching from participants in this study and other researchers (Berg and Karlsen, 2007; Cosstick, 2010; Grant *et al.*, 2010). It cannot be said to lend support to the predictions by Grant *et al* (2010) that it would increasingly be

used to further organisational change, at least not within the PROC situation. This lack of progress may not be that surprising given coaching is an intervention supporting 'Soft S' subjects and these are generally handled less well within the organisational change or sometimes just ignored (Woodward and Hendry, 2004; Handy, 2007). It does accord with Stober's (2008) concern that there has been little debate about how to go about achieving an increase in coaching during organisational change and Nanduri's (2017) finding that the use of coaching in the implementation of organisational restructures has still not been given as much consideration as it deserves.

It is not entirely clear this situation is going to change. Tentatively it could be speculated that updates to change models, increases in HRDs influence or developments in senior executives' knowledge might make a difference over time. Practitioners use step-change models such as Kotter's (1996) because they appear to be common sense and easy to understand (Pollack and Pollack, 2015). None of the popular change models currently contain explicit steps to stand up executive coaching but should that alter then the use of coaching in PROC is likely to increase. However, as these change approaches are well established and have not changed despite producing poor success rates (Strebel, 1996; Beer and Nohria, 2000; Raelin and Cataldo, 2011) it seems unlikely they will add extra steps at this point. Possibly HR directors could come to see executive coaching in PROC as a way of achieving similar engagement levels in strategy as the other functions (McKinsey & Co, 2017). However, this would likely be dependent on the ROI debate in the previous section being satisfactorily resolved. A final possibility is that senior PROC executives become more aware of the benefits. That may happen over time as coaching grows more generally within organisations, however, this finding did not suggest the executives were likely to be proponents. Partly this would be because of the reputational risk from the ROI issue but also because even those who have been coached during PROC still naturally thought of coaching as a personal development tool rather than an organisational solution.

This finding has significance in that coaching researchers just claiming that executive coaching would be a good solution within PROC is not enough for it to happen in practice. Without the message getting through to those setting up coaching programmes or controlling PROC budgets, it seems possible that researchers will be reporting on the surprising underuse of coaching in radical organisational programmes for some time yet.

6.3.4 Impact of Machiavellian leaders and senior team members lacking change readiness

The current study found it feasible that Machiavellian top managers could prevent others from receiving executive coaching. The research participants suggested that coaching could be prevented by Machiavellian top managers aiming to undermine or obstruct others. There were examples of Machiavellian behaviour including executive coaching being considered and then consciously not being offered and projects being suddenly shut down. There was also an acceptance that internal politics was something that always exists in organisations and which sometimes could be helpful in change programmes. However, it is important to bear in mind the possibility of overstatement in these responses. It is possible that these were rare and slightly shocking experiences and thus they were more emphasised by participants than their actual impact deserved.

The acknowledgement and acceptance by the research participants that internal politics exists in change programmes agrees with previous studies suggesting that politics is inevitable and change agents need to be politically capable (Dorow and Blazejewski, 2003; Buchanan, 2008; McAllister *et al.*, 2015). Although the downsides of political behaviour were made clear by the executives this was balanced by views that political behaviour can be helpful to keep change moving or to get it unstuck. This broadly supports the comments by Dorrow and Blazejewski (2003) and Antal-Mokos (1998) on the usefulness of political behaviour in aiding radical transformations. This result showing the presence of both internal politics and Machiavellian behaviour is also consistent with previous research by (Ferris *et al.*, 2002) who described Machiavellianism as being at the heart of office politics and preceding internal political action. It is consistent with Furnham's (2018) claims that the more aggressive type of office politics is equivalent to Machiavellianism and, given the high rank of these participants, also with Greer *et al* (2017) who claim top teams are particularly political and paranoid. This qualitative finding is consistent with its quantitative finding that there is a correlation between individuals with higher Machiavellianism and lower favourability to coaching. While these results are intriguing, as this is the first study to look at this area care is needed in interpreting the strength and frequency of this issue in practice, further studies to confirm this effect are recommended.

This qualitative element of the current study did not find evidence that change resistance in senior levels was considered an issue or a potential obstacle to executive coaching being brought in. While a lack of change readiness was reported this was mainly seen as something that affected people further away from the PROC team, with the assumption that anyone on the PROC team who was identified as change-resistant would quickly be moved so they could not cause harm. This revealed perhaps a surprisingly low level of concern about senior executives hiding their resistance, given that Recardo (1995) suggests that 70 per cent of resistance is covert. That said, change resistance in more junior individuals was strongly identified, especially with unionised staff.

This assumption that employee resistance will be present is consistent with other change literature (Denis *et al.*, 2001; Lines, 2004; Knights and Willmott, 2012). The assumption that the resistance will mainly be from non-leadership staff matches the research on practices to overcome resistance in employees on the receiving end of change (George and Jones, 2012; Hayes, 2014; Burnes, 2017). That said, the reported low level of concern is inconsistent with literature that discusses techniques suitable for managing other leaders, including negotiation, threats and co-option (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1979; Buchanan, 2008; Crouzet, 2014).

This qualitative finding is informative in terms of the research question. It suggests that a lack of change readiness amongst senior executives may be less of an obstacle to procuring coaching than implied by the change readiness-coaching favourability correlation in this study's quantitative analysis. However, the executives' limited concern about covert resistance was a somewhat unexpected finding and in future research this would be an area to investigate further.

6.4 Synthesis of quantitative and qualitative findings

The different findings are brought together and illustrated in Figure 6, showing how the different methods found and investigated different obstacles. Some issues uncovered by the survey analysis, the first element in this sequential design, were investigated further in the interviews. The width of the arrows in the diagram tentatively suggests the strength of the relationships; however, as this figure includes qualitative measures, these are all judgments and not mathematical calculations. These relationships have all been discussed earlier although some, such as Machiavellianism and favourability to coaching, will have been in more depth than others, such as Fear of being seen to waste money and reluctance to make a suggestion to the board of directors. Having noted that point of caution, and the qualitative nature of the synthesis, it is still considered valuable to connect all obstacles together on one diagram. This figure also uses the obstacles to tentatively suggest further research or practitioner action to ensure that executive coaching is purchased more frequently to support PROC implementation programmes.

The quantitative investigation on the left side of the page shows how coaching in these circumstances is at risk of being blocked by high-ranking individuals. The quantitative modelling of factors that could make such individuals not favour coaching is split into the previous roles held by executives and their attitudes. In the category of obstacles related to roles, not having led PROC is shown with a dotted arrow. It is not a solid line, as the final Model 3 did not show this as a significant variable but other tests suggested there may be some relationship. The asterisk next to 'Not Led PROC' shows that it was selected for follow up in the interviews through the selection of interviewees. In the interviews, although executives who had led PROC were favourable towards coaching, so also were executives who had not been leaders. Hence, a relationship with this feature is still quite tentative. Having had a role as a coach, coaching organiser or authoriser during PROC was more significant in the regression model and, unlike 'Not Led PROC' is shown with a solid arrow.

The two leadership attitudes examined were relatively strong predictors of favourability to coaching score in the final quantitative model, hence the broader arrows here. High Machiavellianism was slightly less critical than change readiness in the model but, when these were discussed in the interviews with relation to PROC leaders, Machiavellianism was seen as more likely to be a problem than change readiness; on this diagram, therefore, they are given equal weight. In the interviews, change resistance (lack of change readiness) was seen as a problem caused by those further down the organisation, consistent with other literature (Ford, Ford and D'Amelio, 2008). Coaching resistance was a feature uncovered in the interview discussions about change readiness. As an obstacle in this context, the arrow indicates that it is related to attitudes and blocks by individuals.

The qualitative side of the figure shows how this part of the research uncovered blocks caused by organisational processes. In essence, the opportunity is not being proposed to those making the decision. This type of coaching in PROC is not a familiar concept to leaders, and it is not being suggested to them by HR, who would often be the customary owners of coaching within an organisation. Other executives who may be in favour of coaching are wary of putting the business case forward because of how it may be received. HR is not always very engaged in PROC and, therefore, not in a position to suggest the use of coaching here. Regarding concerns about

presenting the business case, the biggest driver of these was the firm belief that coaching benefits are intangible in respect of business performance. This is somewhat paradoxical, as executives were clear that personal benefits existed but struggled to articulate the profit and loss impact. This perceived intangibility leads to a belief that proposing an extensive coaching programme would be seen as profligate by board-level leaders, which naturally prevents its proposal. Related to this, the intangibility claim prevents the drafting of a credible predicted ROI calculation and, in turn, the completion of the business case.

The research and Figure 6 indicates that these are primarily procurement obstacles and not problems with whether executive coaching would be valuable or not. A direct way to overcome this type of obstacles would be to add the coaching programme as a standard step in whichever step-by-step methodology is preferred for PROC implementation planning. For instance, if the Kotter (1996) eight-stage process is already established, make it a nine stage process as illustrated in the following mark-up 1) establish urgency, 2) create a leading coalition, 3) derive a vision/strategy, *4) establish PROC executive coaching programme* ~~4)~~ 5) communicate, ~~5)~~ 6) empower wide supported change, ~~6)~~ 7) bring about quick wins, ~~7)~~ 8) consolidate gains and ~~8)~~ 9) embed new practices in the culture.

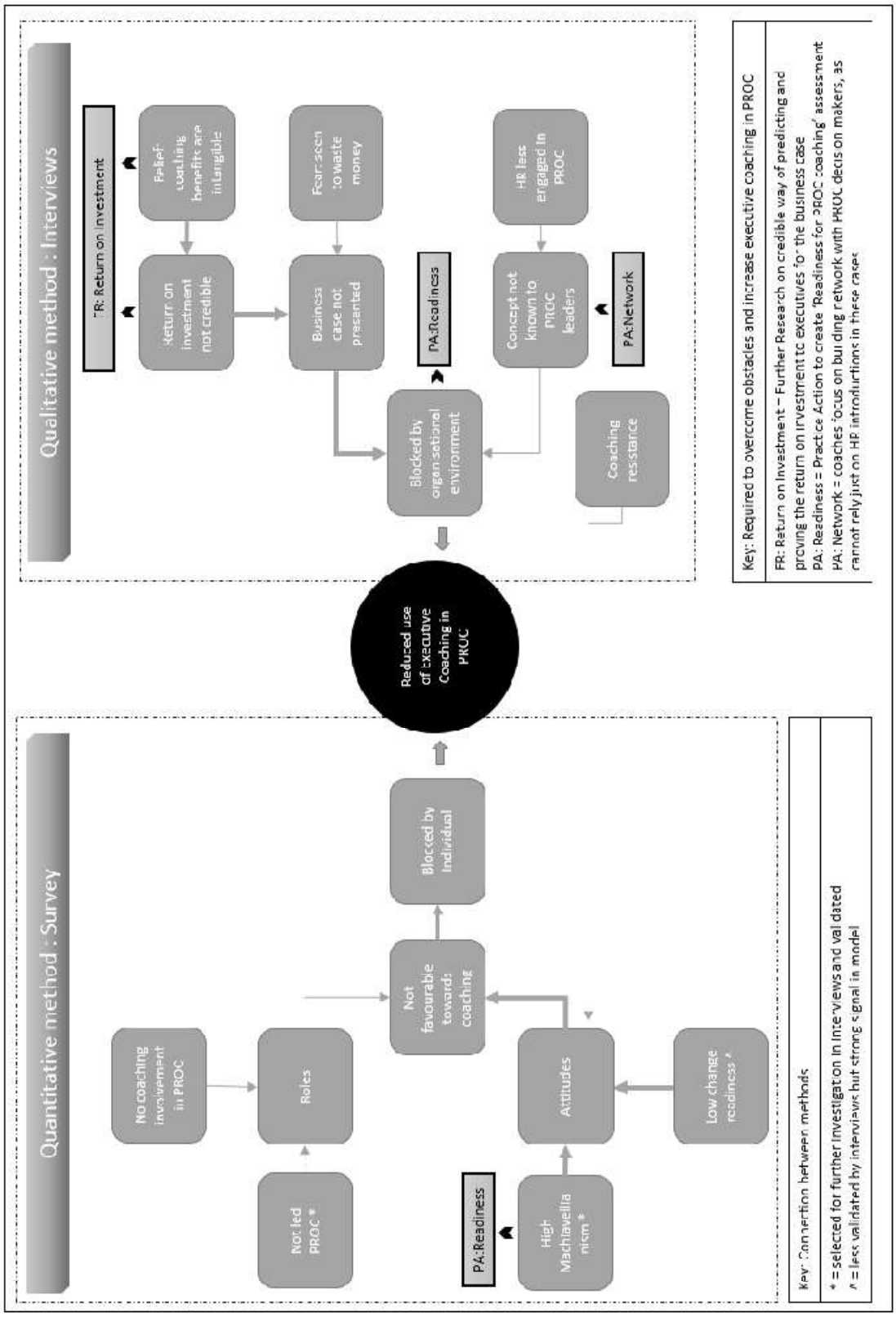

Figure 6. Diagram combining quantitative and qualitative findings

6.5 Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the obstacles slowing the growth of executive coaching in Planned Radical Organisational Change (PROC) implementation programmes. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that senior executives simply do not believe there is a way to create a credible predicted return on investment (ROI) to use in the business case. This appears to be a significant obstacle. Although they did not doubt that executive coaching was useful, these senior executives were sceptical that the value of executive coaching could be expressed as a credible financial number. As integrating executive coaching into a PROC programme through coaching tens of senior executives would be a significant investment it needs a robust business case with a defined numerical benefit. Without that, even supportive influential executives cannot propose or approve the idea without reputational risk to themselves. In these circumstances, without a business case, a significant programme of coaching is unlikely to take place.

The second major finding was that the idea of standing up a programme of executive coaching for change leaders as part of the PROC implementation was not in senior executives' minds and was not being presented to them as an option by HR or external advisors. While the executives themselves retrospectively thought coaching in PROC was a good idea, none of them while in a PROC situation without a coach had considered requesting that an executive coach be provided to them or their peers. Coaching for executives was usually arranged by HR as part of routine leadership development programmes but there were no examples of HR suggesting that coaching be put in place to help an individual about to play a significant role in PROC. Without the idea being put forward, in many cases these opportunities do not even get to the stage of the business case being presented.

The final major finding was that executives with increasing levels of Machiavellianism are less likely to have as favourable a view of coaching. This was shown statistically from the survey results where a significant medium-strength correlation was found. It was supported by the interviews with senior executives involved in PROC who believed this could be an issue and spoke of a small number of cases where coaching was not offered when leaders were concerned with what others might do with extra ability or motivation. In itself, this is not a direct obstacle to coaching being procured in PROC but suggests a possible friction to its budget approval should many of these teams contain leaders and influencers with high average Machiavellianism. Although this type of behaviour has been suggested in the literature as being present in organisational change further research would be needed before it was certain this was a significant obstacle against coaching.

An important but subsidiary insight is that, when they consider it as an option, senior executives are very supportive of the use of executive coaching in PROC. This is subject to the ROI issue being overcome because although they were supportive, they felt it unlikely to happen at scale due to the business case issues. That executive coaching is considered helpful by senior executives is consistent with previous literature. In terms of potential obstacles preventing coaching from being used in PROC, this finding goes a long way towards eliminating any residual concerns that perhaps it is not growing quickly simply because it is not useful in PROC.

These findings will be of interest to coaching researchers, coaches and HRDs. It adds an original understanding because of its access to particularly senior business executives, a population rarely covered in qualitative coaching studies and barely researched in quantitative coaching studies due to access problems. However, when looking at PROC situations access to this population is crucial, since these are the executives who influence and make the final decisions on external advisors used to aid the organisational change. They have a different business perspective from the junior to mid-level employees who – along with students – are more often available as study subjects.

This thesis makes several contributions to the literature. It adds to the very small amount of research on executive coaching in radical organisational change. It is the first study to investigate the obstacles to the procurement of coaching in PROC. The results of this study help provide a better understanding of the importance and perceived difficulty of calculating a credible predicted return on investment in such situations. It identifies how little the concept of using executive coaching for organisational aims during PROC has reached senior leaders. Finally, evidence that Machiavellianism or lower change readiness in leadership is related to lower favourability towards coaching may be of interest to other coaching researchers.

It contributes to knowledge on the contentious issue of measuring the return on investment of coaching by finding that the current inability to produce a credible (to senior leaders) predicted ROI is a significant obstacle, at least in this specific PROC situation. While some researchers claim that because calculating ROI is hard, it should not be attempted and that other measures are more appropriate (De Meuse, Dai and Lee, 2009; Grant, 2012), this current study develops the discussion by agreeing that while credible ROI calculation indeed is hard it disagrees that this means other measures should be used instead. In some cases, previous research was made more difficult by seeking a single number as the ROI of coaching in all situations. To be clear, for practice, that is not required, decision-makers need a return calculated for each of their programmes as they know returns will vary with the size, importance and risk of the PROC. Although difficult, this study shows work needs to continue to find a methodology that will enable executives to invest. Regarding literature that suggests ROI can already be calculated along with claims to have measured it in certain projects (McGovern *et al.*, 2001; Parker-Wilkins, 2006; Anderson, 2012) this current study certainly supports the claim that this is an important area to research. However, the additional input from this study is that senior executives do not currently believe it can be calculated robustly - so either the methodologies currently are not credible to business people or more needs to be done to get the message across to them on how the current ROI approaches work.

This research highlights how little the idea of coaching in PROC is leaving the field of research and reaching senior executive decision-makers in practice. It reinforces findings that HR plays a critical role in organising coaching but has a relatively small role in radical organisational change strategy (McKinsey & Co 2017; Petra 2012) and cautiously suggests that together these factors are likely to hinder the delivery of the idea of using coaching in PROC. It also adds support to the finding by Thompson and Cox (2017) that the potential availability of coaching support for project work is often not well communicated.

Taken together, some of the quantitative and qualitative findings advance a new idea that further investigating obstacles to coaching procurement from Machiavellian leadership is worthy of

additional research. It also slightly extends the work about politics in change and teams (Dorow and Blazejewski, 2003; Buchanan, 2008; McAllister *et al.*, 2015; Greer, Van Bunderen and Yu, 2017) by examining coaching in PROC as a new example of these behaviours. Finally, the current study strengthens previous claims that coaching is seen as affecting organisational change positively by providing the ability to step back from the everyday pressures of PROC and the opportunity to think and prioritise (Grant, 2014; Conbere, 2017; Nanduri, 2017; Bickerich, Michel and O'Shea, 2018).

There are limitations to this study. With twelve interviewees it is always possible that they were not entirely representative of the whole and that different research participants would have provided different data. Also, as qualitative results, while the interview findings may be transferable, they are not generalisable. The quantitative results are generalisable to western-based, large organisations undergoing PROC but will be less generalisable for organisations outside these criteria. One source of weakness in this study, that could have affected the quantitative results, was the broad definition of coaching in the survey which failed to mention any requirement for formal coach training or accreditation. There was also a risk of self-selection bias in that executives who disliked coaching or organisational change may have ignored an invite to help with a study encompassing those subjects. Notwithstanding these limitations, this work still offers valuable insight into the relatively under-researched field of executive coaching in planned radical organisational change.

This study raised several areas that would benefit from further research. While it may not be impossible, just "very, very difficult" to compute ROI for coaching (De Meuse, Dai and Lee, 2009, p. 125) this current study shows it is important to keep trying despite the difficulties. A breakthrough in creating a methodology that is credible to sceptical senior executives could have a significant impact on the growth in the use of executive coaching in this type of organisational change.

The statistical findings of interactions between Machiavellianism, lack of change readiness and favourability towards coaching are intriguing and further studies need to be done to extend this current early-stage work to confirm the strength of these relationships. More investigation on the propensity of PROC leaders to be Machiavellian, or for senior team members to lack change readiness, is needed to understand the size effect on coaching project approval in practice, resulting from these unfavourable factors. The findings on ROI and the idea not being presented to PROC leaders came from the qualitative interviews. In some mixed-method techniques, the sequence can be survey – interview – survey (Creswell, 2014). Due to time constraints, this was not possible in this study but for future work, it is suggested that a survey and quantitative work could further generalise these findings.

Further research could widen the scope. This initial research limited the participants to senior executives working within large organisations as they are the group that make the purchase decision in PROC. However, future work could look at the other influential groups which would include HR directors, executive coaches and management consultants. This current research focused on large UK companies. In future, scope could be increased to consider other types of organisations, such as smaller companies, non-UK or non-Western multinationals or those in the Third Sector.

These findings have implications for practice, particularly for coaches who wish to address this market opportunity. The finding that senior executives involved in PROC can see the potential

benefits of coaching may come as no surprise to coaches but it is still a reassuring fact that there is nothing in the provision of coaching itself that seems to be objectionable in this circumstance. This is a good start although major difficulties to closing a sale remain. The ROI issue is significant. This finding shows that in PROC a decision on using external advisers is made by PROC leadership (rather than HR) and for a large investment such as this, they need a robust business case. Practitioners would be well advised to make the most of the research literature that has been produced on ROI to develop a methodology to demonstrate their value in proposals and pitch meetings. However, they should also recognise that, currently, many leaders are likely to be sceptical to ROI claims. The finding that the concept of providing coaching to help the organisation with its change is not reaching PROC teams suggests that greater business development efforts will be needed. The question mark over whether HR is proactively putting this proposition forward suggests relationships need to be developed by coaches with PROC decision makers in addition to their usual network of HRDs.

For HRDs this study cautiously suggests a potential opportunity to engage more in the strategic decisions as PROC is being planned. However, before taking the risk of suggesting something that the top managers may assume will just cost money, the HRD will want to be sure the external coaching firm has credible answers for the predicted ROI and how this will be monitored throughout the project. Although the findings on Machiavellianism are more tentative the HRD will also want to consider how much of this there is in their leadership team before investing any time and personal capital in putting forward the suggestion of adding executive coaching to a PROC implementation programme.

6.6 Reflection

The past four years have been challenging although I have learnt much and developed as a researcher along the way. I smiled wryly when I found Pollack and Pollack's (2015) claim that academics and practitioners' approaches in organisational change differed widely and that neither party tended to take much notice of the others' suggestions. This experience has reminded me of the value in critically examining declarations made by self-declared practice experts and now it is more natural for me to look to published and reviewed research to validate such claims.

Being forced to consider ontology and epistemology was an interesting journey. It was not one I particularly wanted to start, but now I am glad I have done it. It took a great deal of effort to bring the different approaches together in a way that worked for me. That effort is reflected in the length of Section 3.1. Including that level of detail seemed important as it may explain why, being very pragmatic, shorter 'casual' or business orientated words rather than longer, more formal scientific ones are sometimes used in this document.

I have found that quantitative scales are ingenious: it is pleasing to use them to obtain a more honest answer. A Machiavellian person would have no compunction lying and saying they were not Machiavellian (unless they were trying a double bluff, which of course, being duplicitous, they might do). I am not entirely sure how much these scales combat this danger, but it is good to have a practical technique to steer back towards a more accurate reply. I would aim to use these more in the future.

Using surveys in research is more stressful than I had expected. I had thought it would be a straightforward way to research – I have discovered that was wrong. As I could only approach these participants once, I had to get it as right as possible the first time. Then, there is no control over what results will come in or how many. I found I hesitated a few times before pressing the button to send them out. This was unlike an interview, where I can correct the course as it progresses or add a further explanation if needed. Even with a pilot study in the process, you cannot easily correct a survey. However, I am now confident in using surveys and would potentially use them in the future, given sufficient time and participants for multiple pilot versions. In contrast to the surveys, I always enjoyed doing the interviews. I thought I would, and I did. That was not so surprising but perhaps what was unforeseen was how open people were. There were some fascinating details disclosed about household name companies and organisations, which reminded me that senior people often just want to talk in confidence, and often have little opportunity to do so.

On reflection, I was too keen to use a definition in the survey that already existed in the literature without modifying it. I was so mindful of being able to point to it in the literature and 'prove' academically that it was correct that I slightly lost sight of seeing it from the respondents' point of view. I could have incorporated Whitmore's coaching definition within a wrapper that also mentioned other requirements such as 'hired-in external executive coaches', 'contracting' and 'tripartite intro, midway and ending calls'. Although that would have meant a much more extended rubric, which could have irritated the busy executives completing the survey, it may have been worth it. I will be more careful in the future if I find myself thinking more about how I defend my approach rather than getting the most robust results.

SPSS is an amazingly useful piece of software. It is true that the interface appears to be literally from the last century when to misquote Douglas Adams (2012), “they still thought [drop-down menus] were a pretty neat idea”, but it achieved an astonishing amount, running on an underpowered laptop, and I learnt not to be misled by its poor interface. I sense I have still only explored a tiny fraction of its functionality, so I have more to look forward to. I have decades of experience doing complicated things with Excel, so I was more comfortable trying to do the initial work in that. Still, it was quickly apparent that it was just more sensible to switch straight to SPSS; it was more fit for purpose for this type of analysis, demonstrating the benefit of using the right tools for the job.

I also discovered that a few rejections would not impede the research. When sending out requests for the survey to senior executives, I was not looking forward to the rejections. However, I received only a few and was able to ignore them because so many people said yes. If the rejections had arrived earlier, when I had sent just one or two requests, that would have been hard. I also found that most often, I was not explicitly rejected, just ignored. That effect was cushioned because, given that people are busy, I did not know until later that these were their final responses, by which time many acceptances had come in, and the rejections no longer mattered. I was also concerned that people would recognise the Machiavellian scale questions and take offence. In fact, only two or three messages came back from people who recognised the questions and declined to continue as a result. That was no great problem: it was only a few, and I had too many other things to deal with to worry. It gives me hope should I ever have to do direct mailing or direct calling in the future for my business or research. I will not enjoy it but I will survive it because of my experience during this study. I will know that the rejections are just noise in the scheme of things and not significant.

I used two new tactics, about which I was initially concerned, but which worked well, so I now know I could use these in the future should I do more research. These were the use of LinkedIn to ask for interviewees in the survey. Using LinkedIn felt a risk, but the advanced search capabilities enabled survey invitations to target individuals who fitted the research aim. Another new element that was successful was not making the survey anonymous. The survey requested that the participants provide their email addresses if they were prepared to be interviewed. This saved time and allowed a targeted selection of interviewees. It also revealed that 47% of the 262 respondents were prepared to be interviewed even after spending valuable time answering the survey. This support for the subject would not have been noticed if separate interview requests had been sent out afterwards to just a few people. Given this experience, it is an approach I would use again.

This project improved my persistence and ability to keep plodding on. As Sir Ranulph Fiennes said about attempting Everest, “Forget about thinking you are going to succeed. You have just got to keep plodding” (Rosamond Hutt, Press Association, 2009). Despite being unable to juggle everything once Covid disruptions were added, my time management skills improved. I found that writing up the research whether I wanted to or not kept it moving. That said, it was never fun: I tried various mindsets to see if any helped – treating the research like a job, like a hobby, like a search or a quest. I never solved how to make it enjoyable and less stressful, but experimenting with mindsets at least kept me plodding on. However, I was not plodding in a straight line. I have discovered that research is rarely a linear journey, despite research papers and other theses giving that impression in final

published versions. The actual route encountered many u-turns, dead ends and wrong turnings before the final destination.

I had the option of a more traditional PhD at another institution but chose the professional doctorate route for the coursework and more rigid structure. Looking back, that was the right choice for me. Even the bureaucracy was strangely helpful in contributing to a sense of progress. For instance, passing the ethics committee was another small victory and a milestone on the way. In general, I have found that undertaking a doctorate is lonely and nothing like being in a class or team. It may sound hackneyed, but the most enjoyable part was being in a class and having classmates who were going through the same experience. Although we did not meet that often, on the days we were in university, those arriving early would have a coffee together, and most of us would have lunch as a group. It is strange how going through a shared ordeal adds something that makes it just possible to keep going. Discussing successes or sharing mutual frustrations is helpful. Our WhatsApp group kept us moving and I certainly missed being physically part of the group when the pandemic hit, and I had to drop behind to spend more time handling additional issues in my primary employment. Probably the smartest thing I did concerning the course was, at the very start, persuading a good friend of mine to enrol as well. Throughout the programme, we had regular hours on the phone sharing complaints and giving mutual encouragement. That was invaluable.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Survey questions

Introduction and permissions

Questions about permissions	Answer Choices
1. Thank you for reading this Participant Information Sheet. Please indicate below if you are happy to proceed.	Yes - I am happy to proceed, No - I would rather not do the survey
2. Thank you for reading this privacy notice. Please indicate below if you consent to these privacy terms.	Yes - I would like to proceed to the survey

Background

Questions about the Executive	Answer Choices
3. What is the size of your organisation?	1-999, 1,000-10,000, 10,000+
4. What is your seniority?	CXO, Partner, Owner, VP, Director, Manager, Staff, Other (please specify)
5. What is your age?	34 or younger, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, Prefer not to say
6. What is your gender?	Female, Male, Prefer not to say

Change experience

Rubric: Planned radical organisational change can be described as a change which fundamentally alters the power structure, culture, routines and strategy of the entire organisation, often appearing as the only option in challenging circumstances. In the interests of brevity, for the remainder of the survey, the word 'change' refers to this type of planned radical organisational change.

Questions about the change	Answer Choices
7. Have you been involved in this type of change?	No, Yes (please enter how many times below) *Note: If answer is not then software skips to Q17 to avoid the change questions.*
8. How many people were affected by the change across the organisation as a whole?	Open-Ended Number Response
9. Where was your role located during this change?	Corporate Head Office Divisional Head Office Unit/Branch External (consultant, advisor, contractor)
10. What was your seniority during this change?	CXO, Partner, Owner, VP, Director, Manager, Staff, Other (please specify)
11. What was your responsibility during this change? Please check all that apply.	Leading and setting the change strategy Project or Programme Management of the change Consulting or advising on the change Leading a change implementation as part of a programme set by others, Being on the receiving end of the change Other (please specify)
12. What percentage of your working time was devoted to this change project	Open-Ended Number Response
13. Did you take on a new role during this change?	Not as such - I had change responsibilities added to my usual (non-change specialist) job, No - I was already a change specialist and continued in that role Yes - all/part of my work time moved to a specific change role
14. If you did have a specific change role, what was it?	Open-Ended Text Response

Executive coaching experience

Rubric: Coaching can be described as a series of conversations to unlock a person's potential to maximise their performance, helping them to learn rather than teaching them.

- Coach may refer to an external or internal coach.
- Organiser means someone who did all or any of finding or hiring coaches, recruiting or organising coachees, managing the coaching programme or similar.
- Authoriser means someone who gave the final go-ahead for coaching to take place, often the person whose budget the payment comes from, also known as the 'economic buyer'.

Questions about Coaching	Answer Choices
15. Did you receive, provide, arrange or authorise any coaching, for yourself or anyone else, during this change?	Yes, No *Note: if answer is No software skips to Q17.*
16. Please check all that apply to your involvement in coaching during change.	Coach, Coachee, Organiser, Authoriser, No - not involved in any of above roles, Other (please specify) *Note: After answer software skips to Q18.*
17. Although you have not been involved in coaching specifically during a change programme, have you been involved in coaching at any time during your career? Check all that apply.	Coach, Coachee, Organiser, Authoriser, No - not involved in any of above roles, Other (please specify) *Note: Software jumped here from a no answer on Q6 or Q15. To capture coaching experience, from those who have not had involvement in coaching during a Radical Organisational change Programme*

Scale questions

All questions in this part of the survey were based on a seven-part Likert ranging between 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. To avoid tempting people to give incorrect answers that might show themselves in more favourable light the rubric for the change readiness and Machiavellian part were kept deliberately generic. In the survey, the questions were not grouped one scale at the time. This presentation was to avoid making it evident to respondents that it was looking at a negative personality trait. For ease of review, the scales are grouped in the table below. Some of the questions need their scoring reversed and this is highlighted in the direction column.

Rubric: The next two pages ask some questions about your attitude to change and other people.

Change readiness	Direction
18. I believe that I am more ready to accept change than my colleagues	
19. I don't worry about changes in my company because I believe that there is always a way to cope with them	

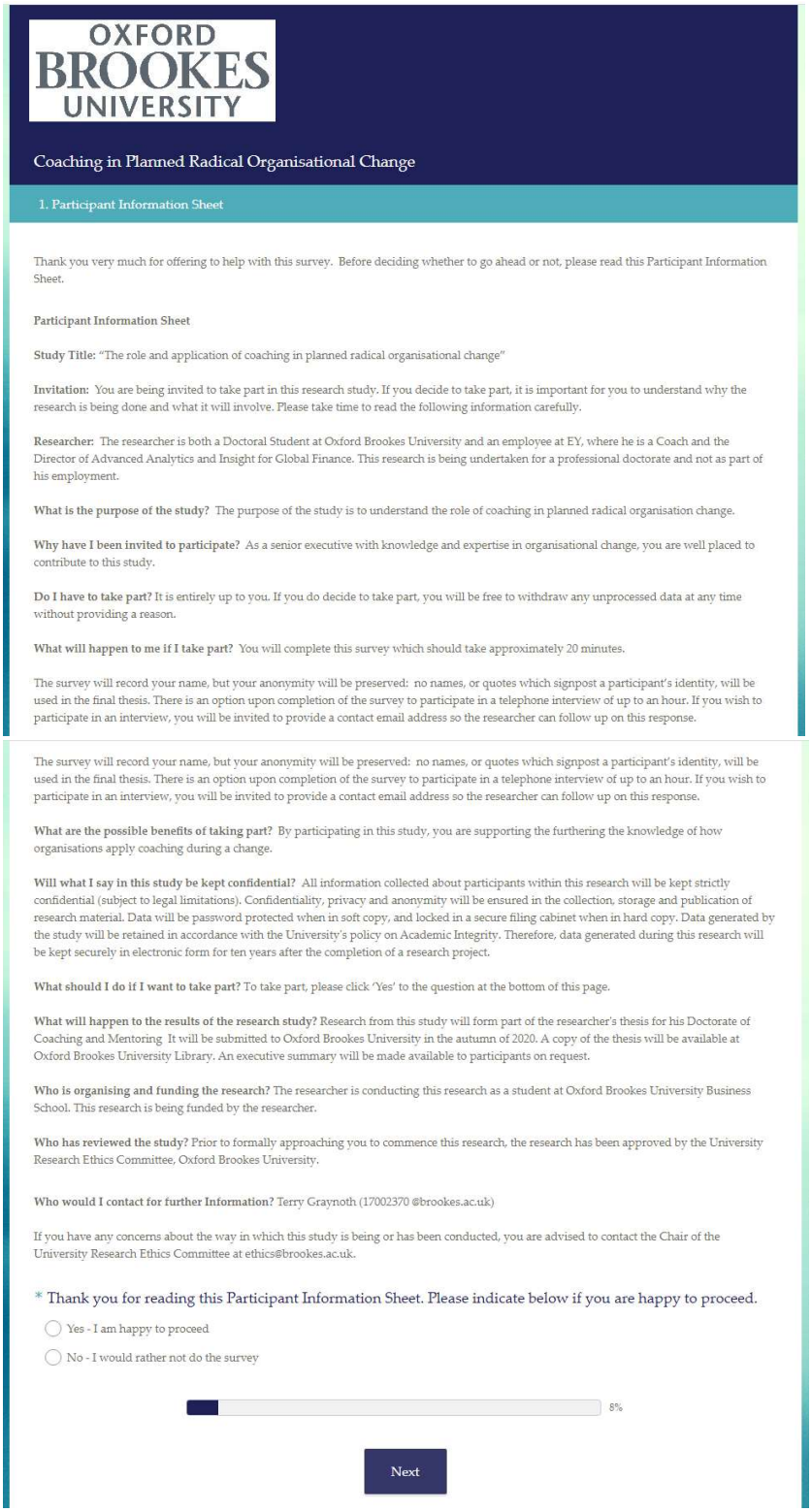
20. I usually try to convince people in my company to accept change	
21. When changes occur in my company, I always have the intention to support them	
22. When changes occur in my company, I believe that I am ready to cope with them	
23. When changes occur in my company, I tend to complain about them rather than deal with them	Reverse
Machiavellian	**Direction**
24. Anyone who completely trusts anyone is asking for trouble	
25. It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance	
26. Most people are basically good and kind	Reverse
27. Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so	
28. The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught	
Coaching Favourability	**Direction**
29. Having access to coaching is not important to people	Reverse
30. If people are coached, they get better results	
31. It helps people fulfil their potential if they are coached	
32. It interferes with a person's work when they spend time being coached	Reverse
33. People feel less stress if they are coached	
34. Using coaching to increase ability is a waste of time	Reverse

Thanks and opportunity to be interviewed

Rubric: This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you very much indeed for your help.
Another part of the research will involve some telephone interviews. This is entirely voluntary, but if you would consider being interviewed for up to an hour, please do put your email in the box below.

Question about being interviewed	Answer Choice
35. I would consider being interviewed. My name and email are...	Open-Ended Response

8.2 Survey permission pages



OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Coaching in Planned Radical Organisational Change

1. Participant Information Sheet

Thank you very much for offering to help with this survey. Before deciding whether to go ahead or not, please read this Participant Information Sheet.

Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: "The role and application of coaching in planned radical organisational change"

Invitation: You are being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Researcher: The researcher is both a Doctoral Student at Oxford Brookes University and an employee at EY, where he is a Coach and the Director of Advanced Analytics and Insight for Global Finance. This research is being undertaken for a professional doctorate and not as part of his employment.

What is the purpose of the study? The purpose of the study is to understand the role of coaching in planned radical organisation change.

Why have I been invited to participate? As a senior executive with knowledge and expertise in organisational change, you are well placed to contribute to this study.

Do I have to take part? It is entirely up to you. If you do decide to take part, you will be free to withdraw any unprocessed data at any time without providing a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part? You will complete this survey which should take approximately 20 minutes.

The survey will record your name, but your anonymity will be preserved: no names, or quotes which signpost a participant's identity, will be used in the final thesis. There is an option upon completion of the survey to participate in a telephone interview of up to an hour. If you wish to participate in an interview, you will be invited to provide a contact email address so the researcher can follow up on this response.

The survey will record your name, but your anonymity will be preserved: no names, or quotes which signpost a participant's identity, will be used in the final thesis. There is an option upon completion of the survey to participate in a telephone interview of up to an hour. If you wish to participate in an interview, you will be invited to provide a contact email address so the researcher can follow up on this response.

What are the possible benefits of taking part? By participating in this study, you are supporting the furthering the knowledge of how organisations apply coaching during a change.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential? All information collected about participants within this research will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material. Data will be password protected when in soft copy, and locked in a secure filing cabinet when in hard copy. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Therefore, data generated during this research will be kept securely in electronic form for ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part? To take part, please click 'Yes' to the question at the bottom of this page.

What will happen to the results of the research study? Research from this study will form part of the researcher's thesis for his Doctorate of Coaching and Mentoring It will be submitted to Oxford Brookes University in the autumn of 2020. A copy of the thesis will be available at Oxford Brookes University Library. An executive summary will be made available to participants on request.

Who is organising and funding the research? The researcher is conducting this research as a student at Oxford Brookes University Business School. This research is being funded by the researcher.

Who has reviewed the study? Prior to formally approaching you to commence this research, the research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Who would I contact for further Information? Terry Graynoth (17002370 @brookes.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns about the way in which this study is being or has been conducted, you are advised to contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee at ethics@brookes.ac.uk.

* Thank you for reading this Participant Information Sheet. Please indicate below if you are happy to proceed.

- ◯ Yes - I am happy to proceed
- ◯ No - I would rather not do the survey

8%

Next

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

Coaching in Planned Radical Organisational Change

2. Privacy Notice and GDPR

Oxford Brookes University (OBU) is the Data Controller of any data that you supply for this research. This means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. You can contact the University's Information Management Team on 01865 485420 or email info.sec@brookes.ac.uk.

Why do we need your data?
The purpose of the study is to understand the role of coaching in planned radical organisation change.

OBU's legal basis for collecting this data is:
- You are consenting to provide it to us; and/or,
- Processing is necessary for the performance of a task in the public interest such as research

If the university asks you for sensitive data such as; racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade-union membership, data concerning health or sexual life, genetic/biometric data or criminal records OBU will use these data because:
- You have given OBU explicit consent to do so; and/or
- Processing is necessary for scientific or research in the public interest.

What type of data will Oxford Brookes University use?
Survey answers.

Who will OBU share your data with?
Data outputs will be shared with the supervisory team (Dr Christian Ehrlich and Dr Elaine Cox) as part of the ongoing challenge and development of the thesis.

All data, and any analysis and findings from the data, will be stored on Oxford Brookes University's Google Drive, for which the University has a security agreement in place. All files will be password protected.

Will OBU transfer my data outside of the UK?
This survey is using SurveyMonkey and any information you enter will be stored temporarily in the US before being transferred to the UK and deleted from SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey's privacy policy may be found at https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy-policy.

What rights do I have regarding my data that OBU holds?
- You have the right to be informed about what data will be collected and how this will be used
- You have the right of access to your data
- You have the right to correct data if it is wrong
- You have the right to ask for your data to be deleted
- You have the right to restrict use of the data we hold about you
- You have the right to data portability
- You have the right to object to the university using your data
- You have rights in relation to using your data automated decision making and profiling.

Where did OBU source my data from?
If you consent the data will come from the survey responses.

Are there any consequences of not providing the requested data?
There are no legal consequences of not providing data for this research. It is purely voluntary.

Will there be any automated decision making using my data?
There will be no use of automated decision making within the scope of UK Data Protection and Privacy legislation.

How long will OBU keep my data?
In line with Oxford Brookes policies data generated in the course of research must be kept securely in paper or electronic form for a period of time in accordance with the research funder or University policy.

Who **can I contact if I have concerns?**
You can contact the Information Management team.
Postal Address: Information Management Team, IT Services, Room 2.12, Gibbs Building, Headington Campus, Gipsy Lane, Oxford, OX3 0BP.
Email: [redacted]
Tel: 018[redacted]UK.

* Please indicate below if you consent to these privacy terms.

- ◯ Yes - I would like to proceed to the survey
- ◯ No - I do not want to continue

15%

Prev Next

8.3 Favourability to coaching scale

#	Original item	Modified item	Rationale
1	I would feel less stressed and anxious if I improved the way I coach and communicate with others at work	People feel less stress if they are coached	1,2,4
2	It would interfere with my work if I spent time trying to improve the way I coach others (reverse)	It interferes with a person's work when they spend time being coached (reverse)	3,4
3	It would help me fulfil my potential if I improved my coaching and communication skills	**It helps people fulfil their potential if they are coached**	1,2
4	Trying to deliberately improve the way I coach and communicate would take too much effort (reverse)		3
5	Learning better ways to coach and communicate would improve my work performance		3
6	Trying to change one's coaching and communication skills is a waste of time (reverse)	**Using coaching to increase ability is a waste of time (reverse)**	1,2
7	Coaching and communication skills are not really important (reverse)	Having access to coaching is not important to people (reverse)	1, 4
8	Improving the way I communicate and coach others will help me in my career		3
9	If I developed my coaching and communication skills, I would get better results at work	**If people are coached, they get better results**	1,2
10	Trying to deliberately change and improve one's coaching and communication skills never seems to work (reverse)		3
11	I would be able to work more effectively if I improved my coaching and communication skills		3
12	You can get by at work with the minimum of coaching and communication skills, so there's really no need to try and coaching and communicate more effectively (reverse)		3

Rationale for modifications:

1. Communication removed as the focus is on coaching
2. 'I' replaced with 'people' as not every respondent would have had coaching but if they had not their view on coaching was still important
3. Significant overlap with other items, dropped to keep scale length manageable
4. Included in the survey but dropped from the final analysis to improve the Cronbach alpha score.

Questions 3,6 and 9 used in the final analysis are shown in bold

8.4 Change readiness scale

1	When changes occur in my company, I believe that I am ready to cope with them.
2	I usually try to convince people in my company to accept change
3	When changes occur in my company, I tend to complain about them rather than deal with them (reverse)
4	I believe that I am more ready to accept change than my colleagues
5	When changes occur in my company, I always have the intention to support them
6	I don't worry about changes in my company because I believe that there is always a way to cope with them

Answers to Question 6 were dropped as a result of the Cronbach alpha tests.

(The full MACH trimmed scale was used and is already shown in full in the methodology section.)

8.5 Interview questions

Number	Question	Notes
-	Welcome, intro	Create connection, confirm timing and mention semi-structured nature, relax interviewee
Q1	Please tell me about a time you were involved in radical organisational change.	To get interviewee talking. As required give an explanation of what radical organisational change is in this context.
Q2	What was the most difficult or interesting part of that?	Prompt question to get into more detail.
Q3	Some commentators say the most challenging position during change is being a divisional or unit manager stuck between the three conflicting elements of 1) delivering the change, 2) managing the messages to head office and 3) supporting their people. Does that resonate with you at all or maybe not?	The literature review had brought this point out. Bryant (2011) Explaining the model in this detail risks being leading but does keep the conversation relevant Putting in some balance to not force either a 'yes' or a 'no.'
Q4	Did you ever find yourself dealing with these three different elements yourself? Can you tell me about that?	Prompt question to get into more detail.
Q5	What do you think managers could do to help themselves deal in this position?	The literature review had brought this point out. Bryant (2011)
Q6	To what extent do you think internal politics plays a part implementing organisational change?	The literature review had brought this point out. Perrewe (2004), Buchanan's (2008)

Q7	Other research suggests that where organisational politics plays a part, then the more Machiavellian leaders are not always enthusiastic to get their people fully equipped to understand what is going on or able to push back. Does that seem likely to you?	Risks being leading but need to be direct to ensure point is covered in limited time available. Semi-structured, so follow-ups were asked to ensure an in-depth but balanced answer recorded. Said with real curiosity to avoid forcing to a yes.
Q8	Do you see a similar situation arising with leaders who are not change-ready?	
Q9	Have you been involved in implementing change programs?	Following from the quantitative analysis that showed this had a small effect on favourability to coaching. If yes, then follow up questions were asked.
Q10	Have you been involved in coaching in your role in change programs or in general?	Following from the quantitative analysis that showed this had a small to moderate effect on favourability to coaching If yes, then follow up questions were asked.
Q11	Do you think it is realistic to bring in coaching for these change projects or would that approach be a waste of money? Why is that?	Asking the direct question of the people involved in change programmes. Extensive follow up questions asked.
Q12	What do you think might be the obstacles stopping more coaches being hired to support organisations with their radical organisational change?	Similar to the above question but asking the same question in a different way allowed more in-depth answers to arise. Extensive follow-up questions asked.
Q13	Is there anything else I've not asked you yet that I should have?	
-	Thanks and end well	Both say how much enjoyed it and in answer to the usual question, promise of an executive summary of the final version of the thesis (in due course)

The link back with the quantitative categorisation was included by choosing interviewees across the different categories and also including Q9 and Q10 (led change programmes and involved in coaching during PROC).

Illustrative transcript 1

"You mentioned earlier you have a team coach for the board that you're on. How else have you personally been involved in coaching?

So, I had my own coach probably about two years ago and that was, so I asked-, so there was two reasons behind it. A, I was about to embark on this massive cultural change programme for the business and I wanted to get that external perspective on how do you shift a sixty-thousand organisation, to change the way they behave, etc. And part of that was to realise that actually the change starts with you, first and foremost. Don't expect to change sixty thousand people by yourself, you've got to make the change in yourself first of all. So, my coaching was kind of two-fold. A, it was about learning about how to make that change in an organisation but be shifting my paradigm to tell them how to do that. So yes, I undertook that programme for about twelve months from a group coaching perspective, then on an individual basis with a coach and got a huge amount of value out of it, and wouldn't be the leader that I am, and particularly in that culture and inclusion space where you have to probably be the most balanced, open minded, non-judgmental person. I wouldn't have managed that without having gone through the shift in paradigm myself and it was a painful process, and it dug up so much, right back to the way that your paradigm's are created, at the different stages of childhood and all of those things, I recognised the huge power in that, because I genuinely believe you can't change an organisation unless you're willing to change yourself. And I think that is probably at the ethos of why learning and development and growth is so important to any shift you're trying to make in a business.

So, that's good to hear and was it because you were already on the group coaching, that gave you the idea to get an individual executive coach?

No, I probably, it happened almost at the same time. I went seeking this particular coach because I was aware of him and knew that he was the kind of coach that I needed. So, again that kind of making sure the coach fits, not just the business telling you that this is the one you've got to use. So, I sought him out for a specific reason, and the reason that I sought him out was because from a professional or kind of personal perspective, I wasn't managing to influence my peers in the way that I'd have liked to. So, I wasn't able to get the outcomes that I was hoping for, so I went and explored that with-, and said look, can I go and get myself a coach because there's something not quite working in my style, I'm not sure what it is, I'd like to go and explore that. And that conversation led into a much wider conversation about paradigm shifts and functioning of the brain and all of those sorts of things that was just so powerful that then led into, actually this is really relevant when you're looking at the cultural change within a business. So yes, it started off with the desire for me to change something about my influencing style, and then that led into the group coaching environment.

And then also, it helped with the change?

I genuinely believe that it helped, so my cultural transformation programme was a success because I'd sorted my head out."

8.6 Illustrative transcript 2

"He introduced within months of arriving a very clear turnaround policy which to this day, sort of five or six later I can still explain all the principles of, it was about where we were going to focus the investment of the company, where we were going to cut bits of the company off, we were going to restructure the bank debt, we were going to save ourselves a billion euros a year in costs.

A billion euros?

Yes, a billion euros a year, which he pretty much did.

Wow.

I think it was about a two-year programme, and we were, certainly by the way it was presented we got close to the billion, we certainly got rid of some unneeded parts of the company and some peripheral activities, we seemed to focus our investment in all areas and we renegotiated the bank loans, allegedly. I mean, that's not stuff I was at all even close to but we came out of it having achieved most of those goals and he also set some principles by which we would operate. Almost really berating other people who were slowing us down, but the message, the values that we were going to try and work to very clear and what we were trying to achieve was very clear, and as I say I can remember that even now, it's still very clear what he's trying to achieve. And as a result of that, he made the company sellable, and actually sold it to XXXXX.

Yes, so that falls into the sort of 30% of successful big changes?

Yes.

Yes, and was any particular bit of it difficult or challenging, I'm sure it wasn't all plain sailing even though it was a great success?

I think letting people go, I can't remember who we let go but we let go tens of thousands of people across the organisation and that was very hard obviously for those individuals and for a lot of managers who'd not had to be, let's say, structured in how we reworked the workforce, you know. It was a proper restructuring where there was a plan, whereas previously we'd just been trying to save costs in various areas whereas now we have areas to focus on and areas we weren't going to focus on. So that made it in some ways easier, but I think that getting rid of the people was hard for everybody.

Did you have to let anyone go, personally?

Well, I'd already done some of that, so when I joined, I became known as the hatchet man in my first eighteen months of the company because I came in and restructured a couple of product areas that we were working on within XXXX."

8.7 Themes, categories and codes

Theme	Category	Code	Example text. First Code
Exec coaching in PROC	Exec experiences	positive experience impact on others value different to other interventions different to consulting benefits to execs independence/confidential	I got a huge amount of value out of it and wouldn't be the leader that I am without it. It was a painful process. And it dug up so much. Right back to the way that your paradigms are created, at the different stages of childhood and all of those things. I recognised the huge power in that, because I genuinely believe you can't change an organisation unless you're willing to change yourself. I genuinely believe that it helped.
	Ways in which it helped	step back staff cope with fears	It's just a mess much more frequently in a complex change. Well, therefore, an executive coach who can be independent of the day-to-day stuff which goes on, I found this extremely massively useful.
	Issue fit to coaching	Impact on self 3 challenges model PROC difficulties and challenges unfairness communication challenge Internal stories BAU vs change unpopular or disliked Staff pushback	I hear myself, you know, sitting in a room addressing people wherein one sense I'm there to listen and to make them feel valued and that their opinion counts. Of course, without sounding like I'm Kim Jong-un the second, the reality is that their opinion doesn't really count. We're not going to change what we're going to do even though we're sitting around this table talking about it.
Lack of demonstratable ROI	Beliefs	comparison to tangible services intangible cost high frequency directors 'reaction business case	Coaching is not necessarily seen as directly impacting the business. I'm not entirely sure why - I never really thought about it. I'm not going to buy coaching in the same way that I would buy SAP. I know that [product] because that's a tangible thing, and I've seen it working in other businesses. Here is their case study, and this, that, and the other. Coaching is tempting, but it's invisible in other organisations.
Idea not reaching decision makers	Source of coaching	reason got coaching received during PROC received another time programme type	I initially asked for training with the Institute of Directors because I want to be a NED. That couldn't give the critical EBITDA and so they couldn't invest. Well then, what about coaching? They did a thing for women over here; I knew that they had talked about that before, and yes, I got my coach.
	Role of HR	in proc / strategic visibility of coaching not thought about it	Look, we're a company that empowers our people. I truly want to know that training or coaching is impacting the overall strategy of where we want to go. In my experience, many people at senior level don't have an engaging conversation with the OD or HR's overall strategy person.
Politics, Machiavellianism and Change Readiness	Impact in PROC	present or not considered helpful considered problem impact	In [organisation], my instinct is we're all Machiavellian, so we're always on the lookout. We're always on the lookout for Machiavellian behaviours by others, and no outcome prospers that we don't put down to some Machiavellian brilliance.
	Impact coaching implement	blocking example blocking potential	He was a perfect example, he didn't want to share the numbers with anybody, didn't want the people to be coached, didn't want

			to share too much, whilst sitting in his office all day. For one specific reason. These people at the middle management level, divisional managers, could do his job with their eyes closed. He knew that, he realised
	Change readiness	top level impact staff resistance	I think many blockers will have to do something else and we will find someone who's not going to block. That's at the top. But the middle and bottom layers, I think that they have to adapt and then make the change.
	Coaching resistance	reasons for	I think some leaders are also very scared, it's a bit like a lifeline, but I think they can find it quite threatening too. Some people embrace that sort of support. And other people don't.

8.8 Survey Invitation

Doctoral Research Survey on Coaching and Change Management

I am researching a Professional Doctorate in Coaching and Mentoring at Oxford Brookes University. This research aims to understand the role of coaching in organisational change.

I am looking for business people who have had any or all of the following:

- experience of a 'planned radical organisational change' – i.e. a significant change, altering the power structure, culture, routines, and strategy of an organisation.

- received executive coaching

- procured or arranged executive coaching

If that matches you and you are a manager or above, who is or has worked at a company with more than 500 employees, please do consider participating. Participation will involve a 20 minute online survey.

If this interests you, please message me via LinkedIn for a link to the survey and an information sheet so you can make an informed decision about taking part in the study.

Many thanks

Terry Graynoth

8.9 Response to those who agreed to complete a survey

Hi [ ]

Thank you so much for offering to help with the survey for my doctoral research project. I really do appreciate it.

Here is a link that will take you to a participant information sheet, a privacy notice and then onto the survey itself. The participant information sheet is important for research ethics as it will give you full details about the project and the type of involvement needed and allow you to make a fully informed decision if you want to go ahead or not.

If you are happy to proceed after reading it, then please click through to the survey but if you have any doubts at all, please do not feel you must continue with the questionnaire.

https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/

If you have any questions feel free to ask me via LinkedIn or via my university email 17002370@brookes.ac.uk and thanks again.

Best wishes

Terry

8.10 Response to those who agree to be interviewed

Hi [ ]

Thank you so much for completing the survey for my doctoral research project and offering to be interviewed by telephone. I do appreciate it.

Attached to this email are three schedules, a participant information sheet, a privacy notice and a consent form. If, after reading these, you are happy to proceed, then please reply to this email confirming that you would like to go ahead. I will then get in touch to set up a mutually convenient time for us to have a call.

The call itself should take about an hour. Please sign the consent form and send a scanned copy or photo/picture of the consent form to me at your convenience before we talk.

However, if you have changed your mind and do not want to be interviewed just let me know. That is not a problem at all, and you do not have to give a reason.

If you have any questions, do feel free to ask. I look forward to talking soon.

Best wishes

Terry

8.11 Interview participant information

Study Title: “The role and application of coaching in planned radical organisational change.”

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in this research study. If you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Researcher

I am both a Doctoral Student at Oxford Brookes University and an employee at EY, where I am a Coach and The Director of Advanced Analytics and Insight for Global Finance. This research is being undertaken for a professional doctorate and not as part of my employment.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of the study is to understand the role of coaching in planned radical organisational change.

Why have I been invited to participate?

As an executive with knowledge and expertise in organisational change, you are well placed to contribute to this study. You have kindly already completed a survey and on that indicated that you would consider being interviewed.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you choose to take part, you will be free to withdraw any unprocessed data at any time without providing a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you choose to take part, you will be invited to a telephone interview at a mutually convenient time. The interview will take no more than one hour. It will be recorded and transcribed, but your anonymity will be preserved. No names, or quotes which signpost a participant’s identity, will be used in the final thesis.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By participating in this study, you are supporting the furthering of knowledge of how organisations apply coaching during a change.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information collected about participants within this research will be kept strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations). Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured in the collection, storage and publication of research material.

Data will be password protected when in soft copy, and locked in a secure filing cabinet when in hard copy. Data generated by the study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. Therefore, data generated during this research will be kept securely in electronic form for ten years after the completion of a research project.

What should I do if I want to take part?

Please review the privacy notice, then sign the consent form and send a scanned copy or photo/picture of the consent form to me at the email address below. I will then get in touch to arrange a mutually convenient time.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Research from this study will form part of my Doctor of Coaching and Mentoring thesis. It will be submitted to Oxford Brookes University in the autumn of 2020. A copy of the thesis will be available at Oxford Brookes University Library. An executive summary will be made available to participants on request.

Who is organising and funding the research?

I am conducting this research as a student at Oxford Brookes University Business School. This research is being funded by myself.

Who has reviewed the study?

Prior to formally approaching you to commence this research, the research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Oxford Brookes University.

Contact for Further Information

Researcher: Terry Graynoth ( )
Supervisor: Christian Ehrlich ( )

If you have any concerns about the way in which this study is being or has been conducted, you are advised to contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee at .

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.