

Academic Paper

Experiences of receiving career coaching via Skype: An interpretative phenomenological analysis

Claudia Deniers  (Siemens)

Abstract

Research on video-mediated coaching is sparse, with literature on video-mediated communication in general and different aspects of technology-assisted coaching existing. Therefore the qualitative study researches the question "What is the impact of the camera in Skype coaching on coachees' experience of being coached?", taking a constructivist epistemological stance and employing the methodology of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as developed by Smith from the late 1990s. It aims to provide a better understanding of the coachee's lived experience of being coached in a camera mediated encounter.

Article history

Accepted for publication: 16 January 2019

Published online: 01 February 2019



© the Author(s)

Published by Oxford Brookes University

Introduction

Since coaching evolved as an industry in the 1990s, the target groups and application fields for coaching have multiplied (Kanatouri & Geissler, 2017, p.715). At the same time, "technology has changed the way coaches and clients interact" (Sherpa, 2017). Penetration and usage of the internet are high, with, for example, 89% of UK households having internet access and 82% using the internet every day (Office for National Statistics, 2016). Coaching practitioners also increasingly make use of technological media and the dyadic face-to-face meeting in real time is no longer the standard mode in which a coaching session takes place. To enhance convenience, location-independence and cost effectiveness coaching also happens via video, text-messages, email or via specifically created platforms, either synchronously or asynchronously, using a single way of delivery or choosing a blended approach (Clutterbuck, 2010; Boyce & Hernez-Broome, 2010; Otte et al., 2014; Kanatouri & Geissler, 2017).

One seemingly obvious way of re-creating a face-to-face situation for the coaching encounter while reaping the benefits of technology, is the use of a web-cam or video-conferencing device in order to connect a physically dispersed coaching pair. The ICF Global Coaching Study (2016) reports that two thirds of 15.380 coaches from 137 countries use an audio-video platform. The Sherpa (2017)

report evaluates responses from 900 coaching practitioners from 65 countries. Findings show that for that year 21% of all coaching services were delivered that way.

While these industry-led reports are based on information provided by coaches, the present study aims to investigate the issue from the client side, zooming in on the individual experience of clients engaged in a video-mediated coaching relationship. Evaluating a sample of eleven participants who chose to engage in career coaching using Skype, it analyses their narratives of the lived experience, exploring their way of giving meaning and making sense of it within their very own context of perception by asking the question "What is the impact of the camera in Skype coaching on coachees' experience of being coached?"

After analysing the existing literature on video-mediated coaching, the study will set out why IPA was chosen as the most appropriate methodology to research the subject. Findings will be structured and discussed around the self-perception of the coachee, his or her perception of the coach and the space in which the encounter takes place. Finally, recommendations for further research will be given.

Literature Review

In reviewing the literature pertinent to the subject of the present study, four topical areas were investigated: First, literature on the use of technology in coaching in general and in career coaching in particular was researched and analysed. While the distinction between "coaching" and "career coaching" was not pervasive, a set of publications focusing on technology assisted career coaching was found and career coaching specific findings will be summarized below. Secondly, research on the working alliance in a technology-supported coaching relationship was examined. Closely related to this proved the question of the comparability between virtual and face-to-face coaching encounters. Thirdly, due to the focus of the research topic on coaching via Skype, academic literature on the specifics and challenges of communication via video-conferencing tools was explored.

The use of technology in (career) coaching

The search for research on the technology facilitated delivery of coaching yielded many results relating to therapy rather than coaching (Cook & Doyle, 2002; Hanley, 2009; Anthony, 2015; Blake Buffini & Gordon, 2015; Day & Schneider, 2002; Suler, 2004; Weitz, 2014). The key topics addressed here, namely effectiveness, the functioning of the working alliance and the comparability to face-to-face interactions are also recurrent concerns in the literature on (career) coaching using technology.

Two recent relevant literature reviews were found: Ghods and Boyce (2013) examine the existing literature on virtual coaching against the backdrop of research into online therapy and e-mentoring, while Kanatouri and Geissler (2017) provide an outline of existing purpose-built technologies to support the coaching process as well as a compilation and review of empirical research on technology-assisted coaching. With Web 2.0 technology available only from 2003, the year which also saw the introduction of Skype, it follows that most studies investigating the use of technology in coaching so far primarily focus on the use of the telephone (Charbonneau, 2002; Berry, 2005; Frazee, 2008; Ghods, 2009; McLaughlin, 2012; Geissler et al., 2014).

Kanatouri and Geissler come to the conclusion that "Overall, the coaching literature has mainly provided positive findings with regard to the efficacy of telephone and online tools for coaching delivery" (2017, p.725). Further research will have to show whether the continuous spread of video-conferencing technology in coaching will go along with an ever more favourable response to this form of delivery.

The working alliance in technology-assisted coaching

The quality of the relationship between coach and client is generally recognized as the single most important factor determining the effectiveness of coaching (Berry et al., 2011; McLeod, 2013; Ianiro & Kauffeld; 2014). Bordin's (1979) definition of the working alliance in therapy as comprising of a mutual agreement on tasks and goals as well as the establishment of a bond formed by trust, acceptance and confidence "is generally considered to be transtheoretical" (Berry et al., 2011, p.244).

Gessnitzer and Kauffeld (2015) show how the coach/client relationship has been analysed for different fields of coaching, namely "executive coaching, career coaching ... or performance and life coaching" (p.179), yet none of the studies reviewed discuss the particularities of virtual coaching.

Across all coaching fields, "the central role of the coaching working alliance for coaching success" (p.232) is recognized, widely accepting McKenna and Davis' (2009) claim that 30% of the success of therapy - and by inference coaching - is accounted for by the working alliance. "So, it is important to think about how to build and sustain the alliance with a remote client. How much of the work can be done remotely without eroding this active ingredient of relationship?" (McKenna & Davis (2009), p.258).

With the growing use of technology-supported coaching, the definition of what constitutes a "face-to-face" interaction has broadened. Thus, Drake (2015) subsumes physical and video mediated encounters under "face-to-face coaching" and opposes it to "technology-based mediated communication" where "coach and client are engaged using e-mail, instant messaging (IM), mobile/smartphone telephone, tablet, or texting" (p.26). Similarly, Simeonsdotter et al. (2014) state: "Skype allows face-to-face communication at a distance." (p.1018) A critical debate whether video-mediated and face-to-face can be used synonymously is as of yet missing in the literature. It could yield a helpful clarification of terms and researchers' and clients' frames of reference.

Eye-contact and self-perception in video-mediated communication

Two aspects of video-mediated communication are relevant to the purpose of the current study: the role of eye contact and the effect of seeing one's own image while being engaged in the interaction. Bohannon (2013), Grayson and Monk (2013) and Jaklic (2017) affirm the importance of mutual gaze for interpersonal communication and investigate the challenges of making eye contact in video-conferencing, where the camera is usually mounted above the screen, so that the person looking into the camera cannot look directly at the picture of the communication partner on the screen and offer solutions to this problem, be they of a technical nature or suggestions for users of video-conferencing tools to be trained for establishing eye contact. In her review of studies focusing on eye-contact in video-communication Bohannon (2013) summarizes that "research indicates that video-conferencing has an impact on verbal and non-verbal communication, also affecting social constructs such as trust and impression formation" (p.184). Also, self-image concerns were found to be prevalent amongst users of video-conferencing tools (de Vasconcelos, 2009, Brubaker, 2012, Hassell & Cotton, 2017), especially in tools like Skype, where one's own video-feed cannot be hidden.

Methodology and Research Design

The study takes a qualitative approach, aiming to "understand phenomena within their own context-specific settings" (Gray, 2014, p.160).

The epistemological stance taken is a constructivist one, assuming that "truth and meaning do not exist in some external world but are created by the subject's interactions with the world" (Gray, 2014, p.20). Consequently, an interpretative theoretical stance is adopted and a methodology chosen that is firmly rooted in the principle of phenomenology, namely Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as developed by Smith from the late 1990s (Smith, 1995; Smith et al., 1999; Smith, 2004; Smith et al., 2009).

Three fundamentals of IPA are particularly relevant to the purpose of this study: it adheres to the phenomenological position originally developed by Husserl, insofar as "it is concerned with an individual's personal perception or account of an object or event as opposed to an attempt to produce an objective statement of the object or event itself". (Smith et al., 1999, p.218).

Secondly, "IPA ... recognises the central role for the analyst in making sense of that personal experience", capturing this aspect by coining the term of "double hermeneutic" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2016, p.8): the participant creates his/her interpretation of his/her personal experience while at the same time the researcher interprets this account. This open admittance and constant reflection (Smith et al., 1999) of the researcher's active involvement in the creation of the participant's narrative has been critiqued as possibly devaluing the validity and generalizability of the research outcome (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Pringle et al., 2011), yet in the context of the present study is seen as an enabling and enriching proposition: With the researcher being a coach employing Skype coaching herself, the acknowledgment and constructive self-reflection of her role in the account of the experience under investigation was found to be essential.

Finally, IPA adheres to the principle of ideography, allowing for an "in-depth analysis of single cases and examining individual perspectives of study participants in their unique contexts" (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2016, p.8). This principle fits with the study's aim to give detailed analyses of a small number of people's lived experience of Skype coaching.

Participants and sampling

This study adheres to the Code of Human Research Ethics prescribed by the British Psychological Society (2010). Informed consent was insured and confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time guaranteed.

Participants for this study were found by asking two career coaching providers to make current and/or former clients aware of the research and asked to participate in it. One of these companies specializes in supporting Chinese graduate students living and seeking employment in the UK, the other company offers career coaching and outplacement support to senior executives worldwide. Through these channels six participants were recruited. An additional five participants were found through coach networks.

All participants met the defined pre-requisites, being:

- adults
- with an excellent command of English
- having received coaching in a career related context
- having conducted their coaching relationship exclusively or predominantly over Skype
- prepared to conduct an interview about their experience using Skype.

The sample was not purposive in terms of gender, age, nationality or location. Of the eleven participants five were female and six male, ranging in age from early twenties to late fifties. They were of British, Chinese, Venezuelan, South African and Bosnian nationality and resided in the UK, Singapore, Vietnam, Belgium, Germany and China at the time of the interviews. This demographic

and geographic variety serves as an indication of the heterogeneity of clients deciding to be coached via Skype.

Data collection and analysis

An interview schedule was prepared before starting the interviews, with questions based on issues expected to be addressed from the existing literature and my own experience as a coach working via Skype. Following Smith's (2009) recommendations, interviews started with the least sensitive material to make participants feel at ease, questions were open-ended and designed to flexibly allow for following any direction the participant might want to take. Questions were reviewed and slightly amended throughout the interview process, allowing each individual participant to take the lead in describing his/her experience. The interviews lasted between 50 and 75 minutes, were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed consecutively. Striking and repetitive phrases were underlined and initial notes added in a wide left-hand margin. This process was repeated several times, before indicators of common themes were noted in the right-hand margin, paying particular attention to the interpretative process of the researcher. These themes were then transferred to a table and matching quotes were pasted under these initial headings. In an iterative process, some of these themes were renamed, and sub- and overarching themes identified.

Findings

The analysis of participants' accounts of being coached via Skype shows that the camera is felt to be the defining element of the process: "This is the virtual world and you can only see via this camera" (Interviewee 4). The effects of the camera are ambiguous: it serves as an enabler of contact, it is perceived as a means of surveillance or its presence can create an atmosphere of being on stage or a film set. Overall, the camera makes an impact in three areas to be discussed here: the self-image of the coachee in the encounter is defined by his/her engagement with the camera; the perception and the relationship with the coach is influenced by the intermediary of the camera; and finally the experience of the space the coaching takes place in is affected.

The perspective of the coachee: keeping things under control

Interviewee 4 emphasized: "The virtual environment changes me and how I think of people". This statement sums up what most participants describe from different angles: When engaging in coaching using a web-cam, very specific considerations and concerns arise, many of them related to a strong wish to stay in control of the situation. One example is the urge to check one's appearance on screen, a phenomenon studied in users of videoconference systems by De Vasconcelos Vilho et al., 2009. Their findings correlate with what participants of the current study related: Their perceived image during the interaction is of high importance to them and makes them inspect their appearance in their own video-feed, particularly at the beginning of sessions (p.260). Also, participants cherished the possibility of choosing the location in which to take the coaching and to be able to decide what elements of their surroundings to present to their coach. Most of them felt most comfortable doing the sessions at home, on their own territory, so to speak, where they feel "safe" (Interviewee 4).

In addition to their self-image and their location, the coach is another part of the coaching process some participants feel needs to be controlled: Some interviewees felt the need for their coach to move away from the camera, so they could see more of them and gain assurance about what they were doing with their hands (Interviewee 11) and many voiced their preference for Skype over telephone coaching, just because it gives them at least some visual clues to assure them of their coach's undivided attention. Finally, the option of turning off the video-feed and thus reducing the coach to voice only was named as another way of exerting control in the coaching situation. One interviewee reported switching frequently between audio only and video plus audio during

sessions, with being on audio only having the advantage of "not being watched", which for this interviewee is equivalent to "not being judged" (Interviewee 8).

The perception of the coach: A "talking head"

Several interviewees report the coach to be perceived as objectified and transportable:

- "I would have my coach on the screen" (Interviewee 1).
- "I can put [the coach] to one side in terms of the voice" (Interviewee 8).
- "I find it easier to concentrate when I have her in my ear"(Interviewee 3).

The coach is experienced as reduced to his/her voice as transmitted through the computer and her/his facial expressions. Being "a face on a screen" (Interviewee 10) reduces the coach's presence and possibly also minimizes the authority (s)he might radiate in the physical world. (Suler, 2004).

For a coach working with Skype, being switched on and off at the coachee's discretion or being asked to show his/her hands to prove they are not doing anything the coachee might disapprove of, might be new experiences that possibly come as part and parcel of a new understanding of coaching, brought about by the integration of technology: "The industry must now embrace this disruptive paradigm shift, which puts the client in charge. They can have a coach in their pocket via a smartphone for when they need support and advice" (Jackson et al., 2017).

In Skype coaching, the coach has not dwindled to pocket-, but to screen-size, a fact that had an impact by all participants of this study. Licoppe and Morel (2012) coin the term "talking heads arrangement" to describe the default mode for video communication, where "both participants [are] on screen and facing the camera" (p.426). This reduced perception has implications for the "communication bandwidth" (Bohannon et al., 2012, 137) accessible for the coaching interaction: With a non-physical meeting already excluding the sense channels of touch and smell, the rigid and reductionist set-up of the video encounter also reduces the variability of gaze, gesture and posture, which all are integral parts of visual behaviour (Whittaker & O'Connaill, 1997, p.25).

The coaching space: So big and yet so small

Many participants reported that Skype coaching gave them a bigger choice of coaches by bridging geographical distance. Interviewee 3 put it like this: "I'd rather have a professional on Skype than someone with lesser capabilities in person. It's the quality first and then the medium". Several interviewees worked with coaches located in different countries or even continents. In this sense, Skype certainly makes the coaching space bigger than it ever was before. On the other hand, Skype coaching, due to the spatial limitation of the computer screen, also brings an aspect of confinement to the coaching encounter, as experienced by Interviewee 3: "There is nowhere to go. You can't look out the window and you can't just take a break, you are actually paying complete attention, because it's a captive audience, 100 per cent captive". Interviewee 10, on the contrary, experienced "an extra sense of freedom ... so there is more kind of freedom around me ... I can do different things, yeah, I can do things that I wouldn't normally do, you know with someone else in the room". Revealing a similar width of reactions, the physical disparity of spaces was felt both as a "sense of intimacy in that [the coach] is inviting you into her space" (Interviewee 1) and as bringing about irritation and confusion: "I wasn't sure what physical space I was in" (Interviewee 5).

Apparently, the "appropriate contextualization of users' interactions [required] in a virtual space" (Wilbur, 1997, p.353) very much depends on preconceptions on the side of both coach and coachee as well as on their mutually developed understanding, a process which cannot be explored further in the context of this study.

Conclusion

This study investigates coachees' individual perceptions of receiving career coaching via the video-conferencing tool Skype. It shows that the presence of a camera in the coaching encounter impacts the self-image of the coachee as well as his/her perception of the coach and his/her experience of the space the coaching takes place in.

Distance coaching incorporating video technology will probably gain even broader acceptance with growing coverage of broadband internet and refinements in HD technology. The insights provided will enable coaching professionals using video-technology to align their contracting, the set-up of their sessions and the coaching encounter accordingly. The same applies for managers leading and coaching remotely and HR professionals setting up video-supported coaching and mentoring schemes.

Three aspects of career coaching via Skype that are not covered in this study stand out as needing investigation: First, an analysis of Skype-mediated coaching from both the coachee and the coach's perspective could give insights into the interaction and mutual influence on behaviour and perception taking place in video-mediated coaching. Secondly, cultural differences in attitudes and valuations of coaching through a web-cam are worth researching. With the different levels of comfort with eye contact in different cultures being a well research fact (Bohannon et al., 2012, p.178), it would be helpful to understand how this impacts the perception of a form of coaching where constant eye-contact is enforced by the medium. And finally it remains to be analysed whether there are differences in how people from various age groups relate to and engage with this type of coaching. This research interest could be geared towards coachees of different age groups, but with many career practitioners being "digital immigrants" working with "digital natives" (Bimrose et al., 2010), it might also be worth investigating how coaches and coachees work together across a possible digital generation gap.

References

- Andrews, A.R. (2014) *Avatar coaching: A case study on the perceptions of virtual reality coaching interventions with an avatar coach* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation edn.). USA: Capella University.
- Anthony, K. (2015) 'Training therapists to work effectively online and offline within digital culture', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(1), pp.36-42. DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2014.924617](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2014.924617).
- Berry, R.M. (2005) *A comparison of face-to-face and distance coaching practices: The role of the working alliance in problem resolution* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation edn.). Georgia, USA: Georgia State University.
- Berry, R.M., Ashby, J.S., Gnillka, P.B. and Matheny, K.B. (2011) 'A comparison of face-to-face and distance coaching practices: Coaches' perceptions of the role of the working alliance in problem resolution', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 63(4), pp.243-253. DOI: [10.1037/a0026735](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026735).
- Blake Buffini, K. and Gordon, M. (2015) 'One-to-one support for crisis intervention using online synchronous instant messaging: evaluating working alliance and client satisfaction', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(1), pp.105-116.
- Bohannon, L.S., Herbert, A.M., Pelz, J.B. and Rantanen, E.M. (2013) 'Eye contact and video-mediated communication: A review', *Displays*, 177(185), pp.177-185. DOI: [10.1016/j.displa.2012.10.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.displa.2012.10.009).
- Bordin, E.S. (1979) 'The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance', *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, 16(3), pp.252-260. DOI: [10.1037/h0085885](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0085885).
- Boyce, L.A. and Hernez-Broome, G. (2010) 'E-coaching: Consideration of leadership coaching in a virtual environment', in Clutterbuck, D. and Hussain, Z. (eds.) *Virtual coach, virtual mentor*. Charlotte, NC, US: IAP Information Age Publishing, pp.139-174.
- Bright, J.E.H. (2014) 'If you go down to the woods today you are in for a big surprise: Seeing the wood for the trees in online delivery of career guidance', *British journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(1), pp.1-12. DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2014.979760](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2014.979760).
- Brocki, J.M. and Wearden, A.J. (2007) 'A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology', *Psychology and Health*, 21(1), pp.87-108. DOI: [10.1080/14768320500230185](https://doi.org/10.1080/14768320500230185).

- Brubaker, J., Venolia, G. and Tang, J. (2012) *Focusing on shared experiences: moving beyond the camera in video communication*. Proceedings of the Designing Interactive Systems Conference, 11 June 2012, , pp.96-105.
- Chung, Y.B. and Allen Gfroerer, M.C. (2003) 'Career Coaching: Practice, Training, Professional, and Ethical Issues', *Career Development Quarterly*, 52(2), pp.141-152. DOI: [10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00634.x](https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-0045.2003.tb00634.x).
- Clutterbuck, D. (2010) 'Welcome to the world of virtual coaching and mentoring', in Clutterbuck, D. and Hussain, Z. (eds.) *Virtual Coach, Virtual Mentor*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, pp.3-30.
- Clutterbuck, D. and Hussain, Z. (eds.) (2010) *Virtual Coach, Virtual Mentor*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Cook, J.E. and Doyle, C. (2002) 'Working alliance in online therapy as compared to face-to-face therapy: preliminary results', *Cyberpsychology & Behavior: The Impact of the Internet, Multimedia and Virtual Reality on Behavior and Society*, 5(2), pp.95-105. DOI: [10.1089/109493102753770480](https://doi.org/10.1089/109493102753770480). PMID: 12025884.
- Corbin Dwyer, S. and Buckle, J.L. (2009) 'The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research', *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), pp.54-63. DOI: [10.1177/160940690900800105](https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105).
- Day, S.X. and Schneider, P.L. (2002) 'Psychotherapy using distance technology: A comparison of face-to-face, video, and audio treatment', *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 49(4), pp.499-503. DOI: [10.1037/0022-0167.49.4.499](https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.49.4.499).
- de Vasconcelos Filho, J., Inkpen, K. and Czerwinski, M. (2009) *Image, appearance and vanity in the use of media spaces and video conference systems*. Proceedings of the ACM 2009 International Conference on Supporting Group Work, 10 May 2009, , pp.253-262.
- Drake, L.M. (2015) *Two kinds of presence: A comparative analysis of face-to-face and technology based mediated communication methods and the executive coaching experience* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation edn.). Santa Barbara: Fielding Graduate University.
- Dunn, K. (2014) 'The therapeutic alliance online', in Weitz, P. (eds.) *Psychotherapy 2.0: Where Psychotherapy and Technology Meet*. London: KARNAC, pp.75-88.
- Fitzgerald, P. (2017) *Where lived experiences enmesh: exploring the impact of the research journey on the researcher as insider*. Proceedings of the Birkbeck University Qualitative Methods in Action Day, 23 May 2017, .
- Fraze, R.V. (2008) *E-coaching in organizations: A study of features, practices, and determinants of use* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation edn.). San Diego: San Diego University.
- Geissler, H., Hasenbein, M., Kanatouri, S. and Wegener, R. (2014) 'E-Coaching: Conceptual and empirical findings of a virtual coaching programme', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 12(2), pp.165-186.
- Gessnitzer, S. and Kauffeld, S. (2015) 'The working alliance in coaching: Why behavior is the key to success', *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 51(2), pp.177-197. DOI: [10.1177/0021886315576407](https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886315576407).
- Ghods, N. (2009) *Distance Coaching: The Relationship between the Coach-Client Relationship, Client Satisfaction and Coaching Outcomes* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation edn.). San Diego: San Diego University.
- Ghods, N. and Boyce, C. (2013) 'Virtual coaching and mentoring', in Passmore, J., Peterson, D.B. and Freire, T. (eds.) *The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of coaching and mentoring*. West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, pp.501-523.
- Goss, S. and Hooley, T. (2015) 'Symposium on online practice in counselling and guidance', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 43(1), pp.1-7. DOI: [10.1080/03069885.2015.995471](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069885.2015.995471).
- Grayson, D.M. and Monk, A.F. (2003) 'Are you looking at me? Eye contact and desktop video conferencing', *ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI)*, 10(3), pp.221-243. DOI: [10.1145/937549.937552](https://doi.org/10.1145/937549.937552).
- Hancock, B. (2014) *The design of a framework and instrument for assessment of virtual coaching competence: An exploratory study* (Unpublished Master's thesis edn.). South Africa: Stellenbosch University.
- Hanley, T. (2009) 'The working alliance in online therapy with young people: preliminary findings', *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 37(3), pp.257-269. DOI: [10.1080/03069880902956991](https://doi.org/10.1080/03069880902956991).
- Hassell, M.D. and Cotton, J.L. (2017) 'Some things are better left unseen: Toward more effective communication and team performance in video- mediated interactions', *Computers in Human Behavior*, 73, pp.200-208. DOI: [10.1016/j.chb.2017.03.039](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.03.039).
- Hayfield, N. and Huxley, C. (2015) 'Insider and Outsider Perspectives: Reflections on Researcher Identities in Research with Lesbian and Bisexual Women', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 12(2), pp.91-106. DOI: [10.1080/14780887.2014.918224](https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2014.918224).
- Hellawell, D. (2006) 'Inside-out: analysis of the insider-outsider concept as a heuristic device to develop reflexivity in students doing qualitative research', *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(4), pp.483-494. DOI: [10.1080/13562510600874292](https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510600874292).
- Ianiro, P.M. and Kauffeld, S. (2014) 'Take care what you bring with you: How coaches' mood and interpersonal behavior affect coaching success', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 66(3), pp.231-257. DOI: [10.1037/cpb0000012](https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000012).

- ICF (2016) *2016 Global Coaching Study. Study Details and Key Findings Germany*. Available at: http://www.coachfederation.de/files/2016_icf_gcs_germany_vs._global_stand_v02_06.08.2016_mfjb.pdf.
- Jackson, A., Tawadros, T. and Tinker, D. (2017) 'Virtual Reality: Adapt to our digital world or it's the end of for traditional coaches and mentors', *Coaching at Work*, 12(2). Available at: <https://www.coaching-at-work.com/2017/03/02/virtual-reality/>.
- Jaklič, A., Solina, F. and Šajn, L. (2017) 'User interface for a better eye contact in videoconferencing', *Displays*, 46, pp.25-36. DOI: [10.1016/j.displa.2016.12.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.displa.2016.12.002).
- Jones, C.A. (2013) *Improving the experience of Skype coaching in an educational setting* (Unpublished MA thesis edn.). London: University of London.
- Kahn, S. (2017) *The researcher as parasite*. Proceedings of the Birkbeck University Qualitative Methods in Action Day, 23 May 2017, .
- Kanatouri, S. and Geissler, H. (2017) 'Adapting to working with new technologies', in Spence, G. and Drake, D. (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Coaching*. London: SAGE, pp.715-730.
- Kettunen, J., Vuorinen, R. and Sampson Jr, J.R. (2015) 'Practitioners' experiences of social media in career services', *The Career Development Quarterly*, 63(3), pp.268-281. DOI: [10.1002/cdq.12018](https://doi.org/10.1002/cdq.12018).
- Licoppe, C. and Morel, J. (2012) 'Video-in-Interaction: "Talking Heads" and the Multimodal Organization of Mobile and Skype Video Calls', *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 45(4), pp.399-429. DOI: [10.1080/08351813.2012.724996](https://doi.org/10.1080/08351813.2012.724996).
- Mantovani, G. and Riva, G. (1999) "Real" presence: How different ontologies generate different criteria for presence, telepresence, and virtual presence', *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, 8(5), pp.540-550. DOI: [10.1162/105474699566459](https://doi.org/10.1162/105474699566459) .
- McLaughlin, M. (2012) *Less is more: The executive coach's experience of working on the telephone* (Unpublished Master's Thesis edn.). Oxford: Oxford Brookes University.
- McKenna, D.D. and Davis, S.L. (2009) 'Hidden in Plain Sight: The Active Ingredients of Executive Coaching', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2(3), pp.244-260. DOI: [10.1111/j.1754-9434.2009.01143.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1754-9434.2009.01143.x).
- McLaughlin, M. (2013) 'Less is more: The executive coach's experience of working on the telephone', *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, Special issue 7, pp.1-13.
- McLeod, J. (2013) *An Introduction to Counselling* (5th edn.). Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Office for National Statistics (2016) *Internet Access - Households and Individuals: 2016 Use of the internet by adults in Great Britain including mobile access, activities, shopping, security and storage*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2016>.
- Osborn, D.S., Kronholz, J.F., Finklea, J.T. and Cantonis, A.M. (2014) 'Technology-savvy career counselling', *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne*, 55(4), pp.258-265. DOI: [10.1037/a0038160](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038160).
- Otte, S., Bangerter, A., Britsch, M. and Wüthrich, U. (2014) 'Attitudes of coaches towards the use of computer-based technology in coaching', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 66(1), pp.38-52. DOI: [10.1037/a0035592](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035592).
- Pascal, A., Sass, M. and Gregory, J.B. (2015) 'I'm only human: The role of technology in coaching', *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 67(2), pp.100-109. DOI: [10.1037/cpb0000025](https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000025).
- Pringle, J., Drummond, J., McLafferty, E. and Hendry, C. (2011) 'Interpretative phenomenological analysis: a discussion and critique', *Nurse Researcher*, 18(3), pp.20-24. DOI: [10.7748/nr2011.04.18.3.20.c8459](https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2011.04.18.3.20.c8459). PMID: 21560922.
- Rochlen, A.B., Zack, J.S. and Speyer, C. (2004) 'Online therapy: Review of relevant definitions, debates, and current empirical support', *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 60(3), pp.269-283. DOI: [10.1002/jclp.10263](https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.10263). PMID: 14981791.
- Schuemie, M.J., van der Straaten, P., Krijn, M. and van der Mast, C.A. (2001) 'Research on presence in virtual reality: A survey', *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 4, pp.183-201. DOI: [10.1089/109493101300117884](https://doi.org/10.1089/109493101300117884). PMID: 11710246.
- Sherpa Coaching (2017) *Sherpa Executive Coaching Survey: 12th annual industry review*. Available at: http://www.sherpacoaching.com/pdf%20files/2017_Executive_Coaching_Survey_PUBLIC.pdf.
- Shinebourne, P. (2011) 'The theoretical underpinnings of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', *Existential Analysis*, 22(1), pp.16-31.
- Simeonsdotter Svensson, A., Pramling Samuelsson, I., Hellström, A-L. and Jenholt Nolbris, M. (2013) 'Experiences of SKYPE communication in education and research – data collection concerning young children with long-term illness', *Early Child Development and Care*, 184(7), pp.1017-1030. DOI: [10.1080/03004430.2013.841154](https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2013.841154).
- Smith, J., Jarman, M. and Osborn, M. (1999) 'Doing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis', in Chamberlain, M.M.K. (eds.) *Qualitative health psychology*. London: SAGE, pp.218-240.
- Smith, J.A. (1995) 'Semi-structured interviewing & qualitative analysis', in Smith, J.A., Harre, R. and Van Langenhove, L. (eds.) *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: SAGE.

- Smith, J.A. (2004) 'Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 1(1), pp.39-54.
- Smith, J.A. (2009) *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: theory, method and research*. London: SAGE.
- Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2015) 'Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods', in *Qualitative psychology: a practical guide to research methods* (3rd edn.). Los Angeles: SAGE, pp.25-52.
- Suler, J. (2004) 'The Online Disinhibition Effect', *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 7(3), pp.321-326. DOI: [10.1089/1094931041291295](https://doi.org/10.1089/1094931041291295).
- The British Psychological Society (2010) *Code of Human Research Ethics*.
- Weitz, P., ed. (2014) *Psychotherapy 2.0: Where Psychotherapy and Technology Meet*. London: KARNAC.
- Whittaker, S. and O'Conaill, B. (1997) 'The Role of Vision in Face-to-Face and Mediated Communication', in Finn, K.E., Sellen, A.J. and Wilbur, S.B. (eds.) *Video-Mediated Communication*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.23-50.
- Wilbur, S.B. (1997) 'Models and Metaphors for Video-Mediated Communication', in Finn, K.E., Sellen, A.J. and Wilbur, S.B. (eds.) *Video-Mediated Communication*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, pp.351-362.

About the authors

Claudia Deniers holds a PhD in English Language and Literature and an MSc in Career Management and Coaching. She started her professional career as a communications specialist in banking and later trained as a coach and held HR positions focusing on change management and leadership development. She now works as an Executive Trainer and Coach designing and delivering leadership development programmes for future core leaders at Siemens, an internationally operating technology company. Claudia is a German citizen and has lived and worked in Germany and the UK.