


Academic Paper

A framework of modes of awareness for team coaching practice

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Abstract

Team coaching is an organisational practice with insufficient empirical and theoretical foundations. This research contributes empirical insights from a 12-month autoethnographic study focussing on *what* team coaches do and *how* they do it. We illuminate the micro-practices that inform sense making and team coaching approaches during emergent practice. The research contributes the new concept of *modes of awareness* for coaches to reflect on the knowledge and experience that inform multiple perspectives required for advanced practice. We build on existing conceptualisations of team coaching practice to present a framework of *modes of awareness* that integrates diverse streams of theory and practice.

Keywords

team coaching, modes of awareness, team coaching framework, sense making, emergent practice,

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Introduction

Team coaching (TC) is a growing human resource development intervention within organisations. However, the research base is under-developed and focussed on dyadic forms (Carter and Hawkins, 2013). Over the past 10 years, although research in team coaching has progressed by defining the practice and describing various approaches, finer practice details still need elucidating. By focussing both on *what* team coaches do and *how* they do it, our research aims to clarify the advanced coaching skills that enable TC practice in a complex, emergent context. Our paper proceeds as follows. First, we consider the status of TC research to highlight the need for a closer examination of coaches' actions in the flow of practice. Second, we introduce our autoethnographic research, describe the first author's experiences of working with the team through fictionalised accounts, and present the findings. We invite the reader into the coach's world, rendering the thinking, feeling and decision making of the coach more apparent, and conceptualising how the team coach makes sense of multiple perspectives required for advanced practice. Finally, we

develop a practice framework that integrates streams of theory and discuss its contribution to TC practice and future research.

Team coaching research: what is team coaching and what else do we need to know?

Researchers have adopted three broad approaches to investigating TC. First, objective analysis of others' practice creating generalisable taxonomies of coaching roles and approaches (Hastings and Pennington, 2019; Hauser, 2014; Lawrence and Whyte, 2017). Second, coach practitioners investigating their own practice case studies, describing insights into process, method and impact (Anderson, Anderson and Mayo, 2008; Ben Hur, Kinley and Jonsen, 2011; Carr and Peters, 2013; Aubé, Rousseau and Tremblay, 2011, Woodhead, 2011; Wotruba, 2016). Third, scholarly practitioners integrating practice insights with allied theoretical streams to create conceptual frameworks (Brown and Grant, 2010; Clutterbuck, 2014; Carter and Hawkins, 2013; O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2017; Thornton, 2016). This study takes the latter approach, integrating theoretical perspectives and empirical findings from practice to create a new conceptual framework of modes of awareness for TC practice.

Many authors highlight the lack of an agreed definition of TC that places boundaries on what it is and distinguishes it from other team-based interventions. Jones, Napiersky and Lyubovnikova (2019) address this issue through a thematic review of 15 TC definitions published since 2000. The analysis generates a summary of potential TC outcomes, addresses some areas of inconsistency and offers an oversight of roles and methods resulting in a comprehensive if somewhat unwieldy description:

Team coaching is a team based learning and development intervention that considers the team to be a system and is applied collectively to the team as a whole. The focus of team coaching is on team performance and achievement of a common or shared goal. Team learning is empowered via specific team coaching activities for self and team reflection, which are facilitated by the team coach(es) through application of coaching techniques such as impactful, reflective questioning which raises awareness, builds trusting relationships and improves communication. (Jones et al., 2019:73)

At its heart, team coaching is a learning process aimed at improving performance relating to a team's shared goals. Learning implies change, yet the route to change may involve individual shifts in thinking, agreement on collaborative action and influencing the prevailing business, political, or social environment pertaining to the team's organisation, customers and wider stakeholders (Hawkins, 2011, O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2017; Thornton, 2016). Consequently, TC can feel demanding (Clutterbuck, 2014) and 'requires advanced coaching skills from the coach such as considering multiple perspectives simultaneously and observing and interpreting dynamic interaction' (Jones et al., 2019:73). Empirical studies suggest coaches adopt an eclectic, pragmatic approaches (Hastings and Pennington, 2019) drawn from organisation development, team effectiveness, learning and leadership theories, amongst others (Hauser, 2014). Drawing from different approaches and disciplines is familiar within dyadic coaching. Western (2017) identifies four discourses - Soul guide, Network coach, Psy expert and Managerial – that shape the thinking and approach of most dyadic coaching practice. Western argues that coaches need awareness of which discourses influence their practice, the inherent assumptions within each perspective, and clarity about choices they make during an evolving coaching assignment. We believe the same is true for TC. We want to examine what a team coach does and how they do it. This research follows a team coach navigating the emerging complexities of TC practice to illuminate micro-practices and choices involved in working with multiple perspectives.

Methodology

Field work

This paper focusses on a 12-month TC assignment where the first author worked with a management team in a UK local government organisation. The team aspired to develop their team-working practices to support their leadership of a culture change programme to implement coaching as a management approach. We adopt an epistemology of relational social constructionism (Cunliffe, 2008) where we are making sense of practice in relationship with TC clients. We chose autoethnographic approaches (Adams, Holman Jones and Ellis, 2015; Sambrook, 2017) to enable the coach to surface and make sense of tacit knowledge '*from within their everyday professional practice*' (Simon, 2018:42) and to create rich descriptions of experience from an insider's perspective. Therefore, we use first person pronouns and the authors' names throughout this paper. Mavin and Corlett facilitated a critically reflexive appraisal of the process as it unfolded, challenging James' subjective sense making (Corlett and Mavin, 2018; Simon, 2018). First author, James collected fieldwork materials from her practice (Duncan, 2004; Muncey (2005); Whybrow, 2013) including audio recordings of team coaching sessions and reflective diaries completed by team members. In addition, James kept notes during the sessions and wrote reflections after each coaching session. The participants were aware that James was collecting observational data for research purposes and gave informed consent to use audio recordings, and their reflective writing. Team coaching activities were emergent, negotiated with the teams over time and based on James tacit knowledge and experience. James collated the research materials including the reflexive sense making with her co-authors into a chronological portfolio that told the story of unfolding events (Muncey, 2005).

Analysis of fieldwork material

To explore what a coach does and how they do it James created a five-stage analysis process. Firstly, she immersed herself in the data, listening to the audio recordings and annotating the chronological portfolio to observe where she was focussing attention. Secondly, she collated ideas in mind maps and identified six broad themes of coach attention: team focus and direction; team task accomplishment; creating an appropriate climate for coaching; helping the team to operate within the wider context; creating capacity for learning and change; team contracting. Thirdly, by creating fictional accounts of the coaching James identified narratives within the stories (Bochner, 2000; Denzin, 2014). For example, a narrative that a team can be engineered, to have optimum outputs through effective goal focus and functional team working behaviours. Fourthly, by deconstructing the narratives (Boje, 2001) James challenged assumptions and uncovered discourses that may conceal complexity. For example, an alternative narrative is that a team is an unstable entity, made up of individuals in a dynamic context. Deconstructing narratives also revealed a discourse of the coach as expert, analysing the team situation and contracting for a series of interventions. This discourse conceals another version of the story, that the coach does not always know what is going on and cannot be the expert. A coaching assignment is fluid and unpredictable, and the contract is renegotiated constantly to reflect emerging realities. The fifth and final stage was to express the emerging narratives as metaphors. The six themes from stage two became four metaphorical perspectives.

Analysis of fieldwork material allowed us to express the sense making process, where metaphorical language helped James to articulate the multiple perspectives she was observing and interpreting. Metaphors helped to codify complex experiences into familiar concrete concepts (Cornelissen, 2005). In the findings, we describe how this process helped us to name what we came to know as 'modes of awareness'. Initial mind mapping acknowledged that the coach considered other issues beyond the four metaphorical perspectives described here, including her relationship with the team leader, the potential to act as organisational consultant as an additional

or alternative intervention to team coaching, and her role as a practitioner researcher. For clarity in creating a foundational framework for team coaching practice this paper does not consider these issues.

In the findings, we construct vignettes through field notes, reflective diaries and recorded dialogue to illustrate how metaphorical language helped James to articulate the multiple perspectives she was observing and interpreting. Fictionalised accounts protect anonymity of those involved or implicated in research whilst still offering insight into hidden organisational worlds (Boyle and Parry, 2007). We incorporate anonymised participant voices through their reflective diaries. Through this process of interpretation, we elucidate the tacit knowledge that informed practice. We refer to the first author, James as I in the vignettes to bring the reader closer to the lived experience (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2018).

Findings

Our findings illuminate how James practised as a '*pragmatic*' '*eclectic*' and '*systemic*' team coach (Hastings and Pennington, 2019:179), '*considering multiple perspectives simultaneously and observing and interpreting dynamic interactions*' (Jones et al., 2019:73). First, we observe James noticing the multiple perspectives, which led to articulating four *modes of awareness* where tacit knowledge and experience are integrated with diverse strands of theory. Then we describe the four modes of awareness and illustrate how this way of thinking facilitated coaching practice.

To illustrate the unfolding complexity within a TC context we offer a vignette where James meets a team at a fictional Local Government office. A contracting session has occurred with Richard, the Organisational Leader, and Diane, the Organisation Change Lead, James is alert to the cues she is observing and alive to the possibilities for how the coaching might unfold. James has not agreed a contract with the team and does not know their individual appetite for the endeavour. For a team coach, tuning in to the multilevel possibilities of the impending coaching assignment and considering their mental toolkit is the first task (Hauser, 2014). In these early encounters, James observes behaviours and communication between team members. It is not clear what issues are at play but the dynamics suggest certain allegiances and challenges within the team and wider organisational system. Diane has shared that the team is not performing, as she would like in leading their culture change programme.

A Coach's Story: Coaching Session One

The coaching room is deserted. Eventually, Diane arrives with Veronica, one of the operations managers. They are concluding a somewhat heated discussion. Diane introduces me and is interrupted by Paul, another operations manager, who squeezes into a seat beside Veronica, and changes the subject to a shared problem they are experiencing. I meet Shirley, a veteran in Community Services, and Jess, from Human Resources, a vocal advocate of coaching. I am itching for us to get started except that multiple team members are missing. Dan from Finance and Clive from Systems drift in together. The team seem remarkably relaxed at the slow start. Eventually Richard bustles in, still on his mobile. He waves a general greeting and heads for the coffee.

Diane calls for attention so that the session can start...

I indicate that I want to get to know them and hear what they want to achieve in the process. I ask them to express their initial thoughts. Paul immediately reveals he is sceptical and frustrated that coaching appears to be the default solution for all scenarios. Veronica describes a coaching initiative in her unit which is progressing slowly, and Dan shares how a skills coaching approach has reduced errors in his month-end process. Jess begins to detail how the annual performance review process identifies development needs, which informs individual coaching plans. At this

several people talk at once, reacting. Veronica is the most vocal; bringing the group back to Paul's opening remarks that coaching is becoming a mandated activity.

I ask about their hopes and fears for the coaching, which highlights discomfort with Richard's presence. They are concerned it may stifle honesty and conflict with their commitments on confidentiality, if they are to be honest about their own coaching practice. Until this point, Richard has been quiet, smiling benignly at the group but giving little away. Now he admits he knows little about coaching practice, Clive wonders if they are a team at all given their diverse functional areas and questions the focus for the team coaching. Shirley interjects that she feels positive about the initiative and that, for her, time with the team would be beneficial.

Modes of awareness for sense making in TC practice

In a review with the authorial team, James described how her reflective writing illustrated what she was noticing and sensing and how she was grappling with making sense of the diversity of issues. James was codifying and evaluating what she was experiencing and deciding on the capacity and willingness of the team to work with her in identifying ways forward. She was aware of looking at the coaching assignment from multiple perspectives but required some mechanism to decide what to do.

I feel a need to categorise what I am noticing, so I can look at the situations from different perspectives and make sense of what I am experiencing. The phrase 'modes of awareness' keeps coming to mind.

(James's reflective log during fieldwork phase)

In the authorial team meeting, James shared how she coined the phrase 'modes of awareness' in fieldwork reflections to describe ways of noticing and sense making. The phrase 'modes of awareness' is not an established concept in TC or other coaching fields. However, in neurobiology, Hayles (2016:784) adopts the term to describe how conscious thought and less conscious sensing of our surroundings work together in human functioning. Hence, in TC practice we are suggesting a mode of awareness encapsulates consciously viewing a situation from a given perspective whilst simultaneously sensing multiple stimuli that could be viewed from different perspectives, within the coaching environment.

Through an iterative process of fieldwork reflection and analysis we were able to name each mode of awareness with a metaphorical tag. James was able to bring her tacit knowledge into more explicit awareness and apply the knowledge to the unfolding experience of practice. The metaphorical tags facilitate an understanding of what is going on and create a shared language to discuss the experiences. We named these modes of awareness Machine, Family, Ecosystem and Wonderland. Table 1 summarises how initial themes were expressed as narratives, alternative narratives and finally as metaphorical perspectives, that gave an identity to each mode.

We now explore the four modes of awareness in more detail. In each case we show how James moves from awareness of what she is noticing in the team, to considering and selecting a coaching intervention and then noticing the impact on team members and on TC objectives.

Table 1. Four stage analysis from initial themes of coach focus to metaphorical perspectives

Theme	Narrative	Alternative narrative	Metaphorical perspective
Team focus and direction	Team operates like a machine producing effective outputs	Team is not always like a machine. It is not a stable entity. The individuals may question its existence over time within an emerging context (See family)	Team as machine
Team task accomplishment	As above	As above	Team as machine
Creating an appropriate climate for coaching	Coach creates a safe trusting environment	Team is a group of individuals with complex history and web of relationships. Coaching cannot be applied collectively without acknowledging needs of everyone	Team as family
Helping the team to operate within the wider context	Working with teams involves a multilevel system of team, organisation, and external stakeholders	Multi-level dynamic system is complex and challenging to navigate for coach and team members.	Team as part of an ecosystem
Creating capacity for learning and change	Team is a site of learning and growth through activities such as reflective dialogue	The team is a group of individuals within a dynamic system who must learn to adapt and survive in their environment.	Team surviving within an ecosystem
Team contracting	Coach is a competent skilled person who can enter a team situation and suggest an appropriate intervention, and contract accordingly.	Coach is a competent skilled person who may at times feel unable to interpret what the team needs, may need to express curiosity about what is going on and may need to recontract frequently.	Team and coach in Wonderland

Mode of awareness 1: Machine

James became aware that she regularly jumped first to noticing if the team was functioning as an effective unit to deliver what stakeholders needed. We describe this as team as **machine** mode of awareness. For example

They do not appear to be a team or even have a shared understanding of what good might look like.

I'm not hearing them talk in the language of team behaviours or processes.

(James' reflective log during fieldwork phase)

This mode of awareness draws on functional, machine-type language prevalent in team-based research that describes teamwork in terms of inputs, processes and outputs (Mathieu, Maynard, Rapp and Gilson, 2008). The metaphorical device of the machine is common in organisational studies (Morgan, 1986). Hackman and Wageman's (2005) theory of team coaching adopts a mechanistic language to articulate cause and effect relationships between coaching functions and team performance outcomes.

A common consideration for James was when to introduce team effectiveness frameworks. Some coaches utilise such frameworks as a standard approach at the commencement of a team-based intervention, for example Carr and Peters (2013) adopt the Team Diagnostic Survey developed by Wageman, Hackman and Lehman (2005). However, James wanted to balance the utility of such a framework with the desire to remain in equal partnership with the coachees, not wanting to impose expertise unnecessarily. If the team could articulate effective behaviours from their own experience she preferred to work with their expertise. If no shared understanding was evident, she offered a framework to scaffold future discussions and establish effective working practices, as Thornton (2016) proposes. In the vignette above, participants demonstrate disparate understandings of why they are together, lack of clarity about a shared purpose, and behaviours (such as arriving late and failing to listen to each other) that betray a lack of effective team process. It suggests a team effectiveness framework could be useful. However, James also notices fundamental questions about trust and safety with the manager present (mode 2 family) and a need to agree a shared

understanding of the drivers for effective teamwork (mode 3 ecosystem). James notices all possible modes, as she considers utility of a machine approach. In this moment, she decides to establish the team's commitment in a coaching contract, and clarity on coaching objectives before introducing team effectiveness approaches.

In coaching session two, James suggests a team effectiveness questionnaire to shape the team's collective understanding and create an action plan for effective ways of working. Having a framework gave some participants tangible ways of thinking about the development process, creating an action checklist and a means of focussing on key tasks.

'We have a working framework. It gave us a language to talk about the team'. (Participant reflective log)

A Coach's Story: Coaching Session Two

At the second session, which Richard does not attend, we focus on the team assessment questionnaire. The group respond to the team questionnaire individually and then work in threes to discuss high and low scores and differences in interpretation. The discussion focuses on team purpose and how they work within their individual departments to contribute to the team mission. Dan and Clive see issues with competition versus cooperation across their departments and a fight for resources to meet their own targets. They recount several heated meetings. Jess suggests they should agree on team behaviours. Veronica and Paul raise issues of trust both inside the team and within the organisation and relate at length their feelings of helpless anger at how a significant period of austerity and redundancies have affected morale and hence their ability to progress with positive cultural change. Their collective emotional force sweeps through the group. I feel the need to regain focus.

I play back what I'm hearing: "you want to be clear on purpose and goals and develop a game plan, and processes so you can work together when the going gets tough? Some of you are saying it goes beyond behaviours to feeling trust between you and an ability to have wider organisational influence. It sounds like you have been living through difficult times". I return to the question of competition for resources and results. Paul brightens at this point. "If culture change is the big prize, we need to cooperate not compete". I notice eye contact, participants leaning in towards the group, engaged. There is a shift in thinking and an emerging sense of cohesion. However, despite everyone making contributions, only Diane makes notes. Am I seeing the usual behaviours playing out? And where is Richard?

Mode of awareness 2: Family

Concurrent with the machine mode of awareness, James perceived a mode she called team as **family**. This mode of awareness emerged through observation of teams working together within the same organisation over time. In the vignette above, we hear how James sensed inherent hierarchies, habitual ways of relating and extended personal histories amongst team members. '*Bodily sensations*' (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2011:64) such as those associated with anxiety or excitement suggest undercurrents of tension or connection between people.

I am conscious of the diverse personalities, the history they all bring. I have started privately referring to Veronica and Paul as Mr and Mrs Angry as they seem to be in a defensive pairing against the world. There is a sense of individual and collective memory between many of them, and a conversation playing out, not for the first time. (James reflective log during fieldwork phase)

Notions of family can suggest nurturing relationships, close-knit bonds and a tight cohesive unit that enables a collaborative and effective team (Salas, Grossman, Hughes and Coultas, 2015). Equally, a family could be a dysfunctional, destructive unit mired in unproductive modes of behavior

(Bion, 1961). James was aware of the need early in the assignment to create a psychologically safe team space (Edmondson, 1999) where individuals could feel comfortable to be themselves and express thoughts openly. Issues of trust were raised from the start centred on Diane and Richard. There seemed to be an unspoken hierarchy too, where Paul and Veronica held much of the power to influence the others. The team played cautiously together, but saved more intimate, risky conversations for smaller, safer cliques. The family mode of awareness was a shorthand way to notice. How is this family doing today? Are they nurturing each other or engaged in damaging or defensive behaviours? Throughout the assignment James was considering which interventions and behaviours she could take to model supportive behaviours that gave everyone a voice, contain emotions and facilitate a constructive, open dialogue (Clutterbuck, 2013; Thornton, 2016). Over time she intended to deepen relationships and build trust and safety.

In session three, James, invited each participant to share their experiences, competencies and philosophies of coaching. This process, inspired by constructive family therapy (Lowe, 2004), enabled them to appreciate team members' backgrounds, values and capacity for resourcefulness. Participants appreciated time to connect and share their experience in a safe environment.

I appreciated everyone's honesty, openness to share, willingness to discuss and debate, listening to each other, acknowledging and accepting everyone's views, thoughts and the huge wealth of experience. (Participant reflective logs)

The Coach's Story: Coaching Session Three

The session to share professional background, values and beliefs continues. Veronica, Paul and Diane have shared aspects of their personal history that have indicated some areas of conflict yet allowed them to appreciate each other's perspectives. It is two hours into the session before Richard offers to share his story.

Richard: *You may have gathered I am not particularly comfortable with talking about myself but here goes... I came here six years ago after 15 years working within management information and financial systems. I get quite excited about articulating management information needed for strategic decision-making. However, as I'm sure you know, I'm not the world's best people person. There is a ripple of laughter. My family has lived here since my grandad moved here over 100 years ago. The place matters to me and I want us to be a successful local authority and a thriving community where people want to live and work.*

Me: *Tell us how you see your role and our organisational culture work.*

Richard: *My role is to be externally facing. I need to move the council to a place of resilience and strength. That has meant significant cuts in people and services and reconfiguring how we operate. That change is difficult. But I see a very capable group here. You manage the operation and the staff extremely well. I cannot claim to have a great understanding of coaching. But I have learned from people around this table that getting the best from people and showing we care about them is a good thing...*

I feel the connection in the room, the energy, the deepening understanding. I'm beginning to make sense of the unpredictable behaviour.

Me: *What do you want for this management team?*

Richard: *I want you to know that you have my respect and appreciation. I want you to develop a sense of autonomy, this is your division, your organisation. I want to have honest conversations about the challenges because I **will** bring you challenges. We are working in a very tough climate and I don't see that changing...*

Mode of awareness 3: Ecosystem

The mode of awareness, of team as part of an **ecosystem**, emerged by observing how the team is situated within a wider context and how issues from outside the team often infiltrate the discussion.

They wanted to retell the history that shaped the current situation repeatedly, comparing notes on who said what and when. I had a sense of swimming in organisational soup. (James reflective log during fieldwork phase)

Notions of an ecosystem draw on ideas from general systems theory (Rousseau, 2015) and complexity theory (Schneider and Somers, 2006) and recognise the interrelated and sometimes unpredictable influences between people and teams within the organisation and its wider social, cultural and economic context. These ideas resonated with James's observations of the team struggling to survive and thrive in the culture of cuts and redundancies. The context seeped into the team narratives, as did their reactions to it. In the vignette, Richard elaborates on the economic and political challenges, his perception of his role. The external environment clearly influences his approach and behaviours.

The coach is constantly considering the team in the wider system, noticing how aware they are of stakeholder needs, how capable they feel to adapt to changing circumstances or influence their environment. The team discussed their community and their aspirations for change and impact. James witnessed the team veering between excitement at possible courses of action and pessimism at the likelihood of success due to organisational constraints. This mode of awareness conjured ideas of adaptability, creativity and learning for the team to flourish in the ever-changing landscape. James played with the ecosystem mode of awareness, thinking about other ways to conceptualise a complex environment. In the coaching session, we discussed the team members as part of a wider organisational community with other departments and regulatory bodies like a galaxy of stars, and the austerity environment as a stormy weather system. This playfulness enabled the team to reconsider the ecosystem and to look for action possibilities. James adopted solution-focussed interventions (De Shazer, 1985) to generate a creative mindset, encourage learning and build a sense of efficacy in responding to their ecosystem challenges.

In one session, James asked the team members to share what had worked to develop coaching approaches in their own areas. Shirley and Jess described an approach that had gained success. Team members built on the idea and saw how they could roll it out further. Participants valued working on the wider issues, developing clarity on how they could learn from sharing examples and working through issues together to adapt to the challenging context.

I felt that as a group we had an 'aha moment'. We developed a shared understanding of where we are, where we could be (as an organisation) and how we might get there. (Participant reflective log)

Mode of awareness 4: Wonderland

Wonderland mode of awareness recognises the sense of disorientation that the coach can feel at certain times in coaching assignment analogous to Alice falling down the rabbit hole into an unpredictable, irrational and contradictory world (McCabe, 2016). In the vignettes above we notice the unexpected (Richard's lateness and non-attendance), the unexplained (diverse understandings of coaching's role in the organisation) and the contradictory (Richard's admission of never experiencing coaching yet wanting to create a coaching culture). Alice retains a childlike curiosity to what goes on around her. She experiments, asks innocent questions or stays silent and considers possibilities as she watches the characters and contexts shift.

In a coaching assignment we may think we have contracted to work on a specific agenda, yet other issues emerge once the coaching gets underway. The coach remains open, flexible and curious.

Equally coaching clients may be experiencing the unpredictable absurdities of organisational life. Managers are not always in control of events; even well-planned change can have unintended consequences. The coach asks - What is surprising or curious here? Are the team aware of it? What sense are they making of this? Cox (2013) describes how the coach frames questions to develop greater insights within the coach-client alliance, adopting a naïve and curious approach to serve the coaching objectives. Whilst her exploration of questioning applies to dyadic coaching, this explanation of creating new knowledge within the coaching alliance appears relevant in TC, where the coach attempts to develop shared understandings of the team situation. At times participants raised their own curiosities within their reflective logs.

It was perplexing that we couldn't move towards a shared goal.

At the start of the session we were very slow and ponderous, not clear what we need, want or expect. I discerned the presence of an elephant in the room and wondered if it was me. (Participants' reflective logs)

James encouraged the team members to share their reflections at the start of each coaching session, modelling a stance of openness where odd or taboo topics could be aired to examine what was going on and raise awareness of unspoken norms. The Wonderland narrative depicts a magical world with multiple realities. People make sense of the world through co-constructing their understandings in dialogue with others. This social constructionism (Gergen, 2015) acknowledges that social, political and contextual understandings affect our worldview creating contradictory realities. 'Coaching is a facilitated dialogic reflective learning process' (Cox, 2013:1). Remaining curious can introduce unconventional dialogues, increase reflection and offer novel insights that enable the team to learn about themselves, their context and their ways of working. Over time, James observed development in the team's learning capacity and reflexivity.

Team coaching contexts can be difficult, leading the coach to question their own value and approach or to feel vulnerable in their professional role. In the 'helping role', it is easy to take on responsibility for the challenges faced by the team, to become the surrogate leader or an expert consultant who adds value through diagnosing issues and offering solutions. Maintaining a stance of curiosity, as in Wonderland, allows the coach to comment on what she is noticing without a need to fix the problems for the team.

Discussion

"If you only have a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail" (Abraham Maslow)

This study conceptualises how a team coach moves from modes of awareness to choosing an intervention and its implications for team coaching outcomes. We propose a framework of modes of awareness for team coaching practice that enables the coach to integrate streams of theory from diverse disciplines with their tacit knowledge and experience to make sense of emergent practice. Thus, the coach demonstrates 'advanced coaching skills' considering 'multiple perspectives' and 'dynamic interactions' over a 'series of sessions' as suggested by Jones et al. (2019:73). Modes of awareness contribute to sense making in the flow of practice and critical reflection, resourcefulness and confidence in a demanding role.

The modes of awareness, utilising metaphorical language, create a heuristic device to make sense of complexity and to codify practice considering multiple perspectives. Furthermore, the modes of awareness and metaphorical language influence cognitive processing, social thought and attitudes (Landau, Keefer and Meier, 2010) such that the modes go beyond explanation to shaping our perceptions and practices. Through examining her own practice, James came to notice that her default and most conscious team coaching approach, seen through the machine mode, was a

functionalist one. Therefore, she often scaffolded the coaching approach using team effectiveness frameworks. However, her senses also alerted her to the relationships, history, tensions and allegiances between people. She modelled supportive behaviours that created safer spaces for dialogue to occur. Codifying the family mode created a language for noticing, enabling greater engagement with theories to enhance her practice and made existing practices more assured and explicit. In the ecosystem mode, James experimented with 'the generative potential' of metaphor (Morgan, 2016:1035) by playing with ideas of communities, galaxies and weather systems to facilitate team creativity and possibilities. The approach created multiple related ways of understanding for the coach and team. Finally, the Wonderland mode reinforced the absurdities of organisational life, and released the coach from the need to be the all-knowing expert. This perspective of curiosity and possibilities encourages dialogic approaches with the team and a reflexive awareness in the coach enabling greater awareness of what might be driving choices of action.

Towards a framework of modes of awareness for team coaching practice

Combining all four modes of awareness, we created a framework of TC practice (Table 2). Each mode offers a focus, indicates theory for reading what might be going on and suggests various approaches for TC practice. We reiterate that the coach senses issues that relate to each mode simultaneously. We could consider Wonderland as a default mode, a state of not knowing that encourages curiosity, through observation and inquiry. By bringing a conscious awareness to where attention is directed, the coach can consider pros and cons of different interventions and decide how to proceed. There are many options and possible routes. As described in the findings, the coach considered introducing a functional model of team effectiveness against addressing issues of trust. In practice, she moved between both modes within a session and between sessions as she worked with the team's needs. The modes also help to notice what the coach is NOT paying attention to in their preferred coaching approaches. This could offer a useful framework for TC reflective practice and supervision.

The machine mode suggests coaching from a functional perspective leading to analytical, behavioural and goal focussed approaches. For example, Carr and Peters (2013) developed a TC model that adopts a process-driven approach utilising the Team Diagnostic Survey (TDS), Wageman et al. (2005) as the catalyst for team discussions about behavioural changes that would enable more effective team performance. Surveys such as the TDS explore the extent to which team members share a common purpose, have clear direction, cooperate, collaborate effectively and experience a supportive climate. Analysing strengths and gaps contributes to a developmental action plan as a focus for coaching.

The family mode leads us to notice group behaviours (Bion, 1961), the degree of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) and the team's cohesion (Salas et al., 2015). Thornton (2016) encourages coaches to notice behavioural and communication patterns between team members, encouraging collaborative behaviour and commenting on destructive or dysfunctional behaviour. Lowe (2004) describes creating optimal conditions for dialogue, through a 'hosting' process, whereby individuals are welcomed and encouraged to feel they are of value and have equal opportunities to contribute. Thornton (2016) describes creating a safe space for coaching, where team members can exchange conflicting ideas, express doubts and raise difficult, and perhaps previously avoided, issues.

The ecosystem mode, drawing on general systems theory (Rousseau, 2015) and complexity theory (Schneider and Somers, 2006), evokes the dynamic complexity familiar to team coaches (Hastings and Pennington, 2019). This perspective encourages the team to consider their relationships with wider stakeholders and to clarify team expectations (Hawkins, 2011). It is useful for the team to think critically about its mission and purpose (O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2017) creating

developmental opportunities to renew direction and approach. Whilst many coaching approaches may be appropriate here, working with the environment inevitably means certain issues are outside of a team's control. A solution-focussed approach (De Shazer, 1985) retains a stance of appreciating what is possible thereby reducing the energy expended on lamenting impossibilities. The team could consider their opportunities to influence and offer leadership within the wider environment (Hawkins, 2011).

Table 2. A framework of modes of awareness for team coaching practice

Mode of Awareness	Focus of noticing and sense making suggested by this mode	Indicative Theoretical perspectives underpinning this mode	Coaching approaches suggested by this mode
Machine	A functional mode of noticing and sense making	Elements of team effectiveness (Wageman et al., 2005) Process driven approach (Carr and Peters, 2013)	Use team diagnostics to develop shared team language and develop effective behaviours Clarify purpose, process and outcomes
Family	A relational mode of noticing and sense making	Group behaviours (Bion, 1961; Thornton, 2016) Team cohesion Salas et al., 2015). Psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) Creating conditions for dialogue (Lowe, 2004)	Noticing patterns of behaviour Sharing personal narratives Appreciating individual contribution Holding a safe space
Ecosystem	A systemic mode of noticing and sense making	General systems theory (Rousseau, 2015) Complexity theory (Schneider and Somers, 2006) Solution focused approaches (De Shazer, 1985) Systemic perspectives in TC (Hawkins, 2011; O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2017)	Mapping the territory and stakeholders Clarify stakeholder expectations Review purpose and directions
Wonderland	A curious mode of noticing that is open to not making sense.	Questioning and coaching as facilitated dialogic reflective learning (Cox, 2013) Social constructionism (Gergen, 2015) Absurdity in organisations (McCabe, 2016)	Dialogue and questions Modelling openness Sharing doubt and confusion

The Wonderland mode encourages curiosity leading to new dialogues, reflective practice and learning (Cox, 2013) as the team members share new perspectives and construct new understandings of their world (Gergen, 2015). The mode encourages the coach to share observations of surprise or confusion, modelling a learning approach that is open to the irrational or unexpected. The coach remains calm and confident even when things do not make sense. This mode recognises the absurdities and irrational actions or unexpected outcomes that are part of organisational life (McCabe, 2016). A curious approach is playful, uses humour and encourages the exploration of ideas without judgement. Questions are framed to explore ideas and reveal new insights in the service of the alliance between coach and team members (Cox, 2013) to build their capacity for reflection and learning over time.

Conclusions and future directions

This paper builds on TC research that describes *what* TC is (Jones et al., 2019) and *where* TC practitioners focus (O'Connor and Cavanagh, 2017) by illuminating *how* they practice in a complex, emergent context. Through our autoethnographic approach we revealed the private thoughts and reflections of the coach and team members and how the coach brings knowledge into conscious awareness to work from multiple perspectives. Furthermore, our framework appreciates rich descriptions of practice (Hawkins, 2011; Carr and Peters 2013; Thornton, 2016) and offers a heuristic device for integrating diverse streams of theory underpinning practice. The modes of

awareness enable the advanced practitioner to hold complex concepts in mind and to decide how to act within the emergent flow of practice. Team coaching practice is increasingly prevalent within our organisations, yet it is complex, and demanding. Our framework offers a scaffolding structure for team coach practitioners to reflect in action and on action through TC supervision. We hope the concept of modes of awareness will stimulate TC practitioners to reflect on their own modes, exploring the mental models and beliefs that guide their practice. Equally, the framework offers a starting point for TC education indicating where the coach might focus attention, explanatory theories and associated coaching approaches.

We offer the framework as a foundation for future research by elucidating further underpinning theory and associated practice within each mode. The study has limitations. It is based on the analysis of a coaching assignment from the perspective of an individual coach within a single stable organisational team. Future research could consider how the modes resonate in different contexts such as short-lived project teams or dispersed virtual teams or by offering new modes that explain practice complexity within a variety of sectors and cultural contexts.

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