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# Intentional Personality Change: Preliminary Evaluation of a Coaching Intervention

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Sydney Business School, Faculty of Business

**Intentional Personality Change: Preliminary Evaluation of a  
Coaching Intervention**

Lesley Sue Martin

This thesis is presented as part of the requirements for the  
award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the  
University of Wollongong

November, 2013

## **THESIS CERTIFICATION**

I, Lesley Sue Martin, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Sydney Business School, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Lesley Sue Martin

November, 2013

## ABSTRACT

Personality has long been recognised as a significant predictor of many important life outcomes. As such it affects most aspects of our lives. Previously a sizable body of research has focused on demonstrating the relationship between personality and consequential outcomes. More recently, however, the literature has suggested it is time to consider exploring the feasibility of intentionally changing personality in beneficial ways.

Exploration of such interventions in populations without major psychopathology, however, is recent and limited. This may reflect a common view that personality is not amenable to change; nor is endeavouring to change it helpful. Over the last decade research has increasingly suggested that personality change may well be possible. This, in turn, has highlighted the need to address a number of related questions: For example, is personality amenable to intentional change, and if so does this translate into tangible life benefits? What type of practitioners would logically undertake such change interventions within a normal population (e.g., coaching or counselling/therapy)? What processes and resources are needed to responsibly achieve such change? How would clients/research participants experience intentional personality change (e.g., would they experience it as helpful or hindering)?

This thesis endeavours to answer these questions. I provide an argument that intentional personality change, though not empirically tested in the past, appears likely to be both amenable to change and beneficial, based on related literature (e.g., how we change in different social contexts, and how a range of short term interventions have resulted in positive incidental personality change). Coaching, it is argued, is a suitable context to explore this possibility with clients without major

psychopathology. A model of personality (big five/five-factor) and measure (NEO PI-R) for assessing such change is suggested and described. I recommend that change be targeted at the facet level. Finally, I identify the need for resource development to further the empirical exploration of intentional personality change within a coaching context.

In Chapter 3, I describe the development of a set of resources designed to empirically explore intentional personality change coaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a panel of coaches/psychologists (experts), in order to develop coaching interventions for each of the 30 facets within the NEO PI-R. Further consultation with a sub-group of this panel led to the development of a step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching, outlined in Chapter 3, and other coach training material outlined in *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*.

In Chapter 4, I discuss an empirical study that investigated the hypothesis that application of the above resources over 10 sessions of coaching would facilitate change on client selected personality facets. Fifty four participants were randomly assigned to a waitlist or a coaching group. Participants in the coaching group achieved significantly greater change on selected facets over the 10 week coaching program. Age, gender and number of facets targeted did not significantly predict change on ATSS. The findings of this study support the hypothesis that application of the personality change coaching resources developed can facilitate change on client chosen personality facets.

In Chapter 5, I explore clients' experiences of personality change coaching. A qualitative design, employing inductive thematic analysis was used. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 individuals who had participated in the

personality change coaching program. The themes that emerged were as follows: personality coaching promotes reflection, leading to greater self-awareness; it fosters an authentic self and values consistent way of living, without loss of valued aspects of identity; it produces tangible real life benefits including enhanced confidence and competence, and strengthens ability to relate to others; and most clients viewed the coaching program as enjoyable, positive and beneficial.

Professional considerations of conducting personality change interventions in a coaching environment are discussed. The combined findings from Chapters 3 and 4 suggest that a structured coaching process can facilitate change on client chosen personality facets, and that such change is viewed as worthwhile and practically relevant by participants.

As exploration of intentional personality change is in its infancy, the studies included in this thesis should be viewed as preliminary, and a number of limitations are discussed throughout the chapters. Nevertheless, the current studies provide an important foundation for this emerging area of research.

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### **Chapter 2**

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### **Chapter 3**

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### **Chapter 4**

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### **Chapter 5**

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### **Appendix 1**

Martin, L. S., Oades, L., & Caputi, P. (2013). Rejoinder: What is personality change coaching and why is it important? A response to Martin, Oades & Caputi. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 8, 74-76.

**Note:** *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches* is provided as a separate document.

### **Peer review**

The work presented in this thesis has received or been submitted for peer review, as detailed in the publication list on the previous page. The following conference presentations have been undertaken:

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Martin, L., Oades, L. G. & Caputi, P. (2013). *A step-wise process of personality change*. Presented at the Australian Conference of Personality and Individual Differences, 22 November, 2013. Brisbane, Queensland.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Some 20 years ago Heatherton and Nichols (1994) proposed that, "whether personality can change is arguably one of the most important and interesting questions facing contemporary personality psychologists" (p. 21). Exploration of intentional personality change in healthy populations, however, is recent and limited. Although the reasons for this are unclear, it may reflect a common view in psychology that personality is resistant to change, and should not be tampered with.

This view can be recognised in the personality literature. For example, Costa and McCrae (1994) defined personality in terms of five broad traits, which they proposed remained stable across a lifetime. As prominent researchers in the field, they put forward the view that, "our traits are our very selves; we act most freely when we express our enduring dispositions" (p. 175). This view suggested we should accept ourselves as we are, and that endeavouring to change our traits was unhelpful. In support of this view, they further added that "Individuals sometimes fight against their own tendencies, trying perhaps to overcome shyness or curb a bad temper. But most people acknowledge even these failings as their own, and it is well that they do so" (p. 175).

Finally, Costa and McCrae (1994) encouraged, "a person's recognition of the inevitability of his or her one and only personality" (p. 175). In addition to proposing that personality change was unhelpful, they noted that no known techniques for changing personality in healthy adults currently existed, suggesting that even if we wished to change our personality, it would not be possible. Although recent literature has discussed intentional personality change possibilities (e.g., Dweck, 2008; Magidson, Roberts, Collado-Rodriguez, & Lejuez, 2012), the influence of earlier

claims that personality was resistant to change may have paused exploration of this possibility within healthy populations.

The view of personality as being resistant to change was likely influenced by longitudinal studies that suggested that personality was relatively stable over time (although this too has been debated in recent years). This finding of relative stability translated into a common belief that personality can't be changed. For example, Costa and McCrae (1994) proffered this view through an analogy with happiness. They proposed that happiness is a product of enduring personality traits, and that as neither appear to change over time (even as circumstances change), neither is likely to be changeable. However, as happiness researchers have demonstrated in recent years, limited average change over time (without change interventions) does not necessarily translate into individual change being unachievable (if you want to change and have effective change interventions) (e.g., see Lyubomsky, 2007).

## **1.1 Key Terms: Intentional Personality Change**

As a lead into the exploration of intentional personality change, it is useful to briefly discuss what we mean by the key terms in the title of this thesis; intentional, personality and change.

### **1.1.1 Intentional**

The Dictionary of Psychology (Reber & Reber, 2001) defines intention as, "any desire, plan, purpose, aim or belief that is oriented towards some goal, some end state. The term is used by most with the connotation that such striving is *conscious*" (p 362). Hence, intentional personality change involves consciously working towards changing personality in a goal oriented manner, with a clear end state in mind (e.g., increase or decrease in a specific facet), and developing strategies to support such

change. For change to be intentional, we first need to identify what we want to change from a personality perspective.

Defining personality is a widely recognised challenge, with Reber and Reber (2001) cautioning that personality, "is a term so resistant to definition and so broad in usage that no coherent simple statement about it can be made" (p. 525). Hence, they suggest that personality be discussed in terms of its role in theory, rather than in terms of definitions. The following section discusses not only the theory or model of personality adopted throughout this thesis (the five-factor/big-five model) (Costa & McCrae, 1992), but also the measure (NEO PI-R).

#### 1.1.2 Personality - Model and Measure

A prerequisite to investigating personality change is determining what model and measure of personality to use, and whether to target change at a facet or trait level). The model adopted in this thesis is the five-factor model, and the NEO PI-R will be used assess personality. The rationale for these choices is provided in Chapter 2. The five-factor model of personality suggests that personality can best be organised under five broad traits; emotional stability (or neuroticism), extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO PI-R, possibly the most researched measure of the five-factor model, further divides the five broad domains (traits) into 30 facets (facets), as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

*List of Traits and Facets included in Five-Factor/Big-Five Model of Personality*

Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness to Experience	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Anxiety	Warmth	Fantasy	Trust	Competence
Anger Hostility	Gregariousness	Aesthetics	Straightforwardness	Order
Depression	Assertiveness	Feelings	Altruism	Dutifulness
Self- Consciousness	Activity	Actions	Compliance	Achievement Striving
Impulsiveness	Excitement- Seeking	Ideas	Modesty	Self-Discipline
Vulnerability	Positive Emotions	Values	Tender-Mindedness	Deliberation

Within this thesis, personality change will be targeted at the facet, rather than trait level. Measurement at the more detailed facet level provides the opportunity for building up a more detailed picture of the individual's personality patterns, and allows for more accurate targeting of change interventions. For example, one of the five broad traits, emotionality, consists of the following facets; anxiety, anger, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability. Whereas it is useful to know the overall emotionality (trait) of an individual, it is also important to understand how the different individual facets of emotionality contribute to this. Furthermore, facilitating change on these individual facets is likely to require different kinds of coaching interventions. For example, reducing facet anger is likely

to require a different coaching approach to reducing facet self-consciousness. Reducing facet anger is likely to involve more focus on identifying and managing anger provoking triggers, while reducing facet self-consciousness is likely to focus more on social phobia based exposure exercises. Further extensive examples of different approaches required to target different facets is provided throughout the Personality Change Coaching Training Manual submitted as part of this thesis (developed by a panel of practitioners with relevant coaching and therapy experience). It is therefore suggested that personality change is focused on the facet level.

### 1.1.3 Change

Finally, we need to consider what we mean by change, within the model and measure of personality proposed. Based on the NEO PI-R, everyone has varying levels of 30 facets. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, change involves identifying facets a client may wish to change, and developing a plan to achieve that, within the framework of the five-factor model of personality, and using the NEO PI-R as a measure.

While proposing the NEO PI-R as a useful measure for empirically exploring intentional personality change, it is nevertheless acknowledged that measurement of personality is a complex matter, and can never be fully captured using one such measure. While there are limitations inherent in the assessment of intentional personality change proposed, it is hoped that it will nevertheless provide a starting point for exploring this important area.

## **2 WHAT IS PERSONALITY CHANGE COACHING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

### **2.1 Introduction**

A dominant paradigm within psychology is that personality traits are resistant to change, without long-term intensive interventions (McCrae & Costa, 2003). This chapter challenges this assumption, and suggests that individual personality change appears both possible and desirable within a one to one coaching context, where client motivation exists. This argument is developed through discussing the following questions: (a) Is personality amenable to change via shorter-term interventions? (b) If change appears possible, is it desirable? (c) If it appears both possible and desirable, how does this fit with coaching? (d) What personality model and inventory would suit this process? (e) What future research is needed to develop this concept?

### **2.2 Is Personality Change Possible?**

As intentional and targeted personality change through coaching (i.e., where the client selects and endeavours to change specific traits or facets) has not been systematically studied, some indication of its likely success can be ascertained by reviewing the literature around personality change versus stability: (a) in response to life events, (b) in different social contexts, and (c) in response to medical, therapy, coaching and training interventions. The hotly debated question of whether personality changes significantly over the life span is not discussed, as this thesis is evaluating intentional change over a shorter time frame. It is also beyond the scope of this thesis to explore causal factors of personality. However, Funder (2007) provides a review of this personality literature and proposes that biology, behaviour and social environments all interact, and that in order to understand one we need to

explore each. The following discussion focuses on the question of whether personality can change.

Roberts and Mroczek (2008) found individual differences in patterns of trait change in response to a range of life experiences (e.g., significant career and relationship events). For example the authors noted that "participating in a stable marriage and committed career track are associated with increases in social dominance, conscientiousness, and emotional stability" (p. 34). These findings led the authors to conclude that " personality is not set like plaster at any point in the life course" (p. 33).

Several studies have found that individuals alter their personality as they move from one social context to another (e.g., from family to friends to work colleagues) (Donahue & Harary, 1998; Robinson, 2009; D. Wood & Roberts, 2006). In Robinson's study, participants completed a short five-factor model of personality questionnaire for three contexts; parents, friends and work colleagues. The study found "the cross-context variability found in the big 5 trait means supports the hypothesis that the majority of people adapt their personality to 'fit in' to social situations" (p. 205). In his study, based on 347 participants (mean age 27 years), Robinson found participants rated their personality as (a) more emotional with parents than with work colleagues or friends, and (b) less open, extraverted, agreeable and conscientious with parents than with work colleagues or friends. These findings supported previous findings that individuals do have the capacity to adjust their personality (e.g., Donahue & Harary, 1998; D. Wood & Roberts, 2006). This ability, in turn, suggests they may have the capacity to adjust aspects of their personality across contexts, if they consciously choose to do so, and had appropriately training professional support to achieve this adjustment.

Further support for the plasticity of personality is provided by the growing evidence that biological factors influence personality, and that neurochemical and neurobiological changes achieved through (e.g., psychiatric interventions) are associated with changes in personality (Bloch & Singh, 2007; Funder, 2007). The limited literature on targeted trait change to date has focused on the impact of psychological interventions on problematic traits in individuals with personality disorders. Although this is a different population to coaching, focusing on limited types of traits, it nevertheless provides evidence in support of the plasticity of personality.

Some investigation of personality change has focused on treatment of borderline personality disorder, and longer-term intensive interventions. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) suggests that personality disorder is characterised by dysfunctional traits that are stable, enduring, inflexible and pervasive. However, a meta-analysis by Leichsenring and Leibling (2003) concluded that both psychodynamic and cognitive behavioural therapy are effective treatments for personality disorder. Similarly, a review by Clarkin and Levy (2006), found that psychotherapy had positive and significant effects as a treatment for this disorder. Consistent with these findings, in a review of the literature on stability versus change in personality disorder, Clark (2009) concluded that dialectical behaviour therapy was effective as a longer-term treatment of borderline personality disorder. Clark further proposed that maladaptive personality traits are more flexible and amenable to change than is suggested by the “standard view” (p. 27) (i.e., that maladaptive personality traits are relatively stable and unchanging). She proposed that one of the reasons that dialectical behaviour therapy is successful is that, after addressing the

more acute manifestations of the disorder (e.g., suicidality), treatment “shifts its focus to developing adaptive life skills (e.g., anger management) and to resolving longstanding, problematic interpersonal dynamics (likely based, at least partly, on personality traits)”(p. 39). These findings in combination suggest that more extreme dysfunctional personality disorders respond to psychological interventions, and that interventions that specifically target trait change are successful.

The findings that personality change may be beneficial, leads into the question, is personality amenable to change? Whereas some literature had argued that personality is relatively resistant to change without long term intensive interventions (Hughes, 2002; McCrae & Costa, 1994; McCrae & Costa, 2003), more recent literature is beginning to question this assumption.

A number of intervention studies have suggested that personality is amenable to change. Tang et al., (2009) found that greater personality changes occurred in depressed participants in two treatment groups (i.e., anti-depressant medication and cognitive therapy over 16 weeks), compared to a placebo control group. This study measured personality using the NEO five-factor Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Participants taking anti-depressant medication reported over three times as much change on trait extraversion and over six times as much change on trait emotionality than the control group, even when matched for improvement in depression. Significantly greater change on trait extraversion was also recorded in the cognitive therapy group than the placebo group, after being matched for improvement in depression. These findings suggest that interventions used to treat depression have an effect on personality (trait level change) separate from its effect on depression (state level change), and that interventions can achieve significant changes in personality traits in as little as 16 weeks. Similarly, De Fruyt, Van Leeuwen, Bagby,

Rolland and Rouillon (2006) found that treatment with medication and therapy was associated with a substantial reduction in neuroticism, and minor gains on extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness.

A six week broad based multimodal outpatient program for substance abusers achieved significant shifts on all five personality domains, with changes on three domains being maintained 15 months later (i.e., reduced trait emotionality and increased agreeableness and conscientiousness) (Piedmont, 2001).

A number of studies have explored if interventions can change the personality of individuals not suffering from psychological problems. For example, Nelis et al. (2011) found that 18 hours of emotional competence training resulted in longer term changes in three of the five big-five personality traits. Six months after the emotional competence interventions participants were less emotional and more extraverted and agreeable, with effect size suggesting that such change was meaningful.

A meta-analysis of 16 transcendental meditation studies (Orme-Johnson & Barnes, 2013) found that individuals whose facet anxiety scores placed them in the 90th percentile achieved significant reductions (down to the 57th percentile) from 20 minutes of transcendental meditation twice daily. Furthermore, effects were sustained at a three year follow up.

A 16 week inductive reasoning training program for older adults increased the trait openness to new experience over the 30 week assessment period (Jackson, Hill, Payne, Roberts, & Stine-Morrow, 2012). Maclean, Johnson and Griffiths (2013) found that mystical experiences induced by administration of psilocybin (magic mushrooms) resulted in increased trait openness, and that increases were maintained at a one year follow up.

Spence and Grant (2005) assessed the impact of ten life coaching sessions on big-five personality traits (using both peer and professional coaching groups). Personality change was not targeted by the coaching interventions in this study (i.e., it was an incidental measure). Nevertheless, significant change was achieved on two of five traits (i.e., extraversion and openness to experience) in the peer coaching group. This study provided some evidence that aspects of personality may be amenable to change through coaching, even when not targeted. Spence and Grant (2007) note, not surprisingly, that constructs that are targeted by coaching interventions are more likely to change than constructs that are not, implying that if personality change is being observed in the absence of targeted efforts, then even greater change is likely to occur if coaching specifically targets such change.

In the above intervention studies that evidenced personality change, participant selected personality change was not specifically targeted. This observation suggests that stronger personality change results may be achievable if (1) participants consciously choose to change aspects of their personality, (2) they had appropriately trained professional support to do this, and (3) such professionals had access to evidence based resources specifically designed to facilitate participant selected personality change.

Nevertheless, some may argue that what we are seeing in many of these cited studies is state rather than trait based change. This state based explanation is unlikely, as, firstly, personality inventory items typically encapsulate more enduring views of self (e.g., 'I often feel inferior to others'). Secondly, the duration of the change noted in some of these studies was substantial (e.g., Nelis et al. (2011) - 6 months; Piedmont (2001) - 30 months; Maclean, Johnson and Griffiths (2013) - 12 months; Orme-Johnson and Barnes (2013) - 36 months). Finally, Tang. et al (2009)

found that their study (drug and therapy interventions for treating depression) showed significant trait level change, even after controlling for state level change. Hence, in combination the above findings provide support for the concept of personality being amenable to change.

Consistent with this view, Magidson et al. (2012) proposed that personality traits, such as conscientiousness, may be amenable to change through bottom up behavioural interventions, and provided both theoretical discussion of this possibility, and a case study illustrating this approach. They proposed that targeting and changing behaviours that underpin personality would lead to healthier patterns, which over time would consolidate and manifest in changes in personality. In a similar vein, Dweck (2008) proposed that beliefs are a major determinant of personality, that beliefs can be changed, and when beliefs change, so too does personality.

Finally, a longitudinal study of 8,625 Australians using data collected in 2005 and 2009 explored whether individuals' personalities changed significantly during this period, and whether such change was meaningful, in terms of life satisfaction (C. Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, in press). The authors concluded that although personality was traditionally considered as stable and non-changing, it did in fact change over time, and that such change was at least as great as changes in external influences on life satisfaction (e.g., getting married, being employed, and earning more money).

In combination these studies provide support for the concept that personality can change in response to a range of variables and interventions, over relatively short periods of time. Although only one study was found that assessed changes in personality in the course of coaching (Spence & Grant, 2005b), the evidence points

to intentional targeted change via coaching being achievable. As these findings suggest that personality is likely to be amenable to targeted change, it is useful to consider whether such change is important enough to warrant research exploration. In other words, is changing personality likely to lead to significant benefits?

### **2.3 Is Personality Change Desirable?**

A meta-analysis conducted by Ozer and Benet-Martinez (2006) suggested the answer to this question is likely to be affirmative. The authors found that certain personality traits were associated with positive outcomes, while other traits were associated with negative outcomes. Furthermore, even small changes on any of the big-five personality traits were associated with widespread impacts across life domains. For example, higher levels of the trait extraversion were associated with positive changes in subjective well-being, existential well-being, gratitude, inspiration, longevity, coping, resilience, depression (-), personality disorder (-), and majority cultural identity at an individual level; peer acceptance and friendship, dating variety, attractiveness, and satisfaction with romantic relationships at an interpersonal level; social and enterprising interests, satisfaction, commitment and involvement at an occupational/performance level; and volunteerism and leadership at a community level. This suggests that if coaching interventions could increase this trait in motivated to change individuals with low scores on extraversion, then benefits are likely to accrue across a range of life domains.

Possibly the trait with the largest potential impact, not only for individuals, but for wider society, is trait emotionality (neuroticism). Although one study found that average to higher levels of emotionality can be associated with health benefits when accompanied by high conscientiousness (Turiano et al., 2011), most research suggests that high emotionality is associated with negative outcomes across a range

of life domains (see appendix 1). For example, the meta-analysis by Ozer and Benet-Martinez found that emotionality was negatively associated with: happiness, spirituality, virtues, health, mental health and identity at the individual level; peer, family and romantic satisfaction at the interpersonal level; and occupational satisfaction, commitment, financial security, and success at the social and institutional level.

Furthermore, an analysis of the economic costs of high emotionality was published in the Archives of General Psychiatry (Cuijpers, Smit, Penninx, deGraaf, et al., 2010), based on data from over 7,000 participants in a Netherlands Mental Health Survey and Incidence Study. The study found that those individuals with high scores on trait emotionality were more vulnerable to a host of mental disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, eating disorders and personality disorders) and physical disorders (e.g., medically unfounded physical complaints, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and irritable bowel syndrome) resulting in an enormous impact on (and economic costs to) the health system. Their analysis found that the incremental costs (per 1 million people) of the highest 25% of scorers on trait emotionality resulted in US\$1.393 billion in health care costs. This was 2.5 times the incremental cost of diagnosed mental health disorders (US\$585 million). The study concluded "The economic costs of neuroticism are enormous and exceed those of common mental disorders. We should start thinking about interventions that focus not on each of the specific negative outcomes of neuroticism, but rather on the starting point itself" (p. 1086).

Research findings on each of the other broad traits, especially conscientiousness, similarly suggest that significant benefits would accrue from identifying processes and interventions that can positively change certain personality

traits (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). For example, the meta-analysis by Ozer and Benet-Martinez found that conscientiousness was associated with spirituality, virtues, health and longevity at the individual level, family and romantic satisfaction at the interpersonal level, and performance success at the social institutional level. Furthermore, Schmidt and Hunter (1998) assessed the validity of a number of workplace selection criteria over the last 85 years. Their findings indicate that high conscientiousness is predictive of better job performance. Furthermore, conscientiousness has been shown to influence academic performance. MacCann et al. (2009) found conscientiousness scores were correlated with greater academic performance in high school students. In addition, a meta-analysis by Poropat (2009) found that conscientiousness was as predictive of tertiary performance as intelligence, after controlling for secondary academic performance. Finally, a meta-analysis of 194 studies indicated that conscientiousness predicted lower risky health behaviours and higher beneficial health related behaviours (Bogg & Roberts, 2004).

A number of studies have explored personality in terms of life-satisfaction, a topic of interest to many coaches. Diener and Lucas (1999) found that personality had a major influence on subjective well-being. Consistent with this theme, Wood, Joseph and Maltby (2008) found that changes in personality accounts for 35% of between-person variance in life satisfaction. More recently, a longitudinal study by Boyce et al., (in press) found that “personality can change and that such change is important and meaningful”, and that “personality is the strongest and most consistent predictor of high subjective well-being” (p.2). Boyce further proposed that identifying ways of changing personality traits is likely to be more productive in terms of improving life satisfaction and well-being than endeavouring to change

individuals demographic characteristics (e.g., earning more money, getting a job or getting married).

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the key findings from Ozer and Benet-Martinez (2006) on the relationship between traits and outcomes at the individual, interpersonal and social institutional level, and in so doing suggests the potential advantages of being able to amend each of the Big-Five personality traits in ways associated with positive outcomes.

In a review of the mechanisms by which personality traits predict consequential outcomes, Hampson (2012) proposed that "As evidence has mounted for the important role played by personality traits in consequential life outcomes, there is increasing interest in the possibility of using this knowledge to bring about beneficial personality change" (p. 333).

In combination these studies provide substantial support for the benefits of exploring personality change interventions. They suggest that if problematic traits (as perceived by the client) can be identified and changed, then widespread benefits may be achieved. More specifically, individuals are likely to be more satisfied with life, have better relationships, contribute more to their community more, have better employment outcomes, and have better mental and physical health (C. Boyce, et al., in press; Diener & Lucas, 1999; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006; A. M. Wood, et al., 2008). The proposition that personality change is both possible and desirable raises the question of how this fits with coaching.

#### **2.4 The Role of Personality Change In Coaching**

This section explores, firstly, what personality change coaching would involve, and how this extends the current personality coaching literature and practice. Secondly, it explores the relative fit of coaching versus counselling/therapy for

personality change interventions, and the merits of one to one versus group processes?

#### 2.4.1 What is personality change coaching?

The concept of personality change coaching would logically involve taking a measure of the client's personality traits and discussing the profile with the client, with a view to identifying problematic traits/facets that the client wished to change. For example, a client may wish to reduce facet anger or increase facet assertiveness, in order to improve relationships and work prospects.

The literature suggests that consideration of personality in coaching to date has focused primarily around understanding and ameliorating problematic behaviours, rather than changing facets or traits themselves. For example McCormick and Burch (2008) proposed that personality is a predictor of behaviour, and that profiling of personality provides, "a useful framework for behavioural change in executive coaching" (p. 267). However he suggested the aim is not to change personality. Hicks and McCracken (2009) similarly discuss problematic behaviours that can flow from dysfunctional personality traits.

Sperry (1997) explored the relationship between temperament, character and personality in a leadership context, and the practical application of such measures to assist executive coaching of individuals with difficult temperaments (based on a psychobiological model of temperament and character developed by Cloninger, Svrakic and Pryzbeck, (1993)). Judge, Piccolo and Kosalka (2009) reviewed the literature on personality traits and leadership, and proposed extending the consideration of personality to include the positive and negative aspects of both "bright side" and "dark side" traits. Hughes (2002) discussed strategies used by 14

psychologists to coach clients with narcissistic personality features. In this study she concluded that shorter-term coaching of such clients would rely on behavioural strategies, and would realistically aim for more “superficial” change, rather than enduring trait change.

Often, the assumption underlying these approaches is that personality predicts behaviour and that through understanding personality we can more effectively understand and target changes in behaviour (though changes in cognitions and feeling are also considered). No literature was identified that explored in a systematic way whether personality change is possible and/or desirable in a coaching context. Furthermore, the vast majority of personality coaching literature is based on case studies, leaving a gap in the empirical literature around targeted and measured personality change in a coaching context.

Given that the psychological and economic literature suggests that personality can change, and that positive movements in personality are associated with wide ranging benefits, this thesis proposes taking coaching one step further by exploring personality change, and measuring such change in the process. Trait change goals can provide a unifying framework for coaching interventions designed to modify (e.g., behaviours, cognitions and feelings). Key benefits of targeting trait change would be provision of an over-arching framework for coaching interventions, increased focus on more enduring changes in behaviours, cognitions and feelings, and inclusion of objective measurement of such changes.

#### 2.4.2 Coaching versus counselling/therapy?

If personality change appears to be a worthwhile endeavour, then the most appropriate approach for facilitating this goal needs evaluation. The following

section proposes that (a) both coaching and counselling/therapy have a strong evidence base as effective change mechanisms, (b) the boundaries between coaching and counselling/therapy are not clear cut, (c) that personality change could arguably fit with either, and (d) whether coaching or counselling/therapy is utilized will be influenced by the nature of the client/research participant, and the intervention style adopted. It suggests that for clients without major psychopathology, a coaching approach may offer certain advantages. These arguments are presented in turn.

#### 2.4.3 Evidence base for coaching and counselling/therapy

In evaluating the merits of coaching versus counselling/therapy, the literature supporting their effectiveness as change processes needs consideration. Findings of coaching outcome studies suggest that coaching is an effective change mechanism in a range of different formats and contexts (Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010b; Greif, 2007; Spence & Grant, 2005b). However counselling/therapy also has an impressive body of research validating its efficacy in change processes (Lambert & Ogles, 2004; Newnham & Page, 2010). These findings suggest that both coaching and counselling/therapy could potentially be effective contexts for facilitating personality change, assuming practitioners are appropriately trained.

While these findings suggest the potential of coaching and counselling/therapy for personality change processes, it is acknowledged that this assumption requires further validation as both coaching and counselling research in the past has been targeting different outcomes (i.e., not personality change). However, as no research interventions were identified in the literature that specifically targeted personality change, then their effectiveness in other change processes (e.g. goal attainment) provides us with some confidence in this respect.

#### 2.4.4 Boundaries between coaching and counselling/therapy

The literature proposes that the boundaries between coaching and counselling/therapy are currently unclear, and that there is a high level of overlap between coaching and counselling/therapy approaches used (Grant, et al., 2010b; Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; Maxwell, 2009). Nevertheless it is widely recognised that coaching is not the treatment of choice for major psychopathology, and disorders requiring longer term treatment (e.g., Axis II disorders, significant current alcohol and drug abuse, active psychosis or bipolar disorder). This indicates that this group would not be suitable candidates for shorter-term personality change interventions. However, a number of studies propose that lesser levels of psychological dysfunction or distress are commonly dealt with in coaching, and that this practice enhances the coaching process (Cavanagh & Grant, 2004; Griffiths & Campbell, 2008; Maxwell, 2009). This suggests that personality change could be facilitated in either a coaching or counselling/therapy setting, even if goals focus on emotionality facets, provided longer term major psychopathology is excluded.

#### 2.4.5 Factors suggesting a coaching relationship

Determining where to locate personality change interventions is therefore not clear cut, and is likely to depend on clients/research participants factors (e.g., their psychological state) and the focus of change interventions employed (e.g., growth and development versus overcoming long term personality disorder patterns). Nevertheless, Williams (2003) suggested that the following factors help differential coaching from counselling/therapy: (a) goal achievement focus versus psychopathology focus, (b) 'learning/development model' focus versus 'diagnostic

medical model' focus, and (c) the degree of collaboration in the process. These considerations are discussed in turn.

According to Williams (2003), coaching is generally viewed as being more goal oriented than counselling/therapy. As the primary focus of personality change interventions would be on goal oriented trait/facet change, rather than identification of psychopathology, this suggests a coaching relationship. Psychological problems would be considered only as they relate to personality change goals. Williams further proposed that coaching more often employs a 'development/learning' model approach, while counselling/therapy more often employs a diagnostically focused 'medical model'. Personality change interventions are likely to focus more on growth and development, rather than diagnosing psychological problems, as most personality facets (24 of the 30) are not related to trait emotionality. Furthermore, diagnosis of psychopathology may not be helpful, even where reduction of emotionality facets is a goal. Therefore, from this perspective, personality change interventions are more likely to align with coaching than counselling/therapy, as they are more growth and development oriented. Finally, Williams (2003) proposed that coaching is more collaborative. As personality change goals would logically be a highly collaborative process, with the client choosing personality change goals and collaboratively mapping their path forward, a coaching relationship is suggested.

Whereas the coaching versus counselling/therapy question remains somewhat murky, differentiating factors, noted by Williams (2003), suggest a coaching relationship may be preferable for clients without major psychopathology, provided the coach has a relevant skills base (i.e., training in personality, psychometrics and skills in dealing with psychological distress). This suggests that psychologists, with additional training in personality coaching, would be well suited to this role.

Professional development issues for coaches working in this role are discussed in the final chapter under section 6.3: *Future research and limitations*.

#### 2.4.6 One to one versus group coaching progresses

The personal nature of personality profiles (e.g., revealing levels of depression and anxiety) suggests that group processes (e.g., peer-coaching) could be ethically problematic, as individuals may not wish to share sensitive aspects of their profile with other relatively untrained group members. Furthermore, it would be difficult to focus on the unique profile and goals of individuals in group settings. The complexity of personality profiles, and the training required in their interpretation, suggests that it would not be well suited to self-coaching or peer-coaching. However one to one coaching with a trained professional enables the tailoring of personality change interventions to the unique profile and goals of the individual, and provides a safer and more private environment. This suggests that one to one coaching would be preferable. Decisions and processes that personality change coaching would require are discussed below.

### **2.5 Which Personality Model and Inventory?**

A prerequisite to investigating personality change is determining what approach or theory of personality (and related measures) is to be adopted. The literature includes a host of different ways of looking at personality (e.g., the trait approach based on individual differences, the biological approach based on physical mechanisms, learning and cognitive approaches underpinning behavioural acquisition and change, the humanistic approach based on conscious free will, and the psychodynamic approach based on unconscious processes)(Funder, 2007). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore and evaluate these alternatives. However, a

comprehensive overview of this literature is provided in Funder. Suffice to say coaches use a range of different personality approaches and tools to assess and work with personality, and many of these could potentially be used for exploring personality change. However, the big-five/five-factor<sup>1</sup> model of personality, based on the trait approach, is considered by most authors to be the most investigated and validated model of personality currently available (Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006; Piedmont, 1998), and as discussed in Chapter 1, will be utilized in the current thesis.

The origins of the big-five model of personality date back to the 1930's, when Allport and Odbert (1936) identified some 18,000 words in an English language dictionary that described individual characteristics. With this as a foundation, a series of research studies attempted to distil this list to a manageable number of meaningful clusters that most effectively differentiated one individual from another. In the 1980s, a consensus began to emerge on a five-factor model (Costa & McCrae, 1997). Support for the five-factor model has been further strengthened by a series of meta-analyses confirming the big-five's predictive validity in terms of behavioural and life outcomes across a wide range of contexts (e.g., Barrick, et al., 2001; Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006). Recently, Smewing and McDowell (2010) proposed that the five-factor model is now the "most widely accepted general model of personality used today" (p. 86). Its wide acceptance and sound predictive validity suggest client personality profiles generated from this model provide sound material to reflect on,

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<sup>1</sup> The terms big-five and five-factor model are used interchangeable. Different authors use different terms. For example Costa and McCrae use the term five-factor in their literature, and in respect to findings based on their inventory, the NEO PI-R.

in terms of life outcomes to date, and how the client's traits might help or hinder future goal attainment.

As outlined in Chapter 1, Table 1, the five-factor model of personality suggests that personality can best be organised under five broad traits: Emotional Stability (or Neuroticism), Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (or similar equivalents) (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Several inventories are currently available for measuring big-five/five-factor traits and facets. Piedmont (1998) proposed that the NEO PI-R is "rapidly becoming one of the most popular measures of normal personality in the research literature" (p. 31). He further proposed that the psychometric properties (including predictive validity) of this inventory are "uniformly favourable" (p. 31), as evidenced by empirical reviews (Botwin, 1995; Juni, 1995 & Piedmont, 1997). These factors suggest that the NEO PI-R (or a sound proxy) provides a reputable measure for exploring personality change.

The NEO PI-R further divides the five broad traits into 30 facets (see Table 1). Measurement at the more detailed facet level provides the opportunity for building up a more detailed picture of the individual's personality patterns, and allows for more accurate targeting of personality change interventions. Further rationale for targeting change at the facet level is provided in Chapter 1. It is therefore suggested that personality change goals be targeted at the facet level.

## **2.6 Conclusions and Future Research Directions**

Although shorter-term targeted personality change has not been systematically studied in a coaching context, the related literature suggests it is likely to be both possible and beneficial, in a one-to-one coaching context. The current chapter proposed that such coaching provides the opportunity to extend existing

coaching practice in positive ways, through focusing on (and objectively measuring) more enduring facet change. The absence of studies directly exploring this issue supports the need for research to (a) develop evidence based coaching resources designed to facilitate personality change; (b) empirically explore whether coaching can facilitate personality change in client chosen facets, using these resources; and (c) clients' perspectives on such change. Furthermore, it would be useful to explore if change does in fact occur, how it occurs over time, and whether it endures beyond the coaching period.

Further development of the literature in these areas offers the opportunity for coaching to provide benefits to the individual across life domains, and to the wider society via (e.g., reduced health costs). From a coaching perspective, such research would expand this literature into a new arena (i.e., targeted personality change). For the discipline of psychology, it offers the potential for its practitioners to contribute a unique skills set, based on their training in personality, psychometrics and skills in dealing with psychological issues relating to emotionality facets.

A pre-requisite to exploring these possibilities is the development of intentional personality change coaching resources and processes. The next chapter outlines the methodology used to develop such resources, and the step-wise process (and related training material) that emerged.

### **3 A STEP-WISE PROCESS OF INTENTIONAL PERSONALITY CHANGE COACHING**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter proposed that personality change was likely to be possible and beneficial, and that one to one coaching by suitably trained professionals, coaching may be preferable for clients without major psychopathology. It proposed using big five/five factor model of personality, and targeting change at the facet level. However the number of coaching sessions was not discussed.

In change coaching processes, consideration needs to be given to the number of sessions required. As no literature exploring the duration of interventions to change personality in clients without major psychopathology was found, attention was directed to clarifying the number of coaching sessions required to facilitate other forms of change. Although limited relevant literature was identified, a number of studies based on 10 coaching sessions achieved good change outcomes (Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007; Spence & Grant, 2005a; Spence & Grant, 2007). As there is currently no guidance from the literature on number of sessions required to change personality, and other change outcomes have been facilitated by 10 sessions of coaching (e.g., goal attainment), it was decided that 10 sessions was a good starting point for exploring/facilitating personality change. Therefore, the step-wise process outlined in the current chapter suggests that 10 one to one coaching sessions, conducted by suitably trained professionals, would provide a suitable context for facilitating intentional personality change for clients without major psychopathology. It incorporates measurement of personality at sessions one, five, and ten, and at a

three month follow-up, so that change over time can be explored, and better understood.

(Boyatzis, 2006) posits that sustainable change in a range of contexts can most effectively be achieved through a sequence of repeating discoveries or conditions as follows: (a) discovering the ideal self; (b) discovering the real (current) self and contemplating how the ideal self and real-self overlap and differ; (c) developing and implementing a plan to move towards the ideal self, through experimenting with new behaviours, thoughts or feelings; (d) developing neural pathways to support this change through practice and mastery; and (e) engaging in trusting relationships that help foster the ideal self. Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006) proposes that the dissonance between the current and desired self provides a driver for intrinsically motivated change, supported by positive affect and psychological arousal associated with hope for a better future and optimal self.

Based on the findings of a number of empirical studies, Boyatzis (2006) proposes that the principles incorporated in intentional change theory can enhance both the amount of change, and the sustainability of change, in a range of contexts (e.g., individuals, groups, organizations, and communities) (Boyatzis, 2006). Whereas a body of literature is developing around application of intentional change theory in the context of enhancing emotional intelligence (Boyatzis, 2001, 2006), no studies were identified that explored intentional change in a personality context.

The client's attitude toward change is a critical factor in change processes, and is likely to significantly impact on outcomes (e.g., Latham, 2007; Rollnick, Mason, & Butler, 1999). For example, if the client is ambivalent about change, it is unlikely to happen. Rollnick, Mason and Butler propose that change outcomes can be enhanced by recognising and appropriately managing motivational factors, and

taking into account the client's confidence in ability to change and the importance of change. Intrinsic motivation, in particular, is viewed as a key consideration in change. In a personality change context, internal motivation is clearly an important pre-requisite. The interaction between internal and external motivation, however, requires careful consideration. If there is a consensus between the client and relevant outside parties that personality change would be desirable (e.g., both the client and their spouse agree that a reduction in the facet anger would be beneficial), then internal and external motivators can work hand in hand. Change goals derived from external motivation alone, however, should be viewed with caution. It could be problematic if individuals felt coerced to change their personality in a way they were not comfortable with because another party, (e.g., an employer) preferred a different personality profile. Used in that way, resistance to change would be likely, and the credibility and ethical integrity of personality change processes could be brought into question.

Although the ideal situation is where high internal motivation is supported by high external motivation (e.g., meaningful support and encouragement from spouse or work), this is often not the case. The relevance and influence of both internal and external motivations, and ways of managing motivational challenges in a personality change coaching context, are discussed in some detail in the Personality Change Coaching Training Manual (submitted as part of this thesis) in *Figure 1* and in *Section 11: Managing participant factors affecting personality change*, subheading *Client attitudes towards personality change*.

Where external support is lacking, then the implications of proceeding with the proposed personality change requires further exploration. This may involve exploring ways of enhancing support, assessing how realistic the proposed change is

in the absence of support, and cost benefit analysis of proceeding with change in an environment that may not reinforce, or actively oppose such change. An example of this could be where a client wished to increase facet assertiveness, whereas their spouse preferred them to be unassertive.

As a corollary to their proposition that personality change may be both possible and beneficial, the researcher (LSM) worked with a panel of individuals with experience in aspects of personality change interventions (who shall be referred to as expert panel in the interest of conciseness), to develop personality change interventions for each of the 30 facets included in the NEO PI-R. An important objective in developing these resources was to enable the empirical exploration of intentional personality change coaching. The methods section that follows explains how the personality change interventions for each of the 30 facets and the overall step-wise process of intentional personality change were developed.

### **3.2 Method**

The method used to develop the step-wise process involved two stages: (1) a qualitative single sample design, using an expert panel, to generate change interventions for each of the 30 facets; and (2) a consensual consultation with a subgroup of the expert panel to develop a step-wise process, incorporating the interventions developed in stage one. The methodology for each stage is discussed in turn.

### **3.3 Stage One: Participants**

Participants (experts)<sup>2</sup> were four practicing psychologists and one coach (three males and two females), with a mean age of 46.2 years, and an average of 13.4

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1. Participants made up the expert panel.

years experience in coaching/psychology. All five participants were chosen based on their previous experience incorporating personality change interventions in either coaching, therapy or training, and experience working with the big-five model of personality. Examples of the relevant personality change experience the panel brought to the processes is outlined below:

- Developing personality profiling processes in an organisational context, and providing coaches with guidelines for coaching participants, taking into account their personality profiles and competencies required of their position.
- Undertaking personality coaching in an organisational context, using the above mentioned processes and resources.
- Assessing personality profiles of police department employees, and exploring related strengths and opportunities for development, in a training and development context.
- Exploring personality patterns of clients in a clinical context, with a view to identifying problematic personality patterns contributing to distress, and how these might be modified.
- Training Clinical Psychology Doctoral Students to develop skills and interventions to work effectively with clients with personality disorders, in a university training clinic context.
- Treating personality disorders.

To ensure that data had a strong psychological focus, three of the five participants were registered clinical psychologists (six years full time training in psychology), and a fourth participant was a provisionally registered clinical

psychologists (five years full time training in psychology). All were currently practicing in New South Wales, Australia. The coach had trained and worked in counselling, mediation, and coaching for 10 years. All were currently practicing psychologists or coaches, four of the five had worked as coaches, and two were currently working as both academics and practitioners. The researcher and supervisors of the current study were not participants.

### **3.4 Stage One: Sampling**

Theoretical sampling was employed (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), (i.e., participants were chosen based on their ability to contribute to the development of personality change steps and interventions).

### **3.5 Stage One: Procedure**

Individual, audio recorded, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants. According to Kruger (1998), semi-structured interviews balance the need to maintain some degree of focus, while allowing participants the flexibility to share relevant knowledge and experience. Participants were given a list of facets as outlined in the NEO PI-R, and definitions for each. They were then asked (and provided with the written question): What intervention/s would you suggest for increasing (or decreasing) (name and definition of facet)? The participant then outlined suggested interventions for changing each facet in turn.

### **3.6 Stage One: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed. Manual coding of the data involved grouping relevant chunks of interview data under the 30 NEO PI-R facet headings. At the end of this process each facet had a range of change options (verbatim), provided by the participants. Some facets had one-directional change interventions, and some had two direction change interventions. For example,

participants considered that it was unlikely that clients would wish to increase facet Depression, so the change interventions provided for facet Depression were one-directional, (i.e., all designed to reduce depression). Similarly, the change interventions provided for some other facets were all designed to increase them (e.g., facets positive emotions and competence). Other facets had two directional interventions (e.g., facets trust and excitement seeking).

The following steps developed these grouped chunks of data into a training resource. If chunks of data were deemed to be confusing or repetitive (i.e., the essence of the change approach had already been covered in another chunk of data) they were omitted. Decisions to omit data were made in collaboration between two participants and the lead author. Working with the remaining data, the first author then developed a more concise summary of the approach and outcome suggested by each remaining chunk of data in a column adjacent to the quote. This was done to improve the user-friendliness of the verbatim quote material. These paired columns of change interventions were then formatted to form part of a coach training resources, along with definitions for each facet, and circulated for comment to three participants. Selection for this role, from the original five participants from stage one, was based primarily on their time availability. An extract from the facet change intervention resources derived from this process (including the facet definition) follows.

<p><b>Facet Achievement striving:</b> This is a facet within the trait of conscientiousness. In the interviews it was defined as “the drive to get ahead, to work hard, being enterprising and persistent”. In the interview extracts below (column two), coaches and therapists indicated how they might assist a client to increase this facet. Column one provides a more concise wording.</p>	
<p>Column 1. Summary of approach and rationale.</p>	<p>Column 2. Quotes from expert panel</p>
<p>Cognitive therapy to build self-esteem and overcome cognitive barriers to achievement.</p>	<p><i>Looking at the thinking if there’s thinking that’s undermining that [achievement striving.] I’d do a fair bit of work with sort of self-esteem and . . . the cognitive barriers that people have, you know, from getting to those goals and getting those achievements.</i></p>
<p>Goal setting, action plans and problem solving to help focus efforts and overcome barriers.</p>	<p><i>Around goal setting, looking at what they’re actually wanting to achieve, and then problem solving around that if there are difficulties. Regarding the goals, asking what that would look like, what’s the steps?</i></p>
<p>Link goals and achievement striving to client values in</p>	<p><i>I think it might be again about why, so the values is “why would I do this” because if the goal that</i></p>

<p>order to increase motivation.</p>	<p><i>they end up having is related to something that's intrinsically motivating, they're much more likely to achieve it anyway. Once again that could be a goal setting type of approach, knowing what you want, making sure you are living by your values, and that it is of value to you, that it is a value that you want to strive towards. Yeah, generally that effective action stuff, putting that effective action into their life.</i></p> <p><i>Interviewer: Could you give me an example of that?</i></p> <p><i>Ah, you know things that are improving your quality of life, so making sure that all of your behaviours and actions that you do towards your achievements are benefiting your quality of life. Again I would come back to that sort of ACT thing of getting people to align their life with their values and, you know – if they are achieving towards their values then they are going to be more achievement striving.</i></p>
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Figure 1. Exemplar of facet change intervention for achievement striving.

The complete range of facet change interventions are provided in *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches* (submitted as part of this thesis as separate document).

### **3.7 Stage Two: Participants**

For the second stage of the study, participants were a sub-group of the above expert panel, made up of three clinical psychologists. There were two males and one female, with a mean age of 43.3 years, and an average of 18.3 years experience in coaching/psychology. These three participants were chosen from the five participants that developed the facet change interventions, based on their time availability.

### **3.8 Stage Two: Procedure**

The development of the step-wise process began with the main author providing information to two of the participants (written and verbal) relating to literature that they may not be well versed in, and that could potentially inform the development of the step-wise process (i.e., an article by Botatzis (2006) providing an overview of intentional change theory; a summary of the number of coaching sessions associated with successful change outcomes in previous coaching studies; and an OHP presentation by one of the experts on client readiness to change considerations, based on research findings of Rollnick, Mason and Butler (1999).

These two participants and the main researcher then consensually blended the following components into a step-wise process: (1) findings from relevant literature; (2) well established steps used in change processes (e.g., goal setting and reviewing progress); and (3) facet change interventions developed in stage one.

The first author then developed these steps into a diagram, with supporting text, and sought feedback from the two participants involved in developing these

steps. Revisions were made based on feedback, and resubmitted for further feedback. This process was repeated until a consensus was reached on the step-wise process. The step-wise process that emerged was then submitted to the third participant (who had not participated in developing the step-wise process) in order to get a fresh, unbiased perspective, and minor revisions were made. The step-wise process was further refined based on feedback from research supervisors and reviewers (when the step-wise process article was submitted for publication). Figure 2, and the discussion that follows, represents the outcome of this process.



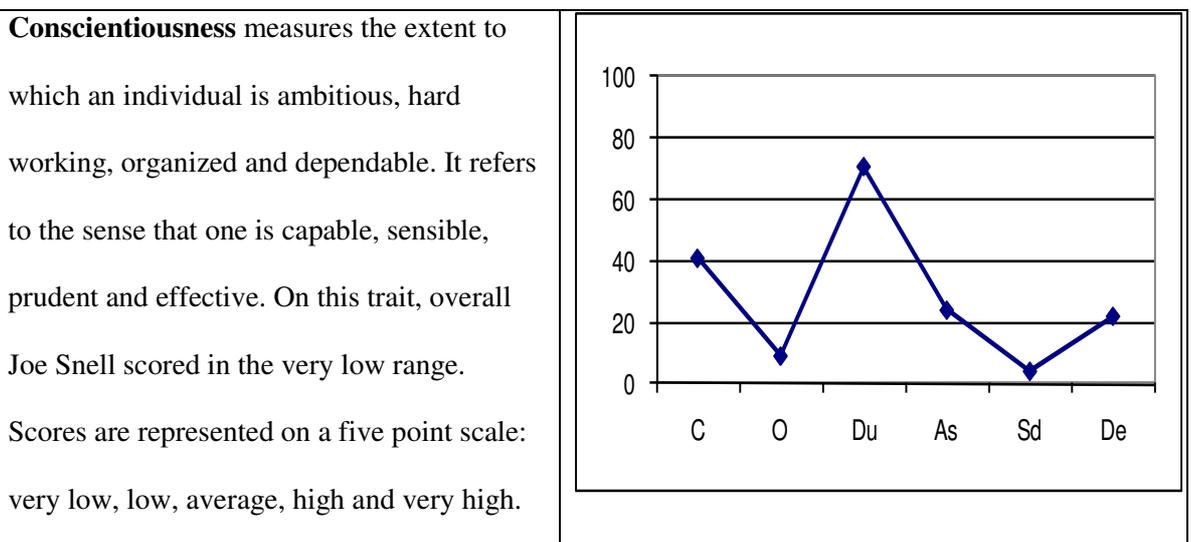
*Figure 2. A step-wise process of intentional personality change.*

### 3.9 Description of a Step-wise Process of Intentional Personality Change

#### 3.9.1 Step 1: Assess personality and client values

A key focus of step one involves administering a questionnaire to assess the client's personality. An important consideration in intentional personality change is deciding how to assess personality. In Chapter 1 it was proposed that a well validated questionnaire reflecting the big-five (or five-factor) model of personality, such as the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992), or a reputable proxy, would suit this purpose. Under the big-five model, the individual's personality is assessed under five well established broad traits; (i.e., emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, openness-to-experience and conscientiousness), and 30 facets. Although the current step-wise process is based around use of a self-report inventory, in some contexts it may be useful to combine this with other methods (e.g., informant reports, behavioural assessments).

A number of big-five inventories are available, each with their own reporting format, strengths and weaknesses. An exemplar of one reporting format developed around the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) follows.



Facets contributing to this trait	Score	Interpretation
<p><b>Competence (C).</b></p> <p>This facet assesses the sense that one is capable, sensible, prudent, and effective. This facet is most highly associated with self-esteem and internal locus of control.</p>	average	You have an intermediate level of competence and ability to deal with life and work issues. You are somewhat efficient and moderately capable.
<p><b>Order (O).</b></p> <p>Order refers to tendencies to be neat, tidy, and methodical. Carried to an extreme, a high Order score might contribute to a Compulsive Personality Disorder.</p>	very low	You often feel disorganized, forgetful, untidy or careless. You find getting organized difficult, and describe yourself as unmethodical.
<p><b>Dutifulness (Du).</b></p> <p>This is the facet of conscientiousness that most closely relates to “being governed by conscience”. It is associated with being dutiful, reliable, dependable and ethical.</p>	above average	You are in the above average range in terms of reliability, dependability and moral principles. Others may describe you as dutiful, dependable and ethical.
<p><b>Achievement Striving (As).</b></p> <p>This facet describes ambition and the drive to get ahead, accompanied by a commitment to hard work, enterprise and</p>	low	You are not highly motivated to succeed and get ahead in life. You are low in ambition and may seem to lack a clear direction in life. However you may be perfectly content with this lower level of achievement striving.

persistence.		
<p><b><i>Self-discipline (Sd).</i></b></p> <p>This facet refers to the ability to begin tasks and carry them through to completion despite boredom and other distractions. Very high scorers may invest too much in their work.</p>	very low	You have limited self-discipline in beginning and carrying through tasks to completion. You struggle with finding the motivation to get the job done, and may procrastinate.
<p><b><i>Deliberation (De).</i></b></p> <p>This facet assesses the tendency to think carefully before acting or speaking.</p>	low	You may be hasty and may act or speak without considering the consequences. On the positive side, low scorers are spontaneous and able to make snap decisions when necessary. Others may perceive you at times as being hasty, or "shooting from the hip".

Figure 3. Exemplar of personality report for facets within trait conscientiousness.

This exemplar, based on a report writer (a proprietary testing tool originally developed by the researcher and other individuals for commercial and research purposes), illustrates testing results for a hypothetical client, Joe Snell, on one of the five traits, (i.e., conscientiousness, and its six facets). A full report would include coverage of the four other traits and the 24 other facets.

Similar reports, utilizing both short and long inventories, are currently available on public domain websites. Ideally personality profiles will describe each of the five broad trait and facets, and illustrate how the client's profile compares with other individuals, through provision of percentiles and/or ranges. In choosing an

personality inventory it is useful to consider the suitability of the report format for personality coaching (e.g., style of feedback), whether item level responses can be viewed after the report is completed (useful, but difficult with most online assessments), timing consideration (e.g., time required to administer and generate a report) and cost factors.

A values assessment is also undertaken, so the coaching process can ensure that personality change decisions are consistent with the client's values. There is merit in choosing a values inventory that differentiates the relative importance of different life domains (e.g., family, health, work, etc), and how consistently the client's actions reflect this level of important (e.g., Wilson, 2002). For example, if the client places a high value on physical self-care, yet recent actions are not consistent with this value, then this knowledge may help inform decisions on which facets the client may wish to consider changing.

### 3.9.2 Step 2: Discover the current self

The concept of current self relates to how the client sees themselves now. Within the step-wise process of personality change, discovering the current self has three aspects to it: (a) reflection on positive and negative aspects of the client's current life (b) considering what the client values in life, and how consistently their current way of living and being reflects these values, and (c) current personality profile. These are discussed in turn.

The first aspect involves gathering information on what is working well in the client's life, and what aspects of their life are experienced as problematic. It includes exploring the duration of problematic patterns, to help differentiate "states" from "traits", and to inform subsequent discussion of more helpful and less helpful

personality facets. For example if a client has a long term pattern of feeling socially isolated, they may wish to consider whether they may want to increase facet warmth, or gregariousness.

The second aspect of understanding the current self involves discussing the values questionnaire findings (completed in step 1), to help inform subsequent discussions around whether increasing or decreasing particular personality facets would likely help or hinder values consistent living. This information is also useful in informing subsequent steps, (e.g., clarifying the ideal self, personality goal setting, etc).

The third aspect of understanding the current self involves reflecting upon each of the 30 facets contained within the personality profile, bearing in mind how helpful they are, and how consistent they are with the client's values. This requires the coach to provide the client with a personality profile (completed in step 1), showing the client's scores on each of five broad traits, and 30 facets, relative to test norms. The coach then raises personality self-awareness by exploring individual facet links with (a) satisfaction/dissatisfaction with current and past life patterns, (b) what they hope to achieve in the future, and (c) what they value. For example if the client felt that a certain facet (e.g., anger) was interfering with a valued part of his or her life (e.g., family relationships), then they may consider reducing facet anger.

It is important to ascertain if the client agrees with their profile, and if not to understand what has contributed to any apparent discrepancies. For example, if the client indicates that a facet description provided in the report doesn't fit, then it is useful to go back to the individual items in the questionnaire, and the client's responses, and discuss with them why they scored within a particular range.

Providing feedback on personality is a sensitive role, and requires well developed skills. As a coach, it is particularly important to monitor the client's reaction to feedback, and to be aware of, and effectively manage discomfort, should it arise. Approaches to managing any such discomfort will vary from client to client, depending on what aspects of their personality causes discomfort, and why. For example, if a client appears embarrassed about aspects of their personality, it may be useful to discourage them from thinking about facet rankings as representing good or bad personalities. Instead it may be helpful to assure them that all facets have value, and that we are simply aiming to clarify whether having more or less of some facets might work better for them.

Let's explore how some of the key concepts in step 2 might play out in a coaching session, using the extract from Joe Snell's personality profile (see exemplar provided in Figure 3 as a basis for discussion). The coach would ask Joe to share his views on what was working well, and what was problematic in his life. Let's assume that during this conversation, Joe indicates that disorganisation and poor self-discipline have created issues at work over many years, and have hindered him managing his diabetes. Joe shares that he would like to work on becoming more organised and efficient at work, and he would like to get better control over his health problems. He also notes that he has been in his current job for many years, and has some interest in looking at getting a better job. The coach and Joe would then collaboratively explore whether increasing or decreasing some facets could help with these issues. For example, they may consider whether increasing some of the facets within the trait conscientiousness might be useful. In particular, it could include evaluating whether increasing the facets order (organisation), self-discipline (capacity to initiate and complete tasks) and achievement striving (drive to get

ahead) would be helpful, as these are in the lower ranges, and seem relevant to Joe's issues. Coaching would also explore whether such changes would be consistent with Joe's values. If Joe places a high value on both physical self-care and work/career (identified on the values inventory completed by Joe), then he may decide that he would like to increase facets order and self discipline (which would be consistent with both changes he wants to make, and his values). However he may choose not to pursue increasing achievement striving if he thinks that efforts directed to getting ahead (e.g., seeking a promotion) may interfere with his health/self-care values. For example, the extra time and effort required at work to get a promotion may conflict with making time to relax, go to the gym, plan his diet, and walk each day.

### 3.9.3 Step 3: Discover the ideal self

This step focuses on clarifying the client's ideal self, from a personality perspective. According to Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006), the ideal self "is the core mechanism for self-regulation and intrinsic motivation. It is manifest as a personal vision, or an image of what kind of person one wishes to be, what the person hopes to accomplish in life and work" (p. 625). Boyatzis and Akrivou propose that once the ideal self is activated, it guides our actions and decisions towards achieving a meaningful and values consistent way of living, and being the type of person we want to be. The conceptualisation of the ideal self within a personality change context provides a unifying framework for change, and harnesses the motivational potential of our desired self. It includes reflecting on who the client wants to be (in terms of thinking styles, actions and emotions), and what that might look like from a personality profile perspective. It also involves clarifying how their current personality profile differs from their ideal personality profile. Hence, this step helps

to identify a shortlist of facets the client may consider targeting for change (i.e., increasing or decreasing). As it may be unrealistic to change more than a few facets (due to coaching time constraints) this step includes prioritising which facets the client most wishes to change, and in what direction. (In a 10 session personality change coaching program discussed in chapter four, clients most commonly chose three out of the 30 possible facets to target for change).

In the case of Joe Snell, this step may include clarifying that Joe's ideal self would be more organised, and more persistent in pursuing meaningful health and work goals. This would further confirm that his ideal self would be higher on facets order and self-discipline.

#### 3.9.4 Step 4: Set facet change goals

In step 4, the client identifies a limited number of facets that they may wish to increase or decrease, in order to move closer to the ideal self. As discussed in previous steps, consistency of the proposed changes with the client's values is considered (by reviewing facet change goals against their values inventory).

#### 3.9.5 Step 5: Assess attitudes towards change

Before settling on a final list of facets targeted for change, it is important to assess a number of attitudinal factors relating to changing the chosen facets (i.e., intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to change, importance of change, confidence in ability to change, and timeliness of change). These attitudinal factors, and ways of managing them are incorporated in the *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*. Techniques included draw heavily on motivational interviewing, and overcoming barriers to change (Rollnick, Mason & Butler (1999)).

As an example, if Joe Snell's internal motivation to increase order was low (e.g., 5 out of 10), then motivational interviewing, incorporating cost benefit analysis of not changing, could be conducted. If, on the other hand, confidence in ability to change facet self-discipline was low, then coaching would explore why. Joe might have tried to improve personal organisation in the past without success, eroding his confidence. If so, it would be important for the coach to understand what he had tried in the past, and why it had not worked (i.e., barriers to change). Identifying ways of overcoming such barriers might then be incorporated in the coaching sessions.

If (a) low scores on attitudinal factors suggest ambivalence about change (e.g., poor internal motivation), and (b) coaching strategies (e.g., motivational interviewing) do not sufficiently address this ambivalence; then removing such facets may be preferable. Increasing or decreasing the remaining list of facets then becomes the unifying framework for the 10 sessions of coaching.

### 3.9.6 Step 6: Develop and implement a coaching plan

Step 6 involves implementing coaching strategies designed to achieve the desired personality change, using the facet change interventions developed. (See *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*, and the exemplar included in Figure 1.

The facet change interventions developed are eclectic, with cognitive, behavioural, positive psychology, solution focused and acceptance and commitment influences apparent. This eclectic approach was based on the experts' opinion that no one theoretical model would be optimal for changing each of these 30 facets, and that different practitioners and/or clients may prefer different theoretical frameworks.

Consequently, the interventions include a unique and flexible set of change strategies for each of the 30 facets incorporated in the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

### 3.9.7 Step 7: Re-assess personality and review progress

At session five, the client once again completes the personality inventory. Progress towards the desired personality change goals are evaluated, and the coaching strategies are reviewed. If limited progress is being made on achieving the desired change on a particular facet, then possible reasons for this would be explored (e.g., barriers to change), and ways of managing barriers, or alternative change interventions options could be discussed. For example, if Joe Snell had made little progress towards increasing order, it would be useful to explore why. If a barrier to being more organised was an ineffective diary system, then coaching could explore options for addressing this. It is also useful to discuss the client's perception of the coaching process to date, and encourage them to express any ideas they may have to enhance outcomes of future coaching sessions.

### 3.9.8 Step 8: Implement the remaining sessions of coaching

The additional coaching sessions are then implemented, taking into account the review process at session 5. For example, if the client has ideas for enhancing the coaching, or if alternative change interventions have been discussed, these could be incorporated in the remaining sessions.

### 3.9.9 Step 9: Review progress and develop maintenance plan

An end of coaching assessment of personality occurs at session 10, through re-administering the personality inventory. The results of the assessment are used to review progress towards personality change goals, and assist with developing

maintenance strategies that the client can use post-coaching to further support the desired personality change.

#### 3.9.10 Step 10: Three months follow up

A final follow up session is conducted three months after the 10 sessions of coaching are completed, to once again review progress on personality change goals, and refine maintenance strategies as required.

### **3.10 Discussion**

#### 3.10.1 Does the step-wise process work?

The importance of empirically validating coaching processes is widely acknowledged in the coaching literature (e.g., Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010a). In recognition of this need, an empirical study of the step-wise process proposed in the current chapter, is outlined in the following chapter. A qualitative study of clients' perceptions of personality change coaching is provided in Chapter 5.

### **3.11 Limitations**

A number of limitations of the current chapter should be acknowledged. First, this field of research is in its infancy, and the resources developed are relatively untested. It is likely that further refinement and development, based on practitioners experience and future research, will be beneficial. Second, the step-wise process rests on the assumption that personality change may be achievable with short term interventions. This assumption is controversial, and is likely to remain so for some time, as personality change is complex and challenging to objectively measure. In the current study personality change is being explored within one conceptualisation of personality (the big-five model), and using one measure (NEO PI-R self report

inventory). It could be argued that change on this measure does not necessarily equate with change in personality. While acknowledging that any such measure can never accurately and fully capture the complexity of personality, the authors have nevertheless proposed a well respected and validated measure of what is arguably the most widely recognised model of normal personality currently available.

Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the use of self report assessments can lead to validity problems (e.g., participants answering in ways that put them in a good light, and/or are consistent with the aims of the research). Hence, the current step-wise process (and future studies of intentional personality change), could benefit from further exploration of a wider range of assessment tools (e.g., independent observer ratings, behavioural assessments), and measuring maintenance of change over longer periods of time.

Finally, intentional personality change sits outside the usual parameters of coaching. As such it may be argued that it should be explored within a counselling or therapy context, rather than a coaching context. The positioning of these interventions within a coaching context was explored in Chapter 2. To avoid repetition, it is not dealt with in any detail in the current Chapter. However it is acknowledged that personality change interventions could sit within either a coaching or counselling/therapy context, and some practitioners may well be opposed to it being conducted within a coaching context. Hence, further discussion of where intentional personality change coaching could or should sit would be beneficial.

In combination, these limitations suggest that the personality change steps, processes and materials outlined in the current chapter should be viewed as relatively tentative. Nevertheless, it is hoped that their development will provide (a) a

foundation for future exploration in this area, (b) a preliminary step towards understanding if intentional personality change is possible, how this can best be achieved.

### **3.12 Links with Existing Theories of Intentional Change**

Although development of the resources and steps discussed in the current chapter were not developed around any particular theoretical model, the step-wise process that emerged nevertheless mirrored several components inherent in intentional change theory (Boyatzis, 2006; Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). For example, reflecting on the questions of "who am I now?" (the current self) and "who do I want to be?" (the ideal self), and how to work towards the latter (learning agenda/change strategies) are important components in both. Hence the literature developed by Boyatzis and colleagues offers useful insights for the practitioner considering intentional personality change interventions. The efficacy of this approach to change is supported by a number of empirical studies, mainly related to emotional intelligence (e.g., Boyatzis, 2006; Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006).

### **3.13 Significance of the Research**

The development of a step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching contributes to both practice and theory in the fields of coaching, personality and intentional change. From the perspective of coaching, it provides a framework to potentially expand practice and research into a new arena (i.e., intentional personality change). It extends the current intentional change literature into a new area (i.e., personality), and provides both practitioners and researchers with a step-by-step process of intentional personality change. For the discipline of psychology, this research offers practitioners an opportunity to engage in a potentially unique role in coaching, based on their training in personality, psychometrics and skills in dealing

with psychological distress. Furthermore, it provides researchers with preliminary resources to explore this largely uncharted, yet important topic.

In conclusion, the current chapter provides a framework for exploring intentional personality change, and the step-by-step process outlined offers a foundation for future researchers and practice. The next chapter empirically explores whether application of this framework can facilitate client chosen personality change, as part of the overall argument that personality change is feasible.

## **4 INTENTIONAL PERSONALITY CHANGE COACHING: A RANDOMISED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF PARTICIPANT SELECTED PERSONALITY FACET CHANGE USING THE FIVE-FACTOR MODEL OF PERSONALITY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Previous chapters proposed that client selected personality change could be both beneficial and achievable, and the need for empirical research to further explore these notions was noted. To this end, Chapter 4 outlined a step-wise process of intentional personality change. A separate document submitted as part of this thesis, *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches* provides additional coach training material developed as part of this thesis.

The current study is designed to empirically explore whether application of this step-wise process (and related training material) over 10 sessions of coaching, can facilitate change on participant selected personality facets. The study reflected participant preferences of having the flexibility to choose which facets were targeted, and how many. Therefore, different participants choose different types and numbers of facets. As it was necessary to avoid participants who chose a high number of facets having a disproportionate influence on the results, an average of the targeted facets was calculated for each participant (at each data collection time). This averaged score was then termed average targeted facet score (ATFS), and this became the personality concept (and measure) explored. Therefore, it was hypothesised that, firstly, the intervention group would have significantly higher ATFS when compared to the control group, and secondly, that there would be significant increases in ATFS over the coaching period. (Reverse scores to be used if reduction in facets was sought by the client).

## 4.2 Method

### 4.2.1 Participants

Total participants were 54 adults aged between 18 and 64 years ( $M = 42.18$ ,  $SD = 12.44$ ). Participants consisted of 8 males and 46 females without major psychopathology (see procedures for exclusion outlined in section 4.2.4). Three individuals were excluded prior to the study, due to Axis II disorders. The 54 participants were assigned to the personality coaching group or the waitlist control group using a waitlist control, matched, randomized procedure (personality coaching group,  $n = 27$ ; waitlist control group,  $n = 27$ ). Participants were firstly matched on sex (male/female) and then on age range (18-30, 31-50, 51+ years). The participants that withdrew (six in the waitlist group and none in the coaching group) were replaced by individuals matched by age grouping and gender. All waitlist control participants that completed the 10 sessions of coaching completed a personality inventory three months later. One participant from the personality coaching group did not furnish a three month follow up personality inventory. The composition of the 54 participants by age and gender is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

*Age and Gender of Participants.*

Age	Female - Coaching Group	Female - Waitlist Group	Male - Coaching Group	Male - Waitlist Group	Total
18-29	4	4	1	1	10
30-49	11	11	2	1	25
50+	8	8	1	2	19
Total	23	23	4	4	54

#### 4.2.2 Experimental design

Table 3 illustrates the study design, including data collection timing for the NEO PI-R and key research stages for the two groups. (Other inventories were completed to assist coaching processes, but changes in these were not measured over time).



for facets and .86 to .92 for traits), and test-retest reliability (between .7 and .8 for most facets and traits)(Piedmont, 1998).

Assessment did not include independent ratings of participant selected facets. Whereas personality ratings by others would be both informative and desirable in many contexts, it was considered less relevant, appropriate and logistically achievable in the current study. The current study was focused on changing facets consistent with the participant's desire for change, rather than meeting others' perceptions of, or preference for, observable change. Furthermore, it is difficult for others to accurately assess change on many facets, (e.g., anxiety, fantasy, aesthetics, vulnerability, feelings, ideas). Finally, some participants could potentially be uncomfortable with others assessing their personality, which in turn could raise ethical and participant engagement considerations.

#### 4.2.4 Procedure

Participants were recruited by an advertisement in a local newspaper, an invitation to participate posted on a university website, and word of mouth from existing participants. The only initial eligibility criteria was that respondents be 18 years or older. Subsequently, major psychopathology was excluded by asking those participants who had one or more emotionality facets on the personality inventory (i.e., anxiety, anger, depression, vulnerability, impulsivity or self-consciousness) in the very high range to also complete a Millon MCMI III (Millon, Davis, & Millon, 1997), an inventory which assesses for DSM-IV diagnoses. Those individuals with Axis II disorders, significant current alcohol and drug abuse, active psychosis or bipolar disorder were excluded from the study, and referred to other services.

Participants were then randomly assigned to either the personality coaching

group (and completed a 10 week personality coaching program) or the waitlist control group (and completed a 10 week waiting period, followed by a 10 week personality coaching program).

#### 4.2.5 Coaching program

The step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching that provided the coaching program framework for the current study was discussed in Chapter 3. Participants in the coaching program completed a NEO PI-R directly before coaching commenced, and completed additional NEO PI-Rs at session five (week five), session 10 (week 10) and again three months later (week 22).

Participants in the waitlist control group completed a NEO PI-R 10 weeks before coaching commenced, and completed additional NEO PI-Rs directly before session one (week 10), session five (week 15), session 10 (week 20) and again three months later (week 32).

During the first coaching session, participants were provided with their personality profile, which included a description and graphing of five broad traits and 30 facets against population norms, based on the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). (An exemplar is provided in *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*). The coach facilitated discussion on whether the participant would like to increase or decrease a limited number of facets. This discussion took into account participant values, motivational factors, and consideration of how facets helped or hindered them in everyday life. If the participant chose to increase or decrease one or more facets, they continued in the program, and changing those facets became the over-riding goal of the coaching. Increasing or decreasing the averaged NEO PI-R scores on the participant selected facets became the measurable

outcomes of the coaching. The facet change interventions used in the 10 one hour coaching sessions primarily reflected an eclectic mix the following approaches; solution focused coaching, positive psychology, acceptance and commitment principles and cognitive behavioural techniques.

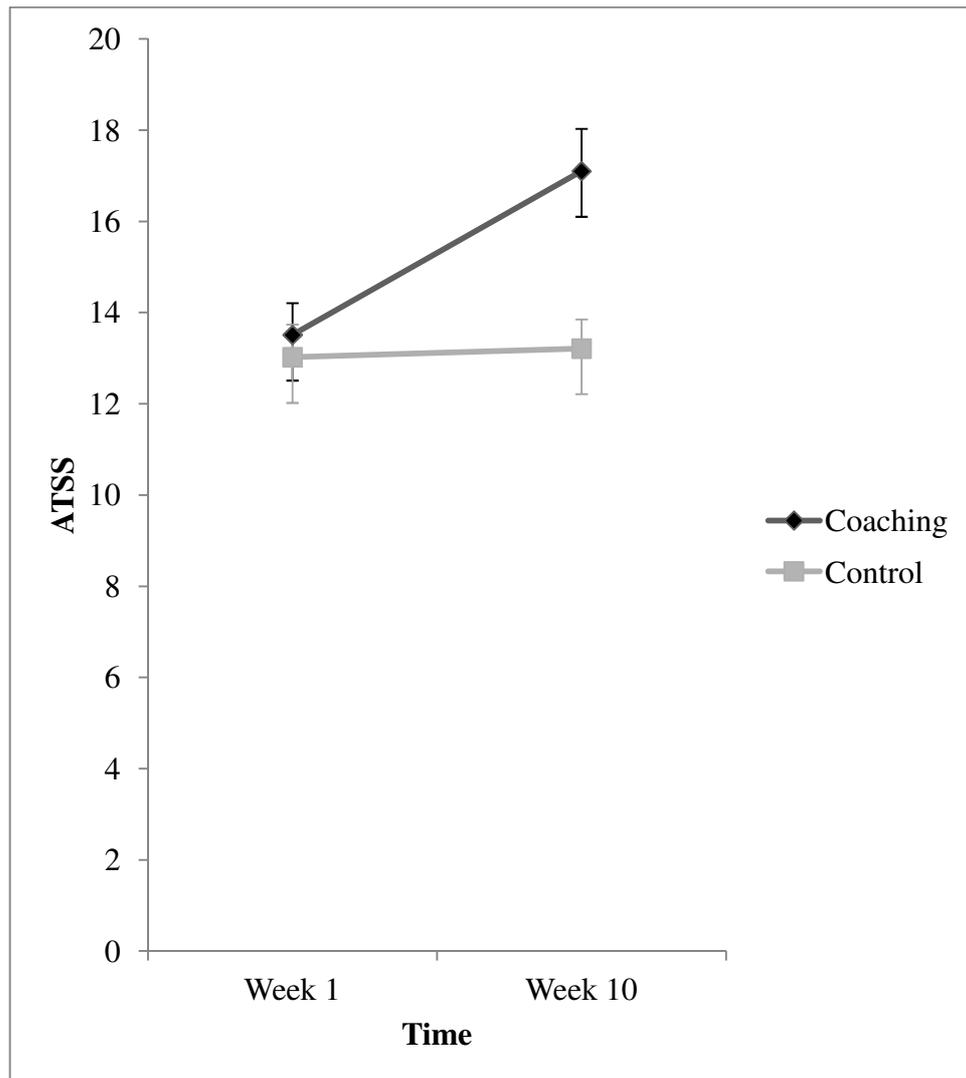
Coaching was conducted by two registered and seven provisionally registered psychologists who received training in personality coaching by way of (a) attendance at a one day workshop, (b) provision of *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*, (c) completion of a research fidelity checklist after each coaching session, and (d) weekly one hour one to one supervision with an experienced personality change coach, and included review of videoed coaching sessions. One supervisor was the student researcher (LSM), a provisionally registered psychologist, and one supervisor was the Director of a training clinic for masters level students at a regional Australian University. They had extensive experience developing coaching resources, and implementing coaching interventions in a commercial and not-for-profit context. Both had coached clients around problematic personality issues, using the five-factor personality profiles as a resource. Both had experience working with clients with personality disorders.

The majority of the coaches (seven) were Masters level clinical psychology students at a regional Australian university, and coaching was conducted as a partial placement. Four coaches were also PhD candidates. The Masters level clinical students were in their fifth year of full time training in psychology, and had a minimum of 60 hours of prior face-to-face client contact.

### 4.3 Results

#### 4.3.1 Mixed design analysis comparing waitlist to coaching group on ATFS over 10 weeks

A mixed design analysis of variance (ANOVA) with Group (waitlist versus coaching) as the between subjects factor and Time (week 1 versus week 10) as the within subjects factor indicated a significant main effect for Time,  $F(1, 51) = 13.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .21$ . There was a significant interaction effect between Group and Time  $F(1, 51) = 11.27$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .18$ . Simple effects were used to analyse the interaction effect. At week 1, there was no significant difference in ATFS between the control group ( $M = 13.02$ ,  $SD = 3.58$ ) and the coaching group ( $M = 13.51$ ,  $SD = 3.58$ ),  $F(1, 51) = .23$ ,  $p = .63$ ,  $\eta^2 = .005$ . At week 10, the coaching group had significantly higher ATFS ( $M = 17.14$ ,  $SD = 4.67$ ) than the control group ( $M = 13.21$ ,  $SD = 3.34$ ),  $F(1, 51) = 11.95$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .19$ . There was no significant simple effect for Time for the control group,  $F(1,51) = .07$ ,  $p = .79$ . There was a significant simple effect for Time for the coaching group,  $F(1,51) = 24.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .33$ . A graphical representation of the means for the coaching group and waitlist group at week 1 and week 10 is presented in Figure 4.



*Figure 4.* Averaged targeted facet score for coaching intervention versus control group over 10 week coaching period.

#### 4.3.2 Repeated measures analysis of change in ATFS over time

As the logistics of having participants complete personality inventories part way through a waitlist period were considered impractical, week 5 measures were not taken for the waitlist group. However, measures were taken at week 5 during the coaching period. Consequently, a repeated measures ANOVA was performed in

order to provide additional information regarding when change occurred during the coaching period.

Assumption tests revealed no violations of normality; however Mauchly's Test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated. Consequently a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied. The results of the analysis suggested that there was a significant difference in ATFS between time points over the coaching period,  $F(1.72, 86.2) = 36.63, p < .001, \eta^2 = .42$ . Within subject contrasts indicated a significant linear effect for time,  $F(1, 50) = 52.90, p < .001, \eta^2 = .51$ .

In order to determine whether there were significant differences in ATFS between each specific time point during the coaching period, a series of dependent sample t-tests were performed using a Bonferroni adjusted significance level of .016 which was calculated by dividing a significance level of .05 by the number of analyses (3). The results indicated that ATFS was significantly higher at week 5 ( $M = 15.40, SD = 3.86$ ) as compared to week 1 ( $M = 13.45, SD = 3.50$ ),  $t(50) = -3.98, p < .001, r = .49$ . It was also found that scores on ATFS were significantly higher at week 10 ( $M = 17.83, SD = 4.28$ ) as compared to week 5 ( $M = 15.40, SD = 3.86$ ),  $t(50) = -5.70, p < .001, r = .62$ . Similarly ATFS was significantly higher at week 10 ( $M = 17.83, SD = 4.28$ ) as compared to week 1 ( $M = 13.45, SD = 3.50$ ),  $t(50) = -7.27, p < .001, r = .72$ .

A dependent samples *t* test was used to determine whether there were significant differences between participants ATFS at the 12 week follow up as compared to the end of the coaching period (week 10). The results of this analysis suggested that participants scores on targeted personality traits had not significantly declined between week 10 ( $M = 17.72, SD = 4.26$ ) and the 12 week follow up ( $M = 17.79, SD = 4.71$ ),  $t(49) = -.25, p = .80$ . Furthermore, a second dependent samples *t*

test indicated that participants ATFS scores were significantly higher at the twelve week follow up when compared to pre-intervention scores,  $t(49) = 6.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = .67$ .

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether age, gender and number of traits targeted significantly predicted change in ATFS over the intervention period. The results suggested that these factors accounted for 1.5% of the variance which was non-significant,  $R^2 = .015$ ,  $F(50) = 1.25$ ,  $p = .30$ . The results of the regression analysis are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4

*Influence of Age, Gender and Number of Traits Targeted on Change in Averaged Targeted Facet Change (ATFS)*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>p</i>
Constant	.35	3.36		
Number of traits targeted	.72	.40	.26	.08
Age	-.01	.05	-.02	.90
Gender	1.86	1.77	.15	.30

#### 4.4 Discussion

The results support the hypothesis that personality change coaching can facilitate significant change in participant selected facets, in the direction desired by the participant. The significant changes achieved between sessions one and five, and again between session five and ten (combined with the large effect size of changes) suggest that meaningful changes occur relatively early in the coaching process, and are further consolidated by additional sessions. The linear nature of these changes raises the question of whether further personality change would be achieved by additional sessions of coaching.

The findings of significant change in personality facets are in contrast with some literature that proposes that personality is relatively resistant to change without long term intensive interventions (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1994). However the current study's findings are consistent with other literature (predominantly published in the last five years) that suggests that personality is more amenable to change than was previously thought (e.g., C. J. Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, 2012; Nelis, et al.,

2011; Robinson, 2009; Tang, et al., 2009). From a coaching perspective, it provides further support for Spence and Grant's (2005) tentative findings that personality changes may occur during 10 weeks of coaching (even though personality change is not the goal of coaching in their study). The stronger findings in the current study on personality change (relative to Spence and Grant's findings) are likely attributable to personality change being targeted with interventions designed for this purpose.

The current study's findings provide empirical support for the proposition that targeted personality change coaching can facilitate change on targeted facets, if the participant is motivated to change. It also provides empirical support for the step-wise process of intentional personality change proposed in the previous Chapter. In so doing, it affirms the value of a structured coaching process, using resources specifically designed for this purpose.

The finding that gender does not affect personality change outcomes may have been influenced by the small number of men ( $n=8$ ) participating in the study, and further exploration of this question with larger male samples would be useful. No participants over 65 years enrolled in the study, leaving this age group unexplored. However in the 18-64 years age range enrolled in the study, age did not significantly affect capacity to change. This is encouraging as it suggests that intentional personality change can be achieved by motivated individuals throughout most, if not all, of the adult lifespan.

The number of facets targeted did not significantly affect average change achieved on targeted facets. This is somewhat surprising as it might be expected that focusing on just one or two facets over 10 sessions would achieve greater average change on targeted facets than focusing on five or six facets, as each targeted facet would have a greater number of coaching hours available to work on it. For example,

targeting just one facet would mean that 10 hours of coaching could be available to facilitate change on it, whereas if five facets were targeted each of these targeted facets would only have two hours, on average, applied to changing them. One possible explanation for this result is that participants who are experiencing greater dissatisfaction with their personality may well target more facets, but may also have more scope for movement on facets targeted. Similarly, individuals who are functioning well may only wish to make minor changes to one or two facets. Hence the beneficial effects of more hours of coaching per facet for participants with less problematic personalities may be offset by a floor/ceiling effect.

An alternative possibility is that interventions that target one problematic facet may also trigger changes on other problematic facets. For example, if someone is low on facet self-discipline and high on facet anxiety, then increasing self-discipline (e.g., through enhancing planning and organisational skills) may in turn reduce facet anxiety (e.g., through reducing distress around the consequences of procrastination). Similarly, development of certain facet change skills (e.g., challenging unhelpful beliefs and assumptions, and learning to think in a more positive and realistic way) may beneficially affect many facets. For example, cognitive behavioural interventions designed to reduce facet depression may have a beneficial effect on other targeted facets (e.g., facets anxiety, gregariousness, assertiveness). This possibility is supported by a number of studies that suggests that a range of interventions (not specifically targeting personality change) nevertheless may have wide ranging beneficial impacts on personality (Nelis, et al., 2011; Piedmont, 2001; Tang, et al., 2009).

The findings of the current study are relevant to the literature in a number of areas. From a coaching perspective, it provides preliminary empirical validation of

the step-wise process described in the previous chapter, and suggests that structured coaching may be an effective mechanism for facilitating beneficial personality change in motivated individuals. The preliminary validation of coaching as an effective personality change process has significant implications for the coaching profession, as it extends coaching practice and research into a new and potentially exciting arena. It also raises questions about the skills needed to competently undertake this work. Training in personality, psychometrics, and coaching, plus the capacity to work confidently with psychological distress, are likely to be important skills.

The findings of this study also raise questions around the circumstances in which personality change interventions are appropriate. It is the authors' opinion that if personality change coaching were to be conducted in the absence of participant motivation to change aspects of their personality, it would likely be ineffectual, and could be ethically problematic. Hence further exploration of, and debate around, how and if personality change coaching fits in an organisational coaching context would be beneficial (e.g., where an organisations may be concerned about problematic personality traits in a staff member).

From the perspective of personality literature, the current study provides further support for the plasticity of personality, and preliminary empirical support for participant selected intentional personality change. The capacity to intentionally change personality has implications from a number of perspectives. Firstly, the strong relationship between personality and well-being suggests that intentional personality change coaching may potentially also have a significant impact on well-being. Future research directly exploring whether intentional personality change

coaching results in changes in well-being, would usefully inform both the personality and well-being literature.

Furthermore, the capacity to change personality suggests a host of potential beneficial implications at the individual, interpersonal and organisational/community level. Based on the associations found between personality and consequential outcomes by Ozer and Benet-Martinez (2006), enhancing personality could potentially have a beneficial impact on the following: subjective well-being, spirituality, physical and mental health, longevity, self-concept and identity at the individual level; peer, family and romantic relationships at the interpersonal level; and a range of occupational and community outcomes. The current research responds to a need, expressed in the literature, to move beyond understanding what the consequential impacts of personality are (e.g., C. J. Boyce, et al., 2012; Cuijpers, Smit, Penninx, de Graaf, et al., 2010; Hampson, 2012), to exploring if and how beneficial personality change can be facilitated.

#### **4.5 Limitations and Future Research**

A number of limitations of the current study should be considered when interpreting the findings. This study is a preliminary investigation, using a relatively small sample size, with training and coaching being conducted within one psychological services setting. Strong claims cannot be made on the basis of a single study of this nature. Future research including larger samples would be desirable. This may require training practitioners across multiple sites. Hence in addition to the current training protocol (see *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*) it is recognised that an implementation protocol should be developed.

Furthermore, this study is based on just one concept and measure of personality, ( i.e., the averaged targeted facet score, using the NEO PI-R as a measure). As different participants choose different facets to target for change, the facet mix targeted, and therefore the measure of personality change being explored, is different for different clients. Therefore it does not allow for analysis of patterns of change by individual facets.

Participants were self-selected, and may not be representative of the wider population. Researchers, including the first author, are currently exploring the personality of individuals who chose to change their personality, and possible implications for the findings of the current study. For example participants in the current study were predominantly women, and the possible impact of this on outcomes deserves further attention. Preliminary investigation also suggests that certain types of personalities chose to change their personality. This may suggest that the findings of this study are relevant to certain groups of individuals, rather than the wider population.

Furthermore, self-report inventories were used in the current study with the inherent risks of (e.g., faking good and responses being influenced by the goals of the coaching). While the logic of this is discussed in the methods section, it is nevertheless a limitation, and one that would benefit from future studies incorporating additional measures (e.g., informant reports and behavioural assessments).

The current study followed participants for three months after completion of the research; hence longer term outcomes are not know. Future research of intentional personality change, with longer follow up periods, would further inform the literature. Finally, whereas it is useful to know if personality change was

achieved based on inventory scores, the current study does not link these changes to consequential tangible life outcomes. Whereas associations between personality measures and a wide range of consequential outcomes is well established (e.g., Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006), it is important to also ascertain whether intentionally changing personality will lead to changes in these outcomes (i.e., to date cause and effect have not been established). In combination, these limitations suggest that the current study's findings should be viewed as preliminary. Hence, future studies addressing these limitations would be useful.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the current study provides preliminary support for the proposition that intentional personality change, facilitated by a structured step-wise coaching process, is possible. This finding has wide ranging beneficial possibilities based on the well-established links between personality and a host of life outcomes.

The next chapter examines participants' experiences of the personality change process, in order to provide a broader understanding of this coaching process, and a preliminary appreciation of its impacts/consequential outcomes.

## 5 CLIENTS' EXPERIENCES OF INTENTIONAL PERSONALITY CHANGE COACHING

### 5.1 Introduction

Whereas intentional personality change exploration is relatively recent, literature has developed over the last decade around more generic intentional change processes, particularly as applied to increasing emotional intelligence. Boyatzis (2006) proposed that change can be facilitated through a sequence of personal discoveries, including reflecting on the ideal self and the current self, with a view to developing a plan to move towards the ideal self. Strategies of aligning the current self with the ideal self included identifying strengths and weakness and a related learning agenda, and establishing relationships that support progression towards the ideal self. Boyatzis, Howard, Rapisarda and Taylor (2004) proposed that coaching can play a key role in this process.

The literature suggests that reflection, leading to greater self-awareness, is an important element of change processes in a coaching context (Boyatzis, et al., 2004; Day, De Haan, Sills, Bertie, & Blass, 2008; Hanft, Rush, & Shelden, 2004; Kristal, 2010). For example, Hanft, Rush and Shelden (2004) propose that coaching is a reflective process, and a way of reaching a deeper understanding of ourselves, and thus expands self-awareness. Reflection on how we *think* and *behave* are key components of intentional change theory proposed by Boyatzis (2006), and assumed to be an important factor in facilitating change in a coaching context by many authors (Gyllensten, Palmer, Nilsson, Regnér, & Frodi, 2010; Kemp, 2005; Kristal, 2010).

The coaching literature further suggests that reflection can lead to intense moments of insight (e.g., aha! moments or revelations) that may be turning points in

the coaching relationship (Day, et al., 2008; De Haan, Bertie, Day, & Sills, 2010). Day et al. (2008) suggested that combining critical moments with reflexivity can enhance change outcomes and deepen the coaching relationship.

The coaching literature contains numerous references to self-awareness being an important component of understanding one's unique identity and living (and leading others) in an authentic, values consistent way (Fusco, Palmer, & O'Riordan, 2011a, 2011b; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). Rationale included in the step-wise process of personality change outlined in Chapter 3, extended consideration of values to a personality change coaching context. Here it was proposed that assessment and exploration of values was an important aspect of personality change coaching, as it helped ensure that personality change goals were consistent with the client's values. It further proposed that client motivated, values consistent personality change was likely to be associated with tangible benefits.

Buckley (2010) proposes that a number of factors should be taken into account when mental health issues arise in a coaching context, (e.g., the client's understanding of the nature of the professional relationship, the training and competence of the professional to work with mental health issues, ethics/good practice guidelines of professional membership organisations, indemnity insurance and other legal and third party considerations). Consideration of these factors will help determine whether the coaching context is appropriate for working with these clients, or whether referring on to other professionals is required.

A number of studies have found that coaching fosters tangible benefits. Tooth, Higgs and Armstrong (2008) explored executives' perspective of coaching and found that a valued benefit was "that coaching enabled them to focus on real issues" (p. 107). De Haan and Neib (2011) reported that third parties noticed

observable practical positive changes in executive after coaching, including enhanced communication and interpersonal skills, management abilities, self-confidence and authenticity. Similarly, DeVaux (2010) found that coaching fostered a range of benefits including enhanced career decisions, planning and management skills, work life balance, and interpersonal skills. Furthermore, an International Coach Federation survey of 155,000 coachees found the vast majority reported coaching had facilitated positive changes. They were pleased with the overall coaching experience, and would be happy to engage in coaching again.

In combination, these findings suggest that client motivated, values consistent intentional personality change coaching is likely be associated with tangible benefits, and be perceived as a positive experience. However, as the concept of personality change coaching is in its infancy, no studies were identified that explored clients' experiences of this type of coaching. As the literature suggests that researchers and practitioners can better understand change processes if they understand the clients' perspective of such change (Hodgetts & Wright, 2007; Passmore, 2010), the current study aims to explore clients' experience of engaging in ten sessions of personality change coaching.

## **5.2 Method**

### **5.2.1 Participants**

Of the 54 participants in the personality change coaching program (described in Chapter 4), 32 were interviewed for the current study. The age range was from 18 to 65 years ( $M = 42.18$ ,  $SD = 12.44$ ). Selection for interview was based on timing of completion of the ten sessions of coaching. As participants completed coaching,

interviews were requested, and this continued until no new information was being gleaned from additional interviews.

#### 5.2.2 Personality change coaches and adherence to protocols

(See Chapter 4 for details).

#### 5.2.3 Qualitative researchers

The two coders in the current study were the supervisors of the clinical students undertaking the coaching. One was the first author in the current study (a registered psychologist and PhD candidate), experienced in personality change coaching. The second coder was a Clinical Psychologist and academic, also with experience with personality change coaching. The academic research supervisor for the current study was also consulted weekly to resolve any queries that arose (e.g., coding issues). Interviews were conducted by the primary researcher and a second PhD clinical psychology student (not associated with the current study). Interview processes were supervised by the academic research supervisor of the current study.

#### 5.2.4 Data collection

At the conclusion of the coaching program, semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants who were asked the following question: How would you describe your experience of personality coaching? Further probing of responses encouraged elaboration. This approach was chosen to allow the participants the flexibility to identify and share relevant experiences, while maintaining some degree of focus.

### 5.2.5 Procedure

Prior to being interviewed for the current study, participants attended ten one to one coaching sessions designed to increase or decrease client selected personality facets (see Chapter 4 for details). The step-wise process employed in the coaching program is discussed in Chapter 3, and illustrated in Figure 2.

### 5.2.6 Approach to data analysis

Transcripts were analysed and themes generated using an inductive thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that thematic analysis “is a technique for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 79). As a minimum, it organizes and describes data, but often also includes interpretation. Inductive denotes a 'bottom up' approach, where themes are determined by the data, rather than being developed around theoretical interests. As it is not tied to a particular theory or epistemology, it offers greater freedom and flexibility to capture stories with as few pre-conceived ideas as possible.

The analysis followed the steps outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006), and employed a collaborate consensual decision making approach, involving a three person research team. Initially two coders gained familiarisation with the data, by reading, re-reading and discussing transcripts. They then jointly generated descriptive codes relevant to the research question, by delineating and discussing the chunks of text in the transcripts in turn. This was followed by a brainstorming or hashing out of themes, and defining and naming them. Relationships between these themes were also negotiated. At each of these stages, feedback was sought, and queries and differences of opinion resolved, through input from the academic research supervisor of the current study. The first author then interpreted and

reported themes, with feedback and further refinement of ideas being sought from the two other members of the research team. This consensual generation of themes was used as the research team considered it could facilitate the development and challenging of ideas in a more interactive evolving manner than more structured processes (e.g., coders independently coding chunks of text, followed by assessment of inter-rater reliability) . In so doing it incorporated consensual theme generation ideas discussed in the qualitative literature (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997; Marcus, Westra, Angus, & Kertes, 2011; Oleson, Droes, Hatton, Chico, & Schatzman, 1994).

### **5.3 Results and Discussion**

Four themes emerged from the research data: personality change coaching (1) facilitates reflection leading to greater self-awareness; (2) promotes an authentic self and values consistent living, (3) produces tangible and practical life benefits, and (4) is an enjoyable, positive and useful experience. These themes are discussed in turn, with relevant quotes identified by participant number (p) and line number (l).

#### **5.3.1 Theme one. Personality change facilitates reflection leading to greater self-Awareness**

The first theme revealed that intentional personality change coaching facilitated reflection, which in turn fostered greater self-awareness. An important component of the step-wise process of the intentional personality change coaching program was reflection. This began with participants completing a 240 item personality inventory before the coaching sessions started. One participant likened this first stage to soul searching.

*The experience of filling out the questionnaire I can recall was very soul searching (p15:l4)<sup>3</sup>.*

After the personality report was prepared and shared with the participant, the early sessions encouraged reflection on "who am I?", and "who do I want to be?" This was followed by the client deciding what personality facet change goals they wanted to set. The value of this reflective process is illustrated by the following quote:

*It was useful not only to look at the broader traits but also going through all the facets and thinking is that me, and do I want to change that? (p8:l11).*

The process of reflecting on the current self and the ideal self mirrors components of the theory of intentional change developed by Boyatzis (2006). One element of this theory involves moving towards the ideal self through being aware of and experimenting with new thoughts and behaviours. In a similar vein, several participants reported that the personality coaching helped them be more aware of how (and why) they thought and behaved in certain ways.

*I've found the experience positive, yeah. And I found it very educational. A lot of stuff we've gone through is about my critical thinking processes. Some things that never really dawned on me before, I ended up reflecting on. Like reflecting on why I say and do things, and where exactly is it coming from. Yeah, so I learned to reflect on how I'm thinking and behaving and to then critically analyse it. And it's something I have never done before (p7:l4).*

The cognitive behavioural orientation evident in the reflective processes may have resulted from most coaches' training being predominantly in cognitive

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<sup>3</sup> In the bracketed reference at the end of each quote, p refers to the page and l refers to line in the transcripts.

behavioural techniques. Although a range of non-cognitive behavioural change options were included in the coaching resources, it is likely that practitioners in the early stages of their professional life favoured familiar change methodologies. To date there has been limited exploration of cognitive behavioural processes in a personality change context, as this literature is still in its infancy. However, personality change inevitably involves reflection on our thinking and behavioural patterns, as our thoughts and behaviours help mould who we are, and who we become (e.g., Dweck, 2008; Magidson et al., 2012). Hence, the current study extends our understanding of cognitive behavioural processes to a personality change coaching context.

Some participants spoke of experiencing aha! or moments of realisation, and the practical translation of these realisations into their lives. The following quote is from a participant who wished to reduce conflictual aspects of her personality (evidenced by a low score on the facet Compliance).

*Coaching helped me change some behaviours I have wished to modify for years. Through the sessions there were a couple of “aha! moments”. Those realisations in life can come and pass. Coaching helped me focus on the consciousness of the aha! and then develop methods and steps to take the ah-huh knowledge into my own life. Coaching made the aha! a reality through weekly commitment to goals and discussion of challenges... It was very insightful and I think it’s really changed me in terms of how I have been doing things, and how I will do things in the future, because now I will stop and think about how’s that going to be received (p17:l61).*

Yet another participant spoke of an aha! moment amid the chaos of a challenging week, leading to the discovery of a deeper self.

*It was the week that things had been in kind of chaos and it was ... it was like that was one of those aha! moments of the universe aligning.... It was kind of like uncovering a part of me, I guess, that was not unknown, but was very deep seated, and also one of those things I had kept hidden from the world and myself, yeah (p18:l11).*

The current study suggests that moments of realisation about oneself can occur in the personality change coaching process, and foster deeper self-awareness and change. These findings are consistent with previous findings that critical moments in coaching can be pivotal to the growth and development of the client (De Haan, et al., 2010) and provide opportunities for insight and change (Day, et al., 2008).

Reflection during the ten week program enabled participants to better understand themselves, not only in terms of what they wanted to change, and how they wanted to grow, but also what they chose to accept, as illustrated below.

*It has been a great opportunity to just really analyse the things that I do, and understand the thoughts that I have when I do things, or when I'm feeling stressed ... and working on being able to tap into those and work out how to change them, and let go of them if that works best, so I guess overall my experience has been really positive. It has been a really good opportunity to understand myself and grow (p21:l4).*

*It's helped me look at areas of my personality that I'm not entirely happy with, and look at trying to improve those qualities, and accept some of them too (p12:l6).*

These findings extend the existing personality change literature by shedding light on how reflection (leading to self-awareness) informs our understanding of (a)

who we are, and who we want to be; (b) how we currently think and behave; (c) the relevance of aha! moments; and (d) the aspects of self/personality we chose to accept or to change.

The processes of reflecting on one's current self and the ideal self inevitably facilitates consideration of both the authentic self, and what one values in life (Gardner, et al., 2005). This links with the second theme evident in the current study; that personality change coaching (assisted by greater self-awareness) promotes an authentic, values consistent way of living.

### 5.3.2 Theme two. Personality change coaching promotes authentic, values consistent living

Although the concept of personality change is likely to have an appeal to some, others may fear that changing their personality would be akin to losing their identity, and abandoning their true selves. Hence, it is interesting to explore the authentic identity theme (and related values concepts) that emerged in the current study, and links with previous literature.

Consistent with previous coaching literature (Fusco, et al., 2011a, 2011b; Gardner, et al., 2005) transcripts suggested that the personality change coaching program, with a focus on self-awareness, had promoted personal authenticity, and values-consistent living. No transcripts alluded to having lost valued components of identity, and some participants actually refuted this, as illustrated by the following quote.

*I knew I wasn't going to change unrecognisably, and I'm certainly not going to change overnight unrecognisably, and go, well who is this woman in my*

*house and in my body? It isn't going to be like that, so I didn't have that fear anymore, so it was easy just to make the switch (p10:114).*

Participants spoke of achieving a more values-consistent way of behaving and living, as illustrated by the following quote:

*Yeah, that values exercise is a really good anchor. Like I made up this stuff, and I've put it on my corkboard. Whenever I see a behaviour that I don't want, I just relate it back to the values, and the coaching, and I'm getting more and more confident that it's not going to go back to what it was before, because I have a bit more experience. And also noticing when you're doing something that you want, and when you're not. I think that was the big thing, just the self knowledge of what you want and what you don't want (p9:114).*

Similarly, the following interview extract describes how one participant (who targeted emotionality facets) experienced the personality change coaching as helping her be more connected to her values, and expressing a more authentic self.

*It's been very helpful in that the anxiety and depression were changing my personality in ways that I didn't like, and in some sense all of these other things were part of my personality being suppressed. It's almost like it (the coaching) was more bringing me back to who I was ten years ago, but with more maturity. I think the anxiety took over, so now I'm closer to the values that matter to me, and were important when I was younger and growing up, and have always been important values to me, but got lost in this vicious downward spiral. But more so, I am more connected with them now because I understand them, and I understand how my mind works better, so I can actually change it ... I'm making decisions more based on those values and beliefs rather than how I am feeling moment to moment (p6:16).*

Components of the step-wise process of intentional personality change likely contributed to promoting values consistent change, and in turn protected clients against losing valued aspects of their identity. First, completion of a values inventory, and evaluating contemplated personality changes against these values, ensured that changes were values consistent. Second, the choice of a limited number of facets to target for change, (i.e., an average of three out of a total of 30) suggested that the aim of the coaching was to fine tune, rather than radically change personality. Third, the participant driven nature of change goals meant that interventions were only directed to making changes that the client wanted. Furthermore, once a facet was shortlisted for change, the following factors were assessed and discussed; readiness to change, internal and external motivation to change, importance of change, and confidence in ability to change. If, at the end of this process, the client realised he or she did not wish to change a shortlisted facet, it was not targeted for change. Hence, the personality change process incorporated a number of ways of ensuring that the client's identity and values were not negatively affected.

Overall, transcripts indicated the personality change coaching had helped participants move towards being more like the person they hoped they could be. This often involved reducing emotionality facets. The nature of facets targeted for change (and the personality profiles of those individuals who choose to change their personality) is currently being investigated by researchers (including the first author). Preliminary findings from this analysis suggest that, in nearly half the cases, 'being who they wanted to be' focused on being less emotionally reactive. This point is illustrated in an extract from a client who had struggled with depression for much of her life.

*Yeah, just a feeling of empowerment to be who I want to be rather than who the depression was making me. And that's all still a work in progress, but I can see the potential, whereas before the future looked very bleak (p5.119).*

In many cases participants and coaches facilitated personality change through mastering better ways to cope with life's challenges. The following interview extract (from a client living with chronic illness) illustrates this.

*Um, my experience of personality coaching is that it's been useful to have tools to put into my everyday life, and particularly to help with my illness, and to help deal with functioning as best as I can. (p12:l4).*

These coping strategies translated into reduced emotional reactivity, and enhanced resilience, as illustrated by a quote from a client who targeted and reduced facet anxiety, depression and impulsiveness during the ten sessions of coaching.

*It's just made me feel much more relaxed which has been noticeable. I've been able to notice it in how I think about things and respond to things, especially when things don't go right. The holiday that we had recently had some ups and downs in it, right, and I just sailed through it (p3.119).*

These findings suggest that personality change coaching can have a positive impact on emotional reactivity and coping skills. The impact of personality change coaching on individuals with high scores on the trait emotionality is also currently being investigated qualitatively by researchers (including the first author).

Consistent with the current study, preliminary findings from this quantitative analysis suggest that personality change coaching was successful in reducing emotionality facets, consistent with the goals of the clients.

These results suggest that personality change coaching can be effectively utilized with individuals who have high levels of emotionality (trait) in certain

circumstances (e.g., when the coach is trained to work with both psychopathology and personality coaching, and is receiving regular supervision by a Clinical Psychologist). The results also suggest that the boundaries between coaching and therapy/counselling can be complex, and that personality change could arguably fit within either a coaching or therapy/counselling context. For example, if the client wished to reduce facet anxiety (the most commonly targeted facet), the interventions employed are likely to be more akin to counselling/therapy, whereas if the client wishes to increase self discipline (the second most commonly targeted facet), then the approach taken may be more akin to coaching. As at the outset of the relationship a decision has not yet been made on which facets to target, it would appear appropriate that professionals undertaking personality coaching should have training in both coaching and therapy, and be well versed in psychometrics.

The current study's findings tentatively suggest that personality change coaching may be effective with clients that are commonly excluded from coaching (i.e., due to high levels of emotionality, including facets anxiety, depression and anger). Further exploration of the implications of expanding the boundaries of coaching to include such clients (in terms of implications, risks and benefits) would usefully inform the literature. If personality change coaching is likely to engage clients that have high levels of trait emotionality (who would commonly be excluded from coaching), then a range of factors identified in Buckley (2010) need consideration (e.g., the training, competence and supervision of the coach).

### 5.3.3 Theme three. Personality coaching facilitates tangible and practical life benefits

While changing scores on personality inventories may be an objective measure of personality change, an important question is; does this translate into meaningful life changes? The theme that emerged in this respect was that many participants cited tangible benefits that accrued from the coaching, as illustrated below.

*You sort of ... learn this stuff about yourself, and you think, so what, how is this going to relate to everyday life. How's this going to change me? And then you can actually see this sort of change (p9:148).*

*There were areas of my life that I felt were holding me back or not working for me anymore, so for me to not only see positive change on the [NEO PI-R] scores, but also to have it reflected back to me in real life increases my motivation to keep it up (p1.149).*

The importance of coaching being relevant to practical and salient issues was discussed in Tooth, Higgs and Armstrong (2008). Hence the current study extends our awareness of the desirability and benefit of ensuring that coaching outcomes translate into practical benefits. The specific nature of the practical changes cited in the current study were wide ranging, but often related to two key concepts, (i.e., enhanced confidence and competence, and improved relating to others). For example, some participants noticed enhanced abilities and confidence at work or in study, as illustrated in the following extracts.

*My confidence overall has increased which has allowed me to perform much better at work. I just feel sounder in my judgement (p4.135).*

*The main areas we focused on were like self discipline and those sorts of areas, especially to do with uni work and I really found the advice that [the coach] gave me helpful. Personally I think I've improved a lot in the areas we were trying to improve, so it was a really great experience, you know (p2:l6).*

The positive impact on enhanced self-awareness in turn positively impacted on how participants related to others. This included gaining a better understanding of others' feelings, being more connected with family, friends and work colleagues, and facilitating a calmer home environment. The following quotes illustrate these concepts.

*I think the assessments scores over time became quite different. I think 90% of the change was around change in my self-understanding. And 10% might be actual change in behaviour. But the change in self-understanding is a change in personality, in the sense that it relates to one's own personality, it changes the way you think and feel, but also self-understanding as it relates to other people. It affected the way I relate to other people, and I could say yes, I now understand people's emotions better than I thought I could (p7:l15).*

*I'm more connected with my family and friends, and I'm engaging better with work (p6:l16).*

*It was about me, it wasn't about everybody else, and it was about, probably about making me a better mum, a better wife. I set the mood in my house so ... and life can be very stressful with my hectic life. I've found that the tone in the house has come down just by my sitting there, thinking, removing myself from the situation, breathing it out and walking back in and going just ...*

*right, think about it logically, whereas before I have just snapped, yeah. So that's been the most beneficial thing, yep (p27:145).*

The findings of the current study reinforce and expand previous findings that coaching commonly fosters practical benefits in the career arena (DeVaux, 2010), self-confidence (DeVaux, 2010; De Haan, 2011), and interpersonal and communication skills (De Haan, 2010). Hence personality change coaching (as with other forms of coaching) appears to translate into meaningful benefits for the majority of clients.

#### 5.3.4 Theme four. Personality change coaching is enjoyable, positive and beneficial

A dominant theme in the interview transcripts was that intentional personality change coaching had been an enjoyable, positive and useful experience.

*I've really enjoyed it. It's been fabulous and I'm sad it's come to an end. It's been fantastic and it's been very, very helpful. It's been great (p11:114).*

*I really can't convey enough how much I've looked forward to the sessions, yes (p24:115).*

*It was an enjoyable experience ... relaxing. It made me sit and think about what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it ... you know. I just enjoyed it. I thought it was very worthwhile (p32:13).*

Some participants expressed their gratitude for having found the advertisements for the personality change coaching.

*I'm just so grateful that I got to be involved. Like ... thank you Mum for finding this on the internet! It was really fantastic and I will definitely miss having my session every week (p2:111).*

*Well I don't often read the Mercury (newspaper) but I'm glad I read it that week. Laughs. It was wonderful. An absolutely terrific opportunity (p15:l81).*

A small number of participants indicated that, while there were benefits, at times the process was frustrating or uncomfortable.

*Well its gone through kind of waves I think. Like the first couple of weeks it started off exciting, and thinking this is great .... And a couple of times I have though why am I doing this? It's not happening, we're going nowhere, this is a waste of time. And then towards the end it became really meaningful and some stuff come out that I hadn't expected that was really quite eye opening, and has given me some real structure for the future, yeah .... No it didn't feel comfortable, but I felt like it was a secure place to do it - but it certainly didn't feel comfortable. Yeah, yeah. But it was really, really useful, I would say (p18.l1).*

Nevertheless, the overall sentiment of the participants was that the process had been enjoyable, positive and beneficial, and in some cases life changing, as illustrated below:

*I just feel so grateful to have been able to be a part of this. Um, it been very useful, it's been life changing (p4.l67).*

The current study's theme of personality change coaching being enjoyable, positive and useful is consistent with previous findings based on coaching in general. DeVaux (2010) found that the majority of the 155,000 coaching clients surveyed reported that coaching had facilitated positive changes, they were pleased with the overall coaching experience, and they would be happy to engage in coaching again.

## **5.4 Conclusions and Implications**

Figure 5 summarises the conclusions of the current study by illustrating themes found, and sequential relationships between themes.

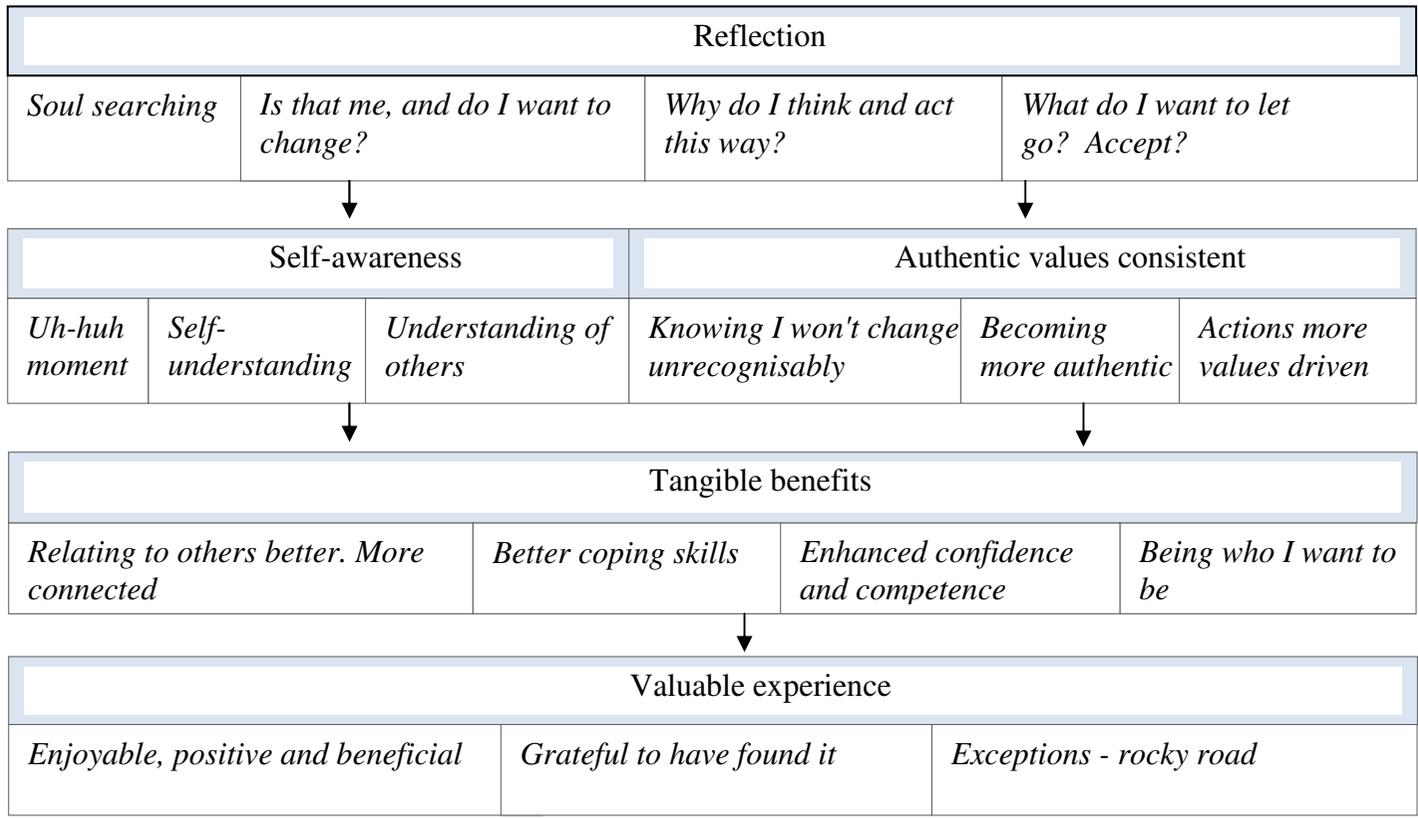


Figure 5. A process of client's experience of personality change coaching.

In the results and discussion section this chapter, reflection and self-awareness are combined under one theme, as participant quotes and related literature often blend these two concepts, making it difficult to discuss them separately from a results point of view. However they have been separated out in Figure 5 in order to also illustrate the sequential nature of their relationship (i.e., the sequential flow from reflection to self-awareness). In essence the current study suggests that personality change coaching is a reflective process which leads to enhanced self-awareness and a more authentic, values consistent way of living. This in turn leads to practical benefits. Hence the process is viewed as beneficial by the client.

The findings of the current study have implications for both practice and research. From a coaching practice perspective, it suggests that clients who wish to change aspects of their personality may well benefit from a structured coaching program designed to achieve this, reflecting steps outlined in Chapter 3. This offers the potential to extend coaching into a relatively new arena. From a research point of view, it fills a gap in the coaching, intentional change and personality literature by providing a clients' perspective of the personality change coaching process.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Summary

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I noted that some 20 years ago Heatherton and Nichols (1994) put forward the proposition that, "whether personality can change is arguably one of the most important and interesting questions facing contemporary personality psychologists" (p. 21). It is hoped that the various chapters in this thesis have built an argument that personality can indeed change, and provided a preliminary framework for exploring intentionally targeting such change in a coaching context. The current chapter summarises key conclusions and implications, and discusses limitations and identifies future research directions.

In Chapter 2, I developed the foundation for this thesis by identifying and answering a number of important questions, based on existing literature. These questions were, first, is personality amenable to change via shorter-term interventions? Second, if change appears possible, is it desirable? Third, if it appears both possible and desirable, how does this fit with coaching? Fourth, what personality model and inventory would be suitable for exploring such change? Fifth, what future research/resources are needed to develop this concept? In exploring these questions, I developed one of the first discussions in the literature around the concept of intentional personality change in a normal population. Answering these questions was important as it provided both a justification for pursuit of this line of enquiry, and direction in terms of how this topic might be explored.

In relation to the first question, I concluded that, although intentional personality change had not been directly explored, it appeared likely to be amenable to change based on evidence of change in related areas.

In relation to the second question, I proposed that even minor personality changes impacted across life domains, and based on that knowledge, exploration of interventions to strengthen personality traits was warranted. Hence, I proposed that benefits are likely to accrue from exploring client chosen intentional personality change.

In relation to the third question, I proposed that personality change coaching would logically involve measuring and discussing the client's personality with a view to identifying facets the clients may wish to change, and focusing coaching interventions on these. I acknowledged that personality change interventions could arguably fit within either a coaching or counselling/therapy context, and that these boundaries are far from clear cut. However, I suggested that for clients without major psychopathology, personality change interventions may be compatible and consistent with a coaching approach.

I further suggested one to one coaching was likely to be preferable to group coaching based on the need to focus on unique profiles and individual goals, and provide a safe and private environment. Professionals (trained in personality, coaching, psychometrics and with skills in dealing with emotionality) were deemed preferable to self or peer coaches.

I proposed the big-five/five-factor as a model of personality, and the NEO PI-R as a suitable measure, and suggested that personality be explored at the facet level. Finally, I identified the need for evidence based personality change coaching resources, and research to empirically explore intentional personality change.

In response to the arguments mounted in Chapter 2, the study described in Chapter 3 focused on developing intentional personality change resources suited to one to one coaching, undertaken by suitably trained professionals. The 10 coaching

steps that emerged from this process were: (1) assess personality and client values; (2) discover the current self; (3) discover the ideal self; (4) set facet goals; (5) assess attitudes towards change; (6) develop and implement the coaching plan (first five sessions); (7) re-assess personality and review progress; (8) implement the remaining five sessions of coaching; (9) conduct final session, review progress and develop maintenance plan; and (10) conduct three month follow up.

The coaching plan development (step 6) drew on the menu of unique change interventions provided for each of the 30 facets (developed by an expert panel). The change interventions were eclectic, and included cognitive, behavioural, positive psychology, solution focused and acceptance and commitment influences.

Building on the findings of Chapters 1 and 2, in Chapter 4 I described an empirical study that examined the effects of a 10 week structured intentional personality change coaching program on client chosen personality facets. Resources derived from the study described in Chapter 3 were utilized. This study found that participation in the personality change coaching program was associated with significant positive change in client chosen facets, with gains maintained three months later. Neither age of participant nor number of facets targeted significantly affected change outcomes. These findings suggested that a structured personality change coaching program can facilitate beneficial personality change in motivated individuals.

Whereas it is important to understand if intentional personality change is possible, it is equally important to understand if it is beneficial. Hence, in Chapter 5 I described a qualitative study conducted with the objective of exploring clients' experiences of participating in the study described in Chapter 4.

This qualitative study concluded that personality change coaching was perceived by participants as fostering greater self-awareness, authenticity, and a values consistent way of living. Whereas personality change was the goal of coaching, this translated into practical benefits. These included enhanced confidence and competence, and strengthened ability to relate to others. Finally, most clients viewed the structured personality change coaching program as enjoyable, positive and beneficial.

The issue of whether personality change fitted within a coaching or counselling/therapy context was discussed in a number of chapters. In Chapter 2 I argued that personality change interventions would likely fit within a coaching context, provided no major psychopathology existed. The coaching resources described in Chapter 3 were designed with a coaching approach in mind. However, the empirical study described in Chapter 4 suggested that individuals were often interested in changing emotionality facets (not commonly a focus of coaching). The findings of Chapters 3 and 4 were that coaching nevertheless achieved good change outcomes with these participants, and that the participants experienced the coaching process as beneficial and useful.

## **6.2 Implications**

The finding that personality appears amenable to change via structured coaching interventions challenges some common beliefs about personality (i.e., that it is enduring and resistant to change). It adds further weight to the argument that as behaviours and beliefs change, so too does personality (e.g., Dweck, 2008; Magidson et al., 2012). It potentially questions definitions that describe personality in terms of being constant, enduring and stable. The findings from this thesis suggest that personality may be less constant than previously thought, and more akin to plasticine

than plaster, as suggested by Piedmont (2001) over a decade ago. This in turn raises the question, if personality is not reasonably enduring, then what is it? The implication is that personality becomes a somewhat 'slippery' concept.

In addition to this definitional consideration, awareness of this personality change potential, combined with resources developed in this thesis on how to change, has implications for; (a) the coaching client, (b) the practitioner and researcher, and (c) wider society, discussed in turn.

In terms of the coaching client, this thesis suggests that personality change appears to be a realistic goal to pursue. It offers the potential to identify and change problematic patterns and dispositions, which, in the past, were commonly portrayed as highly resistant to change. Furthermore, the findings from this thesis suggest that such changes are likely to translate into meaningful real life benefits. These findings, combined with the well established association between personality and consequential life outcomes (i.e., some traits are associated with positive outcomes and some negative outcomes), raises the possibility that a relatively small investment of resources (10 weeks of coaching) may translate into significant gains.

For the practitioner and the researcher, this thesis offers an empirically investigated step by step process for changing aspects of personality. To date coaching practice has focused more on changing problematic behaviours that are the product of personality, without exploring ways of changing personality itself. The resources and step-wise process included in this thesis provide a structured framework for moving beyond problematic behaviours, to the starting point itself. Furthermore, the consequential outcomes research (described in Chapter 2), and the study described in Chapter 5, suggest this is likely to be beneficial. For the

personality researcher, the findings from this study provide a foundation for future research (discussed further in 6.3 Future Research).

From the perspective of the wider society, the discovery that problematic traits can be intentionally enhanced raises the tentative possibility that personality strengthening interventions may translate into social benefits (e.g. reducing trait emotionality may lead to reduced health costs and unemployment).

The personality change intervention resources developed, combined with the personality change outcomes achieved using these resources, expands the intentional change theory literature into the field of personality. In addition to suggesting that intentional personality change is possible, the findings from this thesis suggest that many of the concepts included in intentional change theory (Boyatzis, 2006) translate well into intentional personality change.

From a coaching point of view, the findings from Chapters 3 and 4 suggest that coaching may be beneficial for clients that are often excluded from coaching (e.g., those interested in working with emotionality issues). Hence it potentially expands the boundaries of coaching, with associated professional and training implications (discussed earlier in this section).

This in turn may have implications for certain coaching contexts. For the individual seeking personal development, the step-wise process is more straightforward, as the client chooses what changes they wish to pursue. However, should personality change be introduced into an organisational context, where the intention may be to correct problematic patterns of behaviour, the picture may be far more complex. Individuals may react negatively to others suggesting how they should change their personality, which in turn could tarnish the reputation of this type of coaching.

### **6.3 Future Research and Limitations**

As personality change is in its infancy, a range of issues require further exploration. Whereas the personality change opportunities suggested in this thesis are attractive, this should be cautioned by the need for further research replicating and expanding upon these preliminary findings. To the best of the author's knowledge, the studies described in Chapters 3 and 4 are the first to investigate intentional personality change in a normal population. Strong claims cannot be made on the basis of two studies with relatively small sample sizes. Furthermore, the participants in these studies were self-selected, and may not be a good representation of the overall population. This suggests that additional studies, with more participants, and different types of participants, would be useful.

As the current study was conducted outside of an organisational context, and coaching is often conducted within an organisational context, the implications (and ethical considerations) of potentially expanding this type of coaching to an organisational context requires further exploration.

The current thesis explored coaching in a one to one context. As one to one coaching studies are resource intensive, and thus limit the number of participants, it may be useful to explore if/how group interventions could be used in an ethically appropriate way, taking into account the sensitive nature of personality profiles. It may also be possible to coordinate some future research projects so that results from different studies in different locations can be combined (to enable larger studies).

Limitations exist with respect to the personality change resources developed. These resources, described in Chapter 3 and *Personality Change Coaching Training Manual: A Resource for Coaches*, are relatively untested. Hence it is likely that

further refinement and development, based on practitioners experience and future research, will be beneficial. This is further discussed in the latter part of this section.

The NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) was used in the current study. However the cost of purchasing these tests is a barrier to research, and a range of alternative models and measures of personality exist. Therefore it would be useful if future research explored other measures. For example, a free online proxy for the NEO PI-R is available, and appears to have sound psychometric properties. It may also be useful to explore suitable behavioural measures, so that observer rating can be included.

In the case of the empirical study (Chapter 4), a number of limitations have been discussed in Chapter 4. Of particular relevance, personality change was explored within one model and measure of personality. Hence, the findings are relevant to this one 'average targeted facet score' based conceptualisation of personality, and may not generalise to other constructs of personality. Change was assessed based on averaged targeted facet scores for the different types and numbers of facets targeted by each participant. Hence in some respects it was not comparing identical measures, which limits our understanding of change on individual facets. Therefore it may be useful if future studies addressed this issue by (e.g., more focused exploration of facets within just one trait).

The study discussed in Chapter 4 relied on self-report measures alone, which may have impacted on the validity of the measurement of change (e.g., participants answering in ways that put them in a good light, and/or were consistent with the aims of the research). Hence future research could usefully incorporate multiple methods of measurement (e.g., behavioural measures, informant reports). Follow up was

limited to three months after the end of the interventions, suggesting that longer term follow up in future studies would be useful.

A number of similar limitations are relevant to the study of client's experience of personality change coaching discussed in Chapter 5 (e.g., uncertain representativeness of the sample, possibly answering in ways that put them in a good light or were consistent with the aims of the research). Further research is also needed to further clarify if and how personality change interventions translate into more measureable outcomes (e.g., greater life satisfaction, better health outcomes).

A further limitation is that this thesis did not include an in-depth analysis of the professional and training implications of personality change interventions being undertaken in the context of coaching. Whereas justification for positioning such interventions within a coaching context was provided in Chapter 2, the boundaries between coaching and therapy are not clear cut, and this decision may be controversial (and hence worthy of further exploration). Personality coaching may well involve working with emotionality issues. Hence the discussion by Buckley (2010) around what needs to be considered when mental health issues arise in coaching could provide guidance on issues to be further explored in this respect (e.g., the client's understanding of the nature of the professional relationship, the training and competence of the professional, ethics/good practice guidelines of professional membership organisations, indemnity insurance and other legal and third party considerations). Hence further research around these types of professional issues is suggested. It could be useful to canvas (a) relevant professionals' views on where personality change interventions should sit (e.g., coaching versus therapy/counselling), and (b) whether clients' likelihood of engaging in intentional personality change interventions would be influenced by what the process is called.

Moreover, it would be useful to know if personality change coaching is more or less effective with individuals with higher levels of trait emotionality (who are commonly excluded from coaching).

Other research questions are currently being explored based on data gathered in the course of this thesis (e.g., who wants to change their personality and in what ways, and what factors affect personality change), which will further inform this emerging literature.

An important future research question is, what needs to happen to support future research in this area, and practitioner engagement in personality change coaching? Training is an important consideration, in terms of promoting competent and ethical practice in the field of personality change coaching (for both researchers and practitioners). Exploration of training needs is worthy of both further research, and discussion by relevant professional bodies.

A second important question is how can personality change resources be (a) further developed, (b) evaluated, and (c) made available to both researchers and practitioners? One option may be to explore options for providing online empirically validated personality change intervention resources for both practitioners and researchers (e.g. facet change intervention options). In addition to including existing empirically validated personality change interventions, it could encourage new evidence based interventions to be added (by future researchers). This would be compatible with the step-wise process designed to offer an eclectic menu of intervention options (step six in the step-wise process). It may also be useful if future research could explore ways of evaluating facet change intervention options. For example it may be possible to categorise interventions by theoretical orientation, and over time explore (via empirical studies) if certain types of theoretical

interventions are more effective than others. It may also be possible and useful to have practitioner evaluations of the effectiveness of different facet change intervention options.

Future research could explore the feasibility of this evolutionary way of refining personality change interventions, and identify ways to promote access to and collaborative engagement with these resources. This type of approach may make combining findings of personality change studies over time more feasible, as it could promote some consistency of approach (within an eclectic framework).

Inherent in the findings of this thesis are both exciting future possibilities and limitations. The limitations suggest that the findings should be viewed as preliminary. Nevertheless, it is hoped they will provide an important foundation for future exploration in this area, and a useful beginning in understanding if intentional personality change is possible, and how it can best be achieved.

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**APPENDIX 1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY TRAITS AND  
CONSEQUENTIAL LIFE OUTCOMES.**

Trait	Individual outcomes	Interpersonal outcomes	Social institutional outcomes
Emotionality	<p><b>Happiness:</b> subjective well-being.</p> <p><b>Spirituality &amp; virtues:</b> (-) existential well-being, (-) humour.</p> <p><b>Health:</b> (-) coping.</p> <p><b>Psychopathology:</b> anxiety, depression, (+/_ ) personality disorder.</p> <p><b>Identity:</b> (-) identity integration/consolidation.</p>	<p><b>Peer and family relations:</b> (-) family relations, (-) status (males only).</p> <p><b>Romantic relations:</b> dissatisfaction, conflict, abuse, dissolution.</p>	<p><b>Occupational choice &amp; performance:</b> (-) satisfaction, (-) commitment, (-) financial security, (-) success.</p> <p><b>Community involvement:</b> antisocial behaviour.</p>
Extraversion	<p><b>Happiness:</b> subjective well-being.</p> <p><b>Spirituality &amp; virtues:</b> existential well-being, gratitude, inspiration.</p> <p><b>Health:</b> longevity, coping, resilience.</p> <p><b>Psychopathology:</b> (-)</p>	<p><b>Peer and family relations:</b> peers' acceptance and friendship (children and adults); dating</p>	<p><b>Occupational choice &amp; performance:</b> social and enterprising interests, satisfaction, commitment,</p>

	<p>depression, (-/+ personality disorders)</p> <p><b>Identity:</b> Major culture identification (for minorities)</p>	<p>variety, attractiveness, status (adults).</p> <p><b>Romantic relations:</b> satisfaction.</p>	<p>involvement.</p> <p><b>Community involvement:</b> volunteerism, leadership.</p>
Openness	<p><b>Spirituality &amp; virtues:</b> existential &amp; phenomenological concerns, forgiveness, inspiration.</p> <p><b>Psychopathology:</b> substance abuse.</p> <p><b>Identity:</b> (-) foreclosure, identity integration &amp; consolidation, majority culture identification (for minorities)</p>		<p><b>Occupational choice &amp; performance:</b> investigative and artistic interests, success.</p> <p><b>Political attitudes &amp; values:</b> (-) right wing authoritarianism, liberalism.</p>
Agreeableness	<p><b>Spirituality &amp; virtues:</b> religious beliefs and behaviour, gratitude, forgiveness, humour.</p> <p><b>Health:</b> Longevity; (-) heart</p>	<p><b>Peer and family relations:</b> Peer's acceptance and</p>	<p><b>Occupational choice &amp; performance:</b> social interests, job attainment, (-</p>

	<p>disease.</p> <p><b>Psychopathology:</b> (+/-) personality disorders.</p> <p><b>Identity:</b> ethnic culture identification (for minorities).</p>	<p>friendship (children).</p> <p><b>Romantic relations:</b> satisfaction (dating couples only).</p>	<p>) extrinsic success.</p> <p><b>Community involvement:</b> volunteerism, leadership.</p> <p><b>Criminality: (-)</b> criminal behaviour.</p>
Conscientiousness	<p><b>Spirituality &amp; virtues:</b> religious beliefs and behaviour.</p> <p><b>Health:</b> Longevity, (-) risky behaviour.</p> <p><b>Psychopathology:</b> (-) substance abuse, (+/-) personality disorders.</p> <p><b>Identity:</b> achievement, ethnic culture identification (for minorities)</p>	<p><b>Peer and family relations:</b> family satisfaction.</p> <p><b>Romantic relations:</b> satisfaction (dating couples only).</p>	<p><b>Occupational choice &amp; performance:</b> performance, success.</p> <p><b>Political attitudes:</b> conservatism.</p> <p><b>Criminality: (-)</b> antisocial and criminal behaviour.</p>

*Note: (-) indicates a negative relation between the trait and outcome.*

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**APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF THE FIVE FACTOR MODEL, TRAITS,  
FACETS AND ITEMS USED TO ASSESS**

## **Emotionality Facets**

### **N1: Anxiety**

I am a worrier.

I am easily frightened.

I often feel fearful or anxious.

I often feel tense and jittery.

I'm often apprehensive about the future.

I often worry about things that might go wrong.

I have more fears than most people.

Frightening thoughts sometimes come into my head.

### **N2: Angry Hostility**

I often get angry at the way people treat me.

I'm not an even-tempered person.

I am known as hot-blooded and quick-tempered.

I am considered a touchy or temperamental person.

I often get disgusted with people I have to deal with.

It doesn't take a lot to get me mad.

At times I have felt bitter and resentful.

Even minor annoyances can be frustrating to me.

### **N3: Depression**

I often feel lonely or blue.

Sometimes I feel completely worthless.

I am often sad or depressed.

I have sometimes experienced a deep sense of guilt or sinfulness.

I tend to blame myself when anything goes wrong.

I have a low opinion of myself.

Sometimes things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me.

Too often, when things go wrong, I get discouraged and feel like giving up.

#### **N4: Self-Consciousness**

In dealing with other people, I always dread making a social blunder.

I often feel self-conscious when I'm around people.

At times I have been so ashamed I just wanted to hide.

It embarrasses me if people ridicule and tease me.

I often feel inferior to others.

I don't feel comfortable in the presence of my bosses or other authorities.

If I have said or done the wrong thing to someone, I can hardly bear to face them again.

When people I know do foolish things, I get embarrassed for them.

#### **N5: Impulsiveness**

I often overindulge.

I have trouble resisting my cravings.

I have difficulty resisting temptation.

When I am having my favourite foods, I tend to eat too much.

I often give in to my impulses.

I sometimes eat myself sick.

Sometimes I do things on impulse that I later regret.

I have difficulties keeping my feelings under control.

### **N6: Vulnerability**

I often feel helpless and want someone else to solve my problems.

I don't feel capable of coping with many of my problems.

When I'm under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like I'm going to pieces.

I find it hard to keep a cool head in emergencies.

It's often hard for me to make up my mind.

I find it difficult to handle myself well in a crisis.

When everything seems to be going wrong, I find it hard to make good decisions.

I'm not as emotionally stable as I would like to be.

## **Extraversion Facets**

### **E1: Warmth**

I really like most people I meet.

I don't get much pleasure from chatting with people. (R)

I'm known as a warm and friendly person.

Many people think of me as somewhat cold and distant. (R)

I really enjoy talking to people.

I find it easy to smile and be outgoing with strangers.

I have strong emotional attachments to my friends.

I take a personal interest in the people I work with.

**E2: Gregariousness**

I shy away from crowds of people. (R)

I like to have a lot of people around me.

I usually prefer to do things alone. (R)

I really feel the need for other people if I am by myself for long.

I prefer jobs that let me work alone without being bothered by other people. (R)

I'd rather vacation at a popular beach than an isolated cabin in the woods.

Social gatherings are usually boring to me. (R)

I enjoy parties with lots of people.

**E3: Assertiveness**

I am dominant, forceful, and assertive.

I sometimes fail to assert myself as much as I should. (R)

I have often been a leader of groups I have belonged to.

In meetings, I usually let others do the talking. (R)

Other people often look to me to make decisions.

I would rather go my own way than be a leader of others. (R)

In conversations, I tend to do most of the talking.

I don't find it easy to take charge of a situation. (R)

**E4: Activity**

I have a leisurely style in work and play. (R)

When I do things, I do them vigorously.

My work is likely to be slow but steady. (R)

I often feel as if I'm bursting with energy.

I'm not as quick and lively as other people. (R)

I usually seem to be in a hurry.

My life is fast-paced.

I am a very active person.

### **E5: Excitement-Seeking**

I often crave excitement.

I wouldn't enjoy vacationing in Las Vegas. (R)

I have sometimes done things just for "kicks" or "thrills."

I tend to avoid movies that are shocking or scary. (R)

I like to be where the action is.

I love the excitement of roller coasters.

I'm attracted to bright colours and flashy styles.

I like being part of the crowd at sporting events.

### **E6: Positive Emotions**

I have never literally jumped for joy' (R)

I have sometimes experienced intense joy or ecstasy'

I am not a cheerful optimist (R)

Sometimes I bubble with happiness'

I don't consider myself especially "light-hearted " (R)

I am a cheerful, high-spirited person'

I rarely use words like "fantastic!" or "sensational!" to describe my experiences'

(R)

I laugh easily.

## **Openness Facets**

### **O1: Fantasy**

I have a very active imagination.

I try to keep all my thoughts directed along realistic lines and avoid flights of fancy. (R)

I have an active fantasy life.

I don't like to waste my time daydreaming. (R)

I enjoy concentrating on a fantasy or daydream and exploring all its possibilities, letting it grow and develop.

If I feel my mind starting to drift off into daydreams, I usually get busy and start concentrating on some work or activity instead. (R)

As a child I rarely enjoyed games of make believe. (R)

I would have difficulty just letting my mind wander without control or guidance. (R)

### **O2: Aesthetics**

Aesthetic and artist concerns aren't very important to me.(R)

I am sometimes completely absorbed in music I am listening to.

Watching ballet or modern dance bores me. (R)

I am intrigued by the patterns I find in art and nature.

Poetry has little or no effect on me. (R)

Certain kinds of music have an endless fascination for me.

Sometimes when I am reading poetry or looking at a work or art, I feel a chill or wave of excitement.

I enjoy reading poetry that emphasizes feelings and images more than story lines.

### **03: Feelings**

Without strong emotions, life would be uninteresting to me.

I rarely experience strong emotions. (R)

How I feel about things is important to me.

I seldom pay much attention to my feelings of the moment. (R)

I experience a wide range of emotions or feelings.

I seldom notice the moods or feelings that different environments produce. (R)

I find it easy to empathize, and to feel myself what others are feeling.

Odd things like certain scents or the names of distant places can evoke strong moods in me.

### **04: Actions**

I'm pretty set in my ways. (R)

I think it's interesting to learn and develop new hobbies.

Once I find the right way to do something, I stick to it. (R)

I often try new and foreign foods.

I prefer to spend my time in familiar surroundings. (R)

Sometimes I make changes around the house just to try something different.

On a vacation, I prefer going back to a tried and true spot. (R)

I follow the same route when I go someplace. (R)

**05: Ideas**

I often enjoy playing with theories or abstract ideas.

I find philosophical arguments boring. (R)

I enjoy solving problems or puzzles.

I sometimes lose interest when people talk about very abstract, theoretical matters (R)

I enjoy working on “mind-twister” type puzzles.

I have little interest in speculating on the nature of the universe or the human condition. (R)

I have a lot of intellectual curiosity.

I have a wide range of intellectual interests.

**06: Values**

I believe letting students hear controversial speakers can only confuse and mislead them. (R)

I believe that laws and social policies should change to reflect the needs of a changing world.

I believe we should look to our religious authorities for decisions on moral issues. (R)

I believe that the different ideas of right and wrong that people in other societies have may be valid for them.

I believe that loyalty to one’s ideals and principles is more important than open-mindedness. (R)

I consider myself broad-minded and tolerant of other people’s lifestyles.

I think that if people don't know what they believe in by the time they're 25, there's something wrong with them. (R)

I believe that the "new morality" of permissiveness is no morality at all. (R)

## **Agreeableness Facets**

### **A1: Trust**

I tend to be cynical and sceptical of others intentions. (R)

I believe that most people are basically well-intentioned.

I believe that most people will take advantage of you if you let them. (R)

I think most of the people I deal with are honest and trustworthy.

I'm suspicious when someone does something nice for me. (R)

My first reaction is to trust people.

I tend to assume the best about people.

I have a good deal of faith in human nature.

### **A2: Straightforwardness**

I'm not crafty or sly.

If necessary, I am willing to manipulate people to get what I want. (R)

I couldn't deceive anyone even if I wanted to.

Being perfectly honest is a bad way to do business. (R)

I would hate to be thought of as a hypocrite.

Sometimes I trick people into doing what I want. (R)

At times I bully or flatter people into doing what I want them to. (R)

I pride myself on my shrewdness in handling people. (R)

**A3: Altruism**

Some people think I'm selfish and egotistical. (R)

I try to be courteous to everyone I meet.

Some people think of me as cold and calculating. (R)

I generally try to be thoughtful and considerate.

I'm not known for my generosity. (R)

Most people I know like me.

I think of myself as a charitable person.

I go out of my way to help others if I can.

**A4: Compliance**

I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them.

I can be sarcastic and cutting when I need to be. (R)

I hesitate to express my anger even when it's justified.

If I don't like people, I let them know it. (R)

When I've been insulted, I just try to forgive and forget.

If someone starts a fight, I'm ready to fight back. (R)

I'm hard-headed and stubborn. (R)

I often get into arguments with my family and co-workers. (R)

**A5: Modesty**

I don't mind bragging about my talents and accomplishments. (R)

I'd rather not talk about myself and my achievements.

I'm better than most people, and I know it. (R)

I try to be humble.

I have a very high opinion of myself. (R)

I feel that I am no better than others, no matter what their condition.

I would rather praise others than be praised myself.

I'm a superior person. (R)

### **A6: Tender-Mindedness**

Political leaders need to be more aware of the human side of their policies.

I'm hard-headed and tough-minded in my attitudes. (R)

We can never do too much for the poor and elderly.

I have no sympathy for panhandlers. (R)

Human needs should always take priority over economic considerations.

I believe all human beings are worthy of respect.

I have sympathy for others less fortunate than me.

I would rather be known as "merciful" than as "just."

## **Conscientiousness Facets**

### **C1: Competence**

I'm known for my prudence and common sense.

I don't take civic duties like voting very seriously. (R)

I keep myself informed and usually make intelligent decisions.

I often come into situations without being fully prepared. (R)

I pride myself on my sound judgment.

I don't seem to be completely successful at anything. (R)

I'm a very competent person.

I am efficient and effective at my work.

**C2: Order**

I would rather keep my options open than plan everything in advance. (R)

I keep my belongings neat and clean.

I am not a very methodical person. (R)

I like to keep everything in its place so I know just where it is.

I never seem to be able to get organized. (R)

I tend to be somewhat fastidious or exacting.

I'm not compulsive about cleaning. (R)

I spend a lot of time looking for things I've misplaced. (R)

**C3: Dutifulness**

I try to perform all the tasks assigned to me conscientiously.

Sometimes I'm not as dependable or reliable as I should be. (R)

I pay my debts promptly and in full.

Sometimes I cheat when I play solitaire. (R)

When I make a commitment, I can always be counted on to follow through.

I adhere strictly to my ethical principles.

I try to do jobs carefully, so they won't have to be done again.

I'd really have to be sick before I'd miss a day of work.

**C4: Achievement Striving**

I am easy-going and lackadaisical. (R)

I have a clear set of goals and work toward them in an orderly fashion.

When I start a self-improvement program, I usually let it slide after a few days.

(R)

I work hard to accomplish my goals.

I don't feel like I'm driven to get ahead. (R)

I strive to achieve all I can.

I strive for excellence in everything I do.

I'm something of a "workaholic."

### **C5: Self-Discipline**

I'm pretty good about pacing myself so as to get things done on time.

I waste a lot of time before settling down to work. (R)

I am a productive person who always gets the job done.

I have trouble making myself do what I should. (R)

Once I start a project, I almost always finish it,

When a project gets too difficult, I'm inclined to start a new one. (R)

There are so many little jobs that need to be done that I sometimes just ignore them all. (R)

I have a lot of self-discipline.

### **C6: Deliberation**

Over the years I've done some pretty stupid things. (R)

I think things through before coming to a decision

Occasionally I act first and think later. (R)

I always consider the consequences before I take action.

I often do things on the spur of the moment. (R)

I rarely make hasty decisions.

I plan ahead carefully when I go on a trip.

I think twice before I answer a question.

Note. Items marked "(R)" are reverse scored

**APPENDIX 3: REPLY TO SHORT RESPONSE TO CHAPTER: WHAT IS  
PERSONALITY CHANGE AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT**

We are thankful for the useful response on our recent article (Martin, Oades and Caputi, 2012). It is encouraging that coaching practitioners and researchers are beginning to debate whether intentional personality change coaching appear feasible, and worthy of further exploration. In the following discussion we respond to the general themes included in the response; that there is little evidence that facilitating client chosen personality change is feasible in a coaching context, and that coaching efforts could best be directed to areas with stronger empirical support, (i.e., personal goal attainment).

We agree that Roberts and Mroczek (2008) was a longer term study, and therefore less relevant to the question of shorter term intentional personality change in a coaching context. Nevertheless, it is suggestive of the plasticity of personality. Furthermore, a more recent shorter term four year longitudinal study of over 8,000 Australians (Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, 2012) found that, "personalities can and do change over time – something that was considered improbable until now – and that these personality changes are strongly related to changes in our wellbeing".

Well-being is an important construct in coaching literature and practice (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Govindji & Linley, 2007; Spence & Grant, 2005; Spence & Grant, 2007). Furthermore, the literature suggests that personality is possibly the largest single contributor to well-being (Diener & Lucas, 1999; Boyce et al.,2012). Hence, furthering our knowledge of personality change in a coaching context would appear to be beneficial. This view is further supported by a meta-analysis that found that personality has a significant impact on a wide range of life outcomes, and across life domains (Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006).

The assertion that Spence and Grant's (2005) findings do not provide strong evidence that personality change is possible is correct, if taken in isolation and

without consideration of the design of their study. Nevertheless, we think a number of additional points are relevant to this discussion. The arguments presented in Martin, Oades and Caputi (2012) proposing that personality appears amenable to change were based on the combined findings of several studies and reviews not discussed in the response (Block & Singh, 2007; Boyce, Wood, & Powdthavee, 2012; Clark, 2009; Piedmont & Ciarrocchi, 1999; Robinson, 2009; Tang et al., 2009). The combined findings of this body of literature in our opinion suggest that personality appears amenable to change, and as a corollary, further exploration of this possibility in a coaching context appears warranted.

In Spence and Grant (2005), although findings on personality change were not strong, significant change was nevertheless found. Furthermore, the more modest findings in Spence and Grant (2005) on personality change (compared to goal attainment) may have been more a product of the study design than personality being resistant to change. In this study, goal attainment was specifically *targeted* with the coaching strategies, while personality change was *not specifically targeted*. Variables that are specifically targeted with coaching interventions may be expected to change more than variables that aren't specifically targeted. This line of thinking is illustrated in Spence and Grant (2007) when they discuss the minimal change achieved on well-being in a goal focused life coaching study. They state "While the minimal impact of life coaching on well-being was surprising, it may be partly explained by the design of the study. First, the current intervention was goal-focused rather than targeted at enhancing well-being, and other coaching interventions specifically targeted at increasing well-being may have an effect where this intervention did not" (p. 192). Hence, the more significant change on goal attainment as compared to personality reported in Spence and Grant (2005) may have been

influenced personality not being targeted. Therefore, it does not necessarily suggest that personality is less amenable to change, or less worthy of further investigation. From my perspective, the modest but significant changes in personality over 10 sessions of coaching, in the absence of coaching strategies designed to change personality, raises some interesting research questions, (e.g., could more targeted personality change strategies attain stronger results).

In response to this line of enquiry, the authors of this reply are currently developing and empirically testing a step-wise process of intentional personality change coaching, designed around the 30 personality facets included in the NEO PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The process is designed around the client's intrinsic motivation to increase or decrease a limited number of personality facets, chosen by the client. The preliminary findings from this 54 participant study, incorporating both a waitlist control between subjects design, and a within subjects design, are very encouraging. Furthermore, preliminary findings from a qualitative study of the clients' perceptions of personality change coaching are also very positive, with some clients finding it life changing.

The conclusion in the short response that Spence and Grant (2005) suggest coaching efforts can best be directed towards personal goal attainment rather than personality change is one interpretation. From our perspective, however, it is important that coaching research not only expands on our existing empirical knowledge (e.g., around goal attainment) but also asks new questions (e.g., can coaching potentially facilitate client chosen personality change goals, if the client wishes to change?). Furthermore, the two are not mutually exclusive. Personality change coaching involves setting goals around personality traits or facets the client

wishes to increase or decrease (i.e. goal setting), implementing coaching strategies to support such change, and assessing progress toward this goal (i.e., goal attainment).

Personal goal attainment coaching has already received a good deal of attention in the coaching literature (e.g., Spence & Grant, 2005; Grant, 2008; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007) while intentional personality change as a goal pursued through coaching remains relatively unexplored. This gap in the literature, combined with the above arguments, suggests that further exploration in this area appears to be warranted.

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**APPENDIX 4. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

**Project Title:** The Utility of Coaching in Facilitating Positive Personality Change

**Research Background and Aims:** Research over the last decade has suggested that personality is more amenable to change than previously thought. Studies have found that it changes over our lifespan, in response to major life events, in different social environments, and as a result of some therapeutic and drug interventions. To date, however, studies have not explored whether individuals can intentionally change specific aspects of their personality, if they are motivated, and have appropriately trained professional assistance to do so. The current study aims to explore if coaching can strengthen individual personality traits selected by clients, and what factors influence change.

**Contact details** of the researchers:

Dr Lindsay Oades Sydney Business School (02) 4221 3694 <a href="mailto:loades@uow.edu.au">loades@uow.edu.au</a>	A/Prof Peter Caputi School of Psychology (02) 4221 3717 <a href="mailto:peter_caputi@uow.edu.au">peter_caputi@uow.edu.au</a>	Lesley Martin (Student researcher) School of Psychology (02) 4227 2363 sue@psy.net.au
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**Demands on Participants:** If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Attend an introductory information session, and sign an informed consent form.
- Attend 10 one-hour weekly coaching sessions, at either 67 Campbell Street, Wollongong or Northfields Clinic, University of Wollongong. The 142

purpose of these sessions will be to identify personality strengthening goals, and develop skills and strategies to achieve these goals. These sessions will be conducted by Coaches, who will be either Registered Psychologists, or supervised Provisionally Registered Psychologists. The sessions will commence either shortly after agreeing to participate in the study, or approximately 10 weeks after that date. The study will be conducted in mid and late 2011 (and possibly during 2012).

- Complete questionnaires before, during and after the coaching, and again 10 weeks after the coaching is completed. The purpose of these questionnaires is to measure personality traits, identify values, and assess both readiness and motivation to change. Personality profiles will be completed in total up to five times, and other inventories up to two times.
- Participate in a brief audio-recorded interview (15 to 20 minutes) when the final questionnaires are completed, 10 weeks after coaching is completed. During this interview you will be asked about your experience of the coaching process. Findings from this data may be used to inform future coaching processes, and further refine coaching resources developed in *Phase One* of this research.

You *may* also be asked to give your consent to video or audio-tape individual coaching sessions, to assist with skills development of coaches. However you are under no obligation to agree to this, and not agreeing to this will not affect your participation in the study in any way. (A separate consent will be provided for this, at the commencement of any coaching session that is to be taped). The total time requirements of participation in this study are expected to be between 12-15 hours.

In addition you will be asked to complete between session “homework” to consolidate skills learned in the coaching sessions.

**Possible Risks, Inconveniences and Discomforts:** There is a small risk that you may find discussing personality traits, or other material raised in the coaching sessions, distressing. However you have the right to not discuss any material that may be distressing to you. You may withdraw your participation from the study at any time, and/or withdraw any data that you have provided. If you do experience emotional distress as a result of this study, you can either: (a) discuss this with your Coach; (b) seek a referral from your General Practitioner for psychological counselling under the Medicare funded Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program; or (c) access free telephone counselling through Lifeline, phone 13 11 14. Refusal to participate in the study, or withdrawal from the study, will not affect your relationship with the University of Wollongong.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be preserved by: (a) assigning pseudonyms rather than real names to interview transcripts; (b) secure storage of audio-tapes, questionnaires, personality profiles, and coaching notes in locked cabinets; and (c) ensuring that no personal identifying data is published. The Coach may only discuss material discussed in coaching sessions with the Student Researcher and the Coach’s Clinical Supervisor, for skills development purposes, and to ensure that research protocols are followed. Coaches will be either fully registered Psychologists or Provisionally Registered Psychologists, and as such will be required to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Australian Psychological Society’s *Guidelines on Confidentiality* (2007), a copy of which is available on request. Consistent with these guidelines, confidentiality may be

breached if the Coach believes that a participant may be at risk of harming themselves or someone else.

**Benefits of the Research:** Participants will be provided with a detailed written personality profile, and 10 free one-hour sessions of coaching. It is hoped that the coaching sessions will assist participants to achieve meaningful personality strengthening goals. Research suggests that even small positive changes in personality can have significant positive impacts across life domains. Furthermore, your participation in the project will assist to develop a better understanding of personality change in a coaching context.

**Use of Research Findings:** Findings from the study may be used in research journals, research thesis, workshops, books, and conference presentations. Identifying participant information will not be revealed in any publication or presentation.

**Ethics Review and Complaints:** This study has been reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Social Science, Humanities and Behavioural Science) of the University of Wollongong. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way this research has been conducted, you can contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457.

*Thank you for your interest in this study. If you would like to participate in this study, or have any further queries, please contact Lesley Martin, (02) 4227*

*2363 or email sue@psy.net.au*

**APPENDIX 5. CONSENT FORM FOR COACHING CLIENTS**

**Research Title:** The Utility of Coaching in Facilitating Positive Personality Change

Contact details of the researchers, are as follows:

Dr Lindsay Oades Principal Investigator Sydney Business School, (02) 4221 3694 <a href="mailto:loades@uow.edu.au">loades@uow.edu.au</a>	A/Prof Peter Caputi Secondary Investigator School of Psychology (02) 4221 3717 <a href="mailto:peter_caputi@uow.edu.au">peter_caputi@uow.edu.au</a>	Lesley Martin Student Researcher School of Psychology (02) 4227 2363 <a href="mailto:sue@psy.net.au">sue@psy.net.au</a>
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I have been given information about The Utility of Coaching in Facilitating Positive Personality Change and discussed the research project with Lesley Martin who is conducting this research as part of a Doctor of Philosophy, supervised by Lindsay Oades, in the department of Psychology, at the University of Wollongong.

I have been advised of the potential risks and burdens associated with this research, including 12-15 hours of participation time, and the possible risk of emotional distress. I have had an opportunity to ask Lesley Martin any questions about the research and my participation.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate, and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, and to withdraw my data at any time. I understand that my refusal to

participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my relationship with the University of Wollongong in any way.

I understand that if I have any enquiries about the research, I can contact Lesley Martin or Lindsay Oades on the above phone numbers, or if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I can contact the Ethics Officer, Human Research Ethics Committee, Office of Research, University of Wollongong on 4221 4457.

By signing below I am indicating my consent to:

- Participate in 10 weekly one-hour coaching sessions, to be conducted at 67 Campbell Street, Wollongong, or Northfields Clinic, University of Wollongong at a time and location to be agreed between myself and my Coach. I understand such sessions will be conducted by either registered psychologists or provisionally registered psychologists, who have had training in coaching.
- Completion of questionnaires before, during and after the coaching, and again 10 weeks after the coaching is completed, with personality questionnaires being completed up to five times in total, and other inventories up to two times.
- Participation in a brief audio taped interview (15-20 minutes) with Lesley Martin, directly after the final coaching session.

I understand that I may be asked to agree to the audio or video-taping of individual coaching sessions for skills development purposes. I also understand that I am under no obligation to agree to this, and if I decline it will not affect my continued participation in the study in any way. If I agree

to a session being audio or video-taped, I understand that I would sign an agreement to this at the commencement of the coaching session that is to be taped, and that this agreement would apply to that session only.

I understand that confidentiality will be preserved by: (a) assigning pseudonyms rather than names to my interview transcripts; (b) secure storage of audio-tapes, questionnaires, personality profiles, and coaching notes in locked cabinets; and (c) ensuring that no personal identifying data is published. Confidentiality of matters discussed in the coaching sessions will be maintained. I understand that my Coach may only discuss coaching session material with Lesley Martin, the Student Researcher, or my Coach's Clinical supervisor, in order to ensure that research protocols are followed, and for skills development purposes. I am aware that all Coaches will be either fully registered Psychologists or provisionally registered Psychologists, and as such will be required to maintain confidentiality in accordance with the Australian Psychological Society's Guidelines on Confidentiality (2007), a copy of which is available on request. I am aware that confidentiality may be breached if the Coach believes that I may be at risk of harming myself or someone else.

I understand that findings from this study may be used in research thesis, research journals, books, workshops, conference presentations, and in other written and electronic media, and I consent for it to be used in that manner. I understand that identifying participant information will not be revealed in any publication or presentation.

6.3.1.1 Signed

Date

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Name (please print)

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