

## Personality coaching—unlocking subjectivity with «universal» methods.

Alvilde Vinge

Cand. Psychol.  
30 Points

Department of Psychology  
Faculty of social sciences

Fall 2022



## Summary

Author: Alvilde Vinge (AV)

Title: Personality coaching —unlocking subjectivity with «universal» methods.

Supervisors: Espen Folmo (EF, main supervisor) & Erik Stänicke (ES, secondary supervisor)

Background and objectives: Executive coaching is a rapidly growing field, and researchers are currently investigating the change mechanisms of coaching. Psychotherapy research has focused on commonalities between specific theoretical approaches. Coaching research has demonstrated the importance of the alliance and has recently begun investigating other change mechanisms as proposed by psychotherapy. The present study investigates the participants' experience of a specific coaching method, including aspects of the alliance, the method/rationale, and how the coaching has influenced the participants. The study is an independent research project, and the author has collected the data material.

Methods: Nine leaders/managers (seven males and two females) were interviewed about their coaching experiences with the same coach and method. The data material was analyzed using the qualitative method Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

Results: Four themes captured the participants' experiences of the coaching. The first theme captured previous coaching experiences and how this influenced their expectations for the present coaching. The second theme comprised the participants' description of the coaching process. The third theme included the establishment of trust in the coach. Additionally, it captured the coach's application of the personality framework. The participants' descriptions illustrated the complex interactive nature of the relationship and method. The fourth theme encompassed the perceived outcome and how coaching led to an ongoing integration process of the personality framework for some participants.

Conclusion: It was concluded that the participants' general high interpersonal trust facilitated the establishment of the personal bond and further engagement in the tasks and goals of the coaching. Belief in and acceptance of the method was important for their engagement and was further increased by interactions with the coach. Further, learning experiences between sessions and after the coaching facilitated the integration of the personality framework. In this short-term coaching, the participants highlighted how the coach's competent application of the personality framework increased their awareness of themselves, others, and their social reality. Integration work appeared to be an ongoing process during and after the coaching. It is argued that psychotherapy research and coaching research could learn from each other.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors, Espen Folmo and Erik Stänicke, for valuable feedback and important discussions throughout the process. I would also like to show appreciation to my main supervisor for trusting and guiding me toward finishing this (at points confusingly) complex and comprehensive research process.

I am also grateful to Thomas Løvenskiold, leader of Human Content, who established contact with the coach, and for showing confidence in this research project, helping me navigate the coaching field and for our fruitful discussion throughout the process that also allowed an open, curious, and independent investigation. I would also like to thank the coach who enabled the recruitment and provided important information about the coaching method and application. I would also like to thank the participants. This would not have been possible without their openness to share their insights, experiences, and reflections about themselves and the coaching.

I would also like to thank Espen Røysamb for his support and engagement throughout the writing process, valuable feedback, and conversations. Also, a big thanks to my good friend, Sairah Husanini-Chen, for language proofreading.

Without the support of friends and co-students, this would have been a lonely journey, so I would like to show my appreciation for my friends and all the support and much needed breaks and conversations. Finally, I am grateful to my partner, Ola, for all the emotional support and encouragement.

# Table of Contents

<b>1 INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 PSYCHOTHERAPY RESEARCH .....	4
2.2 CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH ON COMMON FACTORS IN COACHING .....	9
2.3 COACHING APPROACHES AND THEORIES.....	11
2.4 MENTALIZATION AND EPISTEMIC TRUST .....	14
2.5 PURPOSE OF PRESENT STUDY .....	15
<b>3 METHODS:.....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1 SAMPLE .....	16
3.2 PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT.....	17
3.3 THE COACHING PROCESS.....	17
3.4 RECRUITMENT AND DATA COLLECTION.....	18
3.5 INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS.....	19
3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND EVALUATIONS.....	21
3.7 PERSONAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL REFLEXIVITY .....	22
3.8 DATA-ANALYSIS .....	23
<b>4 RESULTS .....</b>	<b>25</b>
4.1 FIRST TOPIC: BEFORE COACHING .....	26
4.1.1 <i>Previous coaching experiences and beliefs affected the coaching</i> .....	26
4.2 SECOND TOPIC: THE COACHING PROCESS .....	28
4.2.1 <i>A short-term process of learning and exploring the personality framework.....</i>	28
4.3 THIRD TOPIC: ESTABLISHING TRUST IN THE COACH AND THE METHOD .....	30
4.3.1 <i>Establishing trust in the coach</i> .....	30
4.3.2 <i>Personality assessment and framework provided a common focus, language, and understanding. .</i>	32
4.4 FOURTH TOPIC: AFTER COACHING .....	34
4.4.1 <i>Increased awareness and mentalization capacity</i> .....	34
4.4.2 <i>Ongoing learning and integration of a framework providing a “holding space”</i> .....	38
<b>5 DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>39</b>
5.1 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS .....	39
5.2 IMPLICATIONS.....	50
5.3 LIMITATIONS .....	51
5.4 CONCLUSION .....	51
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>53</b>

<b>APPENDICES:</b> .....	<b>60</b>
APPENDIX A: IPA HIERARCHY .....	60
APPENDIX B: TABLE 2, OCCURRENCE OF THEMES ACROSS CASES .....	62
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE .....	63
APPENDIX D: INVITATION LETTER AND LETTER OF CONSENT .....	64
APPENDIX E: NSD APPROVAL.....	68

# 1 Introduction

Both psychotherapy and coaching employ relevant theoretical frameworks and methods, within a trusting relation and setting, to progress clients towards agreed-upon goals (Spence, 2007; Wampold & Imel, 2015). However, despite such practices demonstrating decent outcomes—half of the patients receiving psychotherapy, return to normal functioning (Lambert & Ogles, 2004), we face a significant challenge when trying to understand how healing occurs in various “talking cures” (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Hence, there is a strong call to investigate how psychotherapy, and coaching, actually lead to change. The coaching literature incorporates core change mechanisms from psychotherapy, and while outcome in clinical studies of psychotherapy can literally champion “clinically significant change” (Lambert & Ogles, 2009), coaching differs more in their operationalization of goal achievement (e.g., Elliott, 2011; Greenberg, 2007; Kazdin, 2009; Wampold & Imel, 2015).

In general, coaching practices focus more on concrete tools and instruments, while psychotherapy has conceptualized the therapeutic relationship at core the of change since Freud (e.g., 1915; 1916). Interestingly, psychotherapy research has also typically been split into two such camps: (1) those who advocate administering specific talking cures/psychotherapy *potions* according to a recipe, and (2) those who champion common factors, such as emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, and awareness of the alliance (Wampold & Imel, 2015). However, the therapeutic relationship, typically operationalized as the working alliance (Bordin, 1979), is also considered a core change seen as one of the best mechanisms and explanations of outcome in coaching practices (Graßmann et al., 2020).

The psychotherapy tradition first emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Originally, the coaching tradition was primarily concerned with the study and enhancement of sports performance (Gaylord, 1967; Griffith, 1926). Since the 1970s, the term “coaching” has been used more broadly, and today it covers a variety of interventions aimed at different problems and populations (Snyder et al., 2019).

Executive coaching has become popular among organizations and in the workplace, demonstrated by the increasing numbers of coaches and the rapidly growing multibillion-dollar global industry (Armstrong, 2011; Graßmann et al., 2020). Coaching is a targeted, purposeful intervention aimed at promoting lasting changes in the personal and professional life of leaders. In the following, coaching will be used as equivalent to executive coaching.

Elaborating on the definition of Grant (2006), Graßmann et al. (2020) suggest the following definition of coaching:

Coaching involves a dyadic, egalitarian relationship between a client and a professional coach, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting, constructing solutions, and fostering clients' self-directed learning and personal growth. (p. 37)

Unlike psychotherapy, coaching is aimed at individuals not suffering from known psychopathology. However, considering the prevalence of psychopathology in the normal population and normality in the psychopathological population, it is likely that coachees might also have problems at a clinical level, even though psychopathology is not addressed. However, it is reasonable to assume that, in general, the coaching population exhibit higher degrees of interpersonal functioning than the psychotherapy population. The American psychological association defines psychotherapy as follows:

Psychotherapy is any psychological service provided by a trained professional that primarily uses forms of communication and interaction to assess, diagnose, and treat dysfunctional emotional reactions, ways of thinking, and behavior patterns. (APA, 2016)

Given the definitions above, the main difference between coaching and psychotherapy is the assumed difference in the degree of distress. Further, the definition suggests that coaching practices are *systematic* and aim to promote changes in *behavior, well-being, and work performance*. In APA's definition of psychotherapy, the emphasis on *communication and interaction* suggests that the relation is the core change mechanism. Coaching promotes individual change at the *group, leader, or organizational* level. Additionally, coaching defines the relation as egalitarian, implying that the coaching relationship is generally more symmetrical than in psychotherapy. Further, while the title *psychotherapist* is protected by laws in many countries, *coach* as a profession is not legally defined or restricted. However, the International Coaching Federation (ICF) certifies coaches with specified qualifications and education.

Both coaching and psychotherapy promote change through theories and methods within a confidential relationship with a socially sanctioned healer through self-reflection and development. While in psychotherapy, where personal remediation is considered the main

goal, coaching is aimed at performance development and enhancement of the person in their leadership role and work context. Hence, the primary goal of coaching is not remediation, or increased well-being, outside of the work context. In coaching, outcomes could be broadly divided into cognitive, affective, and goal attainment (Graßmann et al., 2020). Additionally, coaching outcomes can be rated by the organization or coachee and measured on the individual, team, or organizational level. Typically, psychotherapy is funded by a national health care system, health insurance, or the individual. Coaching is often sponsored by a third party, most often the employer of the coachee. Unlike in psychotherapy, where the economic and societal interests are easily kept at a distance, coaching often (explicitly or implicitly) includes a third party's interests and goals. This will also include the third party's organizational culture, which may influence the coaching process. Bang (2013) suggests that organizational culture can be defined as follows:

Organizational culture is the shared norms, values, and social beliefs that develop in an organization, where the (group) members cooperate with one another and their surroundings and is expressed through the members' behavior and attitudes in the work context. (my translation, p. 329)

The culture consists of *values* that guide what is perceived as important, valuable, and what one should strive for in the organization. *Norms* prescribe how one should behave and what are acceptable actions and attitudes. In addition, the culture consists of *beliefs about reality* that help members understand what is true and false, how things work, and how to make sense of what is happening in their surroundings. It is reasonable to assume that the coachees' organizational culture can affect the coaching process considering that values, norms, and beliefs will interact with their social reality.

The two traditions also differ in terms of "healing context". Psychotherapy is typically situated within a setting associated with healing traditions (e.g., within a psychotherapy or health facility). Coaching can occur in various settings, such as the coachees' workplace, within a coaching facility, through digital platforms, and so on. Additionally, coaching can be administered by external or internal coaches. This may influence expectations for coaching and the relationship, which is essential for outcome (Graßmann & Schermuly, 2020; Molyn et al., 2021; Wampold & Imel, 2015).

All of the above may influence the coaching process and, thus, the relationship. As such, these factors will inevitably challenge how to understand and characterize changes in coaching. As mentioned, the alliance is at the core of both processes but may work differently



depending on the method (Bordin, 1979). Executive coaching is commonly grounded in psychological approaches aimed at behavioral change, such as cognitive approaches (Palmer & Whybrow, 2018). Psychotherapies rooted in psychodynamic traditions— so-called “talking cures” — put the relationship itself at the core of the treatment and for change. Typically, cognitive therapy explicitly focuses on the goals and tasks of the treatment to promote change through focus on maladaptive patterns of thinking and behavior. In cognitive psychotherapy traditions, the establishment of the personal bond facilitate the clients’ engagement in the treatment and acceptance of the explanations and tasks suggested by the therapist. Coaching is characterized by various tools and approaches but tailored to the work and organizational context, and also explicitly focuses on goals and tasks to promote change. Hence, one would expect that the way the alliance works in coaching would be similar to the alliance in cognitive approaches. However, both in psychotherapy and coaching traditions, there is consensus that a strong enough relationship is necessary for change to occur (e.g., Graßmann et al., 2020; Horvath, 2018). Hence, Bordin’s (1979) conceptualization of the alliance constitutes the backbone of this thesis and is presented in the following sections.

## **2 Theoretical and empirical foundation**

### **2.1 Psychotherapy research**

Already in 1936, Rosenzweig suggested that “everyone has won, and everyone must get a prize”, referring to the observation that different psychotherapy approaches seemed equally effective (Rosenzweig, 1936). This is known as the dodo-bird verdict in psychotherapy, inspired by the tale of the dodo-bird who stated this in a competition in Lewis Carrol’s *Alice in Wonderland* (Carrol, 1939). For decades this idea was forgotten, perhaps due to the focus on comparing specific methods, in the hope of finding that one specific theoretical method was superior to other methods. After decades of comparative research on psychotherapy, research informs us that specific theoretical approaches account for only about 1% of variance in outcome from psychotherapy (e.g., Lambert et al., 2004). This led to the reemergence of Rosenzweig’s (1936) idea and inspired the investigation of commonalities between psychotherapy methods and their effect on outcome. Frank & Frank (1991) brought the common factors out of the shadows in their seminal book *Persuasion and healing*. Building on the work of Frank and Frank (1991), Wampold (2001) proposed the contextual model, a meta-theory including three change pathways: (i) the real relationship, (ii) expectations, and (iii) specific ingredients (see also: Wampold, 2001; Wampold & Imel, 2015). Wampold

(1997) also suggested that bona fide treatments, or every effective psychotherapy approach, refer to treatments that are *delivered by trained therapists, are based on psychological principles*, and are *offered to the psychotherapy community as viable treatments* (e.g., books or manuals) or contain *specific ingredients*.

Laska et al. (2014) further elaborated the conceptualization of Frank and Frank (1991) to consist of five necessary and sufficient factors for change. They suggested that all effective treatments include 1) an *emotionally charged bond* between the therapist and client, 2) a consistent *healing setting* in which therapy takes place, 3) a therapist who provides a *psychologically derived and culturally embedded rationale for the client's emotional distress*, 4) a *rationale that is adaptive* and that is *accepted by the client*, 5) and a set of *procedures or rituals* engaged in by the client and therapist that leads the client *to enact something positive, helpful, or adaptive* (Laska et al., 2014). The common factors approach has inspired researchers to investigate commonalities between bona fide treatments and has resulted in a large body of research (e.g., Wampold, 2021; Wampold & Imel, 2015).

Decades of research inform us that about 80% of clients administered psychotherapy have a positive outcome compared to no treatment (Lambert & Ogles, 2004; Munder et al., 2019; Smith & Glass, 1977). Studies have found that psychotherapy explains 13-14% of the variance in outcomes and that common factors explain 70% of the variance in the effect of psychotherapy (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Observing that around half of patients recover during psychotherapy implies that a relatively large proportion of patients do not benefit from the treatments they receive (often denoted as non-responders). Linden and Schermuly-Haupt (2014) found an emerging consensus that unwanted events should be expected in 5%–20% of psychotherapy treatments. Lambert and Ogles (2004) report that 15%–20% of patients show no significant change, while 5%–10% consistently deteriorate during the course of treatment (e.g., Crawford et al., 2016; Jarrett & Ollendick, 2008; Lambert, 2013; Mohr, 1995).

Bordin (1979) proposed the working alliance to consist of three broad features: agreement on goals, agreement on tasks assigned to both parties, and the personal bond. The therapeutic alliance—the quintessential so-called common factor—is the most robust predictor of psychotherapeutic healing, explaining around 7.5% of the variance in outcomes (Fluckiger et al., 2018). In sum, about 30.000 patients have contributed to research on the relationship between alliance and clinical change (Wampold, 2021). Bordin (1979) perceived the alliance as a vehicle that enables and facilitates specific treatment techniques (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989). Thus, the alliance is embedded within the specific treatment method (Bordin, 1979).

The goals and tasks specified appear intimately linked to the nature of the relationship between therapist and patient. For example, the kind of bond developed when a therapist presents a patient with a form and asks him to make a daily record of his submissive and assertive acts, and of the circumstances surrounding them, appears quite different from the bond developed when a therapist shares his or her feelings with a patient, in order to provide a model, or to provide feedback on the patient's impact on others. (Bordin, 1979, p. 254)

The establishment of the initial trust is based on an empathetic and genuine interaction where the client feels understood and viewed with positive regard (Anderson et al., 2009; Baldwin & Imel, 2013; Heinonen & Nissen-Lie, 2020; Wampold & Imel, 2015). Importantly, therapist- and patient-rated alliance are found equally to be good predictors of outcome (Fluckiger et al., 2018). Client and extra-therapeutic factors account for about 40% of the variance in outcomes, including their level of distress, interpersonal functioning, and social support (Lambert et al., 2004). There is no identifiable source or doctrine that owns the concept or can speak with authority concerning the alliance; it is a common factor because it exists by a consensus (Horvath, 2018). Further, the role of the alliance is as important for the therapist as for the parent, coach, and teacher (Bordin, 1979; Graßmann et al., 2020). It would be interesting to investigate whether therapies with good outcome are characterized by high congruence between patient-rated and therapist-rated alliance.

The relationship between therapist and client is essential for change but insufficient to explain variance in positive outcomes (Laska et al., 2014; Tracey et al., 2014; Wampold & Imel, 2015). The therapist effect accounts for about 5% of the variance in psychotherapy outcomes (Baldwin & Imel, 2013; Heinonen & Nissen-Lie, 2020). Research informs us that the best therapists are able to create an adequate alliance with a range of patients, regardless of their personal characteristics (Wampold & Imel, 2015). This ability includes the willingness and capacity to adequately challenge maladaptive patterns, avoid being overwhelmed by own emotions, and maintain a steadfast focus on the tasks and goals—without being rigid (Folmo et al., 2019; Rønnestad, 2016). Interestingly, Baldwin and Imel (2013) reported that in naturalistic settings, 7 % of the variability in outcomes was attributable to the therapist, compared to 3% in clinical trials. One interpretation could be that clinical trials often have used protocolized methods, which would influence the therapist's flexibility and adaptation of the treatment to the individual (Wampold & Imel, 2015). In one psychotherapy study (Goldberg et al., 2016), the top 10% of therapists performed three times

better than the bottom 10%. Furthermore, professional self-doubt – not being overly certain of own efficacy as a therapist – is associated with clients’ therapeutic engagement (Nissen-Lie et al., 2010). Nissen-Lie et al. (2010) suggest: “Some therapists win, and some do not, independent of the method they use.”, challenging Rosenzweig’s (1936) proposed dodo-bird verdict.

Expectations in psychotherapy facilitate change in several possible ways (e.g., Wampold, 2021). The very act of seeking professional help is beneficial as it instills hope and expectations for remediation (e.g., Wampold & Imel, 2015). Clients will enter the treatment with their beliefs and understandings of their problems, influenced by the cultural understanding of their psychological problems. Typically, these beliefs are not adaptive as they have not allowed for solutions that benefit the individual. Therefore, of importance is offering an adaptive explanation for their struggles accompanied by suggestions of new ways to deal with their problems (Frank & Frank, 1991). Studies on placebo illustrate the importance of expectations and hope for outcomes (Enck & Zipfel, 2019; Howe et al., 2017). The strength of placebo studies is how this enables research to isolate the common factors, including the relationship between patient and doctor, the information communicated to the patient, the physical healing space, the therapeutic activities (tasks), and cultural beliefs about therapy and therapists (Wampold, 2021). Expectations can be facilitated by various aspects of the treatment but depend on the client’s acceptance of the provided explanation of the problems and the rituals and procedures anchored in the rationale (Frank & Frank, 1991; Wampold & Imel, 2015).

Absent a treatment, there can be no agreement about the goals and tasks of therapy and a crucial component required for creating expectations is missing. (Wampold & Imel, 2015, p. 59)

All effective healing practices involve the transmission of a culturally accepted “healing myth”, a rationale consisting of a cogent explanation and concomitant therapeutic actions (Frank & Frank, 1991; Laska et al., 2014; Wampold, 2021; Wampold & Imel, 2015). Further, given the considerable placebo effects in medicine, it seems that a crucial factor is also that expert therapists both master and believe in their own method: One “of the sacrosanct assumptions of a client is that their therapist believes in the treatment being delivered” (Falkenström et al., 2013, p. 10; Wampold & Imel, 2015, p. 120). Importantly, as we find no common-factor therapy in any culture; there is “no such thing as a ‘common factor’ treatment” (Laska & Wampold, 2014, p. 520), the therapeutic healing ritual needs to center

around an acceptable healing narrative, combined with adequate trust in the socially sanctioned healer. According to Frank and Frank (1991), the particular rationale needs to be accepted by the client and the therapist but need not be “true.” The rationale can be a myth in the sense that the basis of the therapy need not be “scientifically” proven.

However, it is critical that the rationale for the treatment be consistent with the world view, assumptive base, and/or attitudes and values of the client or, alternatively, that the therapist assists the client so that he or she is in accord with the rationale. Simply stated, the client must believe in the treatment or be led to believe in it. (Wampold & Imel, 2015, p. 48)

Recent research suggests that clients’ experience of therapy can be conceptualized as two factors, *confidence in the therapist* and *confidence in the method* (Finsrud et al., 2022). Confidence in the therapist comprises the clients’ experience of the therapists’ interpersonal skills and his/her ability to help and collaborate. Finsrud et al. (2022) suggest that clients do not differentiate between the therapist’s empathy and competence. Confidence in the treatment (i.e., method) refers to the clients’ experience of the treatment as a meaningful process, promoting expectations and hope for a desired outcome. Additionally, Finsrud et al. (2022) suggest that *confidence in the therapist* and *confidence in the treatment* are conceptually overlapping with two of the change pathways proposed in the contextual model (Finsrud et al., 2022). The first factor – confidence in the therapist – is associated with the changes stemming from the therapeutic relationship (personal bond of the alliance) with an empathetic and competent therapist. The second factor – confidence in the treatment – align with the client’s belief in the rationale/method, and expectations of the treatment to be helpful and assist their change process.

In a recent study, Sundal and Tobiassen (2022) propose that patients acquire different rationales and understand their change processes differently in accordance with the “healing myth” of the specific treatment approach. Their findings indicated that the change narrative reflected the acceptance of the therapist’s specific method and rationale, including the cogent explanation of why the client has previously struggled, how they could overcome their obstacles, and how the rationale facilitates change. Sundal and Tobiassen (2022) argue that the integration of the specific change narrative by the clients seemed an ongoing process beyond the termination of the therapy and underscore the importance of resonance between the therapist’s rationale and the client’s cultural beliefs. Notably, the study illustrated how the

culturally embedded change rationale creates different change narrative depending on the specific method (Sundal & Tobiassen, 2022).

## **2.2 Current state of research on common factors in coaching**

Here, a review of studies on common factors in coaching will be presented. As mentioned, coaching research is challenged by the heterogeneity of outcome measures, and the lack of agreement on how to measure and operationalize desired outcomes is evident in the coaching literature. As mentioned above, outcome can be rated by the coach, coachee, or organization and can measure change on organizational, team, or individual level. Research has suggested three broad categories of outcomes: 1) affective outcomes, including attitude and motivation, such as self-efficacy and perceived effectiveness of coaching, 2) cognitive outcomes, including new knowledge and self-organization, self-reflection, and self-understanding; and 3) goal attainment (results).

Research indicates that coaching is generally effective and associated with desired outcomes. However, studies investigating the effect of coaching on outcomes report largely heterogeneous effect sizes (Jones et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2021). Wang et al. (2021) examined the effect of psychologically informed coaching approaches and found that coaching effectively promotes desirable changes. Additionally, Wang et al. (2021) reported that the specific approaches were equally effective, in line with the dodo-bird verdict in psychotherapy (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Importantly, this suggests that specific coaching methods are equally effective in promoting desired.

Furthermore, research informs us that the alliance is associated with coaching outcome (de Haan et al., 2011; Ely et al., 2010; Graßmann et al., 2020; Visser & de Haan, 2010). O'Broin and Palmer (2008, p. 305) synthesized the working alliance between the coach and the coachee to the *“engagement in collaborative, purposive work within the coaching relationship, and is jointly negotiated and renegotiated throughout the coaching process over time.”* Graßmann et al. (2020) found a moderate robust relation between alliance and outcome. The alliance was found to be more strongly associated with affective and cognitive outcomes than with goal attainment (Graßmann et al., 2020). Further, Graßmann et al. (2020) reported that alliance was negatively related to unintended adverse effects of coaching. Studies including both coaches' and coachees' ratings of alliance imply that when coaches overestimate the strength of the alliance and that the coachees' rating of the alliance was more strongly related to outcome (de Haan et al., 2013). Importantly, research has indicated that

coaching facilitates goal achievement through the goals and tasks aspects of the alliance, and not the personal bond (Grant, 2013). In a recent longitudinal study, Molyn et al. (2021) reported that working alliance was a mediator between social support and outcomes. Interestingly, alliance was related to coachee ratings of “coaching effectiveness” and well-being but not goal attainment. Molyn and colleagues’ (2021) findings may imply that the working alliance is essential for affective outcomes and engagement in the coaching tasks and goals, which would be in line with Bordin’s (1979) conceptualization of the alliance. Interestingly, Graßmann et al. (2020) suggest that changes stemming from the alliance, such as increased well-being, “pave the way for achieving desirable coaching outcomes” (p. 39).

Research suggests that expert coaches are empathetic and able to establish a trusting relation (Gettman, 2008; Ianiro & Kauffeld, 2014; Ianiro et al., 2014; Ianiro et al., 2013; Jones & Spooner, 2006). Gregory and Levy (2011) reported that coachees’ rating of trust in the coach accounted for 75% of variance in alliance. In addition, similarity between the coach and coachee in terms of observed dominance and affiliation has been associated with coachee ratings of goal attainment and the coaching relationship (Ianiro & Kauffeld, 2014). However, the perceived similarity could reflect the coach’s ability to attune to coachees’ needs and preferences. Ianiro et al. (2013) observed that coaches’ willingness to challenge coachees in an empathetic manner was associated with goal achievement and working alliance. Additionally, qualitative research has underscored the importance of the coach exhibiting competence and strategic skills (Audet & Couteret, 2012; Gettman, 2008). Jones & Spooner (2006) interviewed seven “high-achiever” coachees and seven coaches. They underscored the importance of the coach’s ability to establish a professional relationship (as opposed to a friendship), the coachees’ perception of the coach displaying empathy and listening skills, and the coach’s flexibility to adapt goals and tasks to needs. Furthermore, the participants emphasized the coach’s willingness to challenge and provide feedback (Jones & Spooner, 2006). Qualitative studies have investigated common factors in coaching, such as the alliance (de Haan, 2019). However, there is a scarcity of qualitative investigations of change in coaching, specifically investigating the interactive nature of the alliance, coaches’ skillful application of their method and the coachees’ experience of their change process.

Research has suggested that coachees’ positive expectation for coaching is predictive of outcome (de Haan et al., 2011). However, research on expectations is challenging as expectations interact with other aspects of the process and are even found effective before the first session (e.g., Wampold, 2021). Findings from placebo research presented above, are likely to apply to the coaching field. Additionally, some studies have investigated the effect of

organizational support on the coaching process and suggest that organizational support is essential for coaching outcomes and experiences (e.g., de Haan, 2021; Schermuly, 2014; Schermuly & Graßmann, 2018). This underscores the importance of considering coachees' perceptions of organizational support. Hence, expectations for the coaching process may need to be explicitly addressed when negotiating goals and tasks of the coaching to decrease the risk mismatch between coachees' goals and their (perception of) their organizations' goal for the coaching. A possible danger of not addressing the (perceived) organizations' goals for the coaching could be that the establishment of the personal bond is negatively affected by mistrust and hence, becomes a barrier to the coachees' engagement in the coaching. It would be most interesting to see further research investigating how organizational support and culture may influence the coaching process.

To summarize this section, recent studies on coaching have investigated common factors (de Haan et al., 2013; Jones & Spooner, 2006; Molyn et al., 2021). Most research focuses on the coaching alliance (Graßmann et al., 2020). Similar to psychotherapy, research on coaching imply that the alliance is an important predictor of coaching outcomes (Graßmann et al., 2020). Some findings indicated that the goal and task aspect of the alliance account for more variance in goal achievement than the personal bond (Grant, 2013). Further, alliance was associated with increased well-being and engagement in the coaching, but not goal attainment (Molyn et al., 2021). Additionally, qualitative research has indicated the importance of the coach's strategical skills and application of the method (Jones & Spooner, 2006). Furthermore, the coaching field calls for investigations of coachees' experiences of coaching how change actually occur in coaching (Boyatzis et al., 2022; de Haan et al., 2013; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Molyn et al., 2021; Passarelli, 2015). A few qualitative and quantitative studies have investigated common factors in coaching, inspired by psychotherapy research (de Haan, 2019). More research is needed on common factors in coaching to see if psychotherapy research is applicable to investigate change processes in coaching.

### **2.3 Coaching approaches and theories**

The diversity of coaches' backgrounds and training leads to coaching being a pluralistic practice grounded in various theoretical approaches and techniques (Bono et al., 2009). Palmer and Whybrow (2018) identified 35 psychologically based approaches and integrative approaches used by coaches. The following approaches grounded in psychology were identified as the most prevalent: Positive psychology, cognitive behavioral, mindfulness,



solution-focused, and strengths-based. The present coaching is grounded in personality trait theory and positive psychology, assuming that strengths and weaknesses that assumed to be associated with personality typologies (specific trait combinations). Therefore, the coaching approaches mentioned are restricted to personality and strength-based approaches.

Personality psychology is concerned with understanding and describing individuality and individual differences (John & Robins, 2021). Personality refers to individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In coaching, personality theories and assessments are widely used, and the body of literature investigating personality in the workplace is massive and growing (Northouse, 2021). There is a lack of research on personality assessments and methods in coaching.

Personality typology assumes that personality can be described as categories comprised of individuals having similar personality attributes. The Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) is one of the most popular personality tools in the coaching field. MBTI is based on Carl Jung's theory of personality types (Myers et al., 1998; Myers & Myers, 2010). Jung suggested that by understanding what personality "type" they belonged to, one would be able to understand their behavior. Jung proposed that individual differences could be captured by introversion or extraversion and four paired "functions." Decades later, this was further developed into the MBTI questionnaire, which measures extraversion, feeling, judging, and intuition (Myers et al., 1998; Myers & Myers, 2010). These four dichotomies are organized into distinctive types as opposed to traits. Its popularity is not waning, despite being criticized for lacking validity and reliability (Stein & Swan, 2019). Another typological approach used in the coaching field is the Enneagram (Riso & Hudson, 1996), which proposes a typology consisting of nine archetypes that describe an individual's most dominant patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, as well as their motives and typical conflicts. Motives are conceptualized as the "focus of attention" and are based on unconscious patterns of internalized working models that stem from childhood and describe the typical way the individual copes with emotional suffering. The focus of attention overlaps conceptually with the idea of maladaptive schemas in cognitive therapy or object-relations in psychodynamic therapy.

Character strengths can be defined as 'positively valued trait-like individual differences with demonstrable generality across different situations and stability across time that manifest in the range of individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Harzer & Ruch, 2014). Character strengths measure individual capacity for thinking, feeling, and behaving in ways that promote benefits for oneself and others. It is a dimensional approach, which

captures which strengths are most salient to the individual and reflects what aspects of themselves they value. In practice, consideration of a person's profile of their twenty-four VIA (Values in action) strengths might help identify which of those strengths are most salient to them, which in turn can be used to explore and understand how to use this knowledge to increase well-being and self-awareness. Character strengths approach assists development in a variety of populations and contexts, such as workplace, military, health, and educational institutions (Bang et al., 2021; Boe et al., 2015; Freidlin et al., 2017; Harzer & Ruch, 2014).

Personality trait approaches aim to identify quantifiable dimensions that describe variations in human tendencies of feelings, thoughts, and behavior across situations and time (John & Robins, 2021). Most trait theories assume that the most socially relevant and important personality characteristics in a culture will be represented in the natural language. Trait theories are based on the idea that traits can be identified in people and that it is sufficient to describe them in meaningful ways (John & Robins, 2021). For decades, several personality theories have attempted to understand and describe individual differences in patterns of thoughts, behaviors, and feelings. Of the more influential personality trait models are Eysenck and Eysenck's (1991) three-dimensional model, Hathaway and McKinley's (1951) Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, and Cattell's (1946) 16 Personality factors. However, the Five Factor Model (FFM), also known as the Big Five, has been favored as a measure of personality and is currently the most prevalent taxonomy of normal personality variation (Widiger, 2017). The five personality dimensions of the Five Factor Model include neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. In some models, neuroticism is reversed and denoted as emotional stability. Later development has led to inclusion of six specific facets of each factor, capturing nuances within the factors (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Costa & McCrae define personality traits as *"endogenous basic tendencies that give rise to consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions"*. The definition emphasizes individual differences in personality traits. According to Costa and McCrae, personality traits have a biological basis, with most of the influence coming from stable traits and less of an environmental impact on personality traits (Costa & McCrae, 1999). A central point in the definition is that personality consists of inherent tendencies. Moreover, personality traits are considered endogenous and hereditary, which is an important reason why personality is considered so stable over time. Trait manifestations are called characteristic adaptations and are influenced by the environment. Research shows that personality traits are relatively stable over time and are a valid measure of individual patterning of thoughts, behavior, and feelings

(John & Robins, 2021). This has given rise to research into what the traits correlate with and, thus, what they can predict. People who score differently on personality traits are thought to be different in meaningful ways. Individuals with differing scores on traits will relate differently to their environments, which is believed to give rise to different life outcomes. A significant body of literature exists on personality and indicates that personality traits are associated with a variety of outcomes (John & Robins, 2021). To name a few: conscientiousness is linked to success in education, work, and health; openness for experience is predictive of years of education; neuroticism is a significant predictor of health outcomes; extraversion is associated with social support (John & Robins, 2021).

John and Robins (2021) argue that when interpreting these findings, it is essential that although individual differences in personality traits are relatively stable over time, they are not fixed. Furthermore, they argue that many people have the capacity to change their patterning of behavior, thought, and feeling. One way of changing the effect of personality patterning is psychotherapy or intervention programs (John & Robins, 2021). Hence, the associations between the Big Five and outcomes are neither fixed nor inevitable for the individual. Instead, they point to critical domains of behavior and emotion that the individual may target for personal development and change. This aligns with the coaching approach in this study, which uses personality assessment and the Big five model to promote change by offering the participants new understanding of themselves and their problems to plan strategies to cope with their patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behavior.

## **2.4 Mentalization and epistemic trust**

Mentalization is the ability to understand and interpret behaviors of oneself and others as expressions of intentional mental states such as feelings, wishes, goals, desires, or needs. It emerges from early childhood and develops through attachment relationships with primary caretakers. A history of safe attachment, including that the child feels understood and recognized, increases the trust in learning from another person when the knowledge passed on is reasonably credible (Fonagy & Allison, 2014).

An attitude of epistemic trust implies that an individual is available to take in knowledge from a trusted other and of personal relevance to their social world (Fonagy & Allison, 2014). Epistemic freeze is characterized by not being able to trust and take in the knowledge shared. Epistemic trust is developed throughout childhood through attachment to caregivers and sufficient care. Fonagy and Allison (2014) argue that epistemic trust is

necessary for an individual to take in information and use their learnings outside the healing context and in their social reality. They also propose that mentalization and being thought about, understood, and explored with the therapist creates mental space for thinking about oneself and enables social learning outside the healing context. Fonagy and Allison (2014) argue that through the implicit or explicit passing of a healing myth in therapeutic relations, the client's capacity to mentalize is increased through the experience of being understood by the therapist and the therapist's rationale. Epistemic trust is currently a hot topic, and some researchers question the concept's usefulness (Karterud, 2021).

Fonagy et al. (2019) claim that social learning is what makes psychotherapy work and is "the way in which any effective treatment is embedded in metacognitive processes about the self in relation to perceptual social reality" (p. 94). Though to open one's mind enough to create new neurological pathways, our channel of trust needs to be open and strong enough to integrate healthy influence from an outside source while at the same time not so open that we risk maladaptive impact. This could be called the "epistemic highway" (Fonagy et al., 2015). Epistemic trust relates to how well "individuals 'learn' or fail to learn about themselves and the social world" (Bateman et al., 2018, p. 45). Fonagy and Allison (2014) argue that mentalization and epistemic trust are common factors in psychotherapy. Mentalization and epistemic trust are a part of normal human development (Fonagy & Allison, 2014), and could be useful when investigating change processes in populations with high interpersonal functioning. In this thesis, the terms *mentalization* and *epistemic trust* assist the analysis and discussion of the coaching.

## **2.5 Purpose of present study**

Recent research primers and reviews have called for investigating coaching processes and the common factors as described in psychotherapy research has been suggested for the study of change in coaching processes (Boyatzis et al., 2022; de Haan et al., 2013; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Molyn et al., 2021; Passarelli, 2015). There is a scarcity of qualitative research on coachees' experiences of coaching and change. To the authors knowledge this is one of the first qualitative studies investigating the common factors in coaching.

The present study aims to investigate how the participants experienced the coaching process, the alliance, and the coach's application of the method. This includes an investigation of the different aspects of the alliance, as conceptualized by Bordin (1979). Secondly, the study investigates how the coaching influenced their understanding of themselves and others.

Thirdly, it aims to understand how the coaching affected them after the coaching. This included capturing their understanding of their change process and how they practiced their learnings from coaching.

### **3 Methods:**

#### **3.1 Sample**

The participating coaching unit was part of IESE (Instituto de Estudios Superiores de la Empresa, translated in English to Institute of Higher Business) business school, University of Navarra. Seven males participated and two females; all participants were between the ages of 35 and 55. All participants had higher education of 3+ years and were working as leaders with responsibility for employees in international corporations. All participants were executive leaders and managers. Seven participants had previous experience with coaching.

The participants were subjected to personality and ability assessment before the first coaching session. The length and time of the coaching varied, eight participants had four sessions, approximately 4–6 weeks in between each session. The participants were coached as part of leader training. One participant had seen the coach regularly over 3+ years. All participants saw the same coach. The coach in this specific coaching is a man in his 60's who had many years of experience. The coach works with participants at leading advanced management programs and other executive leadership programs at an international educational institution. His educational background includes professional coach training in London with Coaching Development Ltd, and he is an accredited coach by the International Coaching Federation. He is also a licensed administrator of the B5-Plus personality inventory. Additionally, he is the Lead Coach for an Advanced Leadership Program at Timoney Leadership Institute in Dublin. The coach has developed the approach/method in collaboration with Human Content, inspired by the Big Five Model of personality and experiences from executive coaching.

Human Content is a Norwegian company that has developed empirical and evidence-based personality and ability assessment tools, and integrated methods for coaching, leadership and team development, recruitment services and other organization development work. They certify and train coaches and other practitioners to use their assessments and methods. The network of Human Content certified professionals around the world provide coaching and leadership training, recruitment services, and other support to foster organization improvement to local and global customers.

### **3.2 Personality assessment**

Personality was assessed using the B5+, a 179-item inventory. The inventory is developed from measures of big five model of personality, with items mapping onto five broad dimensions (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience), as well as three specific facets for each dimension. The inventory is conceptually overlapping with other big five inventories. Measures of reliability and validity are reported acceptable (Anderssen, 2000; Moen, 2007)

### **3.3 The coaching process**

The coaching method has been developed by the coach in collaboration with Human Content. It builds on the assumption that individual differences can be measured, and that personality traits are associated with meaningful differences between individuals and their patterns of behavior, thinking and feeling. Additionally, based on their years of coaching experience, they suggest that trait combinations are linked to meaningful descriptions of preferences, strengths and weaknesses. Hence, the coaching approach combines decades of research on personality traits and their competence from years of coaching practice, and suggest specific typologies comprised of trait combinations. Typologies linked to social preferences/needs, comprised of Factor I and II, conceptually overlapping with extraversion and agreeableness. Factor III and IV, conceptually overlapping with conscientiousness and openness to experience, describes preferences of ways to work. However, it is beyond the scope of the current thesis to describe the possible typologies suggested in this approach.

The three core processes of the coaching process were conceptualized as “acknowledge – embrace – exploit”. This guided the coaching process. In the beginning of the coaching, the coachees were subjected to the assessments. Initially, the personality scores were used to explore and recognize their patterns of behavior, feelings, and thoughts. This included seeing how different personality patterns can both function as a strength, a watch-out and could be actively called up to compensate for watch-outs, depending on context/culture and participants goals. The coach worked toward the participants embracement of their unique patterning, while also challenging their understandings. Lastly, the participants engaged in reflection and tasks to “exploit” their personality, which was done by recognizing when their patterning was associated with wanted and unwanted consequences for themselves or others, reinforcing desirable strategies and practicing new strategies optimizing their fundamental

drivers. The coach aimed to teach the coachees a framework to understand themselves, others, and their experiences. In between every session, coachees were recommended to practice the strategies formulated in the coaching in situations that were experienced as challenging and that were identified as relevant to their personality patterning.

### **3.4 Recruitment and data collection**

Participants were recruited in collaboration with Human Content. The coach was asked to recruit coachees he perceived were responding to the coaching, as the aim of the study was to investigate how coaching had impacted the participants. The data collection was performed in a period of 6 weeks. During the preparation phase for the interview, we had meetings with the coach and with Human Content, with the intention familiarizing the author and the main supervisor with their specific application of the method. Before the interviews a semi-structured interview guide was developed, with the help of the supervisor. The duration of each interview was 35–65 minutes on Zoom. Eight out of nine interviews were conducted in one sitting, and one was conducted over two sittings.

An interview guide was developed for this study (see appendix D). The interview comprised two overarching themes: “how do you experience situations when you feel content or discontent about yourself (personality)” and “how did you experience the coaching?”. The aim of the interview was initially to investigate participants experiences with their personality, and how their personality affected the coaching. Considering that the participants had been in touch with the coach recently, and some participants had talked to their coach about the research project, the emphasis was shifted to how coaching had affected their self-understanding, and their experience of the coaching process. During the interview the participants were asked questions aimed at exploring their self-perception and experiences, and their experience of personality coaching.

In the beginning of each interview, the participant received information about the project, and was asked if they had questions about the project or the interviews. They were reminded of the information from the informed consent, including that their participation would not influence their relationship with the coach and that all information was confidential (see “ethical considerations” below). The participants were encouraged to give a detailed description of their experiences, emotional reactions, or reflections.

After the two first interviews, the interview guide was evaluated by AV and EF. Additionally, we watched one of the interviews, and EF gave feedback to AV on interview

technique, to increase possibility of interviews captured participants experiences and understandings. The interview guide seemed to cover the topics of interest. Hence, no changes were done to the interview guide. However, this evaluation resulted in prioritizing the questions about coaching in each interview, as this appeared to be important experiences for the coachees. The interview guide was used in a flexible way, attempting to follow the participant's narrative and skip the questions already covered. All 9 interviews, summing up to 7 hours of video data, were transcribed into about 65 000 English words.

### **3.5 Interpretative phenomenological analysis**

IPA as a qualitative method is concerned with detailed examinations of lived experience and how one makes sense of one's experience. IPA is rooted in phenomenological philosophy and hermeneutic theory about interpretation.

Phenomenological epistemology assumes the experience as the source of knowledge. Phenomenology is grounded in the work of Edmund Husserl (1859) and further developed by other philosophers, such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre (Heidegger, 1927, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sartre, 1956, 1960). A key point in phenomenology is that knowledge about "the thing itself" can only be acquired through understanding the individual's experience of the thing of interest. Phenomenology assumes that phenomena and experiences exist in their natural reality. Hence, the experience of the phenomenon of interest cannot be removed from its context and looked at as isolated objects.

Together with phenomenology, the hermeneutic tradition comprises the backbone of the IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutic was originally referred to as the theory of interpretation and has later been expanded to include theory of understanding. and argues that when we understand a phenomenon, our interpretations will inevitably be based on our knowledge. Hence, our knowledge affect - and is affected - by our own experiences and understandings. Without foreknowledge, one would not be able to understand and make sense of what is examined. IPA aims to interpret the phenomena of interest and recognize the dialogue between how our foreknowledge will affect and be affected by the phenomena of interest. Hence, the researcher's ideas and assumptions will influence the meaning-making process and will be influenced by the dialogue with the phenomena studied. IPA involves a "double hermeneutic" process, where the researcher is making sense of the participant making sense of a specific phenomenon. The hermeneutic circle captures this dynamic, non-linear process of moving between the particular participant, the material, and the researcher. To understand the "wholeness" of something, one needs to make sense of the "part", and to



understand the *part* one must make sense of the *wholeness*. Hence, the scientist will reflect on the data material in a circular process, engaging with the data in different ways to gain an as broad as possible understanding of the phenomena of interest, while also considering their own contribution (foreknowledge). The analytic process involves cautiously moving from the particular to the universal to find commonalities and differences across cases and producing patterns of meaning that reflect the participants shared experiences (Smith et al., 2009).

Another way in which the IPA involves a double hermeneutic is inspired by Ricoeur (1974), who distinguishes between two interpretative positions. 1) A hermeneutic of empathy, where the researcher attempts to reconstruct the original experience of the participants. 2) A hermeneutic of suspicion where the researcher uses theoretical perspectives from the outside to shed light on the phenomena. The latter is appropriate if it serves to make sense of the phenomenon of interest (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) advises the researcher to move between the understanding and questioning/interpreting. The researcher attempts to shift between empathetic interpretations and suspicious interpretation. The empathetic interpretations strive to understand how the specific person thinks, in his/her specific context, and make sense of a specific phenomenon (i.e., ideographic). The suspicious interpretations enable the researcher to investigate and question the participants' understandings, almost as a detective looking at something from different angles to acquire deeper understanding. Through connecting these findings to the existing literature, the researcher investigates how the findings can be understood in the context of existing research. However, the researcher ensures that the generalizations are grounded in the particular and ideographic details of the content. IPA provides a framework to underpin and structure the process of investigating the individual's uniqueness and guiding the journey from the particular to the general.

Before the analysis, I discussed with my supervisors whether thematic analysis or IPA would be more fitting with the data consisting of in-depth interviews about the participants' experiences. Although interpretation is a distinctive feature of all qualitative methods, IPA places particular emphasis on the depth of interpretations. The purpose of the interviews was to get rich and detailed descriptions of the participants' personal experiences. Of importance for the choice of IPA was how the method provides analytical freedom to interpret the phenomenon being studied. The phenomenological aspect allows the researcher to investigate the participants' understanding of their experiences, while the hermeneutics aspect allows the researcher to interpret their understanding. Additionally, IPA allows the use of relevant theoretical grounds in the analysis, and to investigate the findings in the context of existing literature. This was advantageous in terms of the thesis aiming for a fundamental investigation

of common factors in coaching. One may argue that important aspects of the common factors in coaching take place on unspoken or unconscious levels. Hence, the participants' understanding of their experiences may best be uncovered by maintaining an interpretive perspective, moving between empathic interpretations and suspicious interpretations. With my foreknowledge about psychotherapy research, I wanted to investigate the relevance of common factors in coaching. To maintain an open stance to the way the participants represented their experiences with coaching, the overarching research question was formulated as follows:

“How do leaders experience coaching, establishment of the alliance, the coaching method and the coach’s application of his rationale? How did the coaching affect them, during and after the coaching process?”

### **3.6 Ethical considerations and evaluations**

The national center for research data (NSD) approved the study (see appendix E). The participants received written and oral information about the project and its purposes. All participants signed a letter of consent before the interviews and were informed that they could withdraw their consent at any time before the data analysis. At the beginning of each interview, information was provided about the aim of the study. Participants were also notified that questions were welcome at any point and that feedback would be asked for at the end of the interview. They were reminded that the interview was strictly confidential, and that their participation would not affect their relationship with the educational institution, the coach, or Human Content. During the interviews, the informants’ reactions were evaluated, including how they appeared to be dealing with talking about more sensitive topics.

Whenever some resistance or hesitance was sensed from the interviewees, they were reminded that they were free to not talk about topics if they experienced it to be private or sensitive content. All interviews were conducted on Zoom and the recordings were handled as described in the NSD-approval. The files were kept in an encrypted cloud service, provided by the University of Oslo, in accordance with the NSD-agreement (see appendix E).

Confidentiality was ensured through de-identification of the interviews, and personal data was altered and anonymized (i.e., names of colleagues, workplace, toponyms). The citations used in the results chapter were edited in a way that ensured that the citation is comprehensible and readable, but that the content is not changed. Transcribing the interviews also created some distance from the interview process and gain a clearer view of the content of the interviews.

### **3.7 Personal and epistemological reflexivity**

According to Finlay and Gough (2008) reliability and validity of qualitative methods rely on credibility. Reliability concerns the credibility of the data collection, validity concerns credibility the interpretations and analysis of the data. Hence reliability and validity are understood differently in qualitative research than in quantitative research. The research is closely tied to the researcher and the participants, and it would therefore not be expected, or even wanted, that another researcher would find the same results in a different study. Credibility is however important for the study to have applicability to others in similar situations. To ensure validity and reliability, transparent communication about the research process and the researcher is necessary. This includes the researcher reflecting on the cultural and social context of the data collection and analysis.

My positionality in the research field is psychology. I am rooted in psychodynamic theory and method, with an understanding of needs, drives, and relationships as important for human nature. Additionally, my experience as a student therapist has been with patients, a population that is skewed towards higher degrees of distress and interpersonal dysfunction. As these processes can be assumed to share some features while also differing in their nature, this could have affected the process of collecting data and the analysis by directing my attention towards interpersonal patterns and problems. In addition to learning about psychopathology as part of my degree, I have acquired knowledge about normal development and psychology. This could have been beneficial, as I understand how psychological functioning is dimensional. I was as not familiar with the coaching field, and initially had limited knowledge about coaching processes. This could have influenced the interviews by being overly focused on the relation. I entered this process (more or less) convinced that the relation is the core change mechanism, which could have influenced my attention towards the relational content of the data, and bypass other important change mechanisms such as the method.

Espen Folmo is the main supervisor. He suggested to study personality coaching, in collaboration with Human Content and Thomas Løvenskiold. Espen Folmo has a background in MBT (mentalization based therapy), as well as being rooted psychodynamic psychology and eastern philosophy. Of relevance, Espen Folmo has a master's degree in coaching from INSEAD. However, in recent years he has worked as a psychotherapist. Espen Folmo suggested Erik Stänicke as the internal supervisor. Erik Stänicke is a clinical psychologist and professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Oslo, and he is grounded in

psychoanalytic theory and method. Espen Folmo and I arranged meetings with Thomas Løvenskiold (Human Content) and the coach, attempting to better understand how the theoretical approach and the personality assessments was applied in the coaching. This could have assisted the analysis, enabling the recognition of descriptions that possibly was anchored in, or echoed, the personality framework from the coaching.

All of the above could have influenced the research process. However, I strived to maintain reflexivity throughout the whole process, from planning to writing up the thesis. I transcribed the interviews and was most involved in the initial steps of the analysis, EF and ES were part of the later analysis and the overall interpretations in the manuscript. This ensured the validity of the findings. I did find that my way of thinking was changed throughout the analysis in the encounter and reencounter with the participants.

### **3.8 Data-analysis**

To guide the process, the analysis followed the steps suggested by Smith et al. (2009). The process included moving forth and back between the steps in accordance with the hermeneutic circle, hence, the steps were not followed stringently. This assisted the process from planning the interviews and the interview guide, through the data-analysis and to writing the results chapter. IPA underscore the importance of maintaining a reflexive approach during the whole process, considering how one's own prior knowledge and context may affect the research project.

The first step consisted of transcribing and reading the interviews several times. Transcribing enabled me to gain some distance from the interviews and see the content of the interviews more clearly. In order to stay close to the participants' experiences, this part of the process consisted of in-depth reading, re-reading, note-taking, and listening to the interview. The focus of this process was on the particular participants experiences and understandings. Espen Folmo and I discussed my initial impression, ensuring that the validity of the preliminary findings was kept.

In the second step, I read each interview several times and made descriptive comments close to the original text. Considering that the analysis included a large sample, some of the cases were analyzed in depth. The first and second step were inevitably intertwined, in accordance with the hermeneutic circle. During this step, Espen Folmo listened to one interview, and we discussed the initial impressions and thoughts. I was focused on the relation

between coach and coachee, reflecting my understanding of the relationship the most important change mechanism.

In the third step, a phenomenological investigation inspired by psychotherapy research was conducted. The descriptive comments were the basis of identifying emerging themes and codes in each case, both within each case and across cases. In accordance with using IPA with larger samples, the analysis focused on broader categories, which provided a foundation for building a hierarchy (Smith et al., 2009). To assist the analysis of the large sample, preliminary themes that were organized into themes based on the interview guide and content of the interviews: “personality at work”, “coaching experiences”, and “coaching insights”. Coaching experiences was divided into two broad categories: “personality framework” and “working alliance”. Inevitably, my pre-existing knowledge about psychotherapy influenced the focus. I was to some degree surprised by the participants experience of the method, and hence, my idea of the relationship as the main vehicle of change was challenged.

In the fourth step, the findings and descriptive codes were discussed with my main supervisor. This included making sense of the codes and synthesizing comments into themes. The themes and sub-themes were printed out to provide visual oversight of the material for each participant. During this step, a hierarchy started to emerge from the data, and the process continued to develop a map of the themes and organizing the sub-themes into clusters of common content. Espen Folmo and I discussed the subthemes and hierarchical structure. Themes were evaluated on whether they appeared important for the participant. Some themes that did not fit with the research question were discarded. During this stage of the process, my focus was shifted towards participants’ experiences with the method. This was a result of the participants emphasis on the method, evident in the data and across cases

The fifth step included finding common themes across study subjects, with common factors such as the alliance, strategic competence, and the healing “myth”/rationale in mind. Some participants descriptions captured the common experiences and differences could be seen in how clearly the participants verbalized and described their experiences. A couple of participants stood out. However, as I wanted to ensure that all participants were represented in the findings, this led to a new investigation of each case to ensure the validity of the themes and findings. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009) the representation of each theme across cases were counted (see appendix B) to ensure that the themes were sufficiently represented across the participants. This felt ensuring and led to an increased belief in the validity of the findings. Additionally, this ensured that the IPA’s idiographic commitment was preserved. I discussed the hierarchy with the supervisors, to ensure the validity of the hierarchy. I also

presented the themes to Thomas Løvenskiold, that helped evaluate whether the findings made sense with his experience and expertise on coaching.

The table below aims to illustrate the process from citation to meta-theme.

Citation	Preliminary code	Sub-theme	Theme	Meta-theme
<i>I think that I go back to the notes often to sort of remind myself of who I am. When there are times that I have tough decisions to make or trying to evaluate how a certain interaction went. The coaching was great. It's a basis for me to make some changes, but it's a bit of a process of evaluating how I did or also being cognizant of the situation that arises so that I can sort of affect my behavior, at the time even. But it takes time to get to where it actually is part of who I am.</i>	Goes back to notes to remind himself of personality insights/ narrative from coaching. "Remind myself of who I am"	4.1.1: Framework has given me mental space to think about myself	4.1: Learning a framework increased awareness and understand my experiences	4.: Explicit learning of new ways to understand my experiences and ways to deal differently with my struggles

Table 1. analysis process

In accordance with the idea of the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009), the analytical process consisted of moving back and forth between the data material as a whole and its parts. According to Smith and colleagues the aim of these step is not to follow the steps, but rather move dynamically between the steps (Smith et al., 2009). EF, ES and TL were consulted throughout the analysis to secure the validity of the findings. With time the results emerged from the data, and a hierarchy of themes was apparent in the data. This hierarchy was evaluated and changed until it captured the themes and subthemes of the interviews and to ensure it was sufficiently representing the participants' experiences. Themes were defined as recurrent when capturing at least 1/3 of the participants experiences in accordance with Smith et al. (2009). A visual overview of occurrence of the meta themes for each participant can be found in appendix B. In the presentation of the results, numbers are given in indeterminate language. "Some" refer to two to three participants, "several" refers to three to five participants. and "many/most" refers to six to eight participants. One refers to 1 participant, and all refer to 9 participants.

## 4 Results

From the IPA the following topics and meta-themes emerged:

### 1. Before coaching

- 1 Previous coaching experiences and beliefs affected the coaching
2. The coaching process
  - 1 A short-term process of learning and exploring the personality framework
3. Establishing trust in the coach and the method
  - 1 Establishing trust in the coach
  - 2 Personality assessment and framework provided a common focus, language, and understanding
4. After the coaching:
  - 1 Increased awareness and mentalization capacity
  - 2 Ongoing learning and integration of a framework providing a “holding space”

The recurrent meta-themes are hierarchically organized into meta themes, themes, and subthemes. In the presentation, subthemes are integrated in the presentation of meta-themes. The whole hierarchy is presented in the appendix A. Appendix B offer a visual overview of the prevalence of each meta-theme in each case.

#### **4.1 First topic: Before coaching**

The first topic and meta theme captured how previous coaching experiences influenced expectations for the present coaching.

##### **4.1.1 Previous coaching experiences and beliefs affected the coaching**

Several participants described their previous coaching experiences and how this had influenced their expectations and beliefs for this particular coaching. They expressed that they were hesitant and doubtful before the present coaching, as a result of their previous experiences and/or their general beliefs about coaching. David described his perception of his friends' coaching processes as follow: *“[the coaching] counterproductive because then it became a crutch for them as how I viewed it.”*

Several participants explained how previous coaching felt overly focused on the specific leader role, organization culture, and/or time. They perceived the coaching to be strongly applying a method or tool and that it lacked flexibility and relevance to their individuality and social reality. George's utterance illustrated how his role and work context was the main focus in the previous coaching: *“It was mainly about the here and now, in that previous time. And you, as a leader at that stage in that country and in that position, what you*

*need to do next.*” George experience exemplifies how some participants described the coaching as being restricted to (their perception of) their companies’ goals for their role as a leader. This led to a feeling of the coaching not being relevant to them as a person, and only aimed at enhancing performance of their role in accordance the culture and goals of the company.

Tom, a man in his 40’s who works as a team leader. He described several coaching and leadership training experiences, and also spoke about his experiences with sports coaching. He explained how he felt that both the sports and executive coaching was *recipe driven*. He described how he felt as not part-taking in the process, and that the coaching lacked agreement of goals and tasks for the coaching. He seemed initially hopeful of achieving his goals if he followed the recipe in previous coaching. He described that the coach instructed him on how he could work towards his goals, without considering his personal preferences, needs, and wishes. He experienced this as simplifying, and thus, not representative of his experiences and wants. Following, Tom looks back on his experiences with leadership training and coaching within his company:

Tom: I have had several [sports] coaches who were very recipe driven, so “here’s your recipe. Go out and do that. Come back to me next month and tell me how it was” [...] It took many years until I got coaching again [...]. When I joined my company, I was in this leadership program, and we had a little bit of a framework around us to give us some level of coaching. We had some leadership sessions that were very much programmed to coach us to the DNA of the company. [...] What I didn’t like was the cookie cutting aspect that you fit in this box. “You are an analyst, or you are a controlling person, or you are” ... putting a label on what characterizes you as an individual within a professional context and basically nurturing that for an extended period of time, “you are that person, and we will tailor the training to in that direction”. I never felt like I was a single thing like they wanted. No, let’s look at everything. Not one of these boxes fit me. I always felt like I belonged to multiple boxes at different periods of time, at different moments, for different purposes.

Tom’s utterance illustrates how some participants described previous coaching. This shows the limitations of coaching being (perceived as) too closely tied to the company culture and role. Furthermore, it illustrates the importance mutual agreement of goals and tasks. Tom explained that he always had a good relationship with his coaches. Hence, one could interpret



this as even when the personal bond is strong, the lack of engagement and relevance of tasks and goals created barriers for promoting changes. The citation also may imply how the acceptance of the rationale (method) relies on the coach's skillful application of the method and successful negotiation of goals and tasks. Furthermore, it may be understood as the method was too simplifying, and hence, not sufficiently comprehensive to explain human psyche.

In contrast, some participants described that they found previous coaching experiences helpful and were still in touch with their coaches, some described the relationship (i.e., personal bond) to be similar to a friend. They valued their relationship with their previous coach, utilizing them as a "*sparring partner*" and source of support. From their previous experiences with coaching, some participants explained how various tools had been helpful and important for their change process. The methods mentioned included the Birkman assessment, strength finder, systemic coaching, and mindfulness. Having experienced different approaches helpful implies that outcome does not rely on which specific tool or method the coach has faith in, but rather shows the importance of both coach's and coachee's belief in the method. Different specific methods may differ in their explanations for problems and in their suggestions of coping strategies. If the rationale is accepted by the coachee it may lead to desired changes and goal achievement in differing ways depending on the method.

## **4.2 Second topic: The coaching process**

### **4.2.1 A short-term process of learning and exploring the personality framework**

The second topic captured the participants' descriptions of the coaching process. Some participants spoke about the coaching process and described it in similar manners. However, different aspects were emphasized by the different participants. As mentioned above, most participants had 3-4 sessions with the coach, one participant a long-term relation with the coach. The initial coaching interaction was described as focused on getting to know the coachee, including the coach listening to and exploring their own understanding of their difficulties. Their goals for the coaching were also addressed. As part of the initial session the coachees' described their current context and their role and wants for their future career. A few participants also spoke about their upbringing and past. As part of the initial sessions, the participants were subjected to the personality assessment. This was followed by a feedback session. The feedback session appeared to include the negotiation of goals and tasks for the coaching, and to teach the personality framework. The assessment seemed to provide the

coach a map of potential strengths and weaknesses, which assisted navigation of the coaching process. After establishing a common understanding of the coachees' problems, the coaching sessions included a collaborative exploration of their patterning in specific situations at work. Between sessions, the participants were advised to practice awareness and reflection when situations evoked reactions or distress. Some participants took notes after encountering challenging situations and brought their notes to the next session. This enabled them to elaborate their understanding of their personality patterning with the coach and helped finding new strategies on how to deal differently. Together with their coach, they formulated specific "key insights", anchored in their personality profile. Insights concerned their strengths and weaknesses, and ways they could cope with challenges by accentuating their strengths. The key insights were linked to specific social contexts and roles, and their future career.

David is a leader in his 40s. He *was not sure what to expect* but hoped to increase his understanding of himself and started the coaching being *open-minded* and *curious*. He described his experiences with leadership training as unhelpful as a consequence of the application and use of personality assessment which felt narrowing and not generalizable to his role and/or social context. For David, the coach's willingness to provide feedback quite early in the coaching process seemed to foster trust in the coach. He described the coaching process as follows:

David: He got to know me first, then we did the test, and then we took the results, and he translated it for me. And we went through a bit of a process through those four sessions to really sort of identify what are my drivers, what are my weaknesses and strengths and things that is some sort of coping mechanisms for those weaknesses, and how to accentuate my strengths. And it was all relative to what I wanted to do with my life and where I was, and these sorts of things. So, it was very positive in that way. I took lots of notes and like I said earlier, it made me more cognizant of my behaviors and things that I needed to put more effort into. And I believe that I have changed from that. You know it's a process, but I feel like I've changed.

David's description of the coaching process reflects how several participants described the coaching. It illustrated how the coach used the personality assessment and framework to map out participants' struggles, resources, and coping mechanisms. As Tom and other participants, David emphasized how the coach considered his wants and his current situation.

### **4.3 Third topic: establishing trust in the coach and the method**

The third topic captured how the participants experienced the coach and the coaching method. and how the participants experienced the coach's application of his rationale as a meaningful way to frame and gather information to gain an understanding of coachees and build trust. Furthermore, it shows how the personality assessment gave the coach and coachee a common language for exploration.

#### **4.3.1 Establishing trust in the coach**

The first meta-theme of the third topic captured the participants' experiences of the establishment of the personal bond between coach and coachee.

As described above, some participants were hesitant as a result of negative experiences with coaching. However, despite this, the majority of the participants seemed to initiate the coaching with general high interpersonal trust. They seemed ready to acquire new perspectives and expected the coach to have knowledge of relevance to them and their life. This could be understood as reflecting the coachees' general high interpersonal trust, and expectations for the coaching. For most informants, it seemed as the personal bond with the coach was easily established. However, they still seemed to evaluate whether they could connect with and trust the coach during the initial interactions. David said: *"I think it takes a particular person and some connection. From the beginning he has set a very nice rapport, so I think that made it comfortable."* The personal bond seemed strengthen by the coach's genuine interest in helping them, and his ability to make them feel comfortable and accepted. Participants emphasized that they felt understood and seen by the coach. They emphasized the connection with the coach as important for their change process and for them being ready to engage in the tasks and goals suggested by the coach and the personality framework.

Additionally, for many participants the coach's skillful balance between following (exploring) and challenging the coachees' understandings seemed to foster and strengthen the personal bond. They expressed that the coach provided feedback and shared his perceptions and understandings in a tactful way. The coach's willingness to challenge their beliefs seemed to promote reflection and new understandings. This was illustrated by David's statement: *"He was also willing to just tell me how he perceived me through video. In a way that was feedback that I needed to hear, so that I could improve on those things."* Additionally, some participants underlined the importance of the coach considering the relevance when offering advice, opinions, or feedback. For some participants, it was important that the coach facilitated exploration of participants' own understandings of themselves and their problems.

Informants appreciated the coach's emphasis on understanding their perspectives before intervening or challenging their perspective, this seemed to increase their agency. This was well illustrated by Sam's statement: *"he usually doesn't give me the answers, he asks questions. Through the questions I think about what I would like and what I want, and that helps me to approach the situation."* This illustrates how the coach encouraged exploration of the informants' understandings of own needs and wants. For Sam, this led to an increased acceptance and validation towards himself. Unlike Sam, David highlighted the coach's willingness to offer feedback in the initial session. Not surprisingly, the coach's ability to adapt his approach depending on the participants needs and goals was highlighted by several participants. This demonstrates the importance of considering the relevance interventions and adapting the coaching to the individual needs, preferences, and goal.

Martin is a team leader in his 30s. He was subjected to the present coaching as a student at the education facility affiliated with the coaching. He was initially skeptical about the benefits of coaching as a result of a previous coach experience where the method and coach's strategical skills was a barrier for change and establishment of a sufficient personal bond. He expressed a high degree of trust in the present coach, which seemed to reflect the coach's application of the method. In the following citation he described the quality coach's characteristics and skills:

Martin: The quality [of the coach] for me is the genuine interest that someone has to help you, listen to you, and try to get the most important information out of what you're saying. So not being shallow, being really deep, and getting more and more of what you say, and not just getting the things on the top right. I think this is, for me, the most important quality is when you feel the right questions will come back to you. I have had sessions before that... I just felt that the guy asked me: "why, but why, but why why why?" Then it was not giving me any benefit from our discussions. The last coaching session I had was amazing [with present coach]. It was the most fruitful one. [...] Because it was someone really interested in understanding myself, catching the main points of what I was saying... He was really listening to me and going deeper on things and then asking me the right questions about it. That made me reflect on things that I wasn't reflecting on before.

Martin underscored the importance of the coach exhibiting both interpersonal skills and strategical skills and seemed shared by several participants. One may interpret this as the participants not differentiating between the relationship with the coach and his application of

the method. Martin's utterance about previous data-driven coach, implied that faith in method was influenced by the coach's strategical skills and interpersonal abilities. Hence, this implies the importance of the coach's empathy and listening skills, while also tailoring the method and activities to match the coachees' goals and preferences. Additionally, it underscores the necessity of the personal bond to be sufficiently strong for the tasks and the goals of the coaching.

The participants seemed to emphasize the personality assessment/framework over the personal bond. This may be because the interview and study were introduced as mainly investigating personality, which potentially influenced the participants to focus their answers. However, it appeared that the participants valued other aspects of the coaching and that these aspects were emphasized as important for their change processes. The participants' general high interpersonal trust seemed to assist the establishment of a personal bond. Hence, participants' acceptance of the personality framework and engagement in concordant tasks seemed to be at core of their change processes. As illustrated by Tom's statement when he asked about what differed from previous coaching experiences:

Tom: The method, recipe versus no recipe. Because, I had from a personal standpoint, always a good relationship with coaches.

#### **4.3.2 Personality assessment and framework provided a common focus, language, and understanding.**

The second meta-theme of the third topic is concerned with the participants' experiences of the personality assessment as a framework to explore and understand themselves within. The personality framework provided the coach with a roadmap to navigate, tailor and adjust the coaching to the unique person, situation, and relation with their coachee.

Several coachees expressed that personality feedback was experienced as relevant and a meaningful activity in the coaching. Additionally, they described that the personality feedback included the coach communication of the rationale (personality framework). For most participants, the personality framework seemed to capture and affirm their individual patterning of action, as well as their internal landscape of thoughts and feelings. The application of the personality framework provided a common language to explore and reach a shared understanding of their struggles, which guided their tasks in the coaching process. It

also was described as an efficient way for the coach to obtain information about the informants' perspectives. Tom described the coach's application of the framework as follows:

Tom: The process was a lot more individual centric, and just trying to comprehend and understand. Like "OK you're that, this represents you" and just with shades of gray that represents a person. "And now that fits in your job and how can you best leverage them in your career"? So, the representation and the distinguishing between different aspects of yourself, I think I found interesting.

Tom's utterance illustrates how the coach's application of the method led to a representational and nuanced personality framework. This view seemed shared by some participants. They described how the personality framework anchored the exploration of their personality patterning. The personality framework provided a common language and worked as a map that assisted the navigation of their inner terrain. Additionally, it assisted the negotiation of tasks and goals for the coaching. As the coach had several years of experience with leaders with similar problems as the participants, the personality framework also provided a meaningful way to suggest explanations of their problems and new ways to deal with their personality in their social context. Some participants underlined that their confidence in the method was enhanced as a result of the scientific and cultural acceptance of personality theories. The coach's application of the framework seemed to normalize and validate their experiences and reactions to specific situations. This was illustrated by Sam's utterance: *"some of the questionnaires and analysis that he has run with me. It definitely gives me confidence that I can do this kind of stuff [his job]."* David explained how the coach's application of the personality tool felt relevant and captured his patterns of experience.

David: OK, so when I get these personality things back... When you've been in business long enough, every company is going to bring you a new one. Whether you're a squiggly line, hawk, square or circle, or these sorts of things... That is all, I guess, useful in a way to understand yourself. I think it was more the coaching along with the sort of personality profile and the translation of that to my real world. Meaning, I already knew I was introverted, but it's like he said, that is a pretty generalized term. I can step up and be social and find some enjoyment in that, so it is more nuanced. Everything is more nuanced than these little boxes that people put themselves in. I think it was just more that it made it more real to my life instead of being very general. More specific than being general.

David's utterance reflects how several participants seemed to experience the coach's application of the personality framework as relevant and capturing their patterning of thoughts, feelings, and behavior without simplifying and forcing the person to fit into a narrow box or label. Importantly, they emphasized the coach's application of the method, illustrated by Tom's statement: *"Actually, it was not really a recipe, just like a bunch of ingredients on the table. And just like kind of exploring [the ingredients]"*. As Tom's citation illustrates, the coachees' seemed to emphasize the coach's empathy, strategic skills, and his application of the method. Martin's utterance illustrates how participants valued both the personal bond and the method (tasks and goals) of the coaching:

Martin: It was a matter of framework. It was a matter of bringing a little bit of science. Only these two points would not have made any difference if the guy was not himself, a good listener, and someone who can perceive things.

#### **4.4 Fourth topic: After coaching**

The fourth topic captured how the coaching affected the participants' understanding of their world and how they used this new learning and knowledge after the coaching. The meta-themes are inevitably to some degree overlapping, but sheds light on different aspects of their change process.

##### **4.4.1 Increased awareness and mentalization capacity**

The fourth meta-theme incorporated how coaching offered new ways of understanding themselves and their struggles through their acceptance of and engagement with the personality framework. Most participants expressed that they had gained new ways of understanding themselves and their struggles after coaching. This included an understanding of their past experiences and new ways of seeing their future. Several participants described that the personality framework was easy to recall after the coaching. They described the coaching with words and concepts reflecting the personality framework. Notably, the personality framework seemed to enhance their hope and expectations of improving their own performance in their role by dealing with their challenges differently.

The coach facilitated changes beyond the coaching sessions by translating the specific method to the participant's reality and teaching a new framework to understand their experiences in their social world. They valued information about what people with similar personalities experienced as "triggering" personality-related reactions and learning new ways

to deal with their reactions. Knowledge and information about why they struggled were highlighted by some participants to increase their acceptance of themselves.

The participants differed in their perceived outcome. Several participants highlighted specific key insights connected to their unique personality framework. All participants described that these learnings changed how they dealt with specific situations, made sense of their past, and thought about themselves in the future. They highlighted how the personality framework and exploration with the coach facilitated an increased consciousness and awareness of themselves in their social contexts and roles. This in turn made it easier for the coachee to cope with and evaluate specific situations at work and think more clearly about themselves and others. For Tom, the coaching was an opportunity for him to reflect about at himself in context and role. The coaching seemed to fulfill the lack of professional guidance throughout his career: *“Being confined to that box, your job, and not being guided along the way. [...] just reflecting [in the coaching], finding the right strategy forward, and getting some external ideas. It has been empowering. It has brought some clarity to my professional thinking.”* He emphasized how the coach taught him a new framework to reflect about himself and others, which in turn had increased his self-awareness. He continued describing how the personality coaching affected how he views himself and his context.

Tom: I think the main thing I took away is probably that whatever you want to do, you probably want to do something that aligns with the drivers you have, with the things that are very natural to you. If you don't then it's probably an uphill battle. I mean you can for sure flex, and you can learn and train yourself, but I think fundamentally whatever you're doing should be genuinely something you feel comfortable with.... at least a good part of what you're doing should be represented by your strengths. Also, the awareness that comes with it, understanding that I have some blind spots and I'm aware of them, and every once in a while, maybe if within those blind spots, I do something. Maybe it's worth apologizing, maybe it's worth exploring them a bit more in detail and seeing “where did I go wrong” [...] The general awareness about myself in the context of work. The personal “me”-part of the work environment. I think it is maybe that awareness that I had learned the most about, or that I took away.

Tom's experience of the coaching increased their understanding and awareness. He also emphasized how this has provided new ways to deal with his personality. This seemed shared by several participants. Some participants explained that their new understanding of



themselves had made them reconsider what they wanted for their future careers. They described how before coaching, they could see themselves in future jobs that consisted of being the face of their company and networking. However, after gaining a new understanding of themselves, including their needs and preferences, they decreased their list of jobs for the future. They described how they reflected on which jobs would fit their personality and what types of roles they could see themselves in the future, and decreased their want to aim for jobs that they saw as compromising their preferences and needs.

Tom: One that I remember was that network... I'm totally OK if I'm brought into a situation like a team meeting or a group interaction. I'm totally fine. I can perform in that context. I can even lead in that context. But I'm also 100% fine being alone and left alone. And the blind spot is that I might want that more than I want to take the lead. So, if you find yourself in a leading position, and that's your job, then it can be a bit of a blind spot. That the comfort zone tends to take you to the shadows, while you're expected to stay a bit more in the light.

Tom's utterance illustrates how some participants experienced how their new understanding of themselves was decreasing the catalog of roles they wanted for their future careers. Hence, one could argue that understanding how their personality-patterning could be evoked by different contexts. This helped them better see their needs and wants for their future.

Some participants explained how the coaching process had made them more aware of their influence on other people. They expressed that the personality framework helped them evaluate when their patterns could be affecting others. Furthermore, this increased their awareness and consideration of how others could differ in perspectives, mental states, and intentions. Sam said: *"I think it has actually helped me to have a perspective on how my boss thinks about things, and what she expects from me."*

Hanna is a leader in her 40s. She explained how positive experiences with coaches inspired her to obtain an education in coaching and that these experiences and the education have taught her to use a "coaching approach" in her job as a leader. She explained how this approach has helped with her communication skills as a leader. Furthermore, the coaching has taught her new ways to understand herself and increased her awareness of her needs, and coaching had helped to set boundaries to maintain a balance between work and personal life. She described how her experiences with coaching had led to increased awareness of differing mental states and how this affected her communication:

Hanna: The coaching has affected me in that way to get a clearer picture of myself. Because every human being has a bias. We all have a little box in front of us, consisting of experience and childhood, failures, and successes... We think that everybody sees the same in the world and things that happen, but it's not true. Even your partner, whom you see every day and every night, sees the world in a different color than you. It has helped me to see that every person has this little box... I often need to ask "do we have the same understanding? I see it like this. How do you see it? My understanding is that we now do this and that and that". [...] I try at the end of the day to do like a little mini-performance check and to say «my understanding is that you do now this and that and that" or I asked the employee to do this. When I started doing this, it was often a surprise because it was sometimes something totally different. You can end up in a conflict if you don't speak about it, you can burn energy or resources. I think that the coaching helped me to see that the world is different that everybody has a different focus and perspective on the world and that this is OK.

What Hanna described could be interpreted as the coaching leading to an increased mentalization capacity. This in turn has led to the participant to check-in more in on colleagues' understandings and perspectives. This view seemed shared by several participants. David said: *"I would go back to the notes or just think back to what some of these drivers are and what caused that. The more I do that, I have less of those uncomfortable interactions that come from those weaknesses."* David explained how the coaching made him aware of how his patterning may influence his social interactions, which seemed to lessen his distress and conflicts. He spoke about how insights into his blind spots, in his case being direct and socially dominant, led to an easier transition when moving jobs to a new country where emotional expression is more culturally accepted. This helped him recognize when and how his pattern of being direct was driving his behavior in ways that could negatively impact others:

David: People told me I was direct, but I never knew I was affecting people. I had no idea how much I was affecting people. Because usually, in America and in business, people aren't as emotional. But if I didn't know that and I came here, where people are pretty emotional, I would have made a wreck of the whole thing.

David's utterance reflects how several participants gained an increased understanding of themselves, which led to an awareness of how they affected others.

#### **4.4.2 Ongoing learning and integration of a framework providing a “holding space”**

For some participants, the learnings of the method provided them with a way to navigate, tailor and adjust their course at the time and/or towards future goals. The majority of the participants used words and described insights in accordance with their coach’s rationale and framework. Additionally, they described using their personality narrative to continue their self-developmental journey after the coaching. It gave them an inner room to reflect around themselves and others.

Most participants described key insights they had taken away from the coaching process. These insights were rooted in their personality scores. Insights included new ways of planning their week, how they could deal with specific situations, what they want for their future, or what context would best fit their unique patterning of preferences, wants, and needs.

Jonathan is a leader in his 40s. He was subjected to the coaching as part of a leadership program and started the process hoping to better understand himself. As a part of his process, he constructed a narrative of his past and linked this to decisions throughout his career and his personality scores. His narrative included a story about his father’s career and decisions and how this inspired his preferences and career choices. He emphasized how creating a narrative helped him see himself more clearly. He underscored how the personality framework helped him plan and strategize toward his goals in a way that aligns with his preferences, values, and needs:

Jonathan: I think that it has helped me have a better framework about my strengths and weaknesses and how to exploit those strengths and how to be more conscious of the limitations of my weaknesses... At the end of the day, we always need a little bit of a certain activation, and to readjust the reins to ward off, setting a route. And then depending on where you’re going, you need to do some readjustments. But setting that it was the “North Pole’-direction” is what we need. And yeah, the B5 was reasonable tool to understand the shape of this boat that I am and help me better target the type of North Pole that, based on the characteristics of that boat, I was ready to embark.

What Jonathan stated illustrates how some participants described that the coaching provided a framework and a language to understand themselves, and how this understanding has made it easier to think and maneuver his imagined future aligned with his understanding of himself/personality. David’s utterance illustrates how the integrative work was an ongoing process after the coaching:

David: I go back to the notes often to sort of remind myself of who I am, when there are times that I have tough decisions to make or trying to evaluate how a certain interaction went. The coaching was great. It's a basis for me to make some changes, but it's a bit of a process of evaluating how I did or also being cognizant of the situation that arises so that I can sort of affect my behavior, at the time even. But it takes time to get to where it actually is part of who I am.

## **5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Discussion of results**

The above results may be captured by four major topics. First, the findings highlight the importance of the relationship between coach and coachee, including the coachees trust in the coach. The IPA indicated the importance of the coachees' previous coaching experiences and attitudes towards the coaching/method, to foster (and bypassing barriers in establishing) a working alliance and positive expectations. Secondly, it signals the importance of tailoring the approach to the coachee, and thus increasing the possibility for the acceptance of the rationale. This includes the personality framework being made relevant to the coachees' (social) reality. The rationale, method or more specifically the application of the big five model, constituted a common cultural foundation for the coaching process. Thirdly, it exemplified how the applied personality framework, or the culturally accepted change narrative, was at core in the change process. Lastly, the personality framework typically fostered an ongoing learning and integration process after the coaching. As we remember from the introduction, the common factors approach comprises the personal bond, acceptance of the rationale, expectations and the goals and tasks congruent with the method/rationale. Hence, the topics are overlapping and will therefore be discussed

In the following, the first and second topic will be discussed. In general, the initial interaction between strangers involves a rapid process of judging whether one can trust another (e.g., Willis & Todorov, 2006). From psychotherapy research we know that an early alliance, typically measured in the third session, is predictive for outcome (Stiles & Goldsmith, 2010). In the coaching literature, the early alliance is typically measured in the first session and is also predictive of outcome (Graßmann et al., 2020). Similarly, the initial coaching interaction seemed essential for establishing sufficient trust. As David said: *"I think it takes a particular person and some connection. From the beginning he set a very nice rapport, so I think that made it comfortable."* As this is not a clinical population, David's

statement illustrates the expected high degree of initial trust. The establishment of a positive personal bond (Bordin, 1979) seemed to have been present almost from the onset. Unlike psychotherapy with more severe pathology (e.g., the presence of personality pathology), where low degrees of relational trust (e.g., epistemic trust) is an obstacle of establishing an adequate alliance, the alliance seemed established from the beginning, facilitated by the participants' general high degree of epistemic trust. Hence, it seems reasonable to assume that the coach would need to display severe lack of sufficient mirroring or otherwise fail to provide a sufficient supportive/psychological safe environment for the coachee to mistrust the socially sanctioned healer and his/her method. Given that the positive personal bond seemed readily available, the coachees' trust in the coach and acceptance of the method seemed at core of the coaching (i.e., change process).

By the participants descriptions of the coach, it seemed sufficient that the coach was showing adequate interpersonal skills and empathy to foster the alliance. This was illustrated by Martin's description of the quality of the coach as *"the genuine interest that someone has to help you, listen to you and try to get the most important information out of what you're saying"*. Martin's utterance aligns with psychotherapy research, indicating that the coach's interpersonal skills are important when establishing a sufficient personal bond in coaching. Martin continues: *"for me, the most important quality is when you feel the right questions will come back to you"*. The coachees' experience of the coach's technical skills seemed to be intertwined with the participants trust in the coach, as illustrated by Martin's utterance. The findings indicate that the positive personal bond facilitated the participant engagement in the coaching process. In fact, the overall results seem to indicate that the vehicle of change in this coaching process was expectations and acceptance of (and engagement with) the provided personality framework. Interestingly, the participants that described positive experiences with previous long-term coaching seemed to value the personal bond over the method. This could be understood as that the vehicle of change in the previous coaching process was more relational. If so, this would also reflect Bordin's (1979) initial tenet that various psychotherapies would put different emphasis on the three alliance components.

Recent psychotherapy research highlights the importance of skillful challenging of maladaptive patterns (Folmo, 2019). Participants underlined how the coach's interventions led to a different understanding of themselves and others. David's utterance exemplified how the coach's willingness to challenge the participants perspectives was fostering the alliance: *"He was also willing to just tell me how he perceived me through video. In a way that was feedback that I needed to hear, so that I could improve on those things."* Further, recent

psychotherapy research has suggested that epistemic trust is a part of the personal bond that develops as a result of adequate challenging or otherwise corrective experiences caused by the therapy. As the initial positive personal bond was present from the start of the coaching process, the participants emphasis on the method overshadowed the importance of the personal bond. This could be understood as the method reinforced the personal bond, or more specifically the trust in the coach and his method (i.e., epistemic trust). This highlights the importance of the coach being empathetic enough to be willing to challenge the participants views and/or offer alternative perspectives.

David's statement illustrates the importance of challenging the coachees' social reality, he spoke about his view of his friend's relationship with their coach: "*[the coaching] seemed counterproductive because then it became a crutch for them as how I viewed it.*" This underscores the importance of empathetic challenging to broaden coachees' perspectives. Hence, coaches who align with the coachees' perspectives in a non-directive, overly empathetic manner (i.e., collusion) are unlikely to promote positive changes (Passmore, 2020). It seems reasonable to assume that coaches who are reluctant to challenge and offer feedback, with perhaps the empathetic intention of avoiding ruptures in the alliance, would risk collusion and thus, no progress/change. The coach seemed to master the art of maintaining a sufficient personal bond and trust, while also challenging the participants understandings. Martin said: "*He was really listening to me and going deeper on things and then asking me the right questions about it. That made me reflect on things that I wasn't reflecting on before.*" Horvath & Bedi (2002) argues that "It is possible to like and admire someone who is nevertheless not working with you efficiently". The findings from the current study supports Finsrud et al's (2021) proposal that client's do not differentiate between their experience of the therapist's warmth and their technical skills.

One of the most critical components of psychotherapy is that the patient receives a culturally embedded explanation for their problems and a strategy to overcome them, both of which needs to be accepted. The therapist must also believe in own method, to instill hope and positive expectations. In the following we will discuss and connect the first, second and third topic. The big five provides a convincing framework for understanding personality. In Western culture personality theories/models, including personality big five, is a subject of interest in the popular psychology and media. This could be understood as personality theories being acknowledged as a "healing myth" for personal and professional problems. The presence in popular psychology and media may reflect how personality theories have gained

the trust and belief of the culture. The coachees in this study were subjected to coaching through a leadership program at an educational institution. They underscored that the credibility of the coaching context was important for their expectation and engagement in the coaching process. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the importance of the theoretical approach being based on science/research. This population was skewed in terms of education on “hard sciences” and seemed to appreciate the scientific rigor underpinning the big five framework. However, this does not imply that the big five framework could be for someone with a “soft science” background. It was also evident from the interviews that other methods had had a deep impact, echoing the finding from psychotherapy research that the most predictive factor for successful outcome is the method being accepted by the client. One could argue that the cultural acceptance of personality models and confidence in the coaching context increased the possibility of accepting and integration of the personality framework.

One major challenge concerning the development and application of theoretical approaches to personality is the reduction or risk of oversimplification of complex phenomena. This may result in so-called epistemic blinders (Hyman, 2010). As mentioned above, reification involves mistaking a mental abstraction or construct—*der ding an sich* (Kant, 1781) - with reality. Building models of the everchanging and strongly subjective phenomena residing in the human psyche is an extremely complex (almost impossible) endeavor. Despite criticism, the big five model, has at least somewhat succeeded in presenting a universally accepted model predicting behavior of assumed latent personality traits. One may argue that reification can freeze change processes and either result in negative stability or positive stability. When applying models in change processes, there is the danger of people identifying with the simplified category and may result in positive or negative stability or change. Røysamb and Nes (2016) suggest that experiences of well-being (eudaimonia) and ill-being differ depending on whether they evoke negative or positive emotions and promote changes or stability. Positive change, *well-moving*, is characterized as an experience of growth and self-development, engagement(wanting-system) and perceived opportunities for goal-achievement and mastering. States of negative change can be understood as *ill-moving*, and includes the perception of potential loss, threats, obstacles, and anxiety (avoidance system). States of negative stability, *ill-staying*, is characterized by psychological distress, such as experience of hopelessness, dysfunction, and little prospect for change. States of positive stability, *well-staying*, is characterized by experience of satisfaction, wellness, and goal-accomplishment. One could argue that the goal of the development and application of models aim for facilitating *well-moving*. However, if the model (framework) is perceived as too

simplifying and causal, it could lead to “freezing” the change process as a result of the possibility of “pegging” own problems on a label that provides an explanation (or excuse) for their dysfunctional patterning (well-staying). Another possible risk of applying models could be freezing change by constructing ill-moving (increased stress) or ill-staying (depression and hopelessness). This did not appear to be a problem in the current coaching, as participants seemed to either discard models that did not fit or only integrate the relevant parts or even tailoring the models to fit with their experiences and social reality. Some participants spoke about how their personality (framework) was not an excuse for interpersonal problems and rather facilitated self-acceptance/forgiveness, agency and increased awareness that facilitated hope for change.

Participants described how previous coaching was experienced as being “labeled” or forced into a “box”, and not relevant to their social reality. Some participants described previous coaching where they felt misunderstood by the coach and reduced to their model. David said this about the personality assessment in the present coaching: *“I already knew I was introverted but that’s - like he said - a pretty generalized term. I can step up and be social and find some enjoyment in that, so it’s more nuanced.”*. David’s statement illustrates how the coach skillfully applied the personality framework, while containing the dynamics and the nuances of the unique participants personality. David continued: *“Everything is more nuanced than these little boxes that people put themselves in. I think it was just more that he made it more real to my life instead of being very general. More specific, than being general.”* Addressing the experience in the current, one of the participants summarized this well: *“OK, you’re that, this represents you” and just with shades of gray that represents a person.*“ As mentioned earlier, when employing a theoretical model in change processes, it is important that the therapist believes in his/her method. However, there is a subtle balance between offering, and preaching the method, or the «healing myth». Hence, it is hard to standardize, or untangle, what is demanded of the expert coach/therapist to master the art of balancing these complex, interactional and contradicting processes required for a tactful application of an approach. It seems reasonable to assume that this challenge is proportional to the degree of clinical severity. Rejecting an unsuited framework may require a sufficient ego structure and high degree of ability to discern relevant from irrelevant external guidance. This could be equated to what Keagan denotes as self-authoring mind of his theory of adult human development (Kegan, 1982). The current sample, being skewed in the direction of high personality functioning, seems insufficient to follow such paradoxes further down the rabbit hole.



As outlined in the introduction, there is evidence that the alliance may facilitate change differently in different kinds of treatments (Bordin, 1979; Ulvenes et al., 2012). This was evident when participants compared their experience of the previous coach with present coach. In line with psychotherapy research, it seemed as the coach's empathy and warmth were important to facilitate the personal bond. During the initial interaction the coach's interpersonal skills and attunement reinforced the participant's general interpersonal trust. The interplaying nature of the personal bond and technical skills built and reinforced the foundation for further engagement in and learning of the personality framework. Martin spoke about how his experiences with a "data-driven" coaching process that left him hesitant and doubtful before this coaching. He explained how this coaching differed from previous experiences as follows *"It was a matter of framework. It was a matter of bringing a little bit of science. Only these two points would not have made any difference if the guy was not himself, a good listener and someone who can perceive things."* We know that the personal bond aspect of the alliance does not sufficiently explain the effect of psychotherapy (Laska et al., 2014). When Tom compared his previous coaching experience with the present coaching, he said that the main difference was: *"The method, recipe versus no recipe. Because, I had from a personal standpoint, always a good relationship with coaches."*

According to Psychotherapy research, expectations are at core of the change process (Wampold & Imel, 2015). Bordin (1979) theorized that the personal bond part of the alliance would be a product of goals and tasks set, and that the three components of the alliance interact, typically in a complex manner. The findings in this thesis support the importance of the context for creating positive expectations. Participants emphasized that the personality model was experienced as representing their entire personality structure and was made relevant to their social reality. They expressed that the coach's communication of the personality framework felt flexible, and that the coach tailored the method to fit with their experiences and understandings. When comparing the present method with prior coaching experiences, the participants expressed that the previous coaching was experienced as lacking flexibility and complexity. Tom described previous coaching and the coaching method as *"putting a label on what characterizes you as an individual within a professional context and basically nurturing that for an extended period of time"*. This illustrates the importance of the coach's ability to adapt the specific method/framework to the unique client. Tom continued describing his experience as follows: *"you are that person, and we will tailor the training to that direction"*. It seemed as the goals were strongly mirroring their leader role and/or organizational culture, and one could wonder if the method was tailored to the goals of the

company rather than to the individual. One interpretation could be that the participants experienced the previous coaching method as unengaging and less relevant to their social realities and their professional goals, which in turn would affect motivation to engage in the tasks and the framework in the previous coaching.

Tom's utterance about the involvement of his employee, illustrates how third parties could compromise the negotiation of goals and tasks: *"we had some [coaching] sessions that were very much programmed to coach us to the DNA of the company"*. Tom perceived that the goals of the coaching reflected the organization culture and/or its idea of the leadership role. He continues, stating that he did not like the *"cookie cutting aspect that you fit in this box."* Tom's statement reflects a typical dilemma in coaching, regarding the coachee taking ownership of his own change process and the involvement of the employee as a third party. This would also inevitably affect the very nature of the personal bond. While psychotherapy focuses on the improvement of the individual, coaching typically focuses on the role of the individual. Given a clear contract between coach and coachee, being coach as a role could also allow for the support from the overall organizational culture. However, the coaching process could also be limited by a strong mismatch between own and organizations preferences and goals. The coachee can also mistrust the coach in terms having a hidden agenda on behalf of the organization. Such agendas, hidden or not, may also influence the coach's ability to tailor and adopt the coaching process. In terms of the present coaching process, the big five framework (and also being an external coach) had an advantage in terms of not being specific for the coachees current role. The personality method offered an increased awareness of strengths and weaknesses without judgment or aiming to change the persons core preferences. The application of the big five framework was rather focused on how to best cope with their personality patterns given the social environment and their current role(s).

The personality framework was used as a common map to explore, analyze, and understand their personality terrain. The informants reported that they felt understood by the coach and resonated with the approach. Jonathan said: *"I think that it has helped me have a better framework about my strengths and weaknesses and how to exploit those strengths and how to be more conscious of the limitations of my weaknesses"*. The presented personality map provided meaning to their social terrain (experiences), which resulted in an increased awareness and mentalizing capacity. Despite the danger of reification involved in personality typologies (e.g., exchanging the map with the terrain), the participants typically reported that the map did not blur the vision of the terrain and that the process typically resulted in

increased agency (awareness, efficacy). Jonathan said: *“At the end of the day, we always need a little bit of a certain activation, and to readjust the reins to ward off/setting a route. And then depending on where you’re going, you need to do some readjustments.”* Jonathan’s statement reflected that the map helped him better navigate the terrain towards his (social) goals. The personality assessment seemed a fruitful starting point which constituted a common language (a model easy to catch at face value) and allowed the expert coach to offer strategies, activities and outlining typical blind spots and strengths. In line with psychotherapy research, the application of the personality framework fostered the participants engagement in tasks, which led to positive expectations, increased agency, and acceptance of themselves (Wampold & Imel, 2015).

Psychotherapy research suggests that the therapeutic relationship works differently in different approaches (Bordin, 1979; Falkenström & Larsson, 2017; Garred & Gough, 2021; Spinhoven et al., 2007; Ulvenes et al., 2012; Wampold & Imel, 2015). However, while cognitive approaches typically focus on explicit tasks and goals, psychodynamic therapy uses the relation itself as the primary change vehicle. In such treatments, corrective emotional experience, or new emotional learning between sessions, is assumed at the core of change. This will demand a deeper personal involvement, and hence, more of the personal bond aspect of the alliance. Cognitive approaches typically emphasize more concrete tools (e.g., maladaptive thoughts), and is assumed to create change through integration of new skills. Consequently, this type of treatment typically both fosters a different kind of relationship and demands less of the personal bond. The coaching seemed focused on generalizability of skills to other contexts and was explicitly focused on goals and tasks. Participants’ description of the change process and the method seemed similar to cognitive behavioral therapy tradition. The therapist typically uses the rationale to inform and apply pedagogical interventions and expects the client to rehearse new skills between sessions (Berge & Repål, 2015). Despite the necessity for the participants do be deeply invested in tasks and goals, the personal bond needs to constitute sufficient relational energy to ignite actual change (e.g., motivations).

The fourth topic concerned the participants descriptions of how the coaching affected them, and their continued change trajectory after the coaching. The IPA indicated that the coaching focused on learning the personality framework and practice mentalization (e.g., self-awareness, consciousness) of self and others in their social reality. The framework assisted the participants awareness of their personality patterning, and typically resulted in a new and *“clearer picture”* (understanding) of themselves. Tom emphasized how the coaching led to an increased awareness of his experiences in his work and leader role: *“The general awareness*

*about myself in the context of work. The personal “me”-part of the work environment”. It is maybe that awareness that I learned the most about”. This may be understood as an increased capacity to mentalize, and that the personality framework provided a holding space (Scharmer, 2009; Winnicott, 1953) that enabled further practice and reinforcement of self-awareness after the coaching. Tom said: ” [coaching helped to] understand that I have some blind spots and [if] I’m aware of them [...] maybe if within those blind spots, I do something. Maybe it’s worth apologizing, maybe it’s worth exploring them [...] and see where did I go wrong”.*

The personality framework enabled the participants to maintain a curiosity towards themselves and others when facing social challenges, which assisted their appreciation of how their behavior and thoughts may influence their experiences. David described how this increased understanding and awareness led to less uncomfortable interactions with others: *“I would go back to the notes or just think back to what some of these drivers are and what caused that. The more I do that, I have less of those uncomfortable interactions that come from those weaknesses.”* David’s utterance illustrated how the process he had been invested in led to changes in how the participants related to others. When the participants were provided a sufficient holding space (Scharmer, 2009; Winnicott, 1953) this seemed increased their curiosity towards others. David’s statement illustrates how he had become aware of a blind spot in terms of his impact on others: *“People told me I was direct, but I never knew I was affecting people. I had no idea how much I was affecting people.”* Other participants reported expanding their understanding of other, for example Hanna stated: *“I think that the coaching helped me to see that the world is different that everybody has a different focus and perspective on the world and that this is OK.”*, an utterance seemingly reflecting an increased mentalizing capacity.

For some participants an increased awareness of different viewpoints led to more frequently and successfully checking whether own understanding matched with that of others, illustrated by Hanna stating: *“It has helped me to see that every person has this little box. I often need to ask, ‘do we have the same understanding?’”* The big five framework explicates the vast differences in perspectives due to personality. This was also evident by how some participants had changed their goals for their future to better match their preferences with their role and context. This could be understood as reflecting the acceptance of own blind spots, and how aiming for roles (and social contexts) that would evoke less inner and interpersonal conflicts. They highlighted how the personality framework led to a clearer view of their contexts influence on their wellbeing. One may wonder how the emphasis on the

individual's responsibility could lead to illbeing in cases where their organizations culture did not allow or facilitate desired changes. However, as the participants seemed to have sufficient trust in their own experiences and in other people, one may assume that they would have the capacity to navigate this by reflection and/or seeking help.

Importantly, participants seemed to view the coaching as a starting point for their journey of change, through acquiring a map that could assist them on their journey towards their goals. It seems reasonable to assume that this short-term coaching did not result in the internalization of the personality framework but rather offered the informants a personality narrative that they could later refer back to and practice when their unique personality patterning were actualized in their social contexts. Participants referred to the key insights from the coaching frequently when they spoke about their experiences. As expected, their descriptions of themselves seemed to reflect their personality scores and the accepted narrative. David described how he practiced the skills and personality framework after the coaching: *"I go back to the notes often to sort of remind myself of who I am"*. As part of their ongoing integration work, it typically seemed that the informants continued to engage with the personality framework aiming for creating lasting changes (e.g., procedural learning, automatization). This clearly indicates that participants trusted the model even more due to its positive real-world impact. Recent psychotherapy research (Folmo et al., 2019) suggests that epistemic trust (i.e., the part of the personal bond not readily available) grows stronger when the therapist successfully focuses on tasks and goals, and in particular when skillful challenging of maladaptive patterns lead to positive observable change. David said this about the coaching: *"It's a basis for me to make some changes. But it's a bit of a process of evaluating how I did, or being cognizant of the situation that arises, so that I can affect my behavior, at the time even."* For a psychotherapy researcher it must be almost surprising to see the degree of integration work happening after only four coaching sessions. This reflects on the population, the method, the expectations, the alliance, and the level of expertise expressed by the coach. However, as Tom said: *"But it takes time to get to where it actually is part of who I am."*, illustrating how some participants viewed the coaching as a start of their change journey, and how further engagement in the personality framework was expected to lead to automatization and integration of their learnings from the coaching.

As we recall from the introduction, recent psychotherapy research suggests that the common factors and the method interact in complex ways to create different changes and/or change narratives in their clients (Sundal & Tobiassen, 2022). Typically, participants in the present study spoke about their change process in similar terms and language, reflecting the

cultural change narrative (big five personality) that they had accepted. One interpretation of this could be that the specific method resulted in a change narrative reflecting the specific approach of the present coaching. Similarities were evident in the way they describe themselves, and their use of words such as drives, blind spots, weaknesses, and strengths. Furthermore, commonalities were evident in their descriptions of how they could use their personalities' strengths to cope with their personalities' weaknesses. Another interpretation could be that these are common ways to describe patterning of human behavior, and that both their descriptions of themselves and their coping strategies reflected their understanding from before coaching. However, the participants seemed to have "bought into" the model. There are many ways to apply the big five framework. Thus, it seemed the method itself was insufficient to make sense of their change process but rather the way the rationale was applied. Hence, it appeared that the participants in this study had accepted the coach's unique application of the big five framework.

David: OK, so when I get these personality things back... When you've been in business long enough, every company is going to bring you a new one. Whether you're a squiggly line, hawk, square or circle, or these sorts of things. That is all, I guess, useful in a way to understand yourself. I think it was more the coaching along with the sort of personality profile and the translation of that to my real world.

From research on expertise in psychotherapy, we know that expert therapists outperform other therapists. Further, it is known that some therapists have no impact on their clients or even worsen their clients' suffering (e.g., Lambert & Ogles, 2004; Goldberg et al., 2016). One participant in this study accepted the rationale to the degree that he regularly checks his notes to further integrate the change narrative. This seemed to reflect the coach's application of the method and the acceptance of the personality framework. Such changes would be difficult, if not impossible, to unveil without performing depth interviews. Hence, it is an intriguing question whether the therapist effects are proportional with the degree of "pathology", and if one would find the same effect of the therapist on a positively skewed population.

To summarize, we have discussed how the relationship may facilitate change in different ways. Alliance as conceptualized by Bordin (1979), interacted with the method, and led to construction of a change narrative (Sundal & Tobiassen, 2022). This complex process was facilitated by the coach's tailoring of the framework to the unique individual, which was indicated to be of importance for participants' acceptance of the provided framework. The findings showed that effective change processes reflected the coach's willingness to challenge

the participants perspectives by giving feedback or by explicitly focusing on the goals and tasks of the coaching. This, in turn, appeared to strengthen the personal bond of the alliance. For the participants' invested in the coaching, the integrative work was an ongoing process, lasting beyond the last coaching session.

## 5.2 Implications

The findings in this thesis underscore the importance of offering a rationale that is accepted by the coachee, and that includes an explanation for their problem and tasks that can facilitate changes. Further, it indicates that the personal bond is important for acceptance of the rationale and illustrates how engagement in activities anchored in the rationale may increase the coachees' acceptance of, and engagement in, the provided framework. Furthermore, the findings illustrate how an acceptance of the change rationale can facilitate ongoing integrative work, that extends beyond the coaching and may result in lasting changes. This study demonstrates the importance of the expert coach's skillful application of the method consisting of techniques, interventions, and explanations. The method may inform the coach's decision making and enhance the effect of the personal bond. Moreover, the coach's belief in the method may be related to the coachees' acceptance and integrative work. The findings highlighted how the coaches' ongoing integrative work included referring back to the personality narrative. This could imply that methods that provide a representational framework for experiences, may facilitate lasting changes. This is an intriguing finding, and it would be most interesting to see future investigations of what characterize *bona fide coaching* or coaches skillful apply their method to the subject (making the "universal" subjective). Additionally, the current coaching is grounded in personality theory and research. This has resulted in development of a theory of personality typologies (trait combinations) based on years of observations and experience in coaching and working with organizations. It would be interesting to see further research on Big Five typologies. Importantly, research on the alliance, both in psychotherapy and coaching, often view the alliance as one construct and alliance are usually only measured once. However, as this study illustrates, the alliance is shaped by the method and could perhaps vary at different points in the process. This aligns with Bordin's (1979) conceptualization of alliance. This calls for further investigations of different aspects of the alliance in coaching (and in psychotherapy). Human change and psyche are unquestionable dimensional, and hence, "normality" and "abnormality" can be assumed to be overlapping. The findings in this thesis imply that both fields could benefit

from bridging the research fields for increased understanding of change process. It is reasonable to assume that the two fields overlap in terms of clients' needs, preferences, and degrees of functioning, and hence, the psychotherapy field could be informed by research on coaching.

### **5.3 Limitations**

There are several limitations that should be considered. Firstly, IPA is interpretative in its nature and the findings will hence be a result of, and limited by, the authors foreknowledge, interests, beliefs, and values. The author's theoretical biases, as well as the supervisors', will inevitably have influenced the direction of the thesis and is accounted for in the methods section. Another limitation may be that the sample consisted of an unequal number of males and females, there was only two females included in the sample. All participants were leaders or managers in global organizations. The sample size included nine leaders, which one could argue to be a small sample size. However, Smith et al., (2009) propose that 6-10 participants are a suitable sample size for an IPA, and hence, nine participants is considered sufficient. The small sample size, consisting of mostly male participants and other aspects of the design, may limit the generalizability of the findings in this thesis. However, while the goal of quantitative research may be to discover generalizable conclusions, one can argue that the aim of qualitative research is to develop new understandings that can inspire researchers and/or practice. The generalizability could be limited by the sample being skewed in the direction of high interpersonal functioning. Another possible limitation is the use of psychotherapy research on coaching processes. Populations of psychotherapy research are assumed to typically differ from coaching population in the degree of distress and levels of interpersonal functioning. However, this may be argued to be a strength as the thesis provides detailed account of the "high-achiever" coachees' experiences of coaching, and how the initial high interpersonal trust facilitated the alliance.

### **5.4 Conclusion**

This study suggest that the coach's tailoring of an evidence-based method resulted in changes through the engagement in and acceptance of the change rationale (personality framework). Findings indicate that initial high interpersonal trust facilitated the early personal bond aspect of the alliance. The personality assessment was the starting point for the communication of the personality framework and planning of tasks and goals in the coaching. Further



engagement in activities and positive learning experiences (a result of adherence to tasks and goals) was implied to increase the acceptance of the rationale and the personal bond of the alliance. The findings indicated that the acceptance of the personality framework led to ongoing learning and integration after the coaching. This impressive integration of the framework seemed to reflect the generalizability/universality of the framework, the scientific credibility of the method and the skillful application of the coach's comprehensive competence. In accordance with research on expert therapists, this reflected both the coach's competence, expert knowledge, and his ability to foster a strong working alliance.

This thesis supports Bordin's (1979) tenet that the working alliance is at core of all change fostering relations. One may argue that a common research ground could benefit both fields by linking evidence from research on populations with differing degrees of interpersonal functioning and difficulties-providing empirical support to both traditions. Findings also reflected of the cultural change narrative, and its congruence to their receivers' experiences and social reality. However, despite the merits of the method, there is no method without a relation.

## References

- Anderson, Ogles, B. M., Patterson, C. L., Lambert, M. J., & Vermeersch, D. A. (2009). Therapist effects: facilitative interpersonal skills as a predictor of therapist success. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 65(7), 755–768. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20583>
- Anderssen, T. (2000). *B5 - Operasjonalisering av Femfaktormodellen for personlighet. Begrepsvalidering av et nytt personlighetsinventorium til bruk i jobbseleksjon.*
- Armstrong. (2011). From the Editors: Continuing Our Quest for Meaningful Impact on Management Practice. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(2), 181–187. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMLE.2011.62798928>
- Association, A. P. (2015). *APA dictionary of psychology*. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/research/action/glossary.aspx?tab=16>
- Audet, J., & Couteret, P. (2012). Coaching the entrepreneur: features and success factors. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001211250207>
- Baldwin, S. A., & Imel, Z. E. (2013). Therapist effects: Findings and methods. In *Bergin and Garfield's handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (Vol. 6, pp. 258-297).
- Bang, H. (2013). "Organisasjonskultur: en begrepsavklaring." *Tidsskrift for norsk psykologforening* 50(4): 326-336. Retrieved from <https://psykologtidsskriftet.no/fagartikkel/2013/04/organisasjonskultur-en-begrepsavklaring>
- Bang, H., Nilsen, F., Boe, O., Eilertsen, D. E., & Lang-Ree, O. C. (2021). Predicting army cadets' performance: The role of character strengths, GPA and GMA. *Journal of Military Studies*, 10(1), 139-153. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jms-2021-0016>
- Bateman, Campbell, C., Luyten, P., & Fonagy, P. (2018). A mentalization-based approach to common factors in the treatment of borderline personality disorder. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 21, 44–49. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.09.005>
- Berge, T., & Repål, A. (2015). *Håndbok i kognitiv terapi*. Gyldendal akademisk.
- Boe, O., Bang, H., & Nilsen, F. A. (2015). Experienced military officer's perception of important character strengths. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 190, 339-345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.05.008>
- Bono, J. E., Purvanova, R. K., Towler, A. J., & Peterson, D. B. (2009). A Survey of Executive Coaching Practices. *Personnel Psychology*, 62(2), 361-404. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2009.01142.x>
- Bordin, E. S. (1979). The generalizability of the psychoanalytic concept of the working alliance. *Psychotherapy*, 16, 252-260.
- Boyatzis, R. E., Hullinger, A., Ehasz, S. F., Harvey, J., Tassarotti, S., Gallotti, A., & Penafort, F. (2022). The Grand Challenge for Research on the Future of Coaching. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 58(2), 202-222. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00218863221079937>
- Carrol, L. (1939). *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass*.
- Cattell, R. B. (1946). Personality structure and measurement. I. The operational determination of trait unities. *British Journal of Psychology*, 36(2), 88.
- Costa, P., & McCrae, R. R. (1999). A five-factor theory of personality. *The Five-Factor Model of Personality: Theoretical Perspectives*, 2, 51-87.
- Costa, & McCrae, R. R. (1992). Normal Personality Assessment in Clinical Practice. *Psychological Assessment*, 4(1), 5–13. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1040-3590.4.1.5>
- Crawford, Thana, L., Farquharson, L., Palmer, L., Hancock, E., Bassett, P., Clarke, J., & Parry, G. D. (2016). Patient experience of negative effects of psychological treatment:

- results of a national survey. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 208(3), 260–265.  
<https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.114.162628>
- de Haan, E. (2019). A systematic review of qualitative studies in workplace and executive coaching: The emergence of a body of research. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 71(4), 227. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cpb0000144>
- de Haan, E. (2021). The case against coaching. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 17(1), 7-13.
- de Haan, E., Culpin, V., & Curd, J. (2011). Executive coaching in practice: what determines helpfulness for clients of coaching? *Personnel Review*, 40(1), 24-44.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/00483481111095500>
- de Haan, E., Duckworth, A., Birch, D., & Jones, C. (2013). Executive coaching outcome research: The contribution of common factors such as relationship, personality match, and self-efficacy. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 65(1), 40-57. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0031635>
- Elliott, R. (2011). Qualitative Methods for Studying Psychotherapy Change Processes. In *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy* (pp. 69-81).  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119973249.ch6>
- Ely, K., Boyce, L. A., Nelson, J. K., Zaccaro, S. J., Hernez-Broome, G., & Whyman, W. (2010). Evaluating leadership coaching: A review and integrated framework. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(4), 585-599. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.06.003>
- Enck, & Zipfel, S. (2019). Placebo Effects in Psychotherapy: A Framework. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 10, 456–456. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2019.00456>
- Eysenck, H. J., & Eysenck, S. B. G. (1991). *Manual of the Eysenck Personality Scales (EPS Adult): Comprising the EPQ-Revised (EPQ-R), EPQ-R Short Scale, Impulsiveness (IVE) Questionnaire*. Hodder & Stoughton.
- Falkenström, F., & Larsson, M. H. (2017). The working alliance: From global outcome prediction to micro-analyses of within-session fluctuations. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, 37(3), 167-178. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07351690.2017.1285186>
- Falkenström, F., Markowitz, J. C., Jonker, H., Philips, B., & Holmqvist, R. (2013). Can psychotherapists function as their own controls? Meta-analysis of the “crossed therapist” design in comparative psychotherapy trials. *The Journal of clinical psychiatry*, 74(5), 482. <https://doi.org/10.4088/JCP.12r07848>
- Finlay, L., & Gough, B. (2008). *Reflexivity: A practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Finsrud, I., Nissen-Lie, H. A., Vrabel, K., Høstmælingen, A., Wampold, B. E., & Ulvenes, P. G. (2022). It's the therapist and the treatment: The structure of common therapeutic relationship factors. *Psychotherapy Research*, 32(2), 139-150.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2021.1916640>
- Flückiger, Del Re, A. C., Wampold, B. E., & Horvath, A. O. (2018). The Alliance in Adult Psychotherapy: A Meta-Analytic Synthesis. *Psychotherapy (Chicago, Ill.)*, 55(4), 316–340. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pst0000172>
- Folmo, E. J., Karterud, S. W., Kongerslev, M. T., Kvarstein, E. H., & Stanicke, E. (2019). Battles of the Comfort Zone: Modelling Therapeutic Strategy, Alliance, and Epistemic Trust-A Qualitative Study of Mentalization-Based Therapy for Borderline Personality Disorder. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 49(3), 141-151.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10879-018-09414-3>
- Fonagy, & Allison, E. (2014). The Role of Mentalizing and Epistemic Trust in the Therapeutic Relationship. *Psychotherapy (Chicago, Ill.)*, 51(3), 372–380.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036505>
- Fonagy, Luyten, P., & Allison, E. (2015). Epistemic Petrification and the Restoration of Epistemic Trust: A New Conceptualization of Borderline Personality Disorder and Its

- Psychosocial Treatment. *Journal of Personality Disorders*, 29(5), 575–609.  
<https://doi.org/10.1521/pedi.2015.29.5.575>
- Fonagy, P., Luyten, P., Allison, E., & Campbell, C. (2019). Mentalizing, Epistemic Trust and the Phenomenology of Psychotherapy. *Psychopathology*, 52(2), 94–103.  
<https://doi.org/10.1159/000501526>
- Frank, J. D., & Frank, J. B. (1991). *Persuasion and healing: A comparative study of psychotherapy*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Freidlin, P., Littman-Ovadia, H., & Niemiec, R. M. (2017). Positive psychopathology: Social anxiety via character strengths underuse and overuse. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 108, 50–54. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.12.003>
- Freud, S. (1915). *On the history of the psycho-analytic movement*. Norton & Company.
- Freud, S. (1916). *Introductory lectures on psychoanalysis*. Norton & Company.
- Garred, S. & Gough, E. M. (2021). Den terapeutiske relasjonen i DBT og MBT
- Gaylord, E. C. (1967). *Modern coaching psychology*. William C. Brown.
- Gettman, H. J. (2008). Executive coaching as a developmental experience: A framework and measure of coaching dimensions.
- Goldberg, S. B., Hoyt, W. T., Nissen-Lie, H. A., Nielsen, S. L., & Wampold, B. E. (2016). Unpacking the therapist effect: Impact of treatment length differs for high- and low-performing therapists. *Psychotherapy research : journal of the Society for Psychotherapy Research*, 28(4), 532–544.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2016.1216625>
- Grant, A. M. (2013). Autonomy support, relationship satisfaction and goal focus in the coach–coachee relationship: which best predicts coaching success? *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 7(1), 18–38.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2013.850106>
- Graßmann, C., et al. (2020). The relationship between working alliance and client outcomes in coaching: A meta-analysis. *Human Relations* 73(1): 35–58. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0018726718819725>
- Greenberg, L. S. (2007). A guide to conducting a task analysis of psychotherapeutic change. *Psychotherapy Research*, 17(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10503300600720390>
- Griffith, C. R. (1926). *Psychology of coaching: A study of coaching methods from the point of view of psychology*. Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Grover, S., & Furnham, A. (2016). Coaching as a Developmental Intervention in Organizations: A Systematic Review of Its Effectiveness and the Mechanisms Underlying It. *PLOS ONE*, 11(7), e0159137.  
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0159137>
- Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. (2014). The Role of Character Strengths for Task Performance, Job Dedication, Interpersonal Facilitation, and Organizational Support. *Human Performance*, 27(3), 183–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959285.2014.913592>
- Hathaway, S. R., & McKinley, J. C. (1951). Minnesota multiphasic personality inventory; manual, revised.
- Heinonen, & Nissen-Lie, H. A. (2020). The professional and personal characteristics of effective psychotherapists: a systematic review. *Psychotherapy Research*, 30(4), 417–432. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2019.1620366>
- Horvath. (2018). Research on the alliance: Knowledge in search of a theory. *Psychotherapy Research*, 28(4), 499–516. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2017.1373204>
- Horvath, A. O. & Bedi, R. P. (2002). The alliance. *Psychotherapy relationships that work: Therapist contributions and responsiveness to patients*. Oxford University Press: 37–69.

- Horvath, A. O., & Greenberg, L. S. (1989). Development and validation of the Working Alliance Inventory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 36(2), 223.
- Howe, Goyer, J. P., & Crum, A. J. (2017). Harnessing the Placebo Effect: Exploring the Influence of Physician Characteristics on Placebo Response. *Health Psychology*, 36(11), 1074–1082. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hea0000499>
- Hyman. (2010). The diagnosis of mental disorders: the problem of reification. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 6(1), 155–179. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.3.022806.091532>
- Ianiro, P. M., & Kauffeld, S. (2014). Take care what you bring with you: How coaches' mood and interpersonal behavior affect coaching success. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 66(3), 231. <https://doi.org/10.1037/CPB0000012>
- Ianiro, P. M., Lehmann-Willenbrock, N., & Kauffeld, S. (2014). Coaches and Clients in Action: A Sequential Analysis of Interpersonal Coach and Client Behavior. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 30(3), 435–456. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-014-9374-5>
- Ianiro, P. M., Schermuly, C. C., & Kauffeld, S. (2013). Why interpersonal dominance and affiliation matter: An interaction analysis of the coach-client relationship. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 6(1), 25–46. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2012.740489>
- Jarrett, & Ollendick, T. H. (2008). A conceptual review of the comorbidity of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and anxiety: Implications for future research and practice. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28(7), 1266–1280. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2008.05.004>
- John, O. P., & Robins, R. W. (2021). *Handbook of Personality*. Guilford Publications.
- Jones, G., & Spooner, K. (2006). Coaching high achievers. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 58(1), 40–50. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1065-9293.58.1.40>
- Jones, Woods, S. A., & Guillaume, Y. R. F. (2016). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 89(2), 249–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12119>
- Kant, I. (1781). Critique of pure reason.
- Karterud, S. (2021). Epistemisk tillit er et tvilsomt begrep. *Norsk Psykologtidsskrift*, 58(4), 289–291. <https://psykologtidsskriftet.no/kommentar/2021/04/epistemisk-tillit-er-et-tvilsomt-begrep>
- Kazdin, A. E. (2009). Understanding how and why psychotherapy leads to change. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 418–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300802448899>
- Kegan, R. (1982). *The evolving self*. Harvard University Press.
- Lambert, M. J. (2013). *Bergin and Garfield's handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (6th ed). John Wiley & Sons.
- Lambert, Bergin, F. J., & Garfield, S. L. (2004). *Bergin and Garfield's handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (5th ed). John Wiley & Sons.
- Lambert, M. J., & Ogles, B. M. (2004). The efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy. In, MJ Lambert (Ed.) *Bergin and Garfields handbook of psychotherapy and behavior change* (pp. 139–193).
- Lambert, M. J., & Ogles, B. M. (2009). Using clinical significance in psychotherapy outcome research: the need for a common procedure and validity data. *Psychotherapy Research*, 19(4-5), 493–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503300902849483>
- Laska, K. M., Gurman, A. S., & Wampold, B. E. (2014). Expanding the lens of evidence-based practice in psychotherapy: a common factors perspective. *Psychotherapy*, 51(4), 467.



- Laska, K. M., & Wampold, B. E. (2014). Ten things to remember about common factor theory.
- Linden, M., & Schermuly-Haupt, M. L. (2014). Definition, assessment and rate of psychotherapy side effects. *World Psychiatry*, 13(3), 306-309. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20153>
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (Vol. 22). London.
- Moen, T. R. (2007). An Examination of the Partial Ipsative and Work-Related Personality Test Shapes Admin: Reliability and Validity.
- Mohr, D. C. (1995). Negative outcome in psychotherapy: A critical review. *Clinical psychology: Science and practice*, 2(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2850.1995.tb00022.x>
- Molyn, J., de Haan, E., van der Veen, R., & Gray, D. E. (2021). The impact of common factors on coaching outcomes. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 15(2), 214-227. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2021.1958889>
- Munder, T., Flückiger, C., Leichsenring, F., Abbass, A. A., Hilsenroth, M. J., Luyten, P., Rabung, S., Steinert, C., & Wampold, B. E. (2019). Is psychotherapy effective? A re-analysis of treatments for depression. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 28(3), 268-274. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2045796018000355>
- Myers, I. B., McCaulley, M. H., Quenk, N. L., & Hammer, A. L. (1998). *MBTI manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Myers, I. B., & Myers, P. B. (2010). *Gifts differing: Understanding personality type*. Nicholas Brealey.
- Nissen-Lie, Monsen, J. T., & Rønnestad, M. H. (2010). Therapist predictors of early patient-rated working alliance: A multilevel approach. *Psychotherapy Research*, 20(6), 627–646. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2010.497633>
- Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage publications.
- O'Broin, A., & Palmer, S. (2008). Reappraising the coach-client relationship: The unassuming change agent in coaching. In *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners*. (pp. 295-324). Routledge.
- Palmer, S., & Whybrow, A. (2018). *Handbook of coaching psychology: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge.
- Passarelli, A. M. (2015). Vision-based coaching: optimizing resources for leader development. *Front Psychol*, 6, 412. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00412>
- Passmore, J. (2020). *The coaches handbook*. Routledge.
- Ricoeur, P. (1974). *The conflict of interpretations: Essays in hermeneutics* (Vol. 1). Northwestern University Press.
- Riso, D. R., & Hudson, R. (1996). *Personality types: Using the Enneagram for self-discovery*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Rosenzweig, S. (1936). Some implicit common factors in diverse methods of psychotherapy. *American journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 6(3), 412.
- Rønnestad, M. H. (2016). Is expertise in psychotherapy a useful construct. *Psychotherapy Bulletin*, 51(1), 11-13.
- Røysamb, E., & Nes, R. B. (2016). Genes, environments and core features of eudaimonic wellbeing. In *Handbook of eudaimonic well-being* (pp. 233-252). Springer.
- Sartre, J. P. (1956). *Being and nothingness*.
- Sartre, J. P. (1960). *Existentialism is a Humanism*.
- Scharmer, C. O. (2009). *Theory U: Learning from the future as it emerges*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- Schermuly, C. C. (2014). Negative effects of coaching for coaches: An explorative study. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 9(2), 167-182. <https://doi.org/10.1037/t42021-000>
- Schermuly, C. C., & Graßmann, C. (2018). A literature review on negative effects of coaching – what we know and what we need to know. *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 12(1), 39-66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17521882.2018.1528621>
- Smith, Larkin, M., & Flowers, P. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis : theory, method and research*. SAGE.
- Smith, & Glass, G. V. (1977). Meta-analysis of psychotherapy outcome studies. *The American Psychologist*, 32(9), 752–760.
- Snyder, C. R., Lopez, S. J., Edwards, L. M., Marques, S. C., Ruini, C., & Marques, S. C. (2019). Psychotherapy, Counseling, and Coaching. In C. R. Snyder, S. J. Lopez, L. M. Edwards, & S. C. Marques (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology, 3rd Edition* (pp. 0). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199396511.013.49>
- Spence, L. J. (2007). CSR and small business in a European policy context: the five “C” s of CSR and small business research agenda 2007. *Business and society review*, 112(4), 533-552. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8594.2007.00308.x>
- Spinhoven, Giesen-Bloo, J., Dyck, R. van, Kooiman, K., & Arntz, A. (2007). The Therapeutic Alliance in Schema-Focused Therapy and Transference-Focused Psychotherapy for Borderline Personality Disorder. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(1), 104–115. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.75.1.104>
- Stein, & Swan, A. B. (2019). Evaluating the validity of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator theory: A teaching tool and window into intuitive psychology. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(2), e12434–n/a. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12434>
- Stiles, W. B., & Goldsmith, J. Z. (2010). The alliance over time. *The therapeutic alliance: An evidence-based guide to practice*, 44-62.
- Sundal, T., & Tobiassen, A. H. (2022). The cultural change narrative as a core component of therapeutic change
- Tracey, Wampold, B. E., Lichtenberg, J. W., & Goodyear, R. K. (2014). Expertise in Psychotherapy. *The American Psychologist*, 69(3), 218–229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035099>
- Ulvenes, Berggraf, L., Hoffart, A., Stiles, T. C., Svartberg, M., McCullough, L., & Wampold, B. E. (2012). Different Processes for Different Therapies. *Psychotherapy (Chicago, Ill.)*, 49(3), 291–302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027895>
- Visser. (2010). Relating in executive coaching: a behavioural systems approach. *The Journal of Management Development*, 29(10), 891–901. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621711011084213>
- Wampold. (2001). *The great psychotherapy debate : models, methods, and findings*. L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Wampold. (2021). Healing in a Social Context: The Importance of Clinician and Patient Relationship. *Frontiers in Pain Research*, 2, 684768–684768. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpain.2021.684768>
- Wampold, & Imel, Z. E. (2015). *The great psychotherapy debate : the evidence for what makes psychotherapy work* (Second edition.). Routledge.
- Wampold, Mondin, G. W., Moody, M., Stich, F., Benson, K., & Ahn, H. (1997). A Meta-Analysis of Outcome Studies Comparing Bona Fide Psychotherapies. *Psychological Bulletin*, 122(3), 203–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.122.3.203>

- Qing Wang, Yi-Ling Lai, Xiaobo Xu, & Almuth McDowall. (2022). The effectiveness of workplace coaching: a meta-analysis of contemporary psychologically informed coaching approaches. *Journal of Work-Applied Management*, 14(1), 77–101.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/JWAM-04-2021-0030>
- Widiger, T. A. (2017). *The Oxford handbook of the five factor model*. Oxford University Press.
- Willis, & Todorov, A. (2006). First Impressions: Making up Your Mind after a 100-Ms Exposure to a Face. *Psychological Science*, 17(7), 592–598.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01750.x>
- Winnicott. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34(2), 89–97.



## Appendices:

### Appendix A: IPA Hierarchy

First topic: Before coaching		
Meta-theme	Theme	Sub-themes
Previous coaching experiences and beliefs affected the coaching	Beneficial experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Previous coach as a sparring partner and support, space for reflection</li> <li>· Interest or education in coaching/leadership</li> </ul>
	Barriers: previous experiences with coaching and leadership training made me skeptical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Lack of trust in coach</li> <li>· Negative coaching beliefs</li> <li>· Too concerned with my role or the specific organizational culture of my company (too specific to context)</li> <li>· The rationale/method was lacking flexibility (too “recipe-driven”) I felt simplified into a label, did not consider my individual characteristics and uniqueness</li> </ul>

Second topic: The coaching process		
Meta-theme	Theme	Sub-themes
A short-term process of learning and exploring the personality framework	Experience and description of the present coaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· He got to know me</li> <li>· Personality and ability assessments</li> <li>· Exploration and reflection about specific situations</li> <li>· Learning new coping-mechanisms</li> </ul>

Third topic: Establishing trust in the coach and the method		
Meta-theme	Themes	Subthemes
Establishing trust in the coach	I felt understood by the coach, the coach “gets me”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Confidence in coaching facility Coach established a safe space for exploration</li> <li>· Coach characteristics</li> <li>· Initial high interpersonal trust</li> </ul>
	The coach understood my problem, the coach “gets it”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Expert coach</li> <li>· Coach strategical skills</li> </ul>
Personality assessment and framework provided a common focus, language, and understanding.	Personality feedback was a meaningful task of the coaching process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Starting point for establishing understanding and exploration</li> <li>· Common language facilitated tasks and goals</li> <li>· Assessment was relevant and meaningful way to work</li> <li>· Captured central aspects of my experiences</li> <li>· Helped the coach to get to know me</li> </ul>

Fourth topic: After coaching		
Meta-themes	Themes	Sub-themes
Increased awareness and mentalization capacity	I understand myself better “I see myself more clearly”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Increased self-awareness/mentalization</li> <li>· Validation and acceptance</li> <li>· Deal with my personality</li> <li>· Constructing a narrative</li> </ul>
	I am more aware of how I affect others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Self-understanding led to understanding how others may have different mental states</li> <li>· Coaching have affected how I relate and interact with others</li> </ul>
Ongoing learning and integration of a framework providing a “holding space”	The personality framework facilitated self-awareness and provided a framework to reflect upon myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· I understand my wants for the future differently</li> <li>· I have acquired new tools</li> <li>· Framework gave space to think about myself</li> <li>· Insights from coaching</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Table 2, occurrence of themes across cases

Meta-theme	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.1 Previous experiences		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.1. Coaching process	x	x	x		x	x		x	x
3.1 Coach	x	x	x	(x)	(x)	x	(x)	x	x
3.2 Method	x	x	x (x)	(x)	x (x)	x (x)		x	x (x)
4.1 Self-awareness, understanding, mentalization	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Others	x		x		x	x	x	x	
4.3 Ongoing integration work	x	x	x	x (x)	x	x		x	x

Table 2: Meta-themes represented for each participant. “x” shows when theme is represented when talking about present coaching. (x) shows when represented when participants described previous coaching experiences.

## **Appendix C: Interview guide**

Could you tell me briefly about yourself and your background?

How would you describe yourself as a person?

Can you think of a specific situation at work when you've felt good with yourself? Could you describe what happened? (Probes: feelings, thoughts, behavior, surroundings, interpersonal)

Can you tell me about a situation at work that made you feel discontent with yourself? Could you describe what happened? (Probes: feelings, thoughts, behavior, surroundings, interpersonal)

Could you tell me about your experiences with coaching? (Previous and present)

- How did you experience the coaching? (probes: coach, method)
- What would you say was the most important you got from coaching? How has the coaching affected you?
- Other important experiences with coaching or experiences that have shaped you?

## Appendix D: Invitation letter and letter of consent

### **Invitation to participate in research project:**

“How does increased consciousness about personality affect the experience of oneself and others in work and personal life?”

This is an enquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to study how consciousness about personality affects one's life. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

### **Purpose of the project**

You are invited to participate in a research project on applied personality psychology. We are conducting research on personality and how knowledge about personality traits have affected you. The purpose of this study is to better understand how increased consciousness about one's personality affects work and personal life.

### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

The university of Oslo is the institution responsible for the project. Human Content provides B5-PLUS assessment results and clients who are interested in participating.

### **Why are you being asked to participate?**

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have experienced the B5-PLUS assessment and coaching with Alan McFarlane, licenced to use and debrief the tool.

### **What does participation involve for you?**

If you chose to take part in the project, we'll invite you to participate in an interview of approximately 45 minutes. The interview includes questions about your experience with taking a personality test and how this experience has affected your life. Your answers will be recorded on video and the interviews will be transcribed and analysed. We will also ask Human Content to share your B5-PLUS assessment results. Findings may be published in international journals, but it will be *impossible* to trace any information back you to.

**Benefits and potential risks**

There will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research study. The anticipated benefit of your participation in this study is that it will contribute to increased understanding of how consciousness experiences of personality.

**Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data**

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Records and data will be subject to and will follow guidelines by The University of Oslo and Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), which will ensure safe data collection and storage.
- All information will be kept confidential. Only research personnel involved in the research project will have access to the collected data. The information will only be used as part of this research project and according to the procedures described above. We will ask Roger Andersen (responsible for data management in Human Content) to share your personality test results.
- I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.
- Research information will be stored in a secure project area provided by TSD (services for sensitive data).

Participants will not be possible to identify in the results when the study is published.

**What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?**

The project is scheduled to end 30th of April 2023. After the study is completed, all collected data will be deleted.

### **Your rights**

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with University of Oslo, Data Protection Services has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Voluntary participation**

Your decision whether to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with Alan McFarlane, your coach. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time by contacting Alvilde Vinge, Espen Folmo or Erik Stänicke.

### **Where can I find out more?**

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- Espen Folmo (+ 47 921 [redacted]) Alvilde Vinge (+47 915 [redacted])  
12 087, [redacted]
- The Institute of Psychology can be contacted through Erik Stänicke, who will be responsible for data protection
- Data Protection Services, by email: ([personverntjenester@sikt.no](mailto:personverntjenester@sikt.no)) or by telephone: +47 53 21 15 00.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Espen Folmo**  
**(Researcher/supervisor)**

**Alvilde Vinge**

If you have any questions about the research project you can contact Alvilde Vinge (· )  
 or Espen Folmo (· )

## **Consent form**

I have received and understood information about the project “How does increased consciousness about personality affect the experience of self and others?” and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in an interview about personality and work
- ☐ for Human Content to share my personality test results with the researchers

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx.  
April 30th 2023

-----  
(Signed by participant, date)



## Appendix E: NSD approval

19.04.2022, 11:48

Meldeskjema for behandling av personopplysninger



### Vurdering

**Referansenummer**

877535

**Prosjekttittel**

"How does increased consciousness about own personality affect experience of self and others in personal and work life?"

**Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon**

Universitetet i Oslo / Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet / Psykologisk institutt

**Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)**

Erik Stänicke, erik.stanicke@psykologi.uio.no, tlf: 22845079

**Type prosjekt**

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

**Kontaktinformasjon, student**

Alvilde Vinge, Alvildevinge@gmail.com, tlf: 91512087

**Prosjektperiode**

12.04.2022 - 15.04.2023

**Vurdering (2)**

---

**19.04.2022 - Vurdert****OM VURDERINGEN**

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, hvis den gjennomføres slik den er beskrevet i meldeskjemaet med dialog og vedlegg.

**VIKTIG INFORMASJON TIL DEG**

Du må lagre, sende og sikre dataene i tråd med retningslinjene til din institusjon. Dette betyr at du må bruke leverandører for spørreskjema, skylagring, videosamtale o.l. som institusjonen din har avtale med. Vi gir generelle råd rundt dette, men det er institusjonens egne retningslinjer for informasjonssikkerhet som gjelder.

**TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET**

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige personopplysninger, særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om helse frem til 15.04.2023.

**LOVLIG GRUNNLAG**

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

For alminnelige personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a.

For særlige kategorier av personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

**PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER**

Personverntjenester vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen:

om lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål

dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet

lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet.

**DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER**

Vi vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

**FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER**

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemaleverandør, skylagring, videosamtale o.l.) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må prosjektansvarlig følge interne retningslinjer/rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

**MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER**

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilken type endringer det er nødvendig å melde:

<https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema>

Du må vente på svar fra oss før endringen gjennomføres.

**OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET**

Vi vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Kontaktperson hos oss: Anne Lene L. Nymoen

Lykke til med prosjektet!

**19.04.2022 - Vurdert****OM VURDERINGEN**

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, hvis den gjennomføres slik den er beskrevet i meldeskjemaet med dialog og vedlegg.

**DEL PROSJEKTET MED PROSJEKTANSVARLIG**

For studenter er det obligatorisk å dele prosjektet med prosjektansvarlig (veileder). Del ved å trykke på knappen «Del prosjekt» i menylinjen øverst i meldeskjemaet. Prosjektansvarlig bes akseptere invitasjonen innen en uke. Om invitasjonen utløper, må han/hun inviteres på nytt.

**TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET**

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til den datoen som er oppgitt i meldeskjemaet.

**LOVLIG GRUNNLAG**

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

**PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER**

Personverntjenester vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål

dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet

lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

**DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER**

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Personverntjenester vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

#### FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

Personverntjenester legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

Ved bruk av databehandler (spørreskjemaleverandør, skylagring eller videosamtale) må behandlingen oppfylle kravene til bruk av databehandler, jf. art 28 og 29. Bruk leverandører som din institusjon har avtale med.

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

#### MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til oss ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: <https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema>

Du må vente på svar fra oss før endringen gjennomføres.

#### OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

Personverntjenester vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!