**This article is published in**

****

**Reference:** Medlock, G.E & Charura, D. (2024) *On becoming a coaching practitioner- researcher: A duoethnographic study. The Coaching Psychologist 20 (1) p. 16-27*

**Abstract**

*Using a duoethnological approach, this paper synthesises the perspectives of two coaching practitioner researchers exploring questions of the epistemological and ontological foundations of coaching as an academic discipline and domain of professional practice. Initially, focus is centred on reflecting on the authors’ responses to two questions (1) How do my research interests and questions arise from my practice experience as a reflective coach or coach educator? and (2) How can I contribute to the development and impact of the coaching profession by integrating coaching practice and research expertise? Engaging with these questions through duoethnography, understood as a collaborative research methodology that promotes introspection and critical reflexivity, six themes were conceptualised as follows: (1) Pre-commencing the duoethnography process; (2) Beginning the duoethnography process and first phase of meeting; (3) Reflections on ontology of self and development; (4) The phenomenology of emergence in the coaching context; (5) Clarifying a personal coaching research agenda; (6) Reflection and commitments to forward/ future action. These themes support an argument for an existential-humanistic conceptual framework that contributes towards establishing coaching as an academic discipline and domain of professional practice. The article concludes by arguing that by personally engaging with questions of the ontology of self and ways of knowing oneself and others, duoethnography dialogue can contribute to the personal development of coaching psychologists and the professional evidence base of coaching practice.*

***Keywords:*** *Duoethnography, Coach Practitioner-Researcher, Coach research development.*

**Introduction**

The purpose of this co-authored article is to facilitate a community dialogue related to the process of becoming a coaching researcher. The article is centered on two questions that we posed during a keynote presentation of the BPS – Coaching Division Conference in London (2023) for all attending conference participants to reflect on:

1. *How do my research interests and questions arise from my practice experience as a reflective coach or coach educator?*
2. *How can I contribute to the development and impact of the coaching profession by integrating coaching practice and research expertise?*

These were questions that we as co-presenters grappled with over the course of two months of preparation leading up to the conference.

From the two questions noted above, and our duoethnograhy process we conceptualized six themes as follows:

1. Pre-commencing the duoethnography process
2. Beginning the duoethnography process and first phase of meeting
3. Reflections on ontology of self and development to
4. The Phenomenology of Emergence
5. Clarifying a personal specific coaching research Agenda
6. Reflection and commitments to forward/future action.

These six themes enabled us to formulate what we are conceptualizing herein this paper as a journey of ‘becoming a reflective coaching practitioner-researcher’. We assert that this journey is an idiosyncratic developmental process that each coaching practitioner can reflect on. Thus, we are framing in this paper with the view that coaching and coaching research are parallel activities of self-reflective practice, originating in the experience of discovery that occurs in coaching practice and that can be refined and investigated in more formal ways in coaching research.

**Why Duoethnography?**

In writing about our experience, we will use the convention of duoethnography to reference our work using “I” and “We” to refer to our respective experiences engaging with this material. In each case, we’ll indicate with parentheses which of us is speaking.

Gordon: As I understand it, duoethnography is a research methodology that breaks the frame of the traditional boundary between the researcher and the subjects of the research. As with all ethnography research, the researcher becomes immersed in the community being studied. As the two originators of this research methodology, Richard Sawyer and Joe Norris, describe the process: “we sought to the turn the inquiry lens on ourselves, not as the topic, but as the site of an archeological examination of the formation of our beliefs, values, and ways of knowing” (Sawyer and Norris, 2015, p, 1).

Sawyer and Norris provide a formal definition of the purpose and process of duoethnography that helped us clarify the purpose of our conference presentation – and the purpose of this article. In the words of Sawyer and Norris (2015, p.2):

*The purpose of duoethnography became for us not the finding of essence but the exploration of how life histories of different individuals impact the meanings they give to those experiences by employing multiple voices in dialogue…Four features [of duoethnography] that we consider central are its polyvocal/dialogic nature, the examination of life history as curriculum, the intent not to profess but rather to learn and change as the result of the conversation, and the importance of learning from difference.*

As a research methodology, it is ideally suited to situations where the thoughts, feelings, and activities of the researchers are themselves directly relevant to the research population and the questions being explored. In this case as co-presenters at the conference, we are both part of the data field. We are exploring the question of how our research interests evolve from our practice experience, and how we can contribute to the development and impact of the coaching profession by pursuing our research interests.

The overarching concern related to both questions was for me the sense that the coaching profession is now at an important inflection point where it is becoming what Tatiana Bachkirova refers to as a “reference discipline” (Bachkirova & Borrington, 2017, p. 338). That is to say, it is becoming a discipline which informs other disciplines, including clinical and counseling psychology, learning and educational theory and practice, human resource development, management and leadership studies, and other helping professions. It is also emerging as a discipline in its own right, with a uniquely pragmatic epistemology that allows for the integration of multiple practice perspectives (Bachkirova & Borington, 2017).

There is also a growing consensus that coaching as a profession is at a vulnerable inflection point in its history. The Thought Leadership Institute of the International Coaching Federation (ICF) recently called for more evidence-based research to more clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of coaching across a wide variety of contexts. Areas where additional research is needed included: (1)desired outcomes of coaching, (2) the process and mechanisms of coaching, (3) coaching for people from distinctive cultures, genders, and context, and (4) the competencies of effective coaching (Boyatzis et al., 2022). As coach training programs proliferate with only loosely defined quality standards, the need for clearly defined coaching education standards supported by evidence-based research is essential to the ongoing integrity of the profession.

Divine: I have engaged in and written on the duoethnography processes and encounters including regarding exploring difference, and diversity, and the notion of the colonizing archetype (Charura & Bushell, 2023). When the concept of colonization is applied to the coaching relationship, we can explore questions relating to the power dynamics in the coaching consulting room. The question then is how far is the consulting room a truly de-colonized space? What is being shared? What is non-negotiable (Charura & Bushell, 2023)? Our commitment should be to authentic encounter in which as coaches we enter authentic relationships in which we not only understand the coaching process thorough research evidence-based theory but also through managing power dynamics in the coaching process. Thus, for me duoethnography brings together elements of autoethnography, autobiography, self-study, and life history (Breault, 2016; Norris & Sawyer, 2004), exemplifies ‘power-with’ rather than ‘power-over’ other dynamics (Charura & Wicaksono, 2023), and can be an instrumental method in exploring difference and diversity (Charura & Bushell, 2023; Hills et al., 2023). Breault, (2016) noted that although duoethnography borrows from other qualitative methods, it is distinctive in its emphasis on the researchers as the site of the research and on the interacting narratives.

Gordon: I am struck by how your account of duoethnography underscores defining characteristics of the coaching process and relationship, including the focus on mutuality and the importance of authenticity in the coaching relationship. You also suggest a strong relationship between phenomenology and the research methodologies of auto- and duo-ethnography, focusing on the process of reflective lived experience. That’s something I would like to explore more in our dialogue.

Divine: Agreed. Phenomenology is definitely an inherent facet of this autobiographical process, reflecting on the researcher’s lived experience as they engage in their study.

We will now outline our process from when we started and consequently explore each theme, offering excerpts of discussion to exemplify the data and demonstrate the trustworthiness of our method.

**Getting Started**

Gordon: In our first meeting we discussed existential-humanistic approaches to coaching, focusing on notions of the self as a process of becoming (Maslow, 1971, pp. 40-77; May, 1953, 1983); Rogers 2004, pp.73-124) and the notion that individuals are responsible for creating their lives through their existential choices (Yalom, 1980, pp. 218-285). We also found the principle of emergence in classic grounded theory as a useful framework to analyze the dynamics of coaching as an emergence process (Wright, Wright, et al. 2022).

I was excited to discover that you were as interested and engaged in this existential-humanistic approach to coaching and therapy as I was. It helped to create an immediate bond and a focal point for our duoethnographic dialogue. I shared my interest in this area, currently centered around the person-centered approach of Carl Rogers and Gene Gendlin. I was interested in how Rogers described the client’s spontaneous process of becoming more genuinely and authentically themselves through the person-centered approach (2004, pp. 107-124). I was also struck by how Rogers viewed the self as an emerging process, rather than as an entity to be studied. It seemed to best reflect the emergence process that I observed in our coaching work.

You immediately picked up on this theme, which you framed as the study of the ontology of the self. You suggested that this focus was a fundamental contribution of the existential-humanistic approach to the field of coaching. I was delighted to find a partner who was so at ease in this conceptual territory.

I was also curious in that first meeting how you had been able to integrate your obvious emotional sensitivity that I sensed in your way of working with clients, with the theoretical sensitivity that was equally evident in your research work. I recall asking the question point blank: How did you become such a prolific researcher, when your passion and talent seems so clearly to be oriented toward emotional sensitivity in working with clients? It seemed unusual to me to combine those two qualities, though even in asking the question I sensed that I was also asking this question of myself.

Divine: In our first meetings I was deeply moved and touched, Gordon, by your curiosity and passion for understanding the process of how one becomes a coaching practitioner-researcher. For example, my ontological and epistemological positions that inform my research, teaching and practice are grounded in phenomenology, interpretivism and relativism. Thus, in line with this, I have conceptualized that from this positionality, no single reality or truth exists, but rather there are multiple realities, which are rooted in an individual’s lived experience and sense-making of their own realities and of phenomena (Smith et al., 2021). I am informed by perspectivism (Blackburn, 2017), which asserts that each unique personal experience and realities of a phenomena rely on one’s position and one’s viewpoint of it, which is subject to change and difference, if positioned differently. Hence, my research interests and questions arise from my practice experience as a reflective coach and coach educator from the position in which I am situated. This, for example, draws from my own position reflecting on my own ethnicity, gender etc. as a Black, middle-aged man. I am also drawn to considering the importance of difference and diversity in coaching practice and research. For example I am informed by Moodley’s (2005) description of diversity which incorporates seven dimensions, namely; age, gender, ethnicity, class, culture, sexuality, and (dis)ability; I am also drawn to Burnham’s systemic (2013) perspectives Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS framework, which relays difference and diversity from the lenses of Gender, Gender identity, Geography, Race, Religion, Age, Ability, Appearance, Class, Culture, Caste, Education, Ethnicity, Economics, Spirituality, Sexuality, Sexual orientation. Furthermore, as a Black British man of African Heritage, I value African philosophy of Ubuntu, which implies that as human beings we are all unique and are always ‘be-ing-becoming’ (Ramose 1999) and this then for me is in contrast to the Cartesian dictum which posits; I think therefore I am! Ubuntu can be understood as a philosophic hyphenated concept – ubu-ntu – comprising of two words ubu and ntu. The Ubu captures the idea of be-ing, generally or universally, before its manifestations in concrete form of reality or in particular entities – ntu (Ramose 1999). Ubuntu therefore maintains that “I am - because I belong”. Thus, my ontology of self as briefly noted here also links with my post-modernist philosophical tenet of dialectics in being able to hold and reconcile two positions, accepting the “both/and’’ rather than “either/or “positions (Charura & Lago, 2021). For example, the psychoanalytic, humanistic- existential schools of thought alongside African Ubuntu philosophy and Coaching theory. In my reflection of becoming a coaching practitioner-researcher- the concept of ‘be-ing-becoming’ is one I value as it helps me to see myself and others as continually in process [thus Ontological dynamism]. In response to you Gordon, It also illuminates the importance of being oriented toward emotional sensitivity, love and compassion in working with clients. I have written elsewhere about the importance of love in the consultation room (Charura & Paul, 2015), and I have been recently inspired by De Haan’s work on ‘Love over fear in helping conversations, as being the gift of coaching’ (De Haan, 2022). Ultimately then, ‘be-ing-becoming’ encapsulates the dynamic process of continual development of becoming a coaching practitioner-researcher.

Gordon: Your views on the post-modern mindset support the pragmatic mindset that Bachkirova describes as foundational to the coaching discipline. As we explore multiple perspectives in our dialogue, we can also explore the potentials for integration of our various positions with the intent to advance the coaching profession. This capacity for integrating multiple perspectives is one of the defining aspects of the pragmatic epistemology.

To that end, I’d like to focus on what I see as the central role of person-centered therapy in defining coaching practice, and specifically on the ontological and epistemological assumptions that inform both coaching practice and research.

**Carl Rogers’ Paradigm for Integrating Coaching Practice and Research**

Gordon: Carl Rogers has emerged for me as a paradigm of the integration of coaching practice and research. His person-centered approach is recognized as foundational to coaching practice, as Laura Whitworth adapted his work in the mid 1990’s to the emerging domain of coaching (Brock, 2009). She adapted Rogers’ framework as defining features of coaching practice, including respect for the autonomy of the client in determining the focus and direction of the coaching process, the qualities of empathic being-with the client and reflective listening, and facilitating awareness and actions that lead to a person’s becoming their more authentic self. For the purposes of this article, I refer to Rogers’ approach as Person Centered Coaching, as his principles and methods are not limited to the therapeutic context. As Whitworth and Carkhuff demonstrate, Rogerian principles apply to helping relationships beyond the domain of therapy (Brazier 1996; Brock, 2009, Carkhuff, 2009).

The principles of unconditional positive regard, accurate empathy, and practitioner congruence have been widely accepted and researched as foundational to facilitating individual’s personal growth and learning (Rogers, 2004, pp. 31-38). They constitute the basis of the experience of the working alliance in coaching, where the client feels accepted, accurately seen, and trusting of the person whom they experience as genuine and authentic. These qualities of the coaching alliance reflect the developmental processes of healthy attachment and being accurately seen and reflected by caregivers as foundational to development of a core sense of self (Kohut, 1977; Siegel, 1999, pp. 67-120).

This relationship also lays the foundation for the client to accurately observe themselves in the coaching process. As the coach reflectively listens to the client and shares observations, feedback, and questions to expand the client’s awareness, the client in effect uses the coach as scaffolding to observe themselves with accurate empathy and unconditional positive regard. This process strengthens the client’s observing ego and core sense of self as an implicit dimension of the coaching relationship (Cornell, 2013, ch.5).

For Rogers, this empathic way of being is more than simply a coaching competency. It is a way of being with others that has a quasi-spiritual dimension. He relates it to Martin Buber’s account of the *I-Thou* experience, whereby individuals experience one another in their profound individuality as persons rather than objects in an instrumental transaction (Rogers, 2004, p.55).

As we were discussing Rogers’ views on this empathic way of being, Divine shared the following citation from Rogers. I found it profound in its own right, and also providing a bridge between the more individualistic perspective of person-centered coaching and the collective perspective of Ubuntu philosophy and the concepts of being-becoming that we both have been exploring.

 *“I am closest to my intuitive self, when I am somehow in touch with the unknown in me, when perhaps I am in a slightly altered state of consciousness….when I can relax and be close to the transcendental core of me, then I may behave in strange and impulsive ways in the relationship, ways that I cannot possibly justify rationally, which have nothing to do with my thought processes. But these strange behaviours turn out to be right in some odd way: it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Our relationship transcends itself and becomes a part of something larger. (1980: 129)”*

This empathic way of being also informs Rogers’ approach to research and provides a paradigm for integrating coaching practice and research. He begins his research inquiry with the evidence of his practice experience to articulate how clients became more fully themselves in the coaching relationship. And based on his observations from his practice experience, he is able to design research to systematically clarify and refine the nature of the process and the fundamental principles of his therapeutic/coaching model. His account of the foundation of research in his personal experience of being-with clients is a recurrent theme throughout his classic work, *On Becoming a Person* (2004).

As a practitioner-researcher, Rogers developed an epistemology of empathy as a way of being that enables us to deeply know another human being. In an article entitled Toward a More Human Science of the Person, Rogers refers to the concept of “indwelling,” originating in Polanyi’s studies of personal knowledge, as an essential element of his approach to research. He describes the essence of this way of knowing as the capacity of the practitioner-research to “indwell” in the experience of being with the client/participant. In his words (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, page 285):

The scientist develops a mode of indwelling in the perceptions, or the attitudes, or the feelings, or the experience, or the behaviors of the participant. The knowledge gained from this deep empathic indwelling can then be organized in a logical and meaningful fashion, so as to yield new discoveries, new approximations to the truth.

One sees in this account the synergies between Rogers’ focus on the coaching relationship as an empathic way of being and the related research approach. These are not radically distinct ways of being and knowing. This notion of indwelling in the experience of the other is the process by which we come to know another person as a person, both in practice and research.

Rogers goes on to point another essential aspect of this research approach – “that there are no longer “subjects” of research, but “co-researchers,” “research partners,” “participants” (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, page 285). This reflects the position you have expressed, Divine, about breaking down the barriers between researchers and subjects and viewing the research project as a co-creative process. It also speaks to his point about the distinctive feature of coaching practice and research as a relationship of “Power-With” vs “Power-Over” as a defining feature of the coaching relationship.

This co-creative approach informed our decision to use the World Café approach at the coaching conference to begin engaging conference participants in exploring questions related to the integration of coaching theory and practice. (See article on that topic included in this collection.)

Divine: Thank you Gordon! I have found our dialogue inspiring, and what you have written here resonates with me and I too value Carl Rogers’ paradigm for integrating practice and research. I would however like to focus on a slightly different perspective. That is to begin here with a critique to the process of reflection as the backdrop to exploring one’s own journey, as I think it’s important and helpful in the journey of becoming a coaching practitioner-researcher. I draw here on specifically, Cushion’s (2018) analysis of the process of reflection which we exemplify through our writing process in this paper, but also which we identify as central in responding to the 2 questions we have proposed and been engaging with. Cushion (2018) invited us to consider different perspectives in the process of reflection, for example Dewey’s (1933) rational- technicist model of reflection that emphasizes a conscious search for solutions to problems, thus from this Deweynian reflective stance, as coaching psychologists our reflecting on research interests and questions may arise out of the problems and questions we have faced in practice. Then if we consider Schön’s (1983) description of technical-rationality as instrumental problem solving made rigorous by scientific theory and techniques where all propositions could be assessed through empirical observation or rigid rational analysis then this, illuminates what Schön (1983) argued, is a ‘positivistic epistemology of practice’ (p. 21). Then I would argue that coaching knowledge claims are only possible and testable through observation and experiment. However Schön (1983) further critique offers another perspective that proposes an alternative epistemology of practice that is ‘intuitive, personal, non-rational activity’ (Akbari, 2007, p. 196), an experiential-intuitive model where knowledge is tacit, in action, and does not derive from rational thought or ‘prior intellectual operation’ , and also includes reflection in action (Schön, 1983, p. 51; Cushion 2018). In line with (Cushion 2018) I therefore argue that it is important to immerse ourselves in coaching practice-based knowledge and to critique scientific or intellectual knowledge that is too theoretical or removed from the reality of coaching dynamics.

Furthermore, I argue that it is important to decolonize coaching knowledge and challenge the Eurocentric dominance in our reflections of its origins, and research evidence. This approach challenges its power, discourse as I have noted earlier and as I have written elsewhere through similar duoethnographic processes (Charura & Wicaksono, 2023). In my conceptualization of this decolonization process my joint focus related to the importance of managing ‘power-with’ rather than ‘power-over’ others in research (Charura & Wicaksono, 2023). The latter is synonymous with colonising dynamics in practices in which, for example, researchers focus on having their research questions answered, rather than on engaging with the diversity of world views/experiences that participants bring to the research process (Charura & Wicaksono, 2023). Additionally, I have also demonstrated my appreciation of duoethnography as dialogical research which contributes to professional development (Hills et al., 2023). This previous experience was key in helping me to respond to the question of how I contribute to the development and impact of the coaching profession by integrating coaching practice and research expertise.

**Eugene Gendlin’s Epistemology of Embodied Knowing in Person-Centered Coaching**

Gordon: I am continually surprised and delighted by the synergies I see in our lines of thought. You mention an “alternative epistemology of practice that is ‘intuitive, personal, non-rational activity’. . .an experiential-intuitive model where knowledge is tacit, in action, and does not derive from rational thought or ‘prior intellectual operation’. . .” Eugene Gendlin (1996, pp. 301-302) partners with Rogers to clarify a similar epistemology that underlies both the practice and research of person-centered coaching.

Gendlin focuses on what the coach and client are actually experiencing moment-by-moment in the session as the foundation of the coaching process (Rogers, 1980, p.141). He describes this flow of experiencing as including an embodied felt sense of what is going on in any given situation. This felt-sense represents a tacit embodied knowing of the total Gestalt of the situation, including the action-orientation of the participants. The process of articulating this felt sense in words serves to clarify the emerging meaning and the field of possible actions that can facilitate the client’s forward movement and growth (Gendlin, 1996, pp. 16-24; Cornell, 2013, ch. 1 ). Gendlin refers to this process as focusing, which is both a skill and a way of embodied knowing that informs what we come to know and who we become in the process.

The felt sense is not a primary feeling or physical sensation. It is a tacit embodied knowing of an immediate existential situation. The situational context can be the coach-client interaction, what is going internally for the coach or for the client, or the situation that the client is re-experiencing as they bring their concerns into the session. Gendlin’s research demonstrated that the client’s capacity to focus on this felt sense of what they are experiencing, moment-by-moment, is the most important factor in facilitating change and growth in the session (Cornell, 2013, Kindle location 113-13 of 5871). It is the experiential reference point for clarifying the meaning and emerging potential in any given interaction.

With respect to person-centered coaching practice and research, this “empathic indwelling” in one’s own experience and one’s connection with the client is the foundation for facilitating change. This is often referred to as coaching presence, as a process that occurs in the immediacy of coach-client interactions prior to the being able to fully articulate what is happening in the present moment (Cox, 2013, pp.11-26). By having a felt sense of what is happening with the client and internally with oneself, the coach is in a position to sense what is most likely to be effective in facilitating the client’s forward movement toward a more alive, creative, authentic expression of themselves.

Gendlin deepens Rogers’ epistemology of ‘indwelling’ in the life of another person by emphasizing the importance of embodied experience in this process. He describes many “avenues” whereby this can take place, such as focusing on one’s felt sense, exploring feelings, engaging in an interaction with the coach, enacting a situation from their life in the session, etc. (Gendlin, 1996, pp.169-180) The point is that an effective session requires that the client be actively engaged in a living experience in the here-and-now, rather than in a story about a situation or in a discussion ‘about’ an issue. As the coach empathically joins the client in their experiencing, they are able to co-create a shared experience that can facilitates the client’s emergence (and the coach‘s emergence) toward the self they yearn to become.

In one respect, each present moment presents itself as a novel experience which we can experience in all its richness, depending on our level of openness to the experience in the moment. At the same time, that felt sense of the present moment also instantly is cross-referenced with all the past experiences to which it is similar for any potential threats. From a neuroscience perspective, this felt sense is the integration of left and right limbic brain responses to the present situation – a perspective we are describing in an article in process as the “Interhemispheric Dance of Coaching.” The concept of interhemispheric dance means that both brain hemispheres of the client’s brain and both the hemispheres of the coach are in concert in relation to reception and action (Moss, 2014; Lux’s 2013)

In applying this experientially grounded, person-centered approach to coaching, which we refer to in our practice as Emergence Coaching, we focus not only on the process of becoming more fully oneself in the present moment, but also on the narrative shift that takes place as the client articulates the change from the self they had been – their habitual self that is conditioned by past experience – to the self they are becoming in the session. We focus on this narrative shift as a tangible outcome we look for in each session, as part of their redemptive narrative of who they are becoming (Adler et al., 2007; Pals, 2006). This process includes the development of an emerging vision of this new way of being and an action step they can take to integrate this learning between sessions. The need for clearly defined measurable outcomes of the coaching process is central to coaching practice and research, and this narrative shift is one of the signature measures of the emergence Coaching process.

**Integrating Perspectives**

Divine: I agree that being, or ‘be-ing-becoming’ more fully oneself in the present moment, is key! Thus, for me (Divine) in reflecting on the phenomenology of emergence viewed in both individual and relational contexts, I again draw from the considerations of the Ubuntu collective perspective of the We-Self as another dimension of this emergence process. I concur with the description of an attempt towards the articulation of the idea of reality within the confines of interdependency, interconnection, complementarity, mutuality and wholeness (Ramose, 1999). Ramose’s (1999), constitution of ‘be-ing-becoming,’ draws on a framework of whole-ness rather than from the traditional concept of ‘being and becoming,’ thus the hyphenated ‘be-ing-becoming,’ from this ubuntu ontological perspective represents reality and emergence as a continuous flow of the stream of existence and as a kind of dynamic fluidity in existence of We-Self (cf. Agada 2021, 9; Ramose 1999). In reflecting on the phenomenology of emergence viewed in both individual and relational contexts, I therefore view my becoming a coaching practitioner-researcher, as something that happens in relationship. In this case my emergence has been facilitated by being in such a dance with you Gordon, and thus have been able to articulate and clarify my own journey and consequently my research agenda. I do hope that our colleagues who will read this paper or join our community of research practice can enter similar dances with self and others too.

Gordon: I couldn’t agree with you more, Divine. Our dialogue has likewise helped me clarify my journey and coaching research agenda. One of our purposes in writing this article is to underline the point that dialogue among practitioner-researchers enriches the research process. Having a dialogue partner helped me clarify my own process of evolving from a practitioner focus to a researcher focus. It also enables me to see that there is a clear synergy between the process that informs coaching practice and the research methodology used to investigate the coaching process. As we reflected together on the underlying epistemology of coaching, I’ve seen more clearly that the evidence-base of experiential learning that takes place in the reflective practice of coaching is an essential grounding for the research practice.

 And at the same time, it is crucial to understand that the knowledge that we acquire through scientific inquiry is an outgrowth of the personal knowing that we develop through our own experience of learning and growing and the practice of coaching. That knowing becomes tacit over time as we develop coaching expertise, just as knowing how to ride a bicycle or drive a car becomes tacit with practice. In the same way, our personal knowing of ourselves and others, developed over the 10,000+ hours of indwelling in the coaching experience, informs the research questions we develop and the research methodologies we select to scientifically investigate those questions. This supports the proposition of Bachkirova (2019) that the underlying epistemology of coaching is indeed an experientially grounded pragmatism. In the final analysis, we are seeking to determine what works in what contexts in the mutual quest to know ourselves and others and to experience the fullness of life.

I (Divine) noted in concluding this process and paper what I reflected as an important contribution of this paper and process to myself but also for colleagues in the field:

Thank you, Gordon, for our meetings and duoethnographic encounters. Having the opportunity to reflect on my journey of becoming a coaching practitioner-researcher, is something I have deeply valued. In the U.K. we are at a time when myself and many of my colleagues in the division of coaching psychology who originally began their careers in other divisions of the British Psychological society and have to evidence how they developed their professional coaching practice within the field of coaching psychology. Standard 4. In the BPS (2022a) Accelerated route to Chartered status for Coaching Psychology, notes that applicants should be able to *“Demonstrate the ability to conceptualise, design and conduct independent, original research in coaching psychology or a closely related discipline that is of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline and merit publication”* (p.9). Furthermore, demonstrating achievement of the standards in coaching psychology includes the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship; as well as continuing to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches (BPS 2022b).

**Conclusion and commitments to forward/future action**

We started our process by asking two questions 1. *How do my research interests and questions arise from my practice experience as a reflective coach or coach educator? And* 2. *How can I contribute to the development and impact of the coaching profession by integrating coaching practice and research expertise?* Through our duoethnography process we conceptualized six themes which have enabled us through this article to exemplify how through a relational dialogical encounter and duaothenography process our research interests and questions which we are taking forward arose from our practice as reflective coaches and educators. What we offer here is a framework that contributed towards coaching research and practice continuing to establish itself as an academic and research discipline. By engaging with an ontology of self, coaching research areas and methods can be formulated to address specific niches and contribute even more to personal and professional evidence base. While it may appear time-consuming to engage in reflexive practice and duoethnography processes, spending the time to develop as coaching research practitioners will contribute to an evidence-based coaching approach. Our commitment is to engage other colleagues in a community of practice, and we have already invited colleagues through the last Division of Coaching Psychology conference, (2023) in London and a World-café approach to explore their own journeys of how they have become and are becoming coaching practitioner-researchers.

**References**

Adler, J.M., Wagner, J.W., & McAdams, D.P. (2007) Personality and the Coherence of Psychotherapy Narratives, in *The Journal of Research and Personality* 41 (2007) 1179-1198.

Agada, Ada (2021), “Nietzsche and Ramose on Being and Becoming: An Exercise in Cross-Cultural Philosophizing”, *Journal of World Philosophies* 6: 1-12 <doi:10. 2979/jourworlphil.6.1.01>.

Akbari, R. (2007). Reﬂections on reﬂection: A critical appraisal of reﬂective practices in L2 teacher education. *System, 35* ,192–207.

Bachkirova, T. & Borrington, S. (2017). Old Wine In New Bottles: Exploring Pragmatism as a Philosophical Framework for the Discipline Of Coaching. *Academy of Management Learning & Education 2019, Vol. 18, No. 3,* 337–360. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2017.0268

Barrett-Lennard, G. T. (1998). *Carl Rogers’ helping system: Journey and substance*. London: Sage.

Boyatzis, R.E., Hullinger, A., Ehasz, 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 2022, Vol. 58(2)* 202-222. Sage.

Brazier, D. (1996). The Post Rogerian Therapy of Robert Carkhuff, AMIDA TRUST Occasional Paper, access online at https://www.academia.edu/3663201/The\_Post\_Rogerian\_Therapy\_of\_Robert\_Carkhuff.

Breault, R.A. (2016). Emerging Issues in Duoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 29*, 777-794. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2016.1162866>

British Psychological Society, (2022a). *Accelerated route to Chartered status for Coaching Psychology. Applicant Guidelines Version 1.0.* BPS

British Psychological Society, (2022b). *Level 8 Standards for Coaching Psychology.* BPS

Brock, V., (2009). Coaching Pioneers: Nora Whitworth and Thomas Leonard, *International Journal of Coaching in Organizations*, 2009 7(1), 54-65.

Burnham, J. (2013). Developments in Social GGRRAAACCEEESSS: Visible-Invisible, Voiced-Unvoiced. In I. Krause (Ed.), *Cultural Reflexivity*. Karnac.

Carkhuff, R.R., (2009). *The Art of Helping*. Amherst, MA: Possibilities Publishing, Inc.

Charura, D. & Paul, S. (Eds.) (2015). *Love and Therapy in Relationship*. Karnac.

Charura, D., & Bushell, S. (2022). A Duoethnographical Exploration of Colonialism in the Cultural Layer of the Objective Psyche. *The Journal of Analytical Psychology, 68*(1), 27-47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5922.12878>

Charura, D., & Lago, C. (Eds.) (2021). *Black Identities + White Therapies: Race, Respect + Diversity*. PCCS Books.

Cornell, A.W. (2013). *Focusing in Clinical Practice: The Essence of Change*. NY: W.W. Norton & Co.

Cox, E. (2013). *Coaching Understood: A Pragmatic Inquiry into the Coaching Process*. SAGE.

Cushion, C. J., Armour, K. M., & Jones, R. L. (2003). Coach education and continuing professional development: Experience and learning to coach. *Quest, 55*(3), 215–230.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How We Think: A Restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process*. Boston, MA: D.C. Heath & Co Publishers.

Finlay, L. (2020). COVID-19 took my breath away: A personal narrative. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *48*(4), 321–339. <https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000200>

Gendlin, E.T. (1996). *Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy: A Manual of the Experiential Method*. NY: The Guilford Press.

Hills, J., Christodoulidi, F., & Charura, D. (in press). A Duoethnographic Study of Power and Privilege in Psychotherapeutic Space: Dialogical Research as Professional Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.*

Kirschenbaum, H. & Henderson, V.L. (1989). Toward a More Human Science of the Person, in *The Carl Rogers Reade*r. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Kohut, H. (1977). *The Restoration of the Self*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lux, M. (2013). The circle of contact: A neuroscience view on the formation of relationships. In J. H. D. Cornelius-White, R. Motschnig-Pitrik, & M. Lux (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary handbook of the person-centered approach: Research and theory* (pp. 79–93). Springer Science + Business Media. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-7141-7\_6](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/978-1-4614-7141-7_6)

Maslow, A.H. (1971). *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. NY: Penguin Books.

May, R. (1953). *Man’s Search for Himself.* NY: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc.

May, R. (1983). *The Discovery of Being: Writings in Existential Psycholog*y. NY: W.W. Norton & Co. Inc.

Moss, R.A., (2013) Brain-based views on psychotherapy integration: Clinical biopsychology. New Therapist Jan/Feb, 6-15.

Norris, J., & Sawyer, R.D. (2012). ‘Toward a dialogic methodology’. In *Duoethnography: Dialogic methods for social, health and educational research*, ed. J. Norris, R. D. Sawyer, & D. Lund, 9–40. Left Coast Press.

Pals, J.L. (2006) Narrative Identity Processing of Difficult Life Experiences: Pathways of Personality Development and Positive Self-Transformation in Adulthood, in *Journal of Personality* 74:4, August 2006

Ramose, Mogobe B. (1999), African Philosophy Through Ubuntu (Harare: Mond Books).

Rogers, C.R. (1980). The Foundations of a Person-Centered Approach, in *A Way of Being*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

Rogers, C.R. (2004). *On Becoming a Person:* *A Therapist’s View of Psychotherapy.* London, UK: Constable & Robinson, Ltd.

Sawyer, R. D. and Liggett, T. (2012). Shifting positionalities: A critical discussion of a duoethnographic inquiry of a personal curriculum of post-colonialism. International *Journal of Qualitative Methods, 11* (5), 628-651.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.* London, UK: Temple Smith.

Siegel, D.J. (1999). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are.* NY: The Guilford Press.

Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2021). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research*. (Second ed.) SAGE.

Sawyer,R. & Norris, J. (2015). Duoethnography: A retrospective 10 years after. *International Review of Qualitative Research, Vol. 8, No. 1, Spring 2015,* 1-4.

Yalom, I.D. (1980). *Existential Psychotherapy*. NY: Basic Books, Inc.

Wright, R., Wright, J., Medlock, G., & Zwell, M. (2022). Grounded Leadership, Emergence Coaching, & Classic Grounded Theory: An Action Research Study. *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal*, Issue 1, June 2022, Vol. 21.