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PROVOCATIVE COACHING

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis takes part in a project called HURMOS which is conducted by Oulu University and Oulu University of Applied Sciences in cooperation with nine local companies. The project aims to examine the use of humour in business environments and discover ways of utilizing it more efficiently. The topic of provocative coaching originated from commissioner's suggestion and was chosen due to authors' interest in human resource management and topic's relation to humour.

The objective of this paper is to give an insight to a relatively new and yet fairly unknown coaching method that exploits i.a. humour and theories such as reverse psychology. Provocative coaching is a coaching method originating from a psychotherapy orientation called provocative therapy, which was developed in late 1960's and has gained more awareness during the past few decades. The method consists of three key elements which are humour, warmth and challenging the client. Although it is still quite unknown approach among coaches in Finland, there is growing interest towards the topic. Since available information about provocative coaching is still quite limited, this thesis serves as a brief guide introducing the basics of this method.

The study is based on a systematic literature review and a few interviews. The aim of the research was to find out what is already known about provocative coaching, how it differs from traditional coaching styles, how humour appears in it and how does the use of humour affect coaching clients. For the theory base and background research of this thesis, references from a few authors specialized in provocative coaching were applied thorough the paper. In addition a couple of interviews were conducted to support the theories and to give different observations about the topic. All the interviewees are coaching entrepreneurs engaged in the HURMOS project.

The main findings of this study indicate that provocative coaching is still rather remote topic for Finnish coaches and range of information available is very narrow. However there seems to be interest towards the topic, yet further and more scientific research is needed in order to support the authors' conclusions discovered in this thesis. Provocative coaching differs notably from traditional coaching methods, and for professionals who are interested in provocative coaching it is important to notice that it can only be used as a supplementary tool and cannot be expected to benefit every client. Additionally humour that is an important part of this method, has several beneficial effects to coaching when it is used appropriately.

Keywords: business coaching, humour, provocative coaching, provocative therapy, HURMOS

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	BACKGROUND.....	7
3	BUSINESS COACHING	9
4	SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF PROVOCATIVE COACHING.....	11
4.1	Data collection.....	11
4.2	Evaluation of quality and rate of evidence	12
4.3	Contents analysis: Provocative coaching	13
4.3.1	The difference between provocative coaching and provocative therapy	14
4.3.2	Use of provocative coaching.....	15
4.3.3	The three key elements of provocative coaching	16
4.3.4	The six dimensions of coaching: provocative vs. traditional coaching.....	18
4.3.5	Provocative starter kit	20
4.3.6	Client's inner processes	23
5	HUMOUR'S INFLUENCE ON COACHING.....	26
5.1	Study of positive emotions.....	26
5.2	Humour in business environment.....	27
5.3	Humour in coaching	30
5.4	Cultural differences and hazards of using inappropriate humour	32
6	INTERVIEWS	34
6.1	Interviewee A.....	34
6.2	Interviewee B.....	37
6.3	Interviewee C	39
7	CONCLUSIONS	42
8	DISCUSSION	46
	REFERENCES	48
	APPENDICES.....	51

1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis takes part in a project called HURMOS - *Developing Humour as a Strategic Tool for Creating Innovative Business* which is funded by Tekes (Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation). The project is conducted by two research partners, University of Oulu and Oulu University of Applied Sciences, in co-operation with nine Oulu-based companies. The objective of the HURMOS project is to raise awareness and proficiency in how humour can be strategically exploited in Finnish businesses, and at the same time discover and develop new practices and opportunities supporting business growth and internationalization with an innovative manner. (University of Oulu, Oulu University of Applied Sciences; 2015, 1)

Provocative coaching is a coaching method which can be illustrated as a psychological cocktail where cognitive assault is mixed with generous amount of emotional support and a plenty of laughter. Like every other coaching approach, also provocative coaching requires training and practicing, yet once mastered it can turn out to be a very fast and effective tool. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1) This leads into the objective of this thesis which is to serve as a brief guide to the concept of provocative coaching. It will give a comprehensive insight into this new approach of coaching yet quite unknown for broad audience in many countries including Finland. The aim is to unwrap the concept by explaining its history and core elements and showing illustrative examples, as well as explore the use of humor and playfulness as an essential part of provocative coaching. The intent is to introduce a new effective tool especially for coaches and therapists working with business clients, and thus broaden the variety of resources they can utilize in their work. The research questions that will be answered in this thesis are the following:

- What is provocative coaching? / What is known about provocative coaching?
- How does provocative coaching differ from traditional coaching?
- How does humour appear in provocative coaching and how does it affect clients?

The nature of this research is qualitative and the methods used are data collection via systematic literature review and interviews. Systematic literature review is a research method that aims to make sense of large quantities of data and to find the most relevant aspects of the topic studied. In systematic literature review all the search terms, databases and other sources of information used

in information retrieval must be listed in order to evaluate the reliability of a research. The result of a systematic literature review is an abstract-like analysis of the chosen topic, in this case provocative coaching.

The structure of the thesis consists of introduction and background analysis, a brief explanation of what business coaching is in general, an unwrapping of the concept of systematic literature review and an analysis about provocative coaching. Additionally an overview of relevant humour theories supporting the effectiveness of provocative approach is presented, and finally three semi-structured interviews with coaching entrepreneurs working with business clients and taking part in the HURMOS project, are conducted to provide observations from a professional point of view. The conclusion chapter compiles the most important findings from the theory base and the interviews. Conclusions are followed by the authors' discussion regarding the work and its progress, the reference list and the appendices in the last pages including the interview templates for further examining.

2 BACKGROUND

This chapter will briefly explain the objective of project HURMOS and define provocative coaching approach, therefore clarifying how these two concepts are linked together in respect of this thesis. The unitive factor between HURMOS and provocative coaching most prominently is the aspect of humour and playfulness which sets the grounds for this research work. HURMOS is a government funded project that is conducted by two research partners, University of Oulu and Oulu University of Applied Sciences in co-operation with nine local, Oulu based companies: Ponsse, motiMind, Kaleva, Power Park, Ranua Zoo, VirtaAvain, Tiedekeskus LOOPPI, the city theatre of Oulu and Siivittäjä. The funding comes mainly from innovation sponsor Tekes covering 60% of the budget. The rest of the funding is divided between the companies and research partners. (University of Oulu, Oulu University of Applied Sciences; 2015, 1)

The objective of HURMOS project is to raise awareness and proficiency of how humour can be strategically exploited in Finnish businesses and at the same time discover and develop new practices and opportunities supporting business growth and internationalization. The aim of this project is to examine how humour can be utilized in order to create value in and around business organization e.g. to its customers, employees and management. HURMOS is a multidisciplinary project which combines methods from international business management, education, marketing and international business communication and merges them in an innovative way. (ibid. 2015, 13)

An expected outcome of the HURMOS project is to create and provide Finnish enterprises knowledge and know-how related to humour. It aims to indirectly or directly establish a link between company performance and the use of humour. As the project is exploring new knowledge, Finnish businesses are able to adopt the latest research information related to humour in more active and attentive ways. The HURMOS project intends to revive communication culture and former business practices e.g. by increasing communal enthusiasm, creativity, innovativeness and company's productivity, as well as internationalization and doing business internationally. What companies will gain from HURMOS can be measured in many ways. The expected outcomes of the project are e.g. increased collaborative enthusiasm, work well-being, raised innovativeness and productivity and increased international business opportunities. (ibid. 16)

The topic of provocative coaching was originally presented to the authors by a teacher of Oulu University of Applied Sciences working in the HURMOS project. The initiative to this subject had come to her from one of the companies participating HURMOS, which offers e.g. business coaching services. Provocative coaching is a relatively new way of leading and supporting clients in which they are challenged to their limits in order to help them solve their problems – ‘making things better by making them worse’ as stated in a book about provocative coaching (Hollander, 2012). The main idea behind provocative coaching is to provide a new possibility which is not yet found in all coaching circles or used in its full potential alongside with traditional types of coaching.

Even though provocative coaching differentiates from the usual coaching methods, it still exploits inner forces that are recognized to have a lot of potential within a process of developing one’s skills and behavior, and it has potential to serve as an efficient tool in business coaching as well. As an example an individual is challenged to perform even better by underestimating their skills or capabilities - when facing a situation like this, one’s intuitive psychological response will most likely be even greater determination in order to accomplish the task. This kind of response is the core of provocative coaching. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

This type of coaching is strongly related to theories like reverse psychology and paradoxical intentions. Provocative coaches encourage the client to actually delve in their problems and ‘do it’ even more rather than search ways to solve it. Provocative coaches’ approach to clients’ problems differs considerably from traditional therapy and coaching methods, since provocative coaches verbally detract the client and question the suitability and practicability of their goals. However, it is crucially important to distinguish provocative methods from confrontation or conflicts. In this approach of coaching challenges are introduced and demonstrated to the client with a considerable amount of humour and warmth, the extremely important aspects of provocative coaching and the link between this coaching method and the HURMOS project. (ibid.)

3 BUSINESS COACHING

Finnish Coaching Association states that enterprises in which workers collaborate with coaches achieve notable advancements both on an individual and an organizational level. For example cooperation between workers improves, amount of conflicts decreases and commitment and work well-being increases. Furthermore the organization's productivity and quality of work develops which leads into greater customer satisfaction (Suomen Coaching Yhdistys 2015, cited 22.10.2015). Coaches' main objective is to help individuals develop and exploit all their yet unused potential which eventually results in achieving the personal goals and therefore benefits the entire company. (ibid.) According to International Coach Federation (2015, cited 22.10.2015) and Mind Tools Corporate (2015, cited 22.10.2015) typical reasons for working with a coach are e.g. new challenges, goals or opportunities within workplace, an imbalance between work and personal life, time management, relationships between colleagues, career planning and stress management.

Although business coaching is not anymore an especially new phenomena and has been widely accepted as a commonly used human resource management practice, there still remains some skepticism towards its genuine effectiveness (Vidal-Salazar et al. 2012, 424). Since research has indeed proven the effectiveness of coaching and mentoring in a broad range of contexts (McCarthy, 2012, chapter 1), presumably some of the skepticism exists because of the lack of knowledge concerning what business coaching is in practice. For example in Finland there still exists many companies that do not have exact knowledge of what business coaching really is due to the lack of experience (Laaksonen, 2012, 50). Outsourced business coaching services in Finland are majorly focused on executive and leader development and change management. (ibid.)

According to Grace McCarthy (2012, chapter 2) coaching process is always built on a dialogue between a coach and a coachee, in other words the client. Traditionally the coach listens when the client explains his or her thoughts out loud, and asks steering questions and occasionally offers own thoughts as a feedback to the client (ibid.). Coaching may also take place in a group session instead of individual coaching and as a matter of fact it is predicted that in the future the focus will be on team coaching and internal coaching due to the desire of saving resources (Laaksonen, 2012, 46). The length of a coaching term is dependent on whether an organization is outsourcing the work for an external coach or the coach is a manager within the company. In case of an external coach, the coaching period is usually a shorter one (McCarthy, 2014, chapter 2). In her book

McCarthy lists some attributes that are vital for a good coach and client relationship; there needs to be chemistry between the parties and most importantly willingness to work together. Some of the features are culturally bound e.g. the use of humour and small talk may in some cultures help building the relationship whereas in some cultures they can diminish the coach's credibility – an important aspect to remember also in respect of provocative coaching as it will be reviewed later in this work. (ibid., 2014, chapter 2)

One might ask whether coaching is just therapy by another name and the answer to this question divides opinions. Most certainly the theoretical background originates from the field of psychology and different therapy procedures, but the main difference between coaching and therapy is that coaching is more practical and concerned about achieving agreed goals and getting results within beforehand-set schedule. It does not attempt to resolve more profound issues such as low self-esteem or insufficient level of motivation which are typically processed in therapy. (Coaching & Mentoring Network 2015, cited 22.10.2015) Most prominently it has to be remembered that coaches do not similarly provide straight answers or share knowledge like e.g. staff trainers do, but instead they help in finding the answers from within the clients themselves. (Vidal-Salazar et al. 2012, 425)

Like Grace McCarthy (2012, chapter 2) points out there are multiple approaches to coaching, stemming from psychology and psychotherapy but also e.g. from education, philosophy, sociology and sports. Regardless of the method the objectives in business coaching are consistently the same - increase the work well-being and thus the productivity of the employees - and it is merely a matter of which method is the most suitable for each client or group of clients. (ibid.) Therefore this thesis aspires to introduce one coaching method which is a relatively deviant one but according to its advocates has turned out to be rather functional especially with challenging clients. Ideally learning about provocative coaching will offer some diversity for professionals working in the field of business coaching, and encourage the use of humour as well as applying some friendly provocation to clients who do not seem to benefit from traditional coaching methods.

4 SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW OF PROVOCATIVE COACHING

Systematic literature review (also referred as 'systematic review') can be described as a research method which aims to make sense of large quantities of information. It is a method where yet uncertain areas are mapped out in order to identify fields where there is little or irrelevant research done, but where new studies are needed. As in every research it is important to distinguish real knowledge out of assumed knowledge and conducting a systematic review is an efficient research tool for this purpose. (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, 2)

Theoretically speaking systematic review is used to collect all empirical information that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria and which is used to answer a particular research question. (Green & Higgins, 2011, 1.2.2) The results are compiled into an analysis which in this thesis is referred to as 'contents analysis'. To put it shortly, systematic literature review is an abstract-like review of the most essential aspects from previous studies made on a specific topic (Salminen, 2011, 9). It uses specific, systematic methods that are chosen in order to minimize bias and hereby provide more trustworthy findings and results from which conclusions can be drawn and further decisions made. (Green, Higgins, 2011, 1.2.2)

4.1 Data collection

As explained above systematic literature reviews usually aim to summarize large quantities of data into a compact summary. Nevertheless this specific thesis work concerning provocative caching has some special features due to the novelty and uniqueness of the concept. Since provocative coaching is yet so remarkably new and widely unknown, the search for relevant information turned out to be much more challenging than initially was expected, hence the amount of useful references ultimately remained rather scarce.

Systematic literature reviews begin with listing the search terms used in the search process (Karabulut & Setälä, 2015, 16). The search words that were used to seek for applicable references for this thesis consisted of the following ones: *provocative coaching*, *provocative therapy*, *paradoxical coaching*, *coaching with humo(u)r*, *business coaching*, *playfulness*, *creativity and innovation*, *humo(u)r in the workplace*, *wit and humo(u)r*. These words were used both solely and

in several combinations. As the word 'humour' has two appearances of writing depending on whether it is used in British English or American English, both styles were used to maximize the search results.

In addition to the search words, also the sources where data was tried to explore from need to be listed (ibid. 18). This search process was mainly conducted in the internet databases accessible for students of Oulu University of Applied Sciences and relevant to business studies. These databases included Ebsco, Ebrary, ABI Inform, SAGE Journals Online and the library of Oulu University. Additionally the database of the city library of Oulu was looked up for related information and the Oulu University of Applied Sciences library's personnel was requested to help with the search in hope of finding more useful references about provocative coaching.

4.2 Evaluation of quality and rate of evidence

Like mentioned earlier this systematic literature review has some special features since the subject is still so notably new and lacks larger amounts of relevant references. As a result of the research there turned out to be only one book dedicated solely to provocative coaching, a book called *Provocative Coaching: Making Things Better by Making Them Worse* that is written by Jaap Hollander in 2012. Besides this publication another relevant mention about provocative coaching was found from the book called *Performance Coaching Toolkit* (McLeod & Thomas, 2010, 157) where the approach was shortly presented in a chapter discussing advanced tools for coaches. From this a conclusion that provocative coaching is only a supplemental tool along with traditional coaching, can be drawn. This matter will be examined more in depth in the chapter 'When is the use of provocative coaching in order' in page 15 of this thesis.

Since the amount of reference findings was so minute there was no need to set any other eligibility criteria (such as 'researches published earlier than 2000 will not qualify') than bare appearing of the term 'provocative coaching'. While seeking for information about provocative coaching a few names appeared in the context repeatedly: Frank Farrelly (the innovator of provocative therapy), Jaap Hollander (the author of the book regarding provocative coaching) and Nick Kemp (the creator of Provocative Change Works™ and the administrator of Provocative Therapy webpages). Taking in consideration these authors' notable interest in provocative coaching and therefore expertise on

the matter, this thesis uses material mainly from these three authors to assemble a comprehensive insight into the very essence of provocative coaching.

4.3 Contents analysis: Provocative coaching

The concept of provocative coaching stems from the psychotherapy orientation called provocative therapy developed by a late American therapist Frank Farrelly. It is important to first know the history and principles of provocative therapy to be able to understand provocative coaching. Farrelly initially started to work on this orientation in 1960's after he had continuously felt unsatisfied with his effectiveness as a therapist. (Provocative Therapy, 2015, cited 20.11.2015) In fact, the discovery of provocation's effects happened purely by accident when Farrelly got frustrated with his client during a session and spontaneously bursted out loud what he was thinking at that moment, although not too aggressively but accompanied with some humour. Surprisingly, the client in question responded in a manner Farrelly had been looking for already for a while with no earlier results. Consequently, this was the moment to initiate the development of provocative therapy. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

When traditional psychotherapy mainly aims to help client to understand his or her behaviour, Farrelly thought there had to be an even more effective way that in addition actually helps to change the behavior. This thought, initiated by the accidental event during a regular session, lead him to the path of creating a new innovative therapy approach that consisted of three basic elements: warmth, humor and provocation, the very grounds of provocative therapy. (ibid.)

Hollander, the author of the book *Provocative Coaching – Making Things Better By Making Them Worse* (2012), was first introduced with the concept of provocative therapy when his colleague visited United States in the 1980's and came back with some audio cassettes consisting of recordings of provocative therapists' discussions with their clients. Back in that time no clinical psychologists in Europe had really heard about this type of approach before and the commonly acknowledged behaviour towards clients was supposed to be extremely friendly and supportive. The message from therapist to client was meant to strengthen the clients' self-esteem by telling them positive things for example how valuable they were and how the therapist could understand and sympathize their feelings. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

Regardless the material in the cassettes was completely distinct from the usual approach. The therapists were telling the clients the exact opposite, things such as 'you are not capable of doing it' or 'you're way too dumb for that'. Most surprisingly the results seemed to be good - the clients were actually changing their behaviour. Hollander and his colleague were so fascinated about provocative therapy that they decided to invite Farrelly, the father of the provocative approach, to come to Netherlands to teach this unconventional method. (ibid.)

During the next ten years Farrelly visited Holland every year and the receiving was always admiring since no one seemed to be able to spontaneously imitate Farrelly's exquisite way of working. His teaching technique was to simply demonstrate and educate by examples, there was no precise structure for his actions. He used to call it 'teaching by osmosis' which in slang means 'picking up knowledge accidentally, without actually seeking that particular knowledge' (Sanakirja.org, cited 23.11.215). At some point this lead Hollander's team to decide to model Farrelly which in neuro-linguistic programming means that exceptional human skills are made learnable to others too. This includes identifying the target's – in this case Farrelly's - behaviour, thinking processes, beliefs and emotional states. After this a theory is formed and put into test and if the results are positive, these theories are translated into techniques that any other person is able to digest too. Hollander explains modelling simply as a way of making skills transferable. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

The modelling process took several years but succeeded in developing rules and practices to help one in learning provocative therapy and coaching. These guidelines include a coherent system of skills, behaviors and beliefs, and now that these explicit provocative techniques exist, it is notably easier to any therapist or coach to comprehend and internalize the concept (ibid.). The process a therapist has to go through for becoming a master in provocative coaching - things like learning the demanded level of honesty, self-awareness and flexibility - is certainly not effortless and requires supervision but it is notably easier now after some practical guidelines have been created (Kemp, 2015, 808).

4.3.1 The difference between provocative coaching and provocative therapy

Very essential question regarding provocative coaching and therapy is what distinguishes these two concepts from each other. Hollander states in his book that the decision to call the concept in question provocative coaching instead of therapy, was in fact almost purely a matter of marketing.

Practically both terms signify the same thing but the word 'coaching' has a slightly more positive tone in it; some people tend to think that the word 'therapy' has a bad reputation and even represents weakness, and this was the main reason Hollander and his team decided to rename the approach as provocative coaching. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

Additionally, some perceive coaching as more work oriented whereas therapy mainly discusses personal matters such as close relationships, non-business goals, lifestyle etc. For example International Coach Federation separates coaching from therapy by explaining that therapy focuses on e.g. the past events that complicate client's present life or emotional functioning, while coaching always orients in the future and mainly aims to help with individual's professional growth. (International Coaching Federation, 2015, cited 23.11.2015) Nonetheless, Hollander (2012) points out that quite usually the problems one has in his or her work environment tend to cause complexities in personal life also. According to Hollander a person who has authority problems towards his or her boss, probably finds it difficult to take in advices from his or her father too. (ibid.)

4.3.2 Use of provocative coaching

In his book, Hollander (2012) wants to emphasize that provocative coaching is certainly not a cure-for-all and the method cannot be used to every single client but it rather works as one tool in a coach's toolbox. Also in a book called Performance Coaching Toolkit (McLeod & Thomas, 2010, 157) provocative coaching is being introduced as just one advanced tool for coaches to supplement their professional toolkit. For example Hollander explains how he personally applies mainly four different approaches to his clients: traditional neuro-linguistic psychology, symbolic modelling - the very opposite of provocative coaching - hypnosis and then finally provocative coaching if it seems like none of the above mentioned methods are not working. Utilizing various methods enables a therapist or a coach to be far more flexible than he or she would be when using just one approach (although that scenario almost never occurs amongst experienced professionals). (Hollander, 2012, chapter 1)

According to Hollander the world is experiencing quite eclectic times coaching wise. He recommends to always begin with a traditional approach and only then moving on to provocative coaching if the first manner or manners of an approach are not generating the desired effect. (ibid.) It is also important to remember that when using provocative coaching the expected response can

take some time. In *Provocative Coaching: Making Things Better by Making Them Worse* (2012) Hollander describes some ideal case studies where the influence of provocation was experienced immediately but he also reminds that in general the process takes longer. It is not unusual that only after days or even several weeks a client starts to show some progress. On the other hand, when the progress has finally begun it often evolves rapidly. (ibid.)

4.3.3 The three key elements of provocative coaching

According to Hollander (2012), there is not yet any quantitative research on provocative coaching which illustrates well how new the whole approach is. Because of this there is not yet any hard evidence but only Hollander's and other advocates' own experiences and case studies to prove the effectiveness of provocative coaching. The basic formula of provocative coaching can be comprehended as three circles that consist of kindness, humour and challenge. These three circles are closely linked together forming the basis for successful provocative coaching method. Here the different practices of provocation or challenge are being introduced alongside with the analysis of the presence of warmth and use of humour in provocative coaching. (ibid.)

In his book, Hollander uses a term provocative intervention when provocative coaching is applied in practice. Usually in the beginning a coach acts like client's problem is not a problem at all. Unlike in conventional coaching where client's opinions are fully accepted, here the coach is challenging the whole idea of something being problematic. Commonly this results in client struggling to get his or hers dilemma accepted by the coach, but also increases client's motivation and clarifies the essence of the actual problem. In practice this is simply achieved by demanding the client to describe why the issue is a problem for him or her. (ibid.)

In practice, this type of provocative intervention where coach denies client's problem can be executed in three ways, often done simultaneously. Firstly the coach denies client's problem and converts it into an advantage or a solution. Secondly, various reasons are given why the issue is not problematic to the client. Thirdly and lastly, the reasons given in the second part are not just complimentary ones; more likely they could be described as a compliment and an insult at the same time. As an example, a client complains she or he is postponing tasks waiting to be done. Here the coach challenges the client and says 'postponing your tasks is a great strategy for a weak person' instead of supporting the client and saying 'it is alright to put things off time to time, it shows that

you are a human'. According to Hollander, this type of approaching forces the client to confront two challenges at once. One is client arguing the issue as a problem and the coach denying it. The other is related to coach's denial which contains something uncomfortable for the client such as an unflattering definition of who he or she is (e.g. the client is lazy). Finally as the coach accepts client's concerns about the problem, he or she claims that the client is never able to resolve it and this leads to the next provocative step and so forth. (ibid.)

In the style of provocative coaching it is extremely essential to work from a presupposition of a strong, almost elastic-like client. According to Hollander a coach should not think that a client is vulnerable or fragile because it sends indirect messages of weakness which can be harmful for the client. On the other hand if the coach challenges the client and therefore sends an indirect message of strength, the client feels he or she is able to face and tangle the issue. It is important to keep in mind that the client needs to have the feeling of being capable of countering the coach. (ibid.)

One very important aspect of provocative therapy and coaching is protest response, also often called as 'reverse psychology'. Like Hollander states in his book, 'what you resist, persists'. Shortly, protest response evolves from a need to prove one's capability of doing something. As an example, an individual responds to a claim of being incapable of performing a certain task by doing the exact opposite: a phrase 'you are not able to do this' provokes a response of wanting to succeed in this particular task. On the contrary, protest response can be perceived also in a reverse way: 'you really can do this' might result in a doubting individual, which means in that sense the more provocative answer gained better reaction. (ibid.)

Provocative coach being more present and more extrovert than the client, is a key part of this concept. As mentioned before, clients have to struggle to get their problems accepted by the coach and this is usually done by the coach talking nonsense about him or herself, as at the same time the client's desire to express their feelings is building up and eventually bursting out as a loud and clear response. This is a good example of provocative principle in which irrelevant sidelines lead to the core. Unlike in conventional coaching, the client is the one who needs to build up the structure of a session and keep the coach in track, which is an important provocative principle. (ibid. chapter 2)

A very key to a successful provocative session is the presence of warmth and love. Hollander describes this aspect as a loving, positive undercurrent in provocative coaching. One should keep

in mind that provocative coaching is all about incongruity or even surreality; as the coach challenges the client with verbal messages such as 'you cannot do it' or 'you are overestimating yourself', at the same time he sends nonverbal messages of love and acceptance. Provocative work can be described as a combination of challenging language and warmth, and an important factor in it can be e.g. touching the client, since touching is one way of expressing acceptance. (ibid. chapter 1)

Verbal communication in provocative work differs from traditional coaching styles considerably. According to a book edited by Edward S. Neukrug (2015), provocative coaches talk to their clients as they were talking to an old friend. It is essential to communicate with a twinkle in an eye and with a warm presence and to put aside professional status. Provocative coaches avoid professional language or jargon and they use "language of the client", so to speak. (Kemp, 2015, 808)

Humour is a very key element in provocative coaching. Humour, as well as exaggeration and mimicking are used to caricature or parody the problem, but never the client. Use of humour helps the client to make insights and broaden his or hers understanding in a tolerable, non-overwhelming way. (ibid.) One of provocative coach's main tools is to use especially good-natured, warm-hearted humour in its various forms but also irony and self-depreciation. Coaches use humour both to stimulate and desensitize the client to cognitive, behavioral and affective patterns. Playful, comical, caring and supporting humour plays important part in a successful provocative coaching session. However, use of humour should not be confused with telling jokes and acting like a stand-up comedian, since this is not the desired approach. (Provocative Therapy, 2015, cited 15.2.2016)

4.3.4 The six dimensions of coaching: provocative vs. traditional coaching

In his book, Hollander introduces an overview of both provocative and conventional coaching on different logical levels (environment, behaviour, capabilities, beliefs, archetype/identity and higher goal) in order to examine how provocative coaching actually differs from traditional coaching (Figure 1). When comparing these two types of coaching, one can notice that the highest and the lowest levels are the same in both types. (Hollander, 2012, chapter 2)

	Provocative	Traditional
Higher goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal effectiveness/growth/development 	
Archetype (Identity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jester • Teaser • Trickster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healer • Wise old man/woman
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pull the donkey's tail • Challenge creates a bond • Resilient man 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go straight for the goal • Distance creates respect • Vulnerable man
Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging • Humour • Warmth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis • Structure • Empathy
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You're too dull • It's no problem • Huh? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can do it! • That must be painful • Next step is ...
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract: Coach is accepted in helping role 	

FIGURE 1. Provocative and conventional coaching on different logical levels. (Hollander, 2012)

To begin with the lowest level (environment), both provocative and conventional coaching presume a social contract between a coach and a client; one person is seen as a helper and the other is being helped. A social contract specifies either directly or indirectly that the client accepts the coach in a role of a helper and this agreement is same in both coaching types. Hollander describes the highest logical level (higher goal) as a spiritual level. In brief the spiritual level consists of one's place in the universe, a relationship to a larger extent and higher forces guiding individuals. Even though this level may differ for different coaches, there is no precise difference between conventional and provocative coach. The aim of this level is usually personal development and growth, and by that making the world a better place. (ibid.)

As the highest and the lowest levels are similar to both coaching types, all the others are different. The level below the spiritual higher goal stage, is called archetype or identity. In terms of archetypes a conventional coach is mostly seen as a wise healer, a knowledgeable professional. Provocative coach exemplifies entirely different archetype and they can be seen as a jester or a trickster. Here the differences between a conventional and provocative coach are emphasized; where conventional coach needs to be consistent, the provocative coach or the jester is able to change his or hers opinion at any time. As the conventional coach has to communicate in a serious manner, a provocative coach is free to act as theatrical as possible, although with the protective aspect of humour. (ibid.)

The next logical level in this overview is called beliefs. Provocative coaches believe in challenging people which should make them stronger and when put up resistance they are able to confront it. Conventional coaches do not believe in this type of coaching, as according to Hollander, they are not aware of how to do it. Conventional coaches believe client becomes weaker or may collapse if being challenged. Provocative coaches on the other hand count on motivating and energizing protest responses. As cited from Hollander's book: 'an unusual set of beliefs results in an unusual set of capabilities, which results in unusual behaviours, which result in unusual effects'. (ibid.)

What comes to the next levels, capabilities and behaviours, they are closely related to the very basic provocative coaching methods. Conventional coach usually guards the structure in traditional coaching; an ordered sequence of steps is introduced to indicate where a client is in a certain process. The intent is to create a systematic trail from problem to goal. In provocative coaching, there is no structure at all: the aim is to encourage the client to establish a structure and then have him or her guard it. Conventional coaching is therefore all about analysis, structure and empathy whereas provocative coaching challenges with a humorous and warm approach. Behaviour of a conventional coach is very supportive, understanding and directive (e.g. offering the next step), while provocative coach acts like there is no problem at all and does not even seem to remember what the previous session considered about. (ibid.)

4.3.5 Provocative starter kit

Hollander has developed a chart called provocative starter kit (Figure 2) to help coaches to learn how a successful provocative coaching session proceeds step by step. The figure is meant to be read from above to below and is explained more in detail underneath the picture.

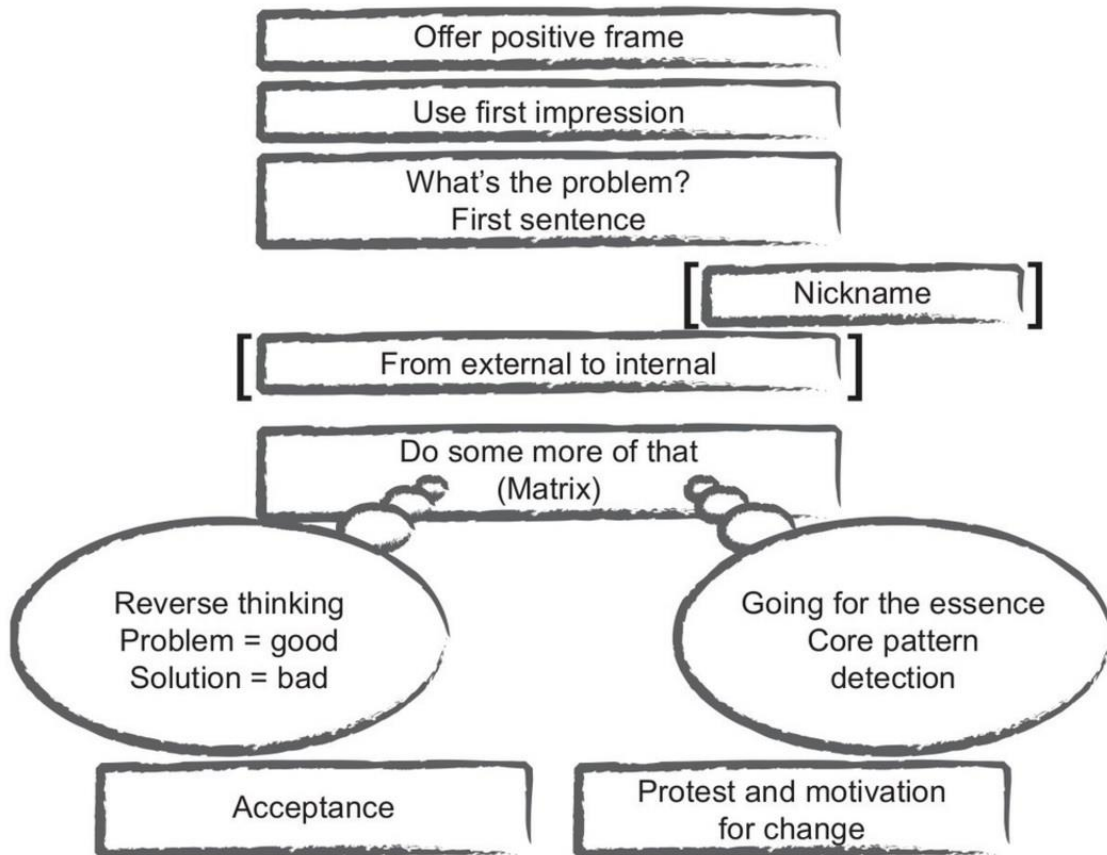


FIGURE 2. Provocative starter kit. (Hollander, 2012)

When starting a provocative coaching session a client has to always be informed beforehand that this time the coach is using a new approach, and that even though it might seem otherwise at some points, the coach will always be completely behind the client. This indicates the first step in the provocative starter kit which is called offering positive frame. Although some are concerned that the provocative approach will not work as effectively if the client knows about it in advance, Hollander assures that the surprise factor will still be remarkable for most of the clients and that it is highly crucial to explain why the coach is suddenly acting as he/she is by offering a positive frame right from the beginning. (ibid.)

After setting the positive frame for the provocative session and as Hollander expresses entering the provocative bubble where everything is possible, it is advisable to draw all the advantage that possible from the first impression. This means e.g. registering how does the client look like and what is he or she wearing, how is he/she behaving when entering the room and sitting into a chair, is he/she avoiding eye contact while talking and so forth. Scientific research conducted in Holland has proven that unconscious mind is more effective than conscious mind in processing complex data and therefore working with the first impressions - which are usually tried to suppress - might

give a coach a notable advantage. Blurting out the first thing that comes to mind when observing the client, no matter how odd, will also clearly indicate that the provocative coaching has started since the coach is behaving in an unusual manner. (ibid.)

At this point of a session the coach usually makes the most essential question: what is the problem? When the client answers the coach must listen very carefully each word that is being said in the first sentence. According to Hollander the coach has to diagnose the tone, volume and tempo of the speech, which words are emphasized and what is literally being said. As an example 'I think my son wants me to live healthier' is not the same thing as 'I should live healthier' or 'my son insists me to live healthier'. The two little words 'I think' can make a considerable difference and tell a lot about the client if the coach is being attentive right from the very start. Answering to a question this vaguely might e.g. point into the fact that the client actually wants this change by him or herself but is not mentally strong enough to make the needed moves towards the change, and therefore partially accuses his or her son for it by telling '*my son* wants me to live healthier' instead of '*I* should live healthier'. (ibid.)

Hollander often gives his clients nicknames on basis of what their problem is. These nicknames are not meant to be complimentary and since any name is always a very prominent part of one's identity they may turn out to be highly powerful mechanisms. The nickname must not necessarily be given at this point of coaching and therefore the step is shown in brackets in the figure. The circumstances just are often favourable at this point because the coach has already been able to gather enough information about the client to come up with a nickname for him or her. (ibid.)

Like the nickname step, also the starter kit element 'from external to internal' is put in brackets in the figure and might not be necessary depending on a client. Since provocative coaching is all about the change it has to be remembered that the things we can have an influence on are only the things happening inside of us and how those things reflect into our behaviour. If a client keeps explaining how an external thing such as bad economic situation is a problem for his or her career, the coach's mission is to turn the thinking into how this external factor makes the client feel internally. For an individual it is impossible to turn the direction of world economics but the way the problem is seen and related to can be changed. Of course if a client distinguishes external and internal factors right from the beginning and instead of complaining wonders why he or she is feeling the way they do, this step can be skipped over. (ibid.)

At this point of provocative coaching the very core of it has been reached and it is finally time to do some reverse psychology: the problem is not a problem and a solution for it would not make things better but even worse. In fact it is impossible to change and even if it was not, the change would only lead to worse problems. The most important thing at this point is to be diverse with the reasoning for why the problem is actually good. A good provocative coach is able to think large-scale and take into account the client, his or her family, workplace and whole society and how the advantages of the problem and disadvantages of the goal influence also these parts of the client's life. Provocative coach can also argue why it is necessary to do more of the problem and why the desired change is utterly impossible. Hollander along his partners has in fact developed a matrix of 21 ways of claiming that a problem is not a problem, and this matrix and especially the ability to use it are highly specialized provocative capabilities. (ibid.)

The last element of the starter kit is certainly the most challenging one for any coach although many years of experience eventually makes it easier. Hollander reminds that it is crucially important to recognize the core patterns that a client is constantly repeating to be able to change the actual problem instead of focusing on its side effects. As an example a person who has anger management issues might actually initially suffer from the lack of control over things. Coaches who have worked for many years and met hundreds of clients will eventually start recognizing archetypes of clients which leads to a faster way to spot the core patterns. Hollander lists three methods to ease the core pattern finding and the first one is consciously doing what experienced therapists and coaches do already subconsciously: asking themselves who (e.g. a previous client) does this client remind them of? The second method is to repeatedly ask the client what he or she is *really* afraid of or longing for. Also putting the explained problem into several other contexts (e.g. home, work environment, relationships, travelling) makes it easier to spot the underlying core issue. (ibid.)

4.3.6 Client's inner processes

In his book Hollander lists a few mechanisms that provocative coaching plausibly triggers in a client, including finding motivation and determination, taking responsibility of one's actions, self-defense, -criticism and -appreciation. What leads into these mechanisms, Hollander perceives as six inner procedures forming the theory of client's inner processes (Hollander, 2012, chapter 3). However

this theory has not yet been tested or scientifically proven and therefore must be considered as merely an assumption lacking of actual proof at this point.

The first of the processes as Hollander declares is generating positive self-statements. As he argues, the generating of positive self-statements as a response to coach's negative descriptions of the client is an automatic psychological reaction, therefore not requiring much of an effort from the client's side. Secondly what is taking place in the client's mind is clarifying his or her core issues. As mentioned earlier, provocative coach's essential attribute is to be inconsistent and easily distracted which results in the client being asked to describe the problem over and over again. This repetition leads the client to clarify to him or herself the core issues which eventually makes it easier to change the patterns of behaviour and thinking. Like Hollander claims 'if you can describe something in different ways, the essence becomes clearer'. (ibid.)

The third process is called classical counter conditioning. The more commonly known conditioning process is usually illustrated with the example of Pavlov's dogs. Just like dogs can be taught to connect the bell with food, people start connecting problems with positive emotional state after experiencing enough provocative coaching. Since humour and laughter have major parts in provocative sessions, at some point the client starts to subconsciously connect problems to a lighter and less serious emotional state. The reason this is called counter conditioning is that the new positive emotional state counteracts with the negative emotional state originally connected to the problem. This activation in client's different nervous system parts allows the development of new behaviours which is the ultimate goal in provocative coaching. (ibid.)

The fourth process is defusing negative frames. Very often clients' problems are triggered by repeated negative statements in their own minds, but when the provocative coach gives the same statements even more exaggeratedly and with dramatized arguments not making any actual sense, it will inevitably diminish the credibility of these proclamations. This defusing pattern can be witnessed also in everyday life; if a person has a very strong opinion about a certain matter and he/she discovers that someone else who is commonly considered a bit lunatic, advocates the same opinion, can it usually trigger second-guessing and disbelief. Thoughts as 'If such a crazy person thinks so too, maybe I need to reconsider my opinion' may occur and oblige to change opinion. (ibid.)

The last processes are strengthening self-reliance and experiencing responsibility. The client has to understand that eventually it will be him- or herself who makes the desired change happen, which leads into enhanced self-esteem and self-reliance. This is something that Hollander reminds also the coaches should remember since some coaches are guilty of gratitude-addiction. As much as some of the clients would want to think that they will miraculously heal when just visiting a coach's appointment, the responsibility of the desired change can never be put on the shoulders of a coach. The realization of one's own responsibility over his or her feelings and behaviour is a major process taking place in provocative coaching and resulting in better outcomes. (ibid.)

5 HUMOUR'S INFLUENCE ON COACHING

This chapter aims to present theoretical framework concerning the use of humour in coaching - particularly in business coaching and business environment in general - by examining its benefits as well as possible disadvantages. After comprehensively studying and reviewing what provocative coaching is in the previous chapter, this one will try to answer the final research question concerning what mechanisms humour and laughter trigger in coaching clients. The chapter begins with an insight to the recently witnessed growing interest in humour research, including projects such as HURMOS. Afterwards theories that support Hollander's and other provocative coaching's advocates' views are aimed to be found in order to give endorsement for the coaching orientation in question. While the main focus is on finding supporting theories, also the weaknesses of provocative coaching are taken into consideration and discussed in the chapter.

5.1 Study of positive emotions

Study of emotions has generally focused on negative emotions leaving positive ones such as joy, interest, contentment and love marginalized (Fredrickson, 1998, 300). During the 20th century researchers' interest in humour and laughter among other positive emotions and behaviour has been surprisingly minor in comparison to negative phenomena as for example depression and anxiety (Raskin, 2008, 18). In her study *What good are emotions?* Barbara L. Fredrickson suggests three main reasons as an explanation for this pattern. Firstly, there simply exists considerably fewer positive emotions than negative ones in the whole specter of human emotions. Secondly, the negative emotions are usually demanding more of researchers' attention because the field of psychology most prominently focuses on offering solutions to problems and positive emotions trigger these problems more seldom than negative emotions do. Thirdly, the emotion theorists tend to generalize the findings of prototypic emotions - usually negative such as anger and fear - also to the less prototypic emotions including the positive ones and therefore some might see it to be in vain to research them separately. (Fredrickson, 1998, 300-303)

Nevertheless, the beginning of a new century has witnessed arising interest towards positive psychology since humour and playfulness have been discovered to be some of the core character strengths contributing to a satisfying life (Raskin, 2008, 19). As well positive emotions are widely

interesting e.g. from the evolutionary point of view because unlike negative emotions, they do not occur in life-threatening situations and circumstances that are vital for survival and thus seem not to have been equally major contributors in the history and evolution of human species. However, positive emotions may have a big part in protecting our health because many negative emotions are linked to physical disorders like high blood pressure, coronary heart diseases and some cancers. In other words positive emotions' purpose might be to diminish the amount of negative emotions and their harmful physical effects and improve individual's health. (Fredrickson, 1998, 303;314)

The conceptualization of (sense of) humour can introduce some difficulties since it is often seen as such individual attribute that it is hard to form a definition for. While there certainly exist many forms and styles of sense of humour, a few definitions have been proposed to describe it as a phenomena. In his study, Robert E. Teehan cites Thorson & Powell (1991) and lists some definitions of sense of humour that include e.g. 1) ability to have a good time, 2) ability to use humor to achieve social goals, 3) recognition of humour / what is humorous, 4) appreciation of humour, 5) use of humour as an adaptive or coping mechanism. (Teehan, 2006, 16)

Humour research extends to many branches but the fields of science that have had the most interest in studying it include at least anthropology, sociology, physiology, education and these days also business. Research has drawn a conclusion of four primary areas that humour affects: physiological (e.g. relaxation and healing), psychological (coping, gaining status and building ego), educational (alertness and enhancing long-term memory) and social functions (in- and out-bonding). (Teehan, 2006, 25;27) When all these four functions are scrutinized from the coaching perspective they are all found to be important contributors to a successful coaching experience.

5.2 Humour in business environment

An important notion while reading through Hollander's book about provocative coaching is that the audience and Hollander himself laugh considerably often. Laughter is many times seen synonymous with humour but on the other hand laughter does not always require humour to burst out (see e.g. nervous laughter) and similarly humour does not necessary generate laughter (Raskin 2008, 23). Still undoubtedly these two elements are strongly linked and as scientists have already known for a considerably long time, laughter releases endorphins which are also known as the

natural pain killers for human body. (Shahriman, 1998, 1) Therefore, if laughter that is often produced as an aftermath of humour has stress-relieving features, should it be considered as a serious matter in respect of work well-being.

Humour is usually seen as a common element of human interaction and for that reason has a great impact on different groups and working organizations. Humour is generally much more than just funny jokes and concepts; it can transform into a multifunctional management tool that can be utilized in order to achieve various goals and objectives. As business is often believed to be very serious, humour can easily lighten the mood inside organizational environments. A proper use of humour within work groups can contribute in valuable benefits and offer even more beneficial tools for management to motivate staff members, improve effective communication and diminish discord. (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, 58)

The present day business environments are usually perceived very hectic and stressful. As a part of globalization competition has increased greatly between companies, which has led to organizations emphasizing the need of new innovations and creativity. At the same time, organizational commitment is often quite low and strive for great turnover results in teams having weak social bonds. Increasing diversity in the workplace can be a source of new innovations and ideas, but at the same time it can cause conflicts if not managed properly. Due to these, and various other reasons, it is a great challenge to build and maintain healthy social systems within a working organization. According to Romero and Cruthirds (2006), humour has the potential to cure some of these mentioned problems and boost healthy social relationships in a workplace. Humour is a great tool in building up group's social cohesion, improving communication, enhancing subordinate satisfaction, contributing to greater productivity and increasing creativity. It is also known that humour helps creating and maintaining organizational culture, supports leadership effectiveness and generates companionship. (ibid. 59)

What comes to organizational outcomes of using humour, there are several areas which can be associated to the field of management: group cohesiveness, communication, stress, creativity, organizational culture and leadership. For example group cohesiveness can be improved through positive reinforcement within a group and reducing so called external threats, such as competition from other groups. Humour plays a significant role in group cohesiveness since it creates positive feelings amongst group members and therefore helps bonding. Humour also helps socialization by making interactions less tense and by that is an important part of developing a strong social

cohesion. Likewise, humour is an extensive part of communication and by using it in different situations, it is possible to create more open atmosphere which awakes positive emotions. (ibid. 60)

According to the authors, humour has so called 'attention-getting' quality, meaning it leads to improved understanding, persuasion and emotional connection. Also one of humour's special features is that it can allow one to critique without creating undesired negative effects. There is strong evidence that humour can reduce stress; joking about a stressful event can make it less intimidating. In addition, humour has the ability to make people feel that they are not afraid: without fear there is a greater sense of control and therefore one suffers less stress. (ibid. 61)

As stated in the article by Romero and Cruthirds (2006), there is literature evidence that humour is linked to creative thinking. Humour can promote openness to new ideas by relaxing individuals and making them less critical towards mistakes or new ideas, which leads to risk taking that is the base of creative thinking. Researches have shown that exposure to humour improves creative problem solving and individuals working in humorous environment are more likely to engage in creative thinking and problem solving. Humour is also described to be an important component of organizational culture by creating a positive atmosphere and environment where ideas and knowledge can be shared freely. It is proven both empirically and anecdotally that humour is linked to a greater performance. (ibid. 62)

It can be said that humour is very valuable tool to communicate organizational values and behavioral norms, e.g. by using humorous stories and comments. In leadership, humour can be used both to secure one's power in hierarchical relationships and to reduce social distance between leaders and followers. When it comes to securing power, humour is a good tool in establishing and maintaining hierarchical relations, which can turn out to be very valuable for leaders in many situations. In essence, humour can be seen as a privilege to individuals with authority and those individuals exploit humour to define their status and power relations. However, while strong social status is important for many leadership roles, it can create distance between leaders and followers. Here humour can reduce social distance by identifying similarities between individuals such as intelligence, values or needs. The use of humour by leaders is one good approach to reduce social distance and build up identification with employees. Humour has the ability of reducing the importance of status by equalizing the supervisor's and subordinate's position. (ibid. 62-63)

5.3 Humour in coaching

Humour is essentially a social phenomenon. It can appear in any kind of social situation although some circumstances are more favourable for large amount of humour than others. Usually depending on how serious a situation is, humor can either occur for a brief moment or be present for longer terms. Rod A. Martin states in a book called *The Psychology of Humour: An Integrative Approach* (2006) that humour is always more present in casual situations where people are feeling relaxed and uninhibited. (Martin, 2006, 6) This phenomenon certainly works also vice versa which means that bringing humour in more serious occasions can help people to feel more comfortable and relaxed. Also from a coaching point of view the use of humour can be a very efficient way to make a client feel less nervous and inhibited which helps them to open up during their coaching period.

Humour is an excellent way of viewing things from a different perspective or seeing more of reality. According to Daniel L. Aroz, a former president of the New York Mental Health Counselors Association, humour helps (counseling) clients to realize that the counselor is in the same tune with clients' own experiences and understands him or her. Aroz points out that most of the times humour has had a welcomed and appreciated effect on his clients, however it is important to see the negative aspects of humour as well. These mostly come in when the client is not ready for any humour or is too stiff in relations between a counselor and a client, so that he or she sees humour inappropriate. Therefore it is very important to take into consideration client's personality before using humour again. (Goldin et al, 2006, 397)

Although the use of humour in therapy (and coaching) divides opinions, also the advocates share one common conclusion with the ones to criticize it: just like humour can be an excellent addition to therapy when used deliberately and the timing is in its favour, it can correspondingly be detrimental if used inappropriately. The study by Franzini (2001) proposes that any humour that e.g. humiliates or deprecates client's self-esteem, intelligence or well-being is considered inappropriate. (Franzini, 2001, 173) Conversely, as it is already analyzed provocative coaching uses exactly this type of improper humour that ridicules clients' capabilities and underestimates the importance of their problems. The theory of humour's appropriateness and inappropriateness, as stated in Franzini's research, therefore arguments Hollander's suggestion of setting positive frame always before beginning a provocative coaching session. It is important to tell about the change of method in advance to avoid undesired misunderstandings caused by sudden provocation. As

Hollander (2012) claims even with a warning beforehand, the surprise factor of provocative coaching will still be remarkable (Hollander, 2012, chapter 2).

A primary problem with using humour in counseling is the fact that it is difficult or even impossible to teach to others. Since it is rather easy to go wrong with a humorous approach, it is crucial to take into consideration three main aspects: timing, appropriateness and receptivity. All these aspects are important when they are related to the purpose of humour in an interaction between individuals. Humour can be used to facilitate communication, keep other person's attention on what you are saying and to make the topic more interesting. From Araoz's point of view, if humour is a part of counselor's personality, it can be used in certain limits. The counselor needs to keep in mind previously mentioned aspects in order to use it as an aid in psychotherapy. In order to successfully use humour in counseling, it must fit into the focused attention of what is going on in the present moment in treatment. (Goldin et al, 2006, 397)

David Kaplan offers a little different kind of approach to humour in coaching. According to him, it is essential for the coach to recognize, when the client is starting to improve. Using humour with a client is a good thing, since it means that progress is made and client is improving. Kaplan states that this is an important message to be aware of, both in counselor's and client's point of view. (ibid. 400)

Arnold Lazarus, a distinguished emeritus professor of psychology, thinks that humour can be favorably exploited in counseling. However it is the prudent use of humour that has the positive effects in clients and that can reinforce the overall process quite remarkably. Humour can add a positive spin to troublesome situations and it can help building up rapport. With humour clients are able to take things less seriously and knowing what client finds amusing helps the counselor in diagnostics. As mentioned earlier, it is important for the counselor to acknowledge different situations so that the client will not see the use of humour as disrespectful or bad taste. (ibid. 401)

The style of humour used plays a significant role in counseling. Sarcastic or black humour is not suitable for everyone and especially in the beginning of a session it is risky to proceed with this kind of approach. According to Lazarus, it is generally advisable to use sarcasm or black humour only after an alliance has been established between a client and a counselor. Nevertheless, a good counselor senses whether humorous approach is successful or not. Lazarus also mentions paradoxical responses and originally cites Goldin and Bordan (1999), who pointed out that the

method has resulted in good effects. In paradoxical response, a laughter must be evoked; unless the client fails to grip to the meta-communication ('communication that indicates how verbal information should be defined', The Free Dictionary, 2016, cited 14.1.2016), the humour or joke will backfire. (ibid. 402)

As pedagogical use of humour has proven to affect students both psychologically and physiologically, the same findings might also apply on a coaching environment since the basic layout is almost the same in both situations: the client/student is looking for help and guidance and the coach/teacher is providing it. Strong use of humour in teacher's work has been studied to result in better learning outcomes which has led to a suggestion that when presented with humour, the taught message will later be more easily recalled by students. (Garner, 2006, 177) Bearing this in mind, a strong orientation in humor during a coaching session might prolong and enhance also the effects of coaching.

In a previously examined study of Barbara L. Fredrickson she offers one important notion that might also support Hollander's theory of counter conditioning discussed earlier in the chapter *Client's inner processes*. A few studies have proven that positive emotions may undo the aftereffects of negative emotions. Thus, if a client is exposed to humour and laughter while or right after processing his or her issues and negative feelings, this might in fact mitigate the physical reactions such as cardiovascular activation triggered by negative emotions. Therefore by easing the physical symptoms also the mental hardships become more easily manageable. (Fredrickson, 1998, 313)

5.4 Cultural differences and hazards of using inappropriate humour

It is important to remember the cultural and individual subjectivity concerning sense of humor. What may seem humorous to someone, may not be considered funny or amusing by someone else. As an example attitude towards irony and even understanding it, is very different e.g. between western and eastern cultures and furthermore between individuals, for some do not find irony humorous at all but rather more or less insulting. Although Hollander (2012) highlights that provocative coaching is not at all about irony or sarcasm because of the strong presence of warmth and love included in it, it can still be very difficult to some cultures and individuals to identify when a joke is meant to be ironic and when just merely offending. (Garner, 2006, 178)

In today's rapidly growing global environment, it is essential to recognize how different ethnic groups react to numerous forms of communication including humour. Styles of humour vary greatly amongst ethnic groups and differences can be significant. Therefore it is crucial to keep in mind, that ethnic humour has the potential to create negative effects and conflicts - humour does not even have to be purposely negative or aggressive in order to offend. It is good to consider audience's ethnic formation before selecting the content and style of humour. (Romero & Cruthirds, 2006, 64)

According to Romero and Cruthirds, it is important to take into consideration differences in how gender influences humour too. Stereotypically it can be seen that women share humour in order to build solidarity whereas men use humour to impress and highlight similarities. Romero and Cruthirds state that gender-based humour is usually aggressive in a form of degrading comments in order to make the initiator feel greater. Needless to say that the recipients of this kinds of humour would not feel comfortable and therefore experience negative effects. Similarly, humour with sexual content can also be disrespectful. According to the paper, women find sexist jokes more offensive than men while men prefer sexual humour more than women. Gender-based and especially sexual humour, when undesirable, can cause conflict and disconnection between groups. Hence, when such humour is used in mixed-gender environments, positive outcomes are less likely to be accomplished. (ibid. 65)

6 INTERVIEWS

Including interviews was not part of the initial plan for this thesis. Nonetheless, as the research process for relevant references turned out to be more challenging than was expected the idea of interviews was introduced to us by our commissioner. The chosen interview type for this research is a semi-structured interview, in which the questions are defined by the interviewer in a certain order, but there are no alternatives for answers, only questions in which the interviewees can answer freely. (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005, 132) The objective of the following interviews is to chart how much the interviewees already possess information regarding provocative coaching and what is their professional opinion about it. All three interviewees work as business coaches taking part in the HURMOS project and are here referred as Interviewee A, B or C. As it will appear the knowledge bases regarding provocative coaching in the beginning of the interviews were quite different for all three of them.

The interview questions were aligned in a manner where the interviewers first asked a few questions leading into the subject and mapping out the interviewees' already existing knowledge concerning provocative coaching, without yet presenting any definition of it. In the halfway of the interview the definition drafted by the interviewers was revealed to the interviewees with the support of showing a video where provocative coaching is demonstrated by Nick Kemp. Finally, questions concerning interviewees' opinion about the concept of provocative coaching and its use were presented. The question framework and the definition of provocative coaching shown for the interviewees can be found from the appendices for further examination. Each interview will be transcribed here as its own subchapter whereas the conclusions are drawn in the following one.

6.1 Interviewee A

Interviewee A is an entrepreneur who defines her goal as a business coach to be to help clients generate excellent work for themselves, for the whole organization and for its customers. The objective is to support managers and subordinates in their path to success and renew operating models with the help of business coaching. The interviewee is a member of several associations including e.g. Finnish Coaching Association (Suomen Coaching Yhdistys) and NLP association. The interviewee is also the person who initially brought up the topic of provocative coaching in

HURMOS project and therefore the interviewers were already aware of that she had some knowledge base regarding provocative coaching beforehand.

When asking Interviewee A how she separates the term therapy from coaching and mentoring, she defines it as more analytic and profound than coaching and mentoring, and emphasizes the fact that she herself is not a therapist and does not possess the needed education or a degree for doing that particular job. Rather, she explains her job description to be work-oriented and her role as to be someone who can help in triggering new ideas that later transform into new actions and ways of delivering work. According to Interviewee A defining coaching and mentoring is relatively hard since there are as many truths as there are individuals. Interviewee A thinks that more important than giving a definition for the terms, is to always set the rules from the beginning of a contract. This means making an agreement on both the role of the coach and the coachee and setting a common objective.

As earlier appeared, Interviewee A is a member in several associations and consequently discovered provocative coaching for the first time via Finnish Coaching Association. In spring 2015 the association organized an event where this innovative method was introduced for the members interested in the topic. Interviewee A tells that she was instantly intrigued because provocative coaching offers something that is often needed when things get stuck and nothing seems to progress in respect of a coaching process. She also points out that some clients expect from a coach a pampering sort of behaviour, and with this type of clients a little provocation might offer the much needed shock effect which eventually triggers thoughts and ideas that lead to the desired change perhaps tomorrow, or a week or a year later.

Interviewee A identifies the term 'provocation' in coaching context as challenging client by e.g. using provocative language and changing the tone, tempo or volume of speech. She mentions that before even hearing about provocative coaching she had used provocation to some extent unconsciously without knowing it was an actual coaching approach. This behaviour might have appeared for example in a coaching situation where things have seemed to circle without any progress and a timeout was needed. Interviewee A explains how in coaching circles there is a term called 'teflon' which is used to describe processes or clients that do not react to any stimulus that is presented for them, and these sort of situations are also an excellent frame for provocative actions. In addition, in group coaching sessions she occasionally uses some participant's successful self-development to provoke also the other clients into better results.

When asked whether the use of provocation has enhanced coaching processes Interviewee A claims that it is very hard to answer since it is often quite challenging to separate the use of provocative coaching from the traditional coaching and where one method ends and another begins. Usually the provocative behaviour comes naturally without planning it beforehand and is therefore integrated in the so called traditional methods. An example of a client who has come to coaching because a manager has ordered so - instead of his or her own will - proposes a situation where a provocative intervention could be useful. Interviewee A also adds that before applying strong provocation it should always be determined at the beginning of a coaching or a mentoring relationship whether it is acceptable that coach uses provocative tools to the client.

Interviewee A tells that such as provocation also humour, the other important aspect in provocative coaching, is integrated in her coaching work. She does not want to market herself and her services with humour because coaching is in her own words still quite 'serious gaming' and she needs to have credibility as a coach. Basically humour is not a part of her own branding although she uses it in her work more or less depending on a situation. Additionally she mentions that when she creates for example names for her services she often uses dialect terminology (e.g. Oulu dialect) and during coaching tries her best to use layperson's terms instead of jargon and fancy sounding professional language. The goal is to set herself as a coach on the same level with coachees and the use of humour helps in this interaction with clients although it can pose challenges too.

When the definition of provocative coaching is finally shown to Interviewee A she claims it sounding familiar and admits practicing it to some extent in her own coaching. Moreover she adds that if there was a scale measuring how frequently provocation or humour was used it might be easier to define how much she exercises the method in question. She also says that she does not use it as profoundly as it is described in the definition e.g. she does not necessarily use '*extremely* absurd metaphors or exaggerations'. Sometimes when e.g. group career coaching has proceeded so far that everyone knows each other really well, some sarcasm or irony might be used between the participants but neither does Interviewee A recognize herself doing any mocking, not even in a playful manner.

As previously explained Interviewee A does not want to profile herself as a provocative coach although she uses some provocation in her work without consciously planning so. As she says it would take a lot of time to master the provocative coaching as it is defined by Hollander or other

gurus in the field, and at this point of her career she has no professional goals including provocative coaching. Nevertheless when facing a situation where a client or a progress has got stuck she may still rely on the help of a little provocation.

As an answer for the question inquiring in which type of situation provocative coaching would not be appropriate, Interviewee A gives an example of leading a group of fired persons where she would have to be very aware of the grieving progress before applying any provocation. Interviewee A proposes that also in situations like these some kind of a scale could be useful to indicate when and what sort of provocation or humour is appropriate to be used. She also clarifies how she always attempts to check that her clients are not battling with their minds when coming to business coaching because her job description does not involve serving as a therapist.

Towards the end of the interview session Interviewee A says that now that she is more aware of the concept provocative coaching she would like to learn to use it more consciously. On the other hand Interviewee A repeats that she has no intentions to start using the actual trademark but could perhaps be interested in creating her own service from the grounds of provocative coaching someday. Lastly when asked about any other ideas triggered by this interview, Interviewee A also ponders with the question how humour and warmth could be learnt to use correctly in provocative situations and how the circumstances could be actively made more favourable for humour and provocation.

6.2 Interviewee B

Interviewee B is an entrepreneur running a business which offers work community guidance/career counseling, manager guidance and coaching. She also has currently a part-time position related to HURMOS project in University of Oulu. When asked to describe how the terms coaching, therapy and mentoring differ from each other, Interviewee B approaches the question from a work community guidance perspective: for her, guidance is a long process that can last several years, whereas coaching is rather a short-term and more goal-directed process where specific goals are set and pursued along the way. Interviewee B likes to keep a strict line between guidance and coaching and does not want to mix these two things together.

When Interviewee B is asked what she already knows about provocative coaching, she admits her knowledge about it to be quite limited. She recalls hearing of the topic also before HURMOS but could not exactly remember where. Interviewee B thinks provocative coaching is a topic which is very interesting and definitely gives food for thought, however differences between traditional and provocative coaching are difficult to identify. When Interviewee B is asked to define how she perceives the term 'provocation', she approaches it from the coaching aspect and describes it with words such as surprising, emotive and stimulating by which she means that clients are left with a feeling of bewilderment.

Interviewee B explains her personal style of coaching to be rather challenging and provocative already. She has not used provocative coaching as described in this thesis but recognizes situations where she has utilized some features of it, especially in career guidance. Like she states, she wants to make clients think more and by that offer them new paths to discover. Clients' reactions to this coaching approach differentiating from mainstream, have been often slightly surprised or even overwhelmed, which according to Interviewee B eventually provokes new thoughts, and this is what she perceives to be the whole purpose of coaching. Similarly when asked whether use of provocation has enhanced coaching processes, Interviewee B immediately provides a positive answer. She thinks that adding a little provocative touch to coaching brings an untraditional tone to it, hence making it is easier to avoid pointless repetition on realizations client has already come to understand and rather offer new paths of thinking.

What comes to using humour in coaching, Interviewee B notes that after joining the HURMOS project she has started to utilize humour more often in her work. Before she did not actually consciously use humour in coaching even though in group sessions humour and playfulness have been important factors for a long time when warming clients up for the sessions. Interviewee B thinks that humour is a great tool in her work and clients respond to it well, and especially situation comedy is something that she thinks she could take more advantage of in the future. In her opinion, humour is a great way of warming new clients up and getting familiar with them regardless the type of a coaching session. Humour helps clients to form groups and effects of humour can be seen throughout the session. Interviewee B states that humour is a key element when it comes to group dynamics.

When asked whether she could utilize provocative coaching in her own work, Interviewee B agrees. However she adds that a good provocative coach needs to have a certain warmth and

confidentiality in his or her presence in order to succeed in this type of coaching. A coach has to be easily approachable and recognize the situations when provocative coaching might not be a suitable option for a client. In Interviewee B's opinion suitable situations for provocative coaching could be for example career guidance, although she wants to emphasize the fact that everything needs to stem from the chemistry between a coach and a client. She thinks that it is possible to sense from a client whether provocative coaching might work on him or her, and by that recognize the situations where this type of coaching could be effective. Altogether now that Interviewee B is more aware of the topic of provocative coaching she finds it very interesting and would like to familiarize herself more with the subject.

6.3 Interviewee C

Interviewee C is an entrepreneur running her own business which is one of the companies taking part in HURMOS-project. In addition to her entrepreneurship, Interviewee C works as a coach and as a comprehensive school teacher, at the same time offering professional guidance and solution based counseling that is majorly linked to positive thinking and positive psychology.

The interview begins with a simple question asking the differences between coaching, mentoring and therapy. Interviewee C sees professional guidance and coaching partly therapeutic but wants to draw therapy out of this context. She has previously worked as an aroma therapist and wants to highlight that even though this job was therapeutic, it should not be mixed with actual medical therapists. According to her, therapists are those who give their clients diagnosis and have an education for it and that is what separates them from therapeutic workers, such as e.g. aroma therapists and coaches. Interviewee C thinks mentoring is closely linked to coaching; however it depends on the context. For her, mentoring is more like supporting and helping colleagues or other (younger) entrepreneurs, and coaching on the other hand is related to helping individuals with a certain problem in which a person needs coaching for. Interviewee C underlines that she is not a 'trainer' or an 'educator': due to her background in solution based counseling, she likes to ask questions and think over client's problems, which she hopes helps the clients to have new perspectives and find answers in themselves. She emphasizes the importance of dialogue, which for her is very key element when doing coaching, counseling and mentoring.

When asked what provocative coaching means to her, Interviewee C states that her knowledge of the topic is still very limited. She has not had any information about the topic, yet has thought about it and whether she has used it in her previous work. Interviewee C came across with the topic for the first time while attending a HURMOS-project meeting at the University of Oulu.

Word 'provocation' brings some assumptions to Interviewee C's mind: she thinks it is related to aggressiveness, pressure and a feeling that client cannot get off easily. She states that if a coach wants to do provocation on purpose, one should be very aware of its effects and has to have a broad knowledge about the topic. When asked whether she has used provocative coaching or provocation in her earlier work, the answer is no – or at least not intentionally. After a while of thinking she is able to recall one client with whom she has used a more provocative style, yet not actually provocative coaching.

What comes to the effects of provocative coaching, Interviewee C states that she might not be the right person to answer this type of question due to the lack of knowledge about provocative coaching. However she remembers one customer to whom she has used provocation to, and this customer's reaction was more negative than positive: customer took more of a defensive approach and became stubborn about his own opinions. Interviewee C admits that provocation did not bear fruit in that timeframe, yet it is unknown whether it has derived in positive results later on.

Interviewee C uses humour a lot in her daily work. She is a laughter coach and quoting her words, 'amuses people for living'. Idea behind laughter coaching is to laugh together as a group – like she states, it is not about telling jokes but more like situation comedy. Customers' reactions to humour have been very positive and laughter coaching and laughter classes are very popular at the time. According to her, people who are interested in laughter coaching and humour are those who already laugh a lot and have a positive mindset. Like Interviewee C states, laughing for nothing' and laughing together is extremely liberating: if it is used at the beginning of e.g. a training session, it awakes peoples' creativity and interaction skills. For Interviewee C, humour is a very important and useful tool and she uses it on daily basis. In her opinion, humour opens people up and helps them to concentrate on different subjects. It helps individuals to reduce stiffness and changes the atmosphere and group's energy immediately.

Finally as the definition of provocative coaching is revealed to her, Interviewee C's reaction is quite positive. She immediately states that this type of coaching requires a lot of practice and when asked

about her opinions towards this style, she is rather pensive. She has positive thoughts about this style, especially when it comes to the playful and funny side of provocative coaching. However she wants to emphasize the aspect that the client needs to be ready for this kind of coaching and provocative coaching would not work if the coach is not trained for this. Interviewee C sees a bit of a mindfulness –side in this style, such as learning how to accept the negative attributes that have been part of me for a lifetime, such as teeth grinding as mentioned in an example videotape shown in this interview. However she underlines the fact that one needs to be certain kind of a coach or a person in order to succeed in provocative coaching style.

From a professional point of view, Interviewee C would be willing to try provocative coaching with clients that are already familiar. When thinking about it, she comes across with an idea of utilizing this coaching style with groups, yet is not sure whether it would work or not. When asked in what kind of situations provocative coaching would be useful, she mentions occasions where no progress is made – in these situations she would be willing to use the warmth and humour aspects of provocative coaching. On the contrary, occasions in which provocative coaching would not be useful would be the times when a customer comes in for a first time. Interviewee C explains this with her own personality and the fact that she wants to know her customers first before using provocation in order to avoid misunderstandings and negative twists.

Whether she has had customers that have not benefitted from normal coaching and to whom provocation might have worked, Interviewee C states that it is difficult to say afterwards whether something would or would not have worked since it is not sure to whom this type of coaching would be suitable for. She admits that provocative coaching would be quite difficult style for her to embrace, mostly due to her personality. She also suggests that the provocative part does not necessarily be so thorough and it could be more like playing around, without going too deep in ones feelings. Interviewee C admits that this style of coaching would be very good skill to assimilate, but from this knowledge base she has, provocative coaching is not yet current topic but possibly in the future.

7 CONCLUSIONS

One of the questions addressed in this thesis regards the differentiation of terms coaching, therapy, mentoring and/or counselling, and also the interviewees were asked to define these terms' meaning to them and how they separate them from each other. As a conclusion it can be stated that coaching must always be clearly separated from therapy since therapy focuses on much more profound psychological issues, and a person who practices therapy must obtain a certain education in order to perform that profession. Coaching on the other hand is always considered goal-oriented and more practical and therefore is the most suitable term to apply in business service context. Mentoring instead is usually considered voluntary and unpaid, and as Interviewee C illustrates it can be e.g. supporting and helping a colleague of a same profession. Nevertheless as Interviewee A indicates even with all sort of official definitions there can be as many interpretations as there are individuals.

As information about provocative coaching was hard for the authors to discover in respect of the theory part, it was expected that also the interviewees would have only some knowledge about the topic. Although the coaches interviewed are all taking part in the HURMOS project and therefore presumably have major interest in innovative coaching topics like provocative coaching, even their knowledge base was considerably limited. Hence it is safe to assume that the overall level of awareness concerning provocative coaching amongst coaches is yet rather low. Nonetheless even though coaches may not use provocative coaching as it is defined in this thesis consciously, it is possible that a lot of professionals still apply some aspects of it in their work unconsciously. For example Interviewee B explains her style of coaching to be rather provocative by its nature without systematically planning it so, and Interviewee A demonstrates how she sometimes uses provocative language or changes the tone, volume or tempo of her speech to achieve some reaction from a client. Also Interviewee C who first denies using provocation in her coaching, eventually recalls using it at least once in her work after a while of thinking.

As a conclusion to the first research question 'What is provocative coaching? / What is known about provocative coaching?' the findings can be summarized as following. Provocative coaching is a fairly new coaching approach which consists of three key components: humour, warmth and provocation. These three elements together combine a successful provocative coaching session, but if even one of the elements (e.g. warmth) is missing, there is a risk that provocative coaching

changes completely to mere sarcasm or ridicule. The method is strongly based on reverse psychology e.g. underrating client's capabilities, which leads the client to be provoked and urged to disprove the coach's claim. In this method coach often uses very absurd and exaggerated metaphors and also allegations that for their part bring humour to this approach. Although it seems like a client is being deprecated or even mocked, this is not the case but the object of criticism is always the problem – never the client. Also the issue is brought up with a twinkle in an eye and the style of approaching the client is very warm and friendly.

Provocative coaching is not recommended to be used as a first method when meeting a new client, but instead it can be used as a supplementary tool where a coach can switch to, if the traditional methods do not seem to function properly. For example all three interviewees apply some provocation in their work in similar type of situations, when either a client is not acting receptive towards the coaching or a coaching process is not proceeding as desired. According to Hollander these are exactly the classic type of situations where provocative coaching can prove to be efficient. It is important to acknowledge that provocative coaching is only a supplemental tool instead of a cure-for-all, and therefore it is not supposed to be used as an only method a coach practices. Also one of the interviewees wants to notify that in her opinion this method could only be used with clients that are already familiar to the coach.

The second research question 'How does provocative coaching differ from traditional coaching?' is discussed in more detail in the chapter 4.3.4 *The six dimensions of coaching: provocative vs. traditional coaching*. As a conclusion both methods start with a social contract where coach is accepted as a helper whereas client is the one being helped. Both styles also aim to the same goal which is to develop the client as an individual depending on what is the issue. The role of a coach on the other hand varies greatly between the methods, since conventionally coach is seen as a wise professional but in provocative coaching he/she is more like a jester or a teaser. Conventional coaches also believe that client might not be able to confront provocation whereas provocative coaches believe in strong clients who are able to put up with resistance. Traditionally coaches set a certain structure and offer next steps for clients, while provocative coaches oblige them to guard the structure by being very disorganized and incoherent in their coaching. Moreover conventional coaches have a supportive and understanding behavior towards clients and their issues, when provocative coaches do not even recognize a problem being problematic at all.

From the interviewees Interviewee B is positively convinced about provocation's beneficial effects whereas Interviewee A notes that sometimes it can be hard to separate the outcomes of provocative and traditional coaching. Interviewee C has even got some negative experiences, where after provocation a client turned to be very defensing and even more persistent regarding her opinions. Nevertheless Interviewee C adds that it is impossible to know whether the provocation has produced positive results after the coaching term has ended, which is an important detail recognized also by Hollander. It is plausible that on occasion something a client has been told to crosses their mind after no less than several years, and if this triggers some new ideas or behaving patterns, provocativeness could be considered successful.

The final research question was 'How does humour appear in provocative coaching and how does it affect clients?'. In provocative coaching the style of humour is supposed to be good-natured and warm-hearted although also ironic with nuances of self-depreciation. Playful, comical, caring and supporting humour is a significant aspect in this coaching approach. As already mentioned the target of humour is on the problem instead of the client and the purpose of using humour is to help client broaden their understanding and generate realizations. Nevertheless, humour in provocative coaching should not be just stand-up comedy and telling jokes but its purpose is to stimulate and desensitize clients to new influences.

Humour, as provocation, is also utilized by all the interviewees. Interviewee A wants to emphasize that her work is not based on humour since she wants to be taken seriously as a coach, but there are definitely some humourous aspects integrated in it. Interviewee B notes that her use of humour has actually increased after taking part in HURMOS project, although it has always been a part of her work and she sees it as a great tool when getting to know new clients and creating favourable atmosphere for coaching. For Interviewee C humour is an important tool in her daily work mostly due to her profession as a laughter coach. Interviewee C thinks that humour reduces stiffness, reinforces creativity and encourages clients to open up, which are all findings that are also supported by various theories of humour as some of those presented in the sixth chapter of this paper.

All the coaches interviewed share the opinion that provocative coaching requires a great amount of practicing. Interviewee C additionally speculates that a coach needs to have a certain type of personality to succeed in it, while Interviewee B mentions that a good provocative coach must obtain a warm, confidential personality and be able to recognize the situations where this type of

approach is not suitable. Now being more aware of the concept all three coaches agree on that they would like to learn to use it more consciously, however it might be that learning the provocative coaching as defined by Hollander and other advocates, is too inconvenient and time consuming option for them at this point of their career.

8 DISCUSSION

The topic for this thesis took shape after a few obstacles in the beginning as the authors had to reform the entire subject; originally the plan was to conduct a market research study for a start-up company, however due to some disagreements the project had to be discontinued. After this it took some time to discover a new thesis topic and these unfortunate circumstances caused the thesis project to delay considerably. The current topic was eventually proposed by the HURMOS project which introduced the authors with a couple of options from where provocative coaching was finally chosen due to both authors' interest in human resource management. From the beginning the object was to conduct only a systematic literature review about provocative coaching since it was already known to be quite unknown topic for broad audience.

As sources of information were very limited, it set some extra challenges for this study. After independently researching the subject, the authors sought help from the library personnel of the Oulu University of Applied Sciences in hope of discovering new references considering provocative coaching. The authors can highly recommend the library's information retrieval service for anyone who is in process with their thesis and finds themselves being stuck with the research, even though in this case the benefits were unfortunately slightly minor. Eventually as the authors had searched for relevant information for a considerable time with no further results, the commissioner proposed adding few interviews to the work to support the already existing theory. In the authors' opinion this was considered a smart procedure in order to acquire more material, but only in case it would be possible to find interviewees and set up the interviews quite rapidly. Due to this the interviewees that were asked to participate in this work, were selected on the basis of already taking part in the HURMOS project, and therefore being the most convenient and time-efficient option for the authors' already stretched schedule.

As for what was prosperous in this thesis, all the research questions were covered successfully despite all the struggle with data retrieval. The two first research questions concerning provocative coaching and its differentiation from conventional method were addressed in the contents analysis whereas the third question is covered in its own chapter. Arguments and theories regarding humour's influence on coaching clients were decided to discuss separately for more clarified appearance, which in authors' opinion was a convenient choice.

What comes to the interviews, the authors feel that for more objective results e.g. the amount of interviewees should have been considerably larger-scale but due to the timeframe the sample was kept this size. Also as it occurred in the presentation seminar of this work, the authors could have asked to interview also one more person they reached earlier through Finnish Coaching Association in order to inquire help with the subject. The coach in question has held seminars concerning provocative coaching in Finland and was happy to answer the authors' email and give some tips, and therefore could have easily been asked to participate as an additional interviewee too. Unfortunately this communication happened in such an early phase of the work that when it was time to conduct the interviews, the authors did not realize or recall the option any more.

All the three interviewees were mostly unanimous and shared many opinions with Hollander and others regarding the subject. However the authors like to point out that as all the interviewees were engaged in HURMOS project, this might have had an impact on the interview outcome and if the research would have been conducted with a larger and more versatile sample, the results might have been much more incoherent. Because of this, for further research the authors recommend larger and more scattered interview sample if any more interviews are conducted in respect of this subject. As for the reliability of the contents analysis, the authors remark that supplementary scientific research regarding provocative coaching is still needed, since most of the theory seems to be based on only presumptions by Hollander and others promoting the method in question. In the authors' opinion this was indeed a quite distracting fact and it would have been highly rewarding to find various other references, but due to the novelty of the subject the outcomes had to be based only on the few references available.

Even though the theory base for this paper was mainly founded on a few specific resources the authors perceive that they were able to assemble the most important aspects into a compact guide for anyone who does not yet possess knowhow regarding the subject. Conducting this work was unexpectedly challenging at some points but also educational for the authors, giving a whole new perspective to business coaching in general as well as to performing a research of this type. The authors would like to express gratitude to all the interviewees whose contribution in this work made a big difference and enabled to finish the work with a much steadier knowledge base than it would have been without it.

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APPENDICES

STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IN FINNISH

APPENDIX 1

1. Millainen on työnkuvasi / minkälaisia palveluja tarjoat?
2. Miten määrittelet valmennuksen (coaching) käsitteenä ja miten se mielestäsi eroaa esim. terapiasta ja mentoroinnista?

3. Mitä tiedät provocative coachingista?
4. Mistä olet kuullut provocative coachingista?
5. Oletko käyttänyt provocative coachingia työssäsi ja millaisissa tilanteissa?
6. Jos et ole tarkoituksellisesti käyttänyt provocative coachingia, oletko koskaan valmennuksen aikana poikennut perinteisestä tyylistä esimerkiksi provosoimalla asiakasta? Millaisessa tilanteessa?
7. Miten asiakkaat ovat reagoineet provosointiin / provocative coachingiin?
8. Onko provosoinnin / provocative coachingin käyttö tehostanut valmennusprosessia ja millä tavalla?

9. Käytätkö valmennustyössäsi huumoria ja millä tavoin?
10. Miten asiakkaat ovat reagoineet huumoriin?
11. Onko huumorin käyttö tehostanut valmennusprosessia ja millä tavalla?

- *** määritelmän paljastus ***

12. Mitä mieltä olet ammattilaisena tästä valmennustyylistä ja voisitko kuvitella käyttäväsi sitä työssäsi?
13. Minkälaisissa tilanteissa voisit kuvitella käyttäväsi provocative coachingia?
14. Minkälaisissa tilanteissa provocative coachingin käyttö ei mielestäsi olisi järkevää?
15. Onko sinulla ollut asiakkaita jotka eivät ole tuntuneet hyötyvän perinteisistä valmennusmetodeista riittävästi ja joihin provocative coaching olisi mahdollisesti toiminut tehokkaammin?

16. Olisitko kiinnostunut perehtymään provocative coachingiin tarkemmin?
17. Tuliko haastattelun aikana mieleesi jotain mitä haluaisit vielä mainita?

1. What is your job description / what kind of services do you offer?
2. How would you define term coaching and how does it differ from e.g. therapy and mentoring?

3. What do you know about provocative coaching?
4. Where have you heard about provocative coaching?
5. Have you used provocative coaching in your work and in what kind of situations?
6. If you have not intentionally used provocative coaching, have you ever deviated from your usual coaching patterns by e.g. provoking a client? In what kind of situations?
7. How the clients have reacted to provoking or provocative coaching?
8. Has the use of provoking or provocative coaching enhanced the coaching process and in what ways?

9. Do you use humour in your work and in what ways?
10. How the clients have reacted to humour?
11. Has the use of humour enhanced coaching process and in what ways?

*** Definition of provocative coaching is shown to the interviewee ***

12. As a professional, what are your thoughts about this coaching method and could you possibly use it in your work?
13. In what kind of situations would you imagine using provocative coaching?
14. In what kind of situations the use of provocative coaching would not be reasonable?
15. Have you ever encountered clients who did not seem to benefit from traditional coaching methods and to whom provocative coaching could have worked more efficiently?

16. Would you be interested in familiarizing yourself more into provocative coaching?
17. Is there anything more you would like to mention?

Provocative coaching on uudenlainen valmennustyyli, joka koostuu kolmesta osa-alueesta: huumorista, lämminhenkisyydestä ja provosoinnista. Nämä kolme osa-aluetta yhdessä muodostavat onnistuneen provocative coaching-session, mutta jo yhden alueen uupuessa (esimerkiksi lämminhenkisyyden) riskinä on, että provocative coaching muuttuu pelkästään sarkasmiksi tai ivailuksi. Metodi perustuu vahvasti käänteispsykologiaan eli esimerkiksi asiakkaan kykenevyyden vähättelyyn, mikä johtaa asiakkaan provosoitumiseen ja haluun todistaa valmentajan väite vääräksi. Tässä metodissa valmentaja käyttää usein hyvin absurdeja ja liioiteltuja kielikuvia sekä väitteitä, jotka osiltaan tuovat huumoria tähän tylisuuntaan. Vaikka asiakasta vähätellään ja jopa haukutaan, asia tuodaan esille pilke silmäkulmassa ja valmentajan tyyli lähestyä asiakasta on hyvin toverillinen.