

Wales Academy for Professional Practice and Applied Research

MA Neuro Coaching

**Approaches to Research and Academic Communication
Part 2: Critical Review**

BMPF7100

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Introduction

This critical review will be considering Shoukry (2016a), *Coaching for Emancipation: a framework for coaching in oppressive environments*, Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring, 14(2), pp.15-30. The paper focuses on research conducted as a PhD study in 2011 (Shoukry, 2014 cited in Shoukry, 2016b, p. 2) at Oxford Brookes University. The study explored the use of coaching as an emancipatory approach, including how “oppression affects coachees, coaches and the coaching process” (p.15). It aimed to “develop a theoretical and practical framework for the use of coaching in oppressive environments to support the emancipation and development of individuals” (p.16). Shoukry (2016b) is also the author of a chapter on ‘Coaching for Social Change’ in The SAGE Handbook of Coaching and co-author of ‘Coaching as a social process’ (Shoukry and Cox, 2018). Dr. Shoukry is an honorary research associate at Oxford Brookes University, as well as a practitioner who has “worked for over twenty years with individuals and groups living in socially challenging contexts” (Academia.edu, 2022). It is the author’s belief that this article is essential reading for anyone interested in coaching in the context of social change. The author also believes that the researcher has succeeded in developing a theoretical model from cross-disciplinary sources and tested it practice with coaching for emancipation.

Summary of the Article

The article begins with a review of coaching literature and critical evaluation of the field of coaching, its potential, and its limitations when used to support individuals in oppressive environments. Shoukry proposes that coaching can be an effective method because it is participatory, it includes critical reflection, and it is flexible (continues to adapt to different purposes) (p.16). In evaluating current coaching approaches and research, Shoukry cites sources to establish that there is limited discussion or research on the relation between coaching and its socio-cultural context, noting that research is limited to the organisational management context. He also concludes that there is little critical thinking regarding the origin of coaching in one dominant cultural view (p.17). Shoukry then discusses ‘oppression’; drawing on

Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator and philosopher, who defined oppression as “what happens when a social order distorts the humanity of some of its members through unjust and sometimes violent perceptions and actions” (cited Shoukry, 2016a, p.17). The definition is inclusive of both the treatment of specific identity groups, and of entire nations under dictatorship or colonisation. Additionally, there is a discussion of literature on how human beings are affected when they live in oppressive environments, including ‘internalised oppression’ (p.18). Finally, literature on ‘emancipatory approaches’ is explored across the fields of education, psychotherapy, arts and theatre, action research, and social work. This literature is then used as the basis of the initial coaching framework employed by the coaches in practical research.

The findings of the study are organised into a framework of coaching for emancipation that includes three aspects (pp. 21-25). Within this structure the researcher identifies where the practice supports existing theories, and where it diverges:

1. Coaching for emancipation is founded on a critical theoretical understanding of the dynamics of oppression and emancipation, development, and empowerment.
2. Coaching for emancipation is enabled by three processes: retelling narratives, renewing beliefs, and fighting back.
3. Emancipatory coaches need to be continuously engaged in a process of reflective practice that drives their own development.

Analysis of the Article

Strengths

The author finds the researcher’s ability to develop an approach to working with clients from a cross-disciplinary review of literature, then test it over multiple coaching sessions delivered by multiple coaches, commendable. This article is

noteworthy because it includes primary research over a period of several years, something that is rare in the literature. Other literature on coaching for social change contributes to theoretical framing, however consistently ends with a call for practical research with coaching clients (Western, 2012; Gannon, 2021; Chiu, 2022). It is also significant that the practical component of the research took place at a time of social change in post-revolution Egypt. When the coaching research field is largely focused in western organisations, with mostly male managers (E. Erlandson, 2009, cited in Shoukry, 2016a, p.17) this research both takes place outside of the organisational context and brings a global perspective to coaching.

A key strength of the article is the theoretical breadth and rigour. The research draws on a critical theory paradigm, human development/pedagogy, and combines this with practices from emancipatory approaches. The researcher develops a model for coaching for emancipation and then this is tested and improved upon via iterations of inquiry in an action-research based method. In this process several theories are progressed in the context of coaching for emancipation:

- The researcher notes that the view of Wilber (2000) that cognitive and emotional lines of development are independent was not supported. Emotional processing was an enabler of 'meaning making' in the coachees (p.23).
- In the method of 'retelling narratives' the researcher challenges Drake (2010) re pre-requisites of self-awareness and ego strength for effective narratives (p.24).

In the 'fighting back' phase of the coaching approach, the researcher also challenged a coaching norm regarding 'reality' (current state, or grounding in boundaries of possibility) (p.25) that is associated with 'performance coaching'.

The researcher used co-operative inquiry, a method that is informed by the 'Transformative' philosophical worldview and aligns with the critical theory paradigm (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.9). Shoukry (2016a, p.20) describes this

methodology as meeting the needs of a dialogical epistemology in which knowledge is created through inquiry and dynamic interaction with the environment (citing Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 2005). Researchers in this philosophy often begin with a focus point of empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, or alienation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.9). The author believes that this makes the method ideal for a study of coaching for social change.

Weaknesses

Unfortunately, due to a lack of detail, it is difficult to assess the theoretical basis of the coaching model that forms the foundation for the practical research. The cross-disciplinary framework, based on seven different disciplines is summarised as a table in Figure 1 by Shoukry (2016a, p.19). This cross-disciplinary analysis could be the basis of many articles. Elsewhere, an entire article is devoted to exploring the conceptual value within just one other discipline, social movement theory, and how it could contribute to a theoretical framework for coaching for social change (Gannon, 2021). It is also the case that the reader needs to already subscribe to the critical theory paradigm for coaching, as there is no opportunity to discuss statements that are extremely rich in meaning and quite challenging to common assumptions, such as 'the neutrality of coaching'. For example, the point that coaching stems from one dominant cultural view that is predominantly westernised is covered in one paragraph in this article, however, it is the entire topic of a later article (Shoukry and Cox, 2018). The author is concerned that there may be little response to what is a significant study without further 'breaking down' of theory into more detailed discussion.

Possibly, the most notable omission regarding methodology is how progress towards emancipation in the coachee experience was recognised. While there is mention of surveying coachees, the self-perception of coachees' emancipation is not mentioned. The context that the research took place in, a post-revolutionary country emerging from military dictatorship, is extremely specific. However, an important element of this unique situation seems to have been missed: a discussion of how to

differentiate 'emancipation as an outcome of coaching' from the experience of emancipation as an outcome of simply living in a post-revolutionary society.

In the practical research component, another omission is a lack of discussion of the demographic make-up of the coachees. It is possible that they were also 75% male, as per the criticism of existing coaching research in the Western world mentioned early in the article (E. Erlandson, 2009, cited in Shoukry, 2016a, p.17). Similarly, it is not clear if there is any diversity amongst the twelve coaches who acted as co-researchers. Social identity is discussed as a basis of oppression in the definition of oppression within the article (p.17), so it is surprising that it is omitted as a factor in the discussion of coaches and participants.

The question of cultural context as a limitation of the study is raised by Shoukry himself, who concludes that "Any claim around the generalisability of findings would be problematic" (p. 26). This caveat contradicts many strong statements regarding the findings such as "the study offers a theoretical view of the journey from oppression to emancipation" (p. 22). Following this caveat, the author would have preferred to see a discussion of where further research could build on and test what is transferrable. Instead, there is a discussion questioning the uncritical acceptance of claims of 'cultural imperialism' by autocratic governments. This is not directly relevant to the transferability of the research and possibly more appropriate as a focus of its' own discussion (see Shoukry and Cox, 2018, p.419).

Conclusion

It is possible that omissions in detail regarding methodology may be explained by the challenge of summarising a research project of such breadth into a single article. The coaching approach that was initially developed from a review of seven different disciplines is deserving of the long-form possible in a book. In terms of taking the research into the world, however, it does appear that practitioners are able to

engage with the framework developed through a training in 'Coaching for Emancipation' offered by the Shoukry (Human Gene: Finding the Human in every one of us., no date). This aligns with the intention of this research field to effect positive social change. Overall, it is the author's view that this article signals the beginning of an exciting new area of research, and it is her hope that it may be furthered in the Western world context, where oppression and internalised oppression are also relevant and where coaching is most established.

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Appendix 1:

Critical Review Presentation Slides



Wales Academy for
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MA Neuro Coaching

Approaches to Research
and Academic
Communication
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PART 2: CRITICAL REVIEW

Presented by Grace Minton

Shoukry, (2016)

***Coaching for Emancipation:
A framework for coaching in
oppressive environments***

*Journal of Evidence Based Coaching
and Mentoring, 14(2) pp.15-30*

Overview

- The Researcher
- Purpose of the study
- Context of the study
- Research Methodology
- Summary of findings
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Conclusion
- References
- Images

The Researcher



Image 1: Human Gene: Finding the Human in everyone of us (2022) Hany Shoukry.
Available in: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360000000>
(Accessed: 7 December 2022).

Dr Hany Shoukry is also the author of:

- 'Coaching for Social Change' Chapter in The SAGE Handbook of Coaching (2016b)
- Co-author of 'Coaching as a social process' (Shoukry and Cox, 2018).

Honorary research associate at Oxford Brookes University

20 years experience working with people living in socially challenging contexts (Academia.edu, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

To “develop a theoretical and practical framework for the use of coaching in oppressive environments to support the emancipation and development of individuals” (p.16).

Context of the Study

EGYPT BETWEEN TWO REVOLUTIONS

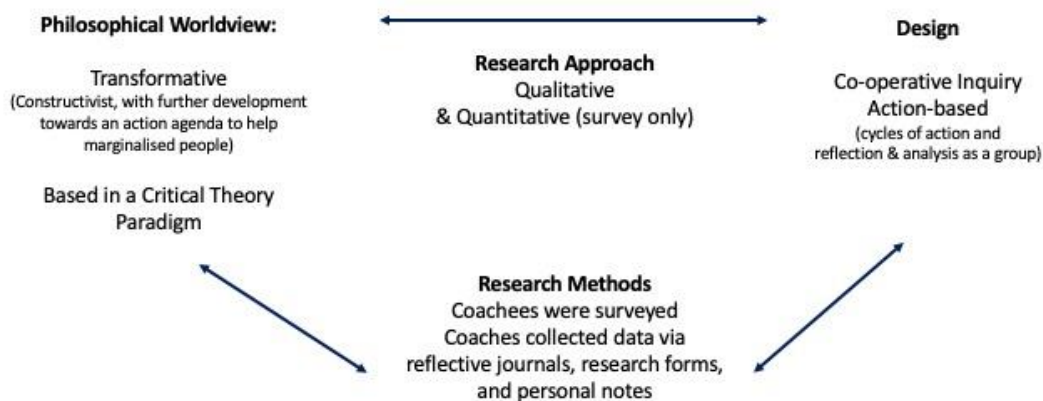
One year after the Arab Spring popular revolution ended the 30 year rule by the Mubarak regime.

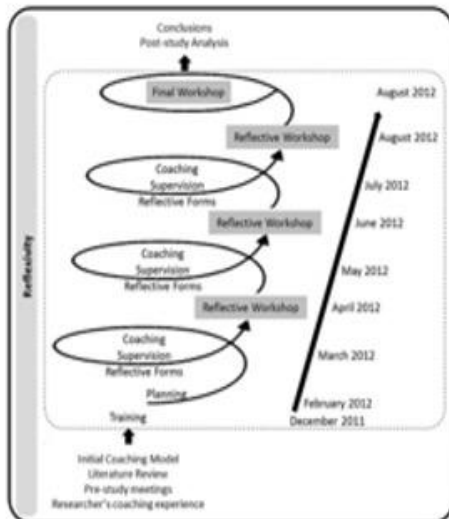
18 days of demonstrations beginning in January 2011...

The Study

One year before the rise of Islamic extremism, the religious discrimination against religious minorities, and the support by many of a return of military rule...

Research Framework

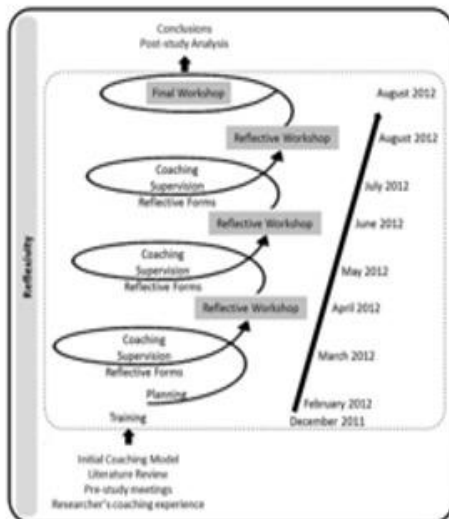




"Figure 2: Research Timelines and Cycles" (Shoukry, 2016a, p. 20).

Research Methodology

- Research was conducted in 2011 as a PhD study by the same title at Oxford Brookes University, (Shoukry, 2014 cited in Shoukry, 2016b, p.2)
- Involving 12 Coaches as 'co-researchers' and 22 Coachees, coaching over 6 months.
- The image shows the creation of an initial coaching model, to training the coaches, then refining this through 3 cycles of action and reflection



"Figure 2: Research Timelines and Cycles" (Shoukry, 2016a, p. 20).

Research Methodology

- Coachees received 1 - 2 coaching sessions per 2 month cycle (up to 6 sessions in total)
- Coaches received 1 supervision session per 2 month cycle (3 in total)
- Coachees were surveyed
- Coaches captured data in reflective journals, research forms, and personal notes
- Data was analysed as a group in 3 x 3 day workshops

Findings



Image source: Adobe Stock

Finding 1:

Founded on a critical theoretical understanding of the dynamics of oppression and emancipation, development, and empowerment.

Finding 1 - Theory

FINDING	THEORICAL FRAME
1. Re impact of oppression on an individual: "Oppression is experienced as a complex web of daily interactions that affects the entire social and psychological experience of the individual" (p.22)	Similar to Habermas (1987), Freire (1970), Bell (2007), Hegazy (2013)
2. Re the coaching journey for a coachee from oppression to emancipation: "both oppression and emancipation are neither individual nor social phenomena... they are both the subjects of a continuous exchange between the individual and his/her social world, whereby the individual internalises, resists or changes the oppressive structure." (p.22)	This is presented as the first of its kind

Finding 1 – Theory

FINDING	THEORICAL FRAME
3. The cycle that coachees move through	Aligns with Mezirow (2000) theory of transformative learning, and expands on it re the primacy of emotion (not cognitive) processes and reaction and counter reaction of social system and individual through cycles of change (p.23)
4. Oppressive contexts may have a negative impact on cognitive and emotional development. The findings suggest that one dimension may act as a prerequisite or enabler to the other (p.23).	Aligning with descriptions of Kegan (1982) and Baxter Magolda (2004). Contradicting the view of Wilber (2000) that the lines are independent.

Finding 1 - Theory

FINDING

3 Principles that relate to moving from powerlessness to freedom:

1. The importance of creating an empowering environment in the coaching session
2. Continuously maintain balance between empathy, appreciation and critical moments.
3. The coach must always maintain that the coachee is the only one who can assume responsibility over his/her life.

THEORETICAL FRAME

Aligns with Foucault (2012), theory of power and subjectivity

Aligns with Foucault (2000)

Finding 2:

Coaching for emancipation is enabled by three processes: retelling narratives, renewing beliefs, and fighting back.

Finding 2 – Coaching Method

METHOD

Re-telling Narratives (p.23-24)

Coachees use stories to understand, externalise and re-author their lives, starting from consciousness raising and naming oppression in the lived experience, to authoring a narrative of liberation.

THEORY

Align with theorists re the liberating power of narratives:

in therapy (White, 2007)
in coaching (Drake, 2010)
in social work (Abels & Abels, 2001)

Challenge Drake (2010) re pre-requisites for effective narratives. The study found that the level of self-awareness and ego strength described by Drake were not required.

Finding 2 – Coaching Method

METHOD

Renewing Beliefs (p.24)

Focus on understanding and challenging the structures that lead to the coachee's experience of oppression, whether they are social structures, or deeply held assumptions and beliefs.

Using 'X-Role (Social) analysis'.

THEORY

Align with reported benefits of social and gender role analysis in feminist therapy (Israeli & Santor, 2000)

Finding 2 – Coaching Method

METHOD

Fighting Back (p.24)

Coachees undertake three types of action:

1. breaking from the reality of daily oppression
2. discovering new worlds where new behaviours can be implemented
3. engaging in reflective actions of resistance and change

THEORY

This phase in the method was not connected to any existing theories. The researcher does discuss how it breaks from standard performance coaching approaches such as the Reality stage in the GROW model

Finding 3:

Emancipatory coaches need to be continuously engaged in a process of reflective practice that drives their own development.

Finding 3 – the need for Supervision

FINDING (P.25)

Coaches may:

- Share many struggles of the coachees
- May be effected by, and effecting, the coachees' feelings and beliefs

Coaches need to develop:

- Awareness of their own assumptions, understanding of the socialisation process for coachee, as well as critical thinking skills
- Be able to reflect on the complexity involved, in the moment

THEORY

Supports Hay (2007) re reflective practice as a common requirement in all coaching, and expands on this to find that it is **essential in coaching for emancipation**

Strengths



Image source: Microsoft PowerPoint

Strengths

1. Primary research within the field of coaching for social change.

Other literature in this topic remains theoretical and consistently ends with calls for primary research.

The research occurring outside of the Western world is also welcomed.



Strengths

2. The theoretical breadth across critical theory, human development/pedagogy and emancipatory approaches.

Testing in action and capturing both alignment and divergence from theories.

Inclusion of concepts that diverge from performance coaching, such as 'fighting back' including a component of challenging reality (as in current state/boundaries of possibility).

Strengths

3. The use of a research method that is in alignment with the philosophy of transformation, and the intention of action for empowerment, to change inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, or alienation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.9) is extremely suitable for a study of coaching for emancipation.

Weaknesses



Image source: Microsoft PowerPoint

Weaknesses

1. The breadth of theories incorporated into the coaching model cannot be contained in sufficient detail in the article to allow for discussion.

In general, there is *so much* in the article that could be broken out into many separate articles.

Without this, there may be limited responses and 'building on' this research by others.



Weaknesses

2. There is an omission regarding *how* coaches or coachees knew that emancipation had been progressed.

Survey data from the coachees did not appear to be used for this.

It is unclear if it is considered an 'ongoing process' that does not complete, or as an outcome of the coaching.



Weaknesses

3. In the description of the research method, there is an omission re the social identities and diversity of the coaches and coachees. E.g. it is hard to know if there is any gender diversity.

Earlier discussion in the article of the limitations of coaching research mentions a lack of coachee gender diversity (p.17), so this is problematic.

Weaknesses

4. There is a caveat under limitations that states “Any claim around the generalisability of findings would be problematic” which contradicts strong statements regarding findings.

It would be have been better discuss how further research might test what *is* transferable outside of the specific culture and social context of the study.

Conclusion



Image source: Microsoft PowerPoint

It is possible to take a training to discover the model and use it as a coach...

Ref. Human Gene: Finding the Human in everyone of us. (2022)



• 11
• Login

Coaching for Emancipation (CFE) is the first research based coaching approach to incorporate personal development and social change



Finding the Human in Everyone of Us

CFE Coach Training Programme

Coaching for Emancipation



Coaching for Emancipation (CFE) is an approach for working with individuals to support their development, while helping them to understand and liberate themselves from the negative implications of living in oppressive environments. It is a process that takes place in the relationship between coach and coachee, and aims to support the individual's growth and learning in any aspect of his/her life.

Becoming a coach is very fulfilling but demanding. Coaching for Emancipation is suitable for those who have a real interest in facilitating the development of others and ideally have some experience with individuals or groups. The training of a CFE coach requires many hours of theory, practice, reflection, supervision, and active contribution to the research and development of the method, over at least one year.

A training for coaches is planned to take place in Egypt soon. If you are interested, please fill your initial details and questions form. The training will be delivered online by Dr. Hany Shoukry, the founder of the method, and face-to-face sessions by number of current CFE practitioners.



Image source: Microsoft PowerPoint

Conclusion

The theoretical foundation of the model and the final model itself seems deserving of a book. This would allow for a proper engagement with both.



Image source: Adobe Stock

Conclusion

This article, and the research study it draws on, signals the beginning of an exciting new area of primary research in coaching for social change.

Ideally, this would be furthered by a 'coaching for emancipation' study in the Western world context, where oppression and internalised oppression are also relevant and where coaching is most established.

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