Decolonising reflective practice and supervision

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Abstract

This paper presents a critique of current norms relating to reflective practice and coaching ethics in the context of our aspirations as coaches and supervisors to contribute to greater social justice, equity and inclusion in the workplace and wider society. Critically reflective action learning (CRAL) is argued for as an approach to reflective practice that might help to address the critique that reflective practice in coaching and supervision is currently dominated by a Eurocentric over-emphasis on the individual's self-awareness at the expense of developing the individual's social awareness and critical consciousness. I argue further that addressing this bias would enhance our ability as supervisors to support coaches serving clients who live and work in a world characterised by a complex intersection of oppressive, existential issues. Without criticality and radical compassion, we risk being the blind leading the blind.

Keywords: coaching ethics, reflective practice, critically reflective action learning (CRAL), social justice, supervision

Introduction

Since becoming an accredited supervisor I have been supporting a growing number of individuals and groups of coaches and mentors conscious of working in a world characterised by a complex intersection of oppressive, existential issues. They have been looking for a supervision approach open to an exploration of the deep, persistent issues of racism and intersectional discrimination that show up in their lives and work. An approach that recognises the complex, diverse nature of our common humanity in ways that do not minimise or dismiss the reality of oppression. Recognising also that coaching and mentoring may be experienced as an oppressive context when and where practitioners remain blind to the Eurocentric, Western norms that have only recently been foregrounded for analysis and discussion in the context of coaching, specifically in relation to race and its intersection with gender and other historically marginalised identity groups, (Roche & Passmore, 2021).

Further, in the move away from the universalisation of individualistic, westernised approaches to ethics, move toward decolonial global ethics (Dunford, 2017) based on inter-cultural dialogue between multiple people/s. This would at minimum engage us in dialogue, on the basis of equality, between cultures that begin philosophically and ethically from a 'we' orientation for example Ubuntu coaching (Geber, 2013), and those that begin from an 'I' orientation.

While coaching, and mentoring before it, may now be said to have taken a 'social turn' (Gannon, 2021), in the form of, for example, the Climate Coaching Alliance (CCA), and emerging anti-racist, social justice-oriented practitioners, can the same be said for supervision? Coaching for social change theorist, Hany Shoukry (2017) identified supervision as one of the professional practices which socialises coaches into the norms, assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that remain, despite a growing aspiration for social change in the direction of greater equity, justice, and sustainability, largely tied to neo-liberal, individualistic, methodology. I will use this position paper to argue that the huge potential of coaching to serve a social change agenda, building on the work of Du Toit & Sim, (2010) Einzig, (2017) and Shoukry, (2013, 2017, 2018), amongst others, requires the broadening of supervision theory and approaches to give more emphasis to the macro-sociological dimensions of human experience, enabling supervisor, coach, mentor, consultant, or leader to widen their gaze and become more critically conscious and radically compassionate (Tara Brach, 2022).

Defining critical reflection as a core competency

Abstracting from the small but growing literature on coaching for social change, I have identified the following characteristics or 'competencies' as key to the stance and approach that is being called coaching for social change and which in practice for the coaches I work with is specifically concerned with coaching for racial, wider social and climate justice. Coaches and supervisors are invited to:

- Contribute to the coaching/supervision agenda from a perspective that recognises the socio-historical context of the dominant forms of coaching and their relationship to emerging 'new' or alternative forms and those from diverse cultural contexts (Western, 2012, Shoukry 2013).

- Develop scepticism toward specific professional norms, including the norm of neutrality (Einzig, 2017, Roche & Passmore, 2021).
- Develop socio-historical, geopolitical, cultural/racial consciousness and sensitivity concerning the specific contexts within which we coach, mentor, or consult (Roche & Passmore, 2022).
- Develop critically reflective systemic awareness, moving beyond self-awareness as a unitary isolated individual to understand power relations and dynamics (Shoukry, 2017).
- Develop ethics as critical practice as an extension of ethical maturity (Roche, 2020).

Supervision is advocated as a key element in the ongoing professional development of coaches, and this is also embedded in the global code of coaching ethics. Supervision is partly defined by its role in developing reflective practice which in turn is defined as "a structured, intentional process of examining one's own experience in order to gain insight" (Campone, 2011). What is the difference between reflective practice so defined and critical reflection? Brookfield (2009) makes the point that reflection while necessary for learning does not in itself guarantee criticality. Brookfield is clear in defining what sets critical reflection apart from reflection per se. Brookfield (2009) says:

> "Critical reflection calls into question the power relationships that allow, or promote, one set of practices considered to be technically effective. It assumes that the minutiae of practice have embedded within them the struggles between unequal interests and groups that exist in the wider world. For reflection to be considered critical it must have as its explicit focus uncovering, and challenging, the power dynamics that frame practice and uncovering and challenging hegemonic assumptions (those assumptions we embrace as being in our best interests when in fact they are working against us)." (p. 293).

There might be an assumption that reflection at the level of systemic issues and dynamics is per se critical; at the systemic level we look for the relationship between everyday lived experience and wider, deeper patterns and interrelationships. The seven-eyed model of supervision is designed to encompass all levels from the intimate individual, relational to the broad sweep of the wider system. One has to ask if this is what happens in reality and even where it does whether that practice fulfils the definition provided by Brookfield? The fifth addition of Supervision in the Helping Professions (Hawkins, 2020) admits that, while supervision training encourages work in all

seven modes (Figure 1), "some supervisors become habituated to using just one mode" (Hawkins, 2020, p. 108).

Figure 1 Seven modes of supervision (Hawkins, 2020)
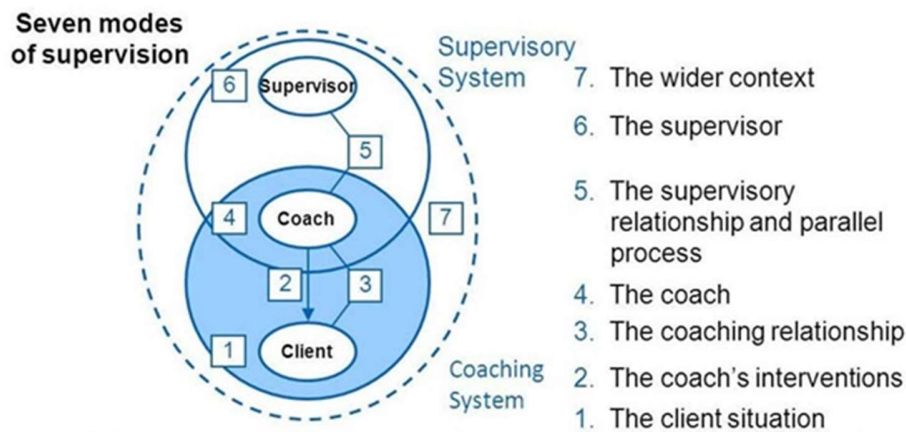
My experience of being trained to use the model as a supervisor is that while the aspiration to be 'systemic' is there, in practice this is limited by an overreliance on psycho-dynamic approaches, psychoanalytical tools such as parallel process, transference and counter transference, possibly reflecting the origins of the seven-eyed model in counselling and psychotherapy (Hawkins, 2020), with little attention to macro-sociological theories and tools.

Specifically, for the purposes of this paper, in the context of Diversity and Inclusion (D&I), I believe that an understanding of the sociology (including social and liberation psychologies) of race, power, domination, oppression and resistance needs to be regarded as essential to practitioners. Practitioners wanting to serve clients who in turn are seeking to advance self and social change and/or those negatively impacted by their lived experiences of oppression. An additional, equally central, issue is the supervisor's role in developing the ethical capacity and ethical maturity of the supervisee (Hawkins, 2020). How is this to be done within the context of supervisory norms which may render both supervisor and supervisee blind to systemic and ideological norms which may in turn reinforce oppressive patterns of power and inequality despite practitioners having the opposite intent? This paper briefly explores two questions:

Firstly, what can we learn from a critical look at the dominant norms of reflective practice?

Secondly, how can we broaden our view from a individualistic conception of ethics?

The following two sections will explore reflective practice in coaching, and by extension, supervision, through the lens of a critique by Cushion (2014) and other critical learning experts (Brookfield, 1998; Corley & Eades, 2006; McNiff, 2011). Finally, some conclusions will be drawn about the implications for ethics through a look at ethics as critical practice (Weiskopt, 2013). As there is no literature, I could find, on the use of CRAL in coaching supervision, this will be supported by an illustrative case study from my own practice.

Reflection and reflective practice discourses in coaching: a critical analysis

The key to answering the questions posed, in my view, may lie in a critical analysis of reflective practice in coaching, an analysis which can be applied to supervision. Cushion's analysis (2014), drawing on Foucault (1972 (2014), defines discourse as a form of knowledge that incites social practices and relational dynamics which, in turn, create our subjectivity or professional identity. In this sense discourses operate as an "exercise of power" (Cushion, 2014, quoting Gilbert, 2001, p. 200) while obscuring the power relations embedded in them.

His analysis identifies two different models of reflection and reflective practice. The first is a rational-technicist model (Dewey, 1933) which emphasises reflection as a conscious problem-solving technique. The assumption about knowledge is that it is objective, evidence-based and scientific. Accordingly, reflection is presented as a 'cognitive function' philosophically based on Cartesian rationality. Thus, the rational being, the 'I' in 'I think therefore I am' (Kant, 1787), becomes the 'object' and the 'subject' of reflection. The thinker links the inner and outer world through their reflections on self and the emotional and psychological material generated in the self. The capacity to reflect on self (self-awareness) is presented as the pinnacle of a universal neutral standard of professional excellence. This standard, I attest in line with Cushion's analysis (2014), tends to turn the coach and supervisor's gaze inwards.

In distinction to Dewey (1993), Cushion (2014) refers to Schon (1983) who defines reflection as an intuitive, individual, non-rational, emergent in-

action process better suited to complex and ambiguous issues/problems. The assumption about knowledge is that it is based on wisdom and intuition gained from experience or practice/action in the field. Overly theoretical knowledge is rejected as unhelpful for understanding the messiness of the real world. While Cushion offers little in terms of critique on this second approach, I believe that its limitation lies in the exclusion of knowledge/ies, theories and understandings that are outside of the direct experience and world views of the reflecting being (s).

Coming back to the distinction between reflective and critically reflective practice, Cushion's overall argument in setting out these two models (citing Darbyshire & Fleming, 2008 and Mackey, 2007) is that their assumptions are far from neutral or universal instead they "are produced by domains of power/knowledge and are not value-free but prejudiced and socially constructed" (Cushion, 2014, p. 86). My observations coincide with Cushion's conclusion that within both models there is a danger that reflective practice, even when mediated by a reflective partner, tends to constitute a closed system confirming what is already known within the professional norms of the coach/supervisor thereby perpetuating social practices and preconceptions. Individualism is the mechanism by which this is affected, in separating reflective practices from the socio-cultural and political contexts that shape them.

This latter point is further illuminated by Brookfield (1998) and McNiff (2011) who draw links between critical reflection and identity, a link of particular interest in the light of contemporary debates around identity, difference and decoloniality. McNiff (2011) contextualises critical reflection as a practitioner within a moral framework of "relational epistemologies" (p. 198) acknowledging the ways in which Eurocentric, Western ways of knowing and being have and are continuing to colonise the world. For McNiff (2011) working across cultures through critical reflection allows taken for granted assumptions, regarded as universal truths, to become the subject of critical thought, creating space for indigenous knowledge and narratives to take their place. This cannot be done by seeing the individual as an isolated, autonomous being. Critical reflection is carried out not by a singular 'I' but by a collective 'we' engaged in a co-creative emergent dialogic practice.

Critical reflection is seen as a way of disrupting the ideological and epistemologically oppressive practices associated with globalisation as a dominant colonising power (McNiff, 2011). As Corley and Eades, (2006) add, critical reflection allows the practitioner to compete with the dominant discourse of the day; compete as in challenge. It is suggested that we are

required to take a moral or ethical stance to what one sees through the eyes of criticality underpinned by radical compassion. We not only make the critique but live by it. Brookfield (2009) offers an interesting model of four critically reflective lens, the most significant for the purpose of this paper is, Critically Reflective Lens 1: Our Autobiography as a Learner in Practice. Brookfield notes that much professional education dismisses autobiography as merely anecdotal and "hopelessly subjective and impressionistic" (p. 198). However, what Brookfield's analysis (1998) of the dialectic between the individual and the universal reveals is what makes knowing and understanding personal narratives vital: formative experiences hardwire motivations and behavioural patterns that are not connected to rational or cognitive ways of holding knowledge. They are emotional biases or drivers. Why we are pulled to certain ways of being as a coach or supervisor for example may have nothing to do a preference for a one evidence-based model over another and may be more to do with a deeply held emotional pull or belief. We are formed by the hidden dynamics of social experience and its imprints as much as by consciously held theories and concepts. Hence the need for critical consciousness and radical compassion as defined by Tara Brach:

> "Compassion can be described as letting ourselves be touched by the vulnerability and suffering that is within ourselves and all beings. The full flowering of compassion also includes action: not only do we attune to the presence of suffering; we respond to it." (Tara Brach, 2022).

Brookfield (1998, 2009) and McNiff (2011) coincide with Cushion (2014) in making this intimate link between critical reflection and an emotional commitment to social change as the basis for ethics in reflective practice. I will now explore this in relation to coaching and supervision in contemporary contexts.

Critical reflection on ethics in coaching and supervision

There is an emerging critique of ethics in coaching and supervision ethics, which is drawing attention to the Eurocentric, neoliberal character. Evidence to support the need for this inquiry is emergent in the research findings set out in Racial Justice, Equity and Belonging in Coaching (Roche & Passmore, 2021). One key finding of this research is that the coaching literature is largely silent about race in terms of the power dynamics of racialisation and how this might show up in coaching and supervision. It is entirely silent on how systemic racism is reflected in coaching and supervision norms. This silence calls into question the profession's ability to ethically coach clients

experiencing the impacts of systemic racism and other inequalities in the workplace or wider society.

This concern has been amplified in a presentation to the March 2022 Coaching Ethics Forum Conference, under the title 'Beyond the individual, behind the scenes: A macro sociological lens on ethics in coaching' (Fatien-Diochion et al., 2022). The presentation made the following opening points: coaching (and by extension, supervision) tends to frame ethical issues predominantly in terms of individual attitudes, behaviours, choices, and responsibility. As a result, the ethical questions are framed in terms of individual problems and therefore in a limited context. The ethical issues can then appear as either something that the supervisee got 'wrong' or an individual problem for them to resolve in line with their values and moral framework. Ethical issues are thereby over psychologised and the default tools and techniques for assisting the coach are psychological or technical.
This in turn leads to a neglect of the sociological, political, and economic dimensions that have contributed to the ethical problem in a "regression from the political to the personal" (Fatien-Diochion, et al., 2022). The speakers alternate between zooming in to the micro level and zooming out to the macro, revealing the dynamic interplay between the two. To do this, they employ a vocabulary of concepts and ideas currently alien to coach and supervision training, including terms such as existential crisis, nationalism, religion, socialism, capitalism, liberal individualism, genocide, discrimination, oppression, disruption of our social contract with governments, and coaching as an industrial complex. This is a vocabulary that centralises the social context of coaching and supervision as social processes, as well as employing a process of 'zooming out' to consider how the macro-social processes are showing up in the individual psyche, behaviours, issues, and concerns embedded in our work and interrelationships.

In November 2021, as a result of a search to resolve these very concerns for myself, I began to experiment with Critically Reflective Action Learning in my one-to-one and group supervision practice. The following section explains this approach and provides an illustrative case study based on my emergent practice.

What is Critically Reflective Action Learning and what does it offer?
Action Learning (AL) has been established as a process for engaging organisations and professional groups in reflective practice to support change. Action learning is understood to be a culture and practice of reflection on and in

action defined by certain key principles (Pedler, 2005). The theory and practice of AL were developed in 1945 from the work of Reginald Revans. Since its inception AL has been proposed as a means of tackling real-life, stubborn problems in situ. Revans (1980) proposed that meaningful solutions to tricky, complex problems could only come from those actively engaged in the everyday realities of social and business change. Subsequently for the AL theorist learning and action were inextricably linked (Hale, 2014; Pedler, 2010; Revans, 1971, 1980, 1982, 1983). Hale (2013, 2014), particularly emphasied the importance of action learning as a process in situations where no pervious learning existed upon which to base solutions. The commonly recognised strength of AL according to Pedler (2010) and Marquart (2010) is that it brings together a group of peers from the same organisation or professional context to learn from real life problems, issues, or challenges. Issues are treated critically, and the reflections used for improving the impact and value of their work. It was meant from the beginning to be a philosophical approach to social and business problems believing that real change required change in the actor/s carrying out change, the barriers to change being environmental and subjective (Revans, 1980; Rigg, 2008). The aim of action was to achieve some social good. While AL from its inception was implicitly linked to the development of ethical behaviour the link became more explicit as the approach evolved in response to perceived limitations of the traditional approach (Marquart & Hale, 2011), particularly in the social context of high-profile ethical failures in the 2000s, (Soffe, et al., 2011).

Criticality and ethics

An intensified focus on ethical conduct was an important consideration in the ongoing evolution of AL. Critical Action Learning (CAL) went beyond AL picking up on research that indicated AL's tendency to individualise the issues under consideration, failing to account for how action and learning are constrained by power and politics in human systems (Rigg & Trehan, 2004; Pedler, 2010; Soffe, et al., 2011). Consequently, CAL also focuses on "'working with the emotional" dimension of surfacing and dealing reflexively with issues of power and "power dynamics in learning processes" (Vince, 1996, p. 119). Thereby challenging the positivist world view of traditional AL (Willmott, 1997). CAL was developed from a synthesis between foundational AL principles, critical social theory, and critically reflective learning reflective/reflexive learning theory.

Willmott (1997) and Reynolds (1998) elaborate the differences between AL and CAL as follows: While AL emphasises the importance of self-development through reflection with peers, CAL focuses on self-development as interdependent with social development. CAL also places more emphasis than AL on challenging conventional wisdom, professional power/opinion, and socially coercive imperatives (Marquardt, 1999; Soffe et al. 2011).

In a further iteration, critically reflective action learning (CRAL), went further still. CRAL takes a view of 'critical reflection that goes beyond 'critique' in its aim to work actively toward social justice outcomes. It does not stop at revealing the dynamics that occur within the individual, organisational or societal context. Changing normative assumptions, interactions, policies, and practices is a crucial part of the action orientation of CRAL (Rigg & Pedler, 2010), reinforcing the arguments of Brookfield (1998), Corley, Eades (2006), and McNiff (2011) presented earlier in this paper; critical reflection needs to acknowledge biases that arise from the socialisation of individual and professional identity, power, and ideology in the context of specific and emerging moral and ethical contexts.

CRAL as a process

The focus of CRAL is to 'emancipate' practitioners on three levels.
- They become aware of their theories-in-use (Argri, 1974), unlearning normative behaviours and practices increasing their capacity for 'inaction' as a transition toward enabling them to choose other ways of approaching and resolving systemic issues.
- They become aware of often-unseen constraints of assumption, habit, precedent, coercion, and ideology.' (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 192).
- Learning to align interactions and decision making with ethical frameworks that value equity moving from intention to impact as a measure of progress (Trehan, 2004).
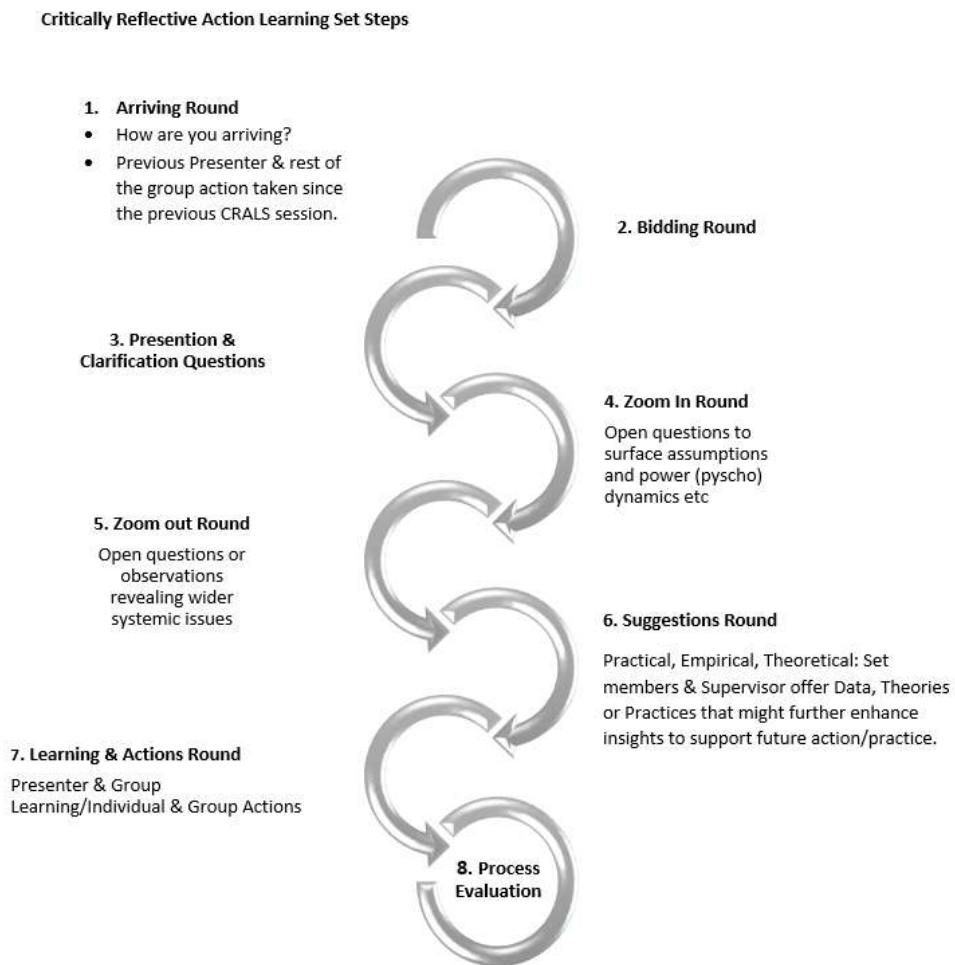
According to this literature the benefits of CRAL is that participants have a framework to:
- Question the underlying assumptions informing their professional practice
- Take a social rather than individual focus, drawing on social psychology
- Include as core the analysis of power dynamics, and structural issues affecting human development within society, organisations, and relationships

- Practice from an emancipatory approach, rather than an approach orientated toward the individual adapting to the context

CRAL works by employing an eight-step process:

Figure 2 Critically Reflective Action Learning Steps (Roche, 2022)

Critically Reflective Action Learning Set Steps

1. **Arriving Round**
   - How are you arriving?
   - Previous Presenter & rest of the group action taken since the previous CRALS session.

2. **Bidding Round**

3. **Presention & Clarification Questions**

4. **Zoom In Round**

   Open questions to surface assumptions and power (pyscho) dynamics etc

5. **Zoom out Round**

   Open questions or observations revealing wider systemic issues

6. **Suggestions Round**

   Practical, Empirical, Theoretical: Set members & Supervisor offer Data, Theories or Practices that might further enhance insights to support future action/practice.

7. **Learning & Actions Round**

   Presenter & Group Learning/Individual & Group Actions
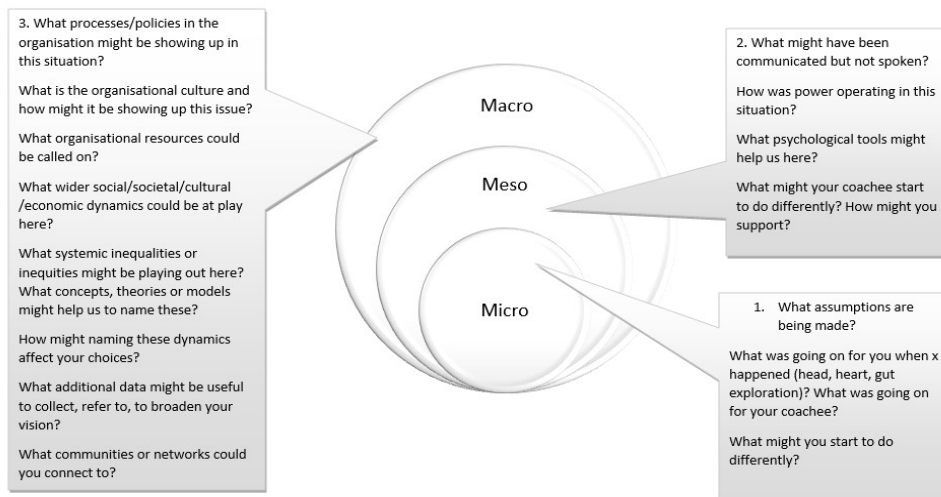
8. **Process Evaluation**

The following illustrative case study aims to demonstrate the difference made to the types and focus of conversations facilitated by the CRALs process.

Preface to illustrative case study

In preface to the case study the diagram below (Figure 3) sets out a range of questions that, I suggest, takes reflective practice into the domain of criticality and social justice. It has become my standard tool for supporting the zooming in and zooming out process when facilitating a CRAL supervision set. It is visible to all set members, supporting us in moving between domains, without becoming stuck in any one domain. This process for supervision does not dispense with a focus on the micro dynamics and inter relational dynamics of the case under discussion instead it ranges between all levels. It does so on the basis that each level contains the other as imagined by a nested system of complex interconnected, interdependent, and mutually interrelated, processes (Velez-Agosto, et al., 2017). The questions in Box 3, by drawing attention to the macro-dynamics, are designed to provide a cognitive scaffold for the set members, enabling them to move beyond professionalised, normative biases. As Brookfield (1998) notes stepping out of the practices normally associated with professional identity and norms can cause turbulence and this may in turn cause avoidance. This process not only aims to engage the practitioner in critical reflection it is also intertwined with generating critical theory and with a rejection of any pretence to 'neutrality' or 'objectivity' (Rigg & Trehan, 2003). There is a relational shift from the 'I' as both the subject and object of reflection (Cushion, 2014) to the self in relation to other diverse human beings, and the planet.

Figure 3 CRAL Process Tool (Roche, 2022)

3. What processes/policies in the organisation might be showing up in this situation?

What is the organisational culture and how might it be showing up this issue?

What organisational resources could be called on?

What wider social/societal/cultural/economic dynamics could be at play here?

What systemic inequalities or inequities might be playing out here? What concepts, theories or models might help us to name these?

How might naming these dynamics affect your choices?

What additional data might be useful to collect, refer to, to broaden your vision?

What communities or networks could you connect to?

Macro

Meso

Micro

2. What might have been communicated but not spoken?

How was power operating in this situation?

What psychological tools might help us here?

What might your coachee start to do differently? How might you support?

1. What assumptions are being made?

What was going on for you when x happened (head, heart, gut exploration)? What was going on for your coachee?

What might you start to do differently?

Illustrative case study

Group Supervision Context: This set was made up of coaches from an internal coaching pool for professionals working in a global not for profit organization.

Summary of a situation brought to group supervision: The coach in presenting the case wanted to explore what was felt as a failure. The coachee, a black African female, had joined an established team in a multi-national organisation. The majority of the team comprised white men and women from European countries. The coachee described how difficult it was to find a place in the team. Her opinions were not respected or listened to. It was hard to build relationships because everyone else already seemed knew each other. Racism was named as an issue in their conversations but not explored as a focus for the coaching.

Summary of CRAL set practice: In zooming in the set paid attention to the coaches feelings of failure and probed what might be going on for the coach here, what were the underlying assumptions about what the coachee wanted or needed? What did the coach want or need? What was the success criteria for the coaching engagement from each point of view? What emotions were engaged and how did they affect the coach/coachee relationship and psychological safety?

We discovered that while the coachee had wanted to stay and had tried out different strategies for 'fitting in' the coachee eventually decided to leave the organisation and the coach now felt that was the right decision. However, she also felt that she had failed because this happens in the organisation a lot: people leave because they feel pushed out.

In zooming out the set paid attention to where else this was happening in the organisation. What are the success criteria for coaching from the organisational perspective? Is it, adapt or leave? The coach was part of an internal coaching pool and a leader in the same organisation as the coachee. What patterns were being observed? What did this say about the culture of the organisation? What policies or practices were reinforcing or reproducing the pattern? New staff induction processes where raised. Interest was shown in what ethical tensions the situation created for the coach. What were the implications for leadership and accountability in the organisation?

Learning: In discussing the learning both the presenter and the set members reflected on their responsibilities as coaches when they became aware of wider dynamics through their work as individual coaches. They wanted to explore how they could use this 'intelligence' without violating confidentiality. They felt that neutrality got in the way of challenging aspects of the culture experienced as exclusionary. In doing so they were being complicit with what they identified for the first time as the organisations 'in culture' as an aspect of systemic racism.

Action: They talked about collecting data to test out what the bigger pattern looked like across the organisation. Who was leaving? What could be proactively done to change these statistics? Collective action and collective responsibility became the focus of learning and action. The potential of the set to contribute to change was palpable.

In the short time I have been facilitating CRALs the list of topics explored are as follows:

- Strategies for working with systemic racism & patriarchy and bullying in organisations
- The dynamics between coach neutrality and responsibility
- Performativity as a barrier to effective coaching
- The pressure to commoditise coaching over coaching with a social purpose
- The impact of equalities legislation on coaches freedom and methodologies when working in organisations fearful of litigation
- Coaching as a potentially oppressive context
- The role of coaching psychology and psychological models- benefits and limitations
- Liberation psychological models-benefits and limitations
- Coaching presence and power dynamics in coaching
- Questioning and power dynamics in coaching
- Radical Compassion in Coaching
- Coaching for emancipation
- liberatory practices in coaching

For additional illustrative purposes I present for comparison a list of topics from the only report I could find describing the use of CAL to support peer supervision in coaching. All the other papers I found related to supervision

practice in the health and social care sectors. This list described the topics typically covered by the set over a four-year period:

- Instinctive coaching
- Use of coaching models
- Ethical and moral issues
- Managing expectations and relationships with host organisations; individual managers or hierarchical leaders
- Distance coaching (use of technology)
- Walking and coaching
- Use of artefacts in coaching
- Liminal space
- Ineffective coaching
- Compatibility between coach and coachee

(Turner, et al., 2017)

A comparison of the two demonstrates a difference in the types of topics and focus on the socio-macro implications of coaching. There is a move away from coaching specific tools, techniques, approaches, and ethical dilemmas to the wider systemic relationship between coaching, the ethics and individual/collective learning and development in the context of social change/justice.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper set out to explore two questions: what can we learn from a critical look at the dominant norms of reflective practice? Secondly, how can we broaden our view from an individualistic conception of ethics?

In relation to the first question the issues discussed in this paper reveal that we need to develop our capacity to work as critically reflective practitioners if we are serious about serving social change. The urgency of this need become most evident when working in contexts of diversity. Homogenous social, ethnic, cultural or identity groups are less likely to experience the dissonance between dominant embedded assumptions and the associated power dynamics and taken for granted systems of values and moral frameworks. This is not only true where racialisation is concerned. For example, values systems that privilege the social will come into conflict with those that privilege the individual. This matters to all of us, whether we work in the D&I space or not. Following the arguments put forward here anyone from an identity group not

aligned with neoliberal individualism will experience the practices associated with it as oppressive. In this respect coaching already has a rich literature evidencing the use of coaching to promote managerial control and compliance to oppressive corporate cultures (for example, Caviacchia & Fillery-Travis; Neilsen & Norreklit, 2009, 2013; Roche & Passmore 2021, 2022; Shouckry 2013, 2017, 2018; Tabrovsky, 2015) from which supervision can learn.
In relation to the second question, in my experience, supervision overly relies on individualised micro-psychological approaches, tools, and techniques and this has ethical implications. For our current times, we need ethics with a critical edge. A practice-based understanding of ethics developed by Weiskopt and Willmott, (2013), in the context of management and organisation studies, might help us to begin to make a move in this direction.

Weiskopt and Willmott, (2013), coined the term ethics as critical practice which begins from the understanding that ethical codes and moral frameworks need to be considered critically and in context and not accepted as neutral, universal norms. This applies to the ethical codes or principles embedded in professional and organisational power on the basis that ethical behaviour may require us to exercise our freedom to resist or challenge what is considered moral or ethical in certain circumstances. A good coaching example is drawn by Du Toit and Sim in their book Rethinking Coaching (2010) which questions what the coaches were doing when the leaders they coached were creating the circumstances leading to the economic crisis of 2008. At that point our ethical codes incited us to work in the interests of our client's agenda. Ethics in the context of critical practice is defined as a social, not as located solely in rules, laws, codes or the values and moral precepts of the "autonomous subject" (Weiskopt & Willmott, 2013, p. 471).

In this approach the subject does not begin by asking, how do I apply the ethical codes or resolve this dilemma in ways that remain true to my values? Instead, the subject might ask first, what are the social dynamics showing up in this ethical issue? How am I called to act in relation to the 'other' and the consequences of my and their actions in relation to wider social issues? These questions may require us to go against long-held moral precepts, codes, rules, assumptions, and practices considered normative in our culture or the organisational culture we are working in. Possibly even those of our client and their wider stakeholders. Culture here can apply to family, organisation, community, profession, nation, etc. What is given more emphasis are the needs of the other and wider society rather than those of the individual making the

ethical decision. Intercultural dialogue is what often enables us to see what we cannot otherwise see.

The future is already emerging as more diverse in terms of what is considered to be normative, we are living through a seismic shift. We need to consciously adopt a decolonial, pluriversal (Dunford, 2017) rather than a universalised Eurocentric approach to reflective practice and ethics, drawing on the strengths and learning inherent in marginalised world views and epistemologies. We also need communities of practice to support us through the emotional turbulence and cognitive dissonance of the subjective changes required by this shift (Soffe et al 2011).

While the global code of ethics for coaching was updated in 2021 to add the interests of wider stakeholders, the environment and society we need more research to create the theoretical underpinnings of the new practices that are emerging. In particular the application of macro-sociological theories to coaching and supervision practice is under theorised. I offer this short position paper as a contribution toward opening up this area for further discussion and ongoing research.

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