

Research and Practice in Coaching and Supervision: How to Build on an Ambivalent Relationship?

ANSE Research Conference
25th April 2015

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Overview

- I. An ambivalent relationship: mutual reassurance and criticism
- II. Taking seriously the inner logic of the two fields:
Key differences and contradictions
- III. What can social psychology tell us about the relationship
between research and practice?
 - Processes and outcomes of intergroup contact
 - Favourable conditions of intergroup contact

Mutual reassurance of each other's importance

Practitioners	Researchers
importance to scientifically back own practice and to further professionalize coaching/ supervision (→ quality assurance)	dialogue with practitioners valuable and indispensable

BUT...

Practitioners' criticism: Research does not...

... inspire

⇒ often very narrow research questions → practical relevance?

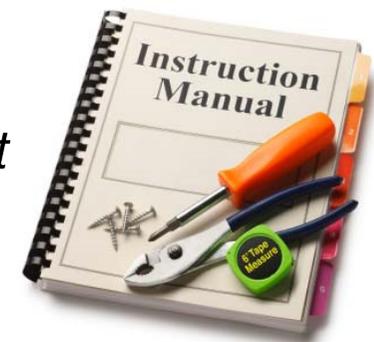
... inform

⇒ research results: often difficult to understand and interpret;
presented in extremely condensed academic articles

... instruct

⇒ value of aggregated means for working with individuals?;
hardly any „if-then-rules“ or concepts for practical application

⇒ *If they were present, experienced coaches/supervisors would not adopt them: only novices stick to rules.* (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1987)



Padberg, 2012;

Möller, 2009; Möller, Kotte & Oellerich, 2013

... **defend coaching/supervision approaches with unfounded conviction** (Scherf, 2010, p.11)

⇒ ...in spite of lacking theoretical and methodical grounding for much of what is done in coaching/supervision



... **lock researchers out**

⇒ deny access, hardly any „openings“ of coaching/supervision processes to research, especially beyond post-hoc surveys (audio- and videotapes, process measures)



... **want only to legitimize and confirm own practice** (Haubl, 2009)

⇒ are not really interested in or willing to learn from research findings (f.ex. Padberg, 2012)



Practice and research - an unbridgeable gap?



Möller, 2009; Möller, Kotte & Oellerich, 2013

Practice and research

„There are two... cultures, the culture of researchers and clinicians [coaching/supervision practitioners] ...”

Hillecke on ResearchGate, 2014

www.researchgate.net/post/How_to_bridge_the_gap_between_research_and_clinical_practice_in_psychotherapy

ResearchGate

Thomas Karl Hillecke
SRH Hochschule Heidelberg

How to bridge the gap between research and clinical practice in psychotherapy?

We built up interesting concepts like scientists-practitioner models, evidence based practice or empirical supported therapy. But especially in psychotherapy

Difference in primary tasks of the two fields

Practice

enable clients to better understand and deal with their situation

Research

generate and expand empirically based knowledge

→ Conflicting approaches with regards to

- (a) dealing with complexity
- (b) the intimacy of the coaching/supervision process
- (c) creating and using knowledge

Dealing with complexity

Practice

To foster or maintain clients' ability to act =

to reduce complexity

- absorb uncertainty, refer to rather simple concepts
- limits to complexity: perception and processing capacities of organisational members and the coach/supervisor

Paid for offering new „models“ of sensemaking, enable clients to make informed choices and act on them

„Advisors have to voice their advice with conviction.“ (Kieser, 2005, p.12)

Research

To further differentiate and question the present state of knowledge =

to increase complexity

- duty of „organized skepticism“ (Kieser, 2005): maintain status of not-knowing, criticism, doubt
- continuously raise further questions, further differentiate existing concepts

Research funds and scientific reputation **through** increasing complexity and differentiation (further refinement of research gap)

Dealing with the intimacy of the coaching/supervision process

Practice

Coaching/supervision as „closed shop“:
trust and solid working alliance =
critical for success; high value of
confidentiality

→ research disturbs!

Research

Without **audio- or videotapes**: only
self-report measures of coaches and
coachees

→ highly subject to (positive) bias

→ ability to express what is crucial?

Creating and using knowledge

Expert practitioner knowledge

- Generated from the reality of coaching practice and training institutions
- Implicit, subjective
- Case-specific (single case)

Scientific knowledge

- Generated from the academic research operations of universities
- Explicit, objective
- Generalizable (group means)

„Experts know and coaches coach because of their capability of a highly selective way of dealing with scientific knowledge.“ (Baecker, 1998, S.17)

Generating knowledge within the „scientific community“

- **Knowledge = scientific**

if „it consists of claims that have been subjected to methodical doubt and have withstood it so far.“

- **4 Steps of knowledge generation**

- 
1. Research activities of individual coaching/supervision researchers or research groups
 2. Collegial criticism by other researchers (conferences, peer-reviewed journals)
 3. Integration to a ‚stock of knowledge‘ (reviews, meta-analyses)
 4. Controversies at the level of philosophy of science

Generating knowledge within the „scientific community“

„Dwarfs on the shoulders of giants“
Bernhard of Chartres, 1120

Depection from the beginning of the 15th century
CE, Source: Wikipedia

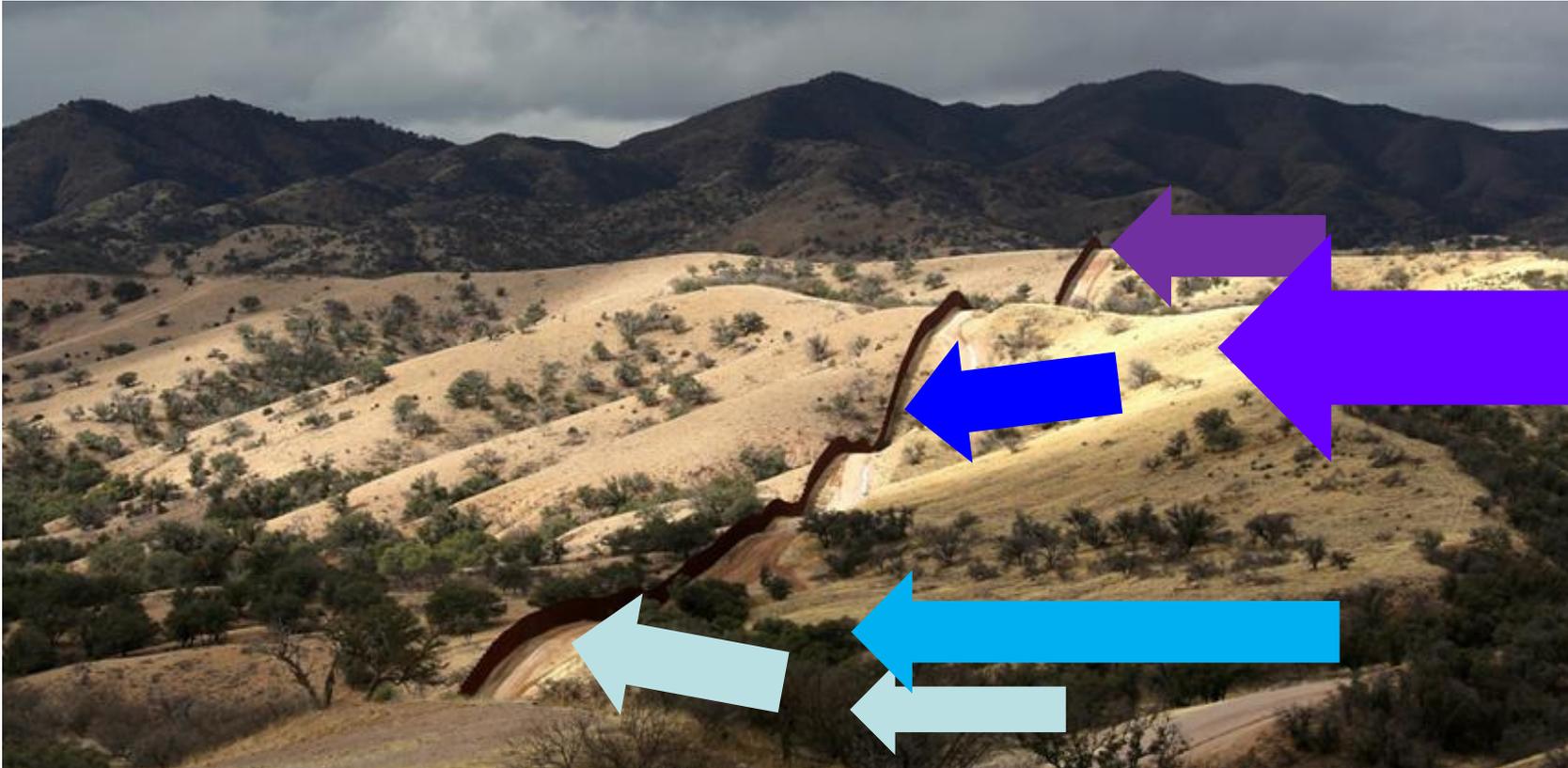


Frontier of research in coaching/ supervision: status quo



A research frontier: a place where innovative research pushes the boundaries of science or knowledge. It may also be an outpost, a remote or isolated place.

Frontier of research in coaching/ supervision: the future?



A research frontier: a place where innovative research pushes the boundaries of science or knowledge. It may also be an outpost, a remote or isolated place.

Generating knowledge within the „community of practice“

- **Players**
professional associations and training institutes implementing their standards
- **4 Steps of generating knowledge**
 1. Personal experience as supervisee
 2. First own supervision practice under supervision
 3. Own supervision practice (reflection during, in retrospect) accompanied by control supervision, intervision, Balint groups...
 4. Theoretical and case-focused seminars (documenting results, arguing) (Jüttemann, 1990)
- **„community of practice“ as matrix of master-apprentice relationships**

Practice and research

„There are two... cultures, the culture of researchers and clinicians [or coaching/supervision practitioners] ...
and they congregate with[in] their own tribe.”

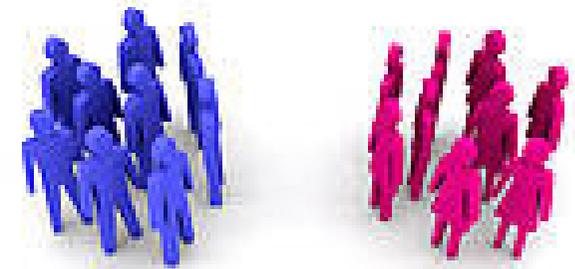
Hillecke on ResearchGate, 2014



What can we learn from social psychology regarding intergroup relations?

Differentiation into ingroup („us“) and outgroup („them“) automatically leads to...

- Ingroup favoritism (positive distinctiveness of ingroup)
- Possible outgroup devaluation (stereotypes, prejudice) / discrimination
- Perception of outgroup homogeneity while maintaining ingroup heterogeneity

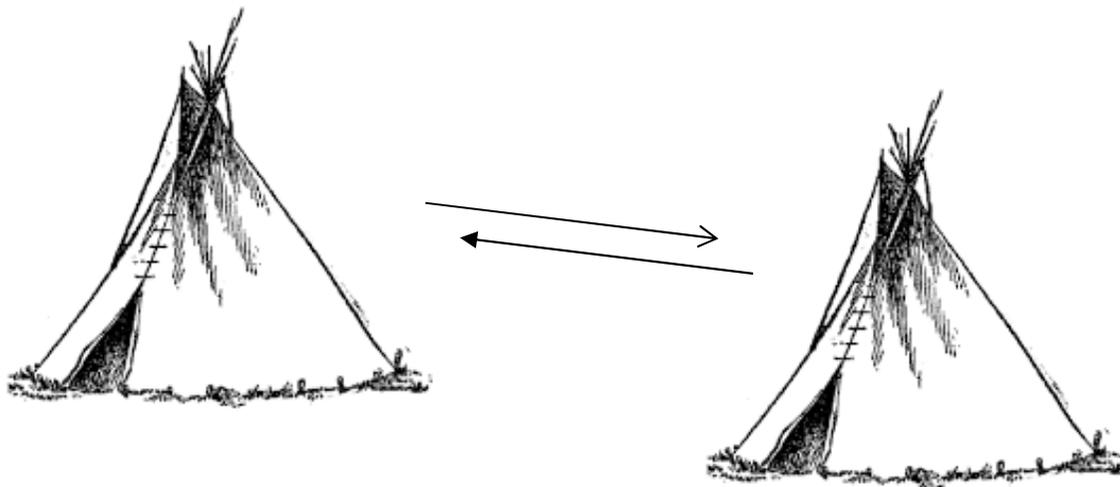


Kessler & Mummendey, 2007; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Pettigrew et al., 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1986

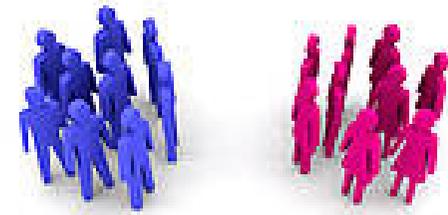
Practice and research

„There are two... cultures, the culture of researchers and clinicians [or coaching/supervision practitioners] and they congregate with[in] their own tribe.

Therefore to bridge the gap would mean to increase interaction.”



What can we learn from intergroup contact theory?



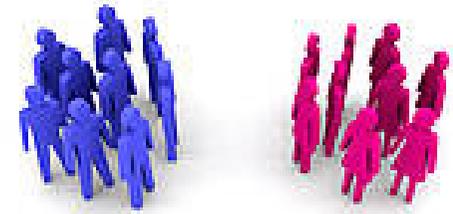
Intergroup contact generally tends to produce positive effects for intergroup relations

- reduction of stereotyping and prejudice (f.ex. outgroup heterogeneity...)
- generating affective ties (increased liking, decreased mistrust, increased willingness to cooperate...)
- ingroup reappraisal (more critical self-evaluation)

BUT: not under all conditions ...

Think about negative experiences with „the other side“ you may have had

What can we learn from intergroup contact theory?



Allport's (1954) **favourable situational conditions** for positive effects of intergroup contact

1. Common goal
2. Mutual interdependence (instead of competition)
3. Equal status in the intergroup contact situation
4. Support from norms, authorities and institutions

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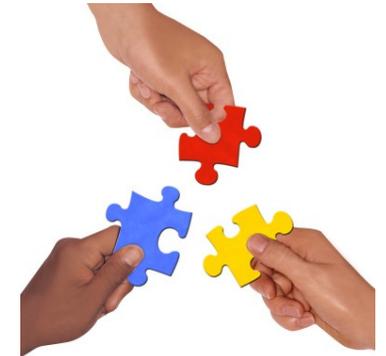
Role of professional associations

- Research sections, conferences, funding of research projects...
- Umbrella function? f.ex. current controversial debate between researchers and practitioners triggered by a study on negative effects of coaching, two of the key players being members of the DBVC

1.+ 2. Mutual interdependence and common goal

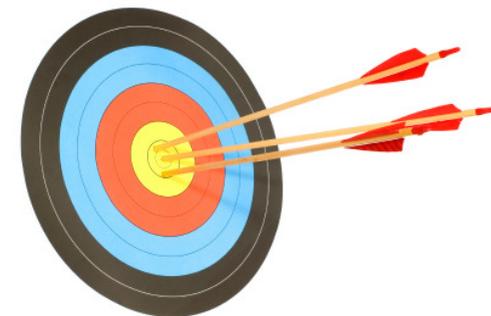
Mutual interdependence ✓

- Researchers: need sufficiently large samples of coaches/supervisors to do their research on
- Practitioners: required to demonstrate evidence and engage in quality assurance (from clients and professional associations)

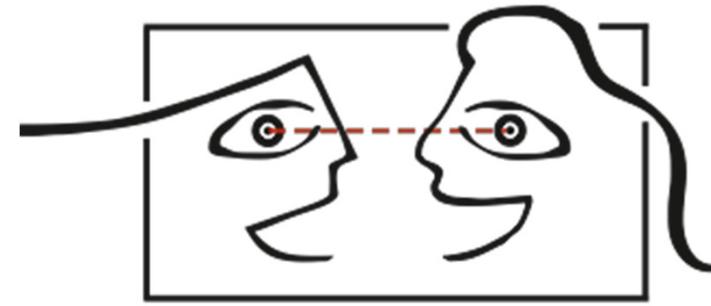


Common goal ?

- Relevant research questions?



3. Equal status



Accept positive mutual distinctiveness regarding competence

- Practitioners' wealth of experience
- Researchers' methodological expertise (research designs, methods of data collection, standards for case study descriptions etc.)

Invest effort into the practitioner-researcher-relationship

- Eye-level: neither only Bachelor/Master students nor pretention of professorship
- Mutual service provision (collect data, provide evaluation tools, feed results back)

Summary

- I. An ambivalent relationship: mutual reassurance and criticism
- II. Taking seriously the inner logic of the two fields:
Key differences and contradictions
- III. Suggestions from intergroup contact theory
 - Support from norms and authorities
 - Mutual interdependence and common goals
 - Equal status

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