



Colebrook, Christopher (2020) *Evaluating Solution-Focused Drama-Based Coaching: an integrated intervention for managing conflict more effectively and promote student flourishing in higher education*. PhD thesis.

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**EVALUATING SOLUTION-FOCUSED
DRAMA-BASED COACHING: AN
INTEGRATED INTERVENTION FOR
MANAGING CONFLICT MORE
EFFECTIVELY AND PROMOTE STUDENT
FLOURISHING WITHIN HIGHER
EDUCATION**



Christopher Colebrook

Cert Resource-Based Therapies

MSc Psychological Studies

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Education, College of Social Sciences

University of Glasgow

August 2020

Abstract

This research project's primary intention was to evaluate the effectiveness of Solution-Focused Drama-Based Coaching (SFDC), an integrated performance-based coaching intervention, asking the following question within group learning in higher education contexts: ***“What can performance-based interventions do to promote prosocial relationships and enable students to thrive in their future experiences of group learning in higher education”?*** A secondary intention of this project was to provide an in-depth, cross-disciplinary examination of student experiences of group activities.

The research was interdisciplinary, drawing together techniques from education, applied psychology and applied theatre, aimed at: i) expanding on previous studies that explored challenges within group activities (Colbeck, 2000; Colebrook, 2014; Hassanien, 2007), as some students can find responding to interpersonal conflicts difficult leading negative group learning experiences; ii) building on Lancer & Eatough (2018), develop coaching practices further for addressing student challenges within higher education, as an early intervention before issues become more severe requiring therapeutic support; iii) providing a new direction for application of positive psychology and drama-based practices beyond corporate settings from studies by Dassen (2015) for students to flourish in future group activities.

Research findings uncovered a wide range of interconnected issues leading to ineffective experiences of group work expanding on previous studies. Findings also provided preliminary insights of the usefulness of performance-based interventions to expand students' behavioural repertoires as SFDC enabled three participants to identify new responses to improve their future interpersonal experiences of group activities. The implications of these findings for higher education and coaching practices are discussed.

Keywords: SFDC, Performance-based interventions, group learning, higher education, applied psychology, applied theatre, coaching, students, interpersonal, flourish, behavioural repertoires.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to give thanks to my supervisors, Dr Bonnie Slade and Dr Stephen Greer for their support and guidance during this research project.

I would also like thank the following individuals for their assistance and collaboration during practice of this study: Mags Keohane, Chris Duffy, Nina Mdwaba, and Matthew O'Hara.

I would additionally like to acknowledge Ms Arlene Burns and Ms Claire Rogers for their administration and organisational support during this project.

Externally, I would like to give thanks for support from friends and family, and other professional guidance local to UK and outside, without which this thesis would not be possible.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I declare that except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted to any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Name. **Christopher Colebrook**

Signed



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Application Approved

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application

Application

Postgraduate Student Research Ethics

Application Details

Application Number: 400150020

Applicant's Name: Chris Colebrook

Project Title: An interdisciplinary solution orientated coaching approach with applied theatre techniques: developing learning tools for effective group work and individual well-being in higher education

Application Status: **Approved**

Start Date of Approval: 19/11/15

End Date of Approval of Research Project: 30/9/18

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

ABBREVIATIONS

AC=Association for Coaching.

BPA: British Psychodrama Association.

CBT = Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

DBT=Dialectic Behavioural Therapy.

ECCM=European Council for Coaching and Mentoring.

FBA: Functional Behavioural Analysis.

ICANDO: Model unique to Life Coaching created by Martin (2001), with the following components: I=Investigate, C=Current situation, A=Aims, N=Number of alternative ways to achieve the aim(s), D=Date wish to achieve these, O=Outcome indicators of success.

ICF=International Coaching Federation.

MI: Motivational Interviewing.

NLP: Neuro-linguistic programming.

NVC: Non-Violent Communication.

OFNR: Central model within NVC training designed by Rosenberg (1998). Includes the components: O=Observation, F=Feelings, N=Needs, R=Requests.

PRACTICE: Solution-Focused Coaching model designed by Palmer (2007). Includes the components: P=Problem identification, R=Realistic goals, A=Alternative solutions, C=Consider consequence of each alternative solution, T=Target the most feasible and desirable solution, I=Implement the chosen solution, E=Evaluate success.

REBT: Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy.

SFBT: Solution-Focused Brief Therapy.

SFDC: Solution-Focused Drama-Based Coaching. Name of the intervention I created for examination in this study.

TIE: Theatre in Education.

UoG: The University of Glasgow.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH INTENTIONS

This Chapter will provide an overview of this project and objectives of this research, whereby this study had a wide scope comprising of academic rationales linked to personal inspirations, to provide this project justice. I will first include the academic rational and justification for this project, including the key aims and objectives. Second, I will highlight several personal inspirations that drove this research and link them to existing research in this field of study, followed by an outline of this whole thesis at the end of this Chapter.

1.1) Rationale and academic justification

This research project had two interrelated objectives. This was primarily, an evaluation of Solution-Focused Drama-Based Coaching (SFDC) effectiveness, as an integrated performance-based coaching intervention by asking the question: ***“What can performance-based interventions do to promote prosocial relationships and enable students to thrive in their future experiences of group learning in higher education”?***

Secondary to this was to provide an in-depth, cross-discipline examination of student group learning experiences in higher education, as previous studies were limited to a single discipline, focus groups, case study analysis or had limited student perspectives. The study was interdisciplinary, drawing together techniques from the fields of adult education, applied psychology and applied theatre, building on previous studies which examined communication and interpersonal difficulties within group learning in higher education (Borg *et al.*, 2011; Burdett, 2007; Colebrook, 2014; Hassanien, 2007; Naykki *et al.*, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2006). Students in these studies reported stress and frustrations leading to unfavourable group learning experiences. Crucial to this research is Colebeck *et al.* (2000) uncovering that students within higher education can experience conflicts in group learning and be unsure how to respond to these, causing negative experiences of these activities. This research thus indicates a demand for an intervention to enable students to learn how to respond effectively to interpersonal challenges in group activities to flourish within higher education.

This project extends and nuances existing research in several ways. First, I designed SFDC to explore personal conflicts within this context with the aim of providing novel insights into effective group work within higher education and providing new in-depth information on the circumstances of such conflicts to engage more with the perspectives of students than

previous studies. This intervention was created to focus on managing personal relationships within the broader aspects of group learning to promote better student experiences, alongside more in-depth exploration of perceptions and feelings of student experiences from several disciplines who engaged in these activities.

Second, this project extends existing research centred on difficulties with academic tasks by focusing on broader interpersonal conflicts within group work in higher education. A greater understanding of these issues is valuable because it would have implications for students working in teams after their studies and the potential for addressing conflicts more effectively in their personal lives by promoting harmonious future relationship dynamics. I will discuss this at length in later Chapters.

Third in recent years there has been increased interest in examining coaching practices within higher education, according to Franklin & Doran (2009), Fried & Irwin (2016), and Swatz *et al.* (2005), for students to flourish in this setting. This is important because of increasing waiting times for students wishing to engage in counselling services. Secondly highly structured therapeutic approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) that are expert-led can fail for some individuals, despite their apparent evidence-base and popularity in higher education (Barnes *et al.*, 2013; Dunn *et al.*, 2002; Schermuly-Haupt *et al.*, 2018; Turner *et al.*, 2007). A crucial study by Lancer and Eatough (2018), additionally provided evidence that coaching practices can improve the confidence of social sciences and arts students within higher education settings, meaning this study was cross-disciplinary in contrast to previous studies in group learning activities highlighted in this Chapter. Such studies advocate a benefit of a collaborative partnership between students being coached and practitioners but provided no information on coaching styles and techniques used that facilitated student transformation. There is thus potential for developing coaching practices within higher education, as early interventions to address student challenges than enabling problems to become more severe that require therapeutic support.

Fourth, I developed SFDC by integrating positive psychology and theatre-based learning to improve participants' performance and enhance their skills for effective group work in higher education (Green & Grant, 2003; Hanson *et al.*, 2014; Lennard, 2013), with specific intended outcomes designed around principles of the strengths-based model. These principles were focusing on improving participant future interpersonal experiences, using flexibility to accommodate different scenarios and choices, inspiring them to identify positive actions to

facilitate change than providing suggestions to enhance their autonomy. SFDC advocated a collaborative partnership between participants, actors, and facilitators (i.e myself and director), rather than providing expert advice to participants.

Drawing on such principles derived from positive psychology described by Deshaizer & Dolon (2012), Hammond (2010) and Palmer (2007), this approach aimed to enhance participants' motivation, autonomy, creative thinking for possible solutions and effectively monitor their progress. This study also involved follow-up interviews to examine where possible the impact of changes into real life as the frequency of participants' future group activities may vary and determine whether they flourish in future experiences of group activities in higher education after this intervention. Drama-based interventions have limited monitoring of individual progress to ensure learnings are taken outside the rehearsal to be applied into life, and restricted to healing past problems (Babbage, 2004; Jones, 1996; Karatas, 2014; Rae, 2013). This suggests a new direction for drama-based interventions expanding on work from Dassen (2015), as this study was limited to corporate settings than covering wider personal coaching contexts.

Fifth this coaching approach was particularly intended to respond to what researchers Fernandez *et al.* (2012), Herrera *et al.* (2009), Masias *et al.* (2015) and Lloyd & Dallas (2008) have reported as “stuck episodes” within talking therapies, which are moments where clients are unwilling to change and progress, describe new behaviour, or evaluate potential solutions. Although these have been described in talking interventions, no reports of these exist within drama-based interventions. Similarly, despite coaching practitioners Russel (2016) and Surin (2017) describing the existence of stuck episodes within coaching interventions, there is no previous research on these within coaching settings.

By addressing these shortcomings in the existing literature, this research thus sought to integrate techniques from a variety of creative practices within a higher education context: a) Psychodrama, Forum Theatre, and Ethnodramas, from applied theatre and b) Solution-Focused Coaching from applied positive psychology. This study thus had potential to effectively monitor participant progress and enhance their skills without stuck episodes to promote their transformation within higher education.

Finally, the wider relationship dynamics was explored for individuals to enhance their insights by linking relevant interpersonal issues within those dynamics than restricted to single episode of conflict (Kellerman, 1992). These were explored using outcome-driven role

play rehearsal, in accordance with participants' subjective experiences, based on positive psychology principles. This was aimed at making enactments more focused and relatable to participants, drawing on shortcomings of Forum Theatre described by Baxter (2005), Gibb (2004), Morelos (1999), and Synder-Young (2009). Prior to engaging in role play rehearsals, behaviours were explored using questions adapted from functional behaviours assessments for each participant scenario to address shortcomings of Psychodrama described by Perls (1992). Reflection in action was used (Ackroyd, 2006), for examining actions at specific points derived from Boal's "Stop and Think" technique. By developing individual-based interventions, prosocial solutions and resources could be unearthed to provide participants new choices of responses to future interpersonal difficulties in group learning activities in higher education to flourish.

Throughout this thesis, I will use "Intervention" when referring to the whole practice of SFDC, and other existing personal development approaches. I will use the term "Model" when referring to a specific framework per coaching session, specialised tools, or sets of intervention principles as SFDC's was a semi-structured intervention. I will define "Transformation" as identifying new responses for future flourishing and "Resolution" as improving interpersonal experiences within this context drawn from positive psychology principles within SFDC.

1.II) Aims and objectives

The heart of this study focused on whether SFDC would enable participants to expand their behavioural repertoires as a concept described by Goldfried & Davison (1994); Tolin, (2016), to enhance their confidence as a primary positive outcome indicator. This aim was premised on the idea that expanded behavioural repertoires would provide participants with more choices when responding to difficult behaviours in group learning, to flourish in future group learning activities. Consequently, I intended to disrupt any self-limiting behaviours maintained by routines in relation to social systems theory as described by Luhmann (1995), to promote more effective responses to interpersonal difficulties within this context.

This aim was divided into the following objectives: i) To obtain empirical data on current issues faced by students during group work activities and background information for this intervention. ii) To examine the effectiveness of SFDC in promoting prosocial relationships in group learning in higher education and its potential as an educational resource that might be used more widely across the sector.

This project had three additional aims: first to explore the wider dynamics in group activities rather exclusively focusing on academic task issues within the study's limited scope. Second this study intended to combine approaches from applied theatre and positive psychology, which have not been examined previously within personal coaching practices to address limitations of both fields. Third to determine whether SFDC enabled university students to apply learnt resources from the experience into real life by exploring all important behaviours within relationship dynamics to improve their future group learning experiences. This aim was the secondary positive outcome indicator for SFDC was that applying (where possible) such resources into future group learning activities would enable participants to manage stress effectively to thrive within this context. Positive outcomes for SFDC to be deemed effective were flexible to tailor for participants' frequency of group learning activities after the intervention within this research. These aims were important considering the complexities of group learning dynamics, shortcomings, and origins of existing approaches, which need to evoke sustained learnings to improve student's future experience of group learning than remain in rehearsal within this context.

1.III) Research epistemology

The research epistemology was social constructivism within the context of group learning in higher education. A social constructionist approach is based on individuals' real-life interaction with the world they reside in, who develop subjective meanings of that experience. These meanings can vary between different individuals which enables researchers to look for multiple categories of data which means that detailed information can be obtained from participants. When researchers apply this approach, they depend on participants' perspectives of the situation based on their interactions with others. This approach enables researchers to inductively create a pattern of meanings or theory rather than deductive examination of existing theories (Creswell, 2003). Researchers thus explore the processes of social interactions amongst individuals to make meaning of their experiences (Hammersley, 2012). I thus intended to develop patterns of meaning from participants' subjective experiences of group activities in higher education and evaluate SFDC to determine whether the aims and objectives of this study were met.

When applying a social constructivist approach, questions are utilised by researchers during interactions with others to enable participants to construct meanings from a situation within specific contexts and social settings of participants. Constructionist researchers must

acknowledge how their life experiences impact on their interpretation and must position themselves to accept how their interpretation is influenced by their own experience (Creswell, 2003). Social constructionist researchers for this research thus apply primarily qualitative methods where data is collected by tools such as interviews and observations (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), which were applied in this project and shall be expanded on in later Chapters.

1.IV) Personal inspirations for research project

This project also had inspirations from my real-life experiences, where this research was important to me for several reasons:

First, I have become interested in prosocial communication, assertiveness and conflict management from my theatre and psychology experiences. When attending personal development workshops, I experienced the benefits of personal coaching and drama-based practices aimed at improving individuals' confidence where problems were discussed and explored dramatically to promote transformation. Both experiences demonstrated benefits of using a variety of different tools to accommodate for individual needs and complex problems, in contrast to highly structured mainstream approaches. I have also become aware creative reflections within both approaches to promote more prosocial relationships, derived from either coaching conversations or dramatic methods.

Second, I gained insights as a long-term Life Coaching and Psychodrama client, whereby coaching approaches problems holistically, whereby interconnected problem areas are explored together at one time within a primary area of focus to thrive in the future.

Discussions with an individual within my personal life who experienced complex unresolved conflicts with their families, suggested limitations with generic coaching conversations and failures of family therapies. This individual however had not engaged in drama-based interventions to address such problems, and conflicts impacted on their experiences in higher education where they dropped out of their degree. Such discussions made me consider the prospect of five alternative choices to address conflicts within group projects higher education. Despite the benefits of generic coaching, they are limited to conversations without exploring and rehearsing skills dramatically to gain further insights and perspectives. This was important as these experiences suggest limited awareness of positive psychology among most theatre professionals and limited awareness of drama-based interventions amongst many psychology professionals, as reflected in scarce studies combining such approaches.

Whilst acknowledging its academic effectiveness, a third inspiration and motivation was CBT's ineffectiveness for certain individuals, despite its popularity and assumed evidence base. Having personally dropped out of CBT, the experience indicated that this approach is limited to negative discussions of problems and structured written worksheets to heal internal pathologies, without exploring alternative solutions to improve an individual's life quality beyond healing. From discussions with several creative individuals with specific learning difficulties and actors, who were unable to engage effectively with CBT, this approach can be emotionally draining and unaccommodating for individual needs or values. I have thus experienced that CBT can have inflexible routines, inappropriate for highly creative individuals and/or individuals with specific-learning difficulties despite assumptions within higher education contexts.

These personal experiences of CBT were highly consistent with findings from many qualitative studies (Barnes *et al.*, 2013; Dunn *et al.*, 2002; Ledley *et al.*, 2011; Najavits, 2005; Schermuly-Haupt *et al.*, 2018; Turner *et al.*, 2007). These discussions however suggested that some individuals with specific learning difficulties and other students can respond more effectively to coaching practices, consistent with Greene (2004) and Swatz *et al.* (2005) to improve their confidence and academic life quality. As mainstream talking therapy, particularly CBT can fail for some students, there were benefits to examine new ways of approaching conflicts in group learning to enable individuals to thrive in future group experiences, with implications outside of this context.

Fourth, from my group learning activities in higher education, I have experienced conflicts in my undergraduate degree to my present studies, especially within disciplines of theatre, psychology, and education leading to frustrations and prolonged individual stress. Interpersonal conflicts within group activities can remain unresolved and remain a problem in this setting. This can lead to student distress considering the increasing waiting times for counselling support in universities described by Turner *et al.* (2007). New coaching practices could thus be developed to address such issues as an early intervention to prevent extensive waiting times for counselling whereby issues may develop further into more severe psychological problems.

Fifth, this project was also inspired by Mark Coleman's "Describe Your Character" worksheet which influenced SFDC's design as this worksheet explores the core behaviours of individuals for dramatic purposes, which from experience is absent in Psychodrama. These

experiences enabled me to think creatively on the prospect of integrating personal coaching and drama tools within an intervention based on advantages and disadvantages of both approaches within this research context to promote harmonious relationships.

Finally, despite benefits of additional insights compared to talking interventions, my experience of personal Psychodrama was limited to a therapist-single client relationship, consistent with Carnabucci (2014) and Vander May (1980). The experience was overly time-consuming when exploring problems by dramatic projections to find resolution during therapy. In contrast to Life Coaching, there were no clear establishment of outcomes during this experience, nor was there involvement of other individuals to respond at a reasonable pace during the dialogues. Establishing outcomes is important as according to Antcliff (2010), individuals engaging in Life Coaching can improve their life experiences within a short time frame of between four to eleven sessions to flourish in the future, without excessive problem analysis. I thus believed involving an actor in this study, had a potential to increase the pace of participant change compared to Psychodrama, when integrated with Forum Theatre and Solution-Focused Coaching tools, to enhance their future experiences of group learning in higher education. From discussions with several individuals, I felt this proposed intervention might have long-term potential to help committed actors who are unemployed and frustrated with limited opportunities within their line work of work. SFDC therefore involved the assistance of an actor when considering the interpersonal dynamics of this intervention which I shall expand on in Chapter 4.

1.V) Thesis Outline

Drawing on all these research intentions and personal inspirations, the outline of this PhD thesis will be as follows:

- 1) Chapter 2, I will give a targeted literature review on challenges within group work in higher education, effective communication concepts, and positive psychology and applied theatre approaches which formed the core values and principles of SFDC, alongside important evaluation criteria for this study.
- 2) Chapter 3 offers a comparative analysis of approaches selected to form the SFDC's design, which focuses on the emotional and personal development of students within higher education. I will also provide evidence on the shortcomings of CBT as a crucial pretext for designing and evaluating SFDC as a specialist coaching intervention to manage personal

relationship within this context, integrating applied theatre and positive psychology techniques. I will also present further support towards developing integrated coaching practices with drama-based techniques, as incentives for this study.

3) In Chapter 4, I will provide an overview of the methodology in this project, including reasons for my analytical choices and roles of all personnel involved in this study.

4) In Chapter 5, I will present an in-depth examination of the experiences of group learning suggested by participants' and assess the effectiveness of SFDC in reaching the goals of enhancing student future interpersonal experiences of group learning activity, to meet the two research intentions.

5) The concluding Chapter considers the broader implications this project's findings for higher education research, positive psychology, and drama-based interventions. I will also offer proposals for SFDC's future development and reflect on further possibilities for improving students' experiences of group learning, based on the project's discoveries and potential for applications within other contexts.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH CONCEPTS

In this Chapter, I will scope the existing fields of research and practice relevant to this research study, to identify the significance and value of this project, by elaborating on foundations described in Chapter 1, in relation to both research objectives. I will first discuss group work issues within higher education, emphasizing the dynamics of conflict management in relation to SFDC's intentions and the reason these are important and cause problems for students. I will secondly discuss relevant applied psychological approaches, applied theatre and dramatherapy-related approaches for this project which formed the basis of SFDC.

I had several intentions and hopes for this project to meet transferability criteria for qualitative research trustworthiness according to Shenton's (2004) recommendations. These recommendations are that researchers must provide detailed background information on the study's context and phenomenon under investigation. I shall discuss all qualitative research criteria and recommendations further in Chapter 4. I thus provided a detailed description of this study's research context of interpersonal challenges faced by students within group learning in higher education, to meet this criterion. I first intended that SFDC would be an effective practice to help students manage a range of difficult behaviours and complex interpersonal challenges to enable them to thrive in future experiences of group activities. Second, I conducted a cross disciplinary study on student experiences in group learning activities to expand on previous research within higher education. I hoped to provide new directions for positive psychology and drama-based practices, considering their shortcomings, by designing a new collaborative practice. From experiences of Life Coaching and Psychodrama I particularly hoped to take an integrated approach to examine group learning challenges that are complex rather than separating issues to meet these intentions. I finally hoped to take a solution-focused and individualised approach derived from such inspirations and meet the research objectives discussed in Chapter 1. I will expand on these intentions and hopes later in this thesis to establish the benefits of this research and using these approaches.

2.1.i) Core challenges within group learning in higher education

When commencing higher education students are required to adapt to new learning and teaching styles to complete their course, as universities aim to encourage students to engage in active learning individually and in groups (Zepke *et al.*, 2006). According to Griffiths *et*

al. (2005), some learning experiences are positive promoting feelings of hope and discovery, whereas other experiences are negative leading to feelings of vulnerability. Learners may experience a range of emotions from guilt, displacement, and fear to feelings of improved self-esteem and anticipation, particularly when they have no prior experience of higher education (Christie *et al.*, 2006 cited in Christie *et al.*, 2008; Reay, 2005). Studies by Christie *et al.* (2008) on first year university students within the disciplines of social sciences indicated a range of emotions throughout their experiences. These included insecurities about academic expectations, sense of belonging, and learning competencies and loss of learner identities from further education.

According to Boud *et al.* (1999), the use of teams in education has increased to develop student communication and cooperation skills, as there is a corporate demand for university graduates who communicate effectively in teams (Bennett, 2002; Boud *et al.*, 1999). Group learning activities are thus a core component of university course designs and typically refer to learning processes where students collaborate in small groups to contribute to mutual goal attainment (Janssen, 2014). Studies by Hassanien (2007), highlighted several benefits to students from group activities within higher education, including sharing ideas and knowledge, improved communication skills for future careers and more effective understanding of the subject matter.

Despite these benefits, research (Burdett, 2003; Kalliath and Laiken, 2006; Lerner, 1995; Walker, 2001), has demonstrated that students can experience difficult behaviours of individuals in a group, which impacts on the interpersonal relationships causing conflict. Interpersonal relationships thus require effective management to improve students' experiences of this activity.

Within higher education several studies have highlighted challenges within group learning activities which remained a problem for students and led to unfavourable experiences. Conflicts among group members can have negative effects on teaching and can cause student stress if unmanaged. Here participants reported that some group members were inflexible and failed to listen to others, leading to frustrations, conflict, and ineffective experiences of group activities (Borg *et al.*, 2011; Colebrook, 2014; Naykki *et al.*, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2006).

From my previous studies using focus groups (Colebrook 2014), psychology students particularly reported the following frustrations from their group learning experiences group

learning in higher education: “In the first group when we had conflicts that was because the situation was really unfair...it was three-member group doing a five people project...we were at the limits”. Students also reported that some members failed to attend and contribute to meetings, leading to frustrations in the group: “There were two of three people who regularly missed meetings... they never had any involvement in the project...never had any understandings of what we were trying to achieve” (Colebrook, 2014, p.36-38). Similarly, in other studies using questionnaires, education students reported several socio-emotional challenges within group learning activities. “We seem to have incompatible styles of working”. Students, additionally, reported frustrations with communication and language between group members: “Some people had problems with other students’ access and level of language proficiency and thought it was difficult to work with them”. These students also reported external commitments causing unfavourable experiences in group learning projects: “We had different personal life circumstances or family/study and work commitments” (Jarvenoja & Javerla, 2009, p.468). These studies however were limited to the broad experiences of participants from a single discipline using focus groups or questionnaire data rather than representative of all student challenges within group learning activities across different disciplines.

Studies using focus groups by Hassianien (2007), identified other student problems within group learning activities: “There have been occasions when I worked with members who don’t adequately understand teamwork. For example, they felt intimidated by our comments and observations”. Other students reported challenges with group member motivations: “Some group members just don’t like to be told by others. On such occasions, I felt we needed a formal leader who could motivate individuals and facilitate the process”. Finally, limited tutor support was also a problem reported by students: “I feel that some tutors do not get involved even a little bit when groups are facing problems. They use an easy escape route”. (Hassianien, 2007, p.142).

Studies by Burdett (2007) using personal interviews provide insights into the challenges faced by students in group activities from academic staff perspectives. Here, two core problems reported by staff were students dominating groups, or group members who failed to contribute to the work. Other challenges as reported by staff were that they would only intervene as a last resort if problems occurred within group learning activities: “It doesn’t

mean that we (teaching team) will never interfere or get involved, but it has to be a very good reason and it's up to us what the good reason will be". Participants also indicated that staff wished to encourage students to learn how to manage conflicts in a group, without staff instruction: "They think that this is really unfair (letting them sort things out) but that is part of what I am trying to get them to learn in the course and in group role because they are getting really close to employment". Interventions were thus limited to altering group member composition, and changing marks if unequal contribution occurred (Burdett, 2007, p.60-63). When considering these challenges, staff were encouraging students to learn skills to work effectively in groups themselves without their mediation to enhance student learning and autonomy for their future career. This is consistent with Helms and Haynes (1990), who discourage staff interventions to empower students to learn the nature of working within a group. This research however was limited only to academic staff interviews without student perspectives on their experiences, whereby there was restricted insights into problems occurring within group activities.

Crucial to this project's intended intervention is focus group evidence from Colbeck *et al.* (2000), whereby some students reported experiencing conflicts among group members and were unsure how to respond to these. In this study, challenges of interpersonal conflicts were particularly prevalent among students without prior group experience when power struggles among group members erupted, leading to negative experiences of these activities as they had no resources to deploy, reducing their motivation for group work. These interpersonal conflicts particularly included difficulties with individuals that had strong personalities and were unwilling to listen to other group members, leading to negative experiences of these activities. By contrast students who were able to apply tools they learnt from more positive experiences to manage negative experiences, increased their motivation for these activities, despite such challenges. Such tools included compromising their needs with those of other group individuals.

This evidence provides insights that negative relationship dynamics are a significant problem within group learning in higher education, especially for individuals with limited experiences of these activities who may find it challenging to respond to conflict in groups. If students have more positive experiences, they can gain more insights by identifying successful resources to promote more effective experiences when responding to future group learning

challenges. Some students however have no or limited experiences of group activities and may respond ineffectively to interpersonal conflicts leading to negative experiences without prior identification of prosocial resources to effectively manage such challenges. An intervention could thus be developed for students to expand their behavioural repertoires by identifying more effective responses to relationship challenges within group learning. Knowledge of these difficult dynamics informed the core intention of SFDC to enable students to thrive in the future groupwork situations and enhance their learning. A shortcoming of the above studies is that they were limited to focus groups or from personal interviews from staff, with restricted information on challenges within group learning activities. Additional insights from student perspectives could provide more in depth-data of a vast array of issues experienced by individuals during group learning activities.

Within the next sections of this Chapter I will provide an overview of key aspects from existing students of group dynamics and conflict management within the context of group learning in higher education. I will particularly discuss the importance of behavioural repertoires in relation to responding well to difficult behaviour during group activities, as a crucial aim of SFDC. I will consequently discuss core criteria to evaluate interventions in higher education, and the challenges considering the aims and principles of this intervention. I will then describe the limitations of two core interventions which focus explicitly on communication skills to promote prosocial outcomes and improved relationship dynamics.

2.1.ii) Group dynamics

A range of researchers across education and organisational studies have attempted to discover the ways in which groups develop and manage interpersonal conflicts. An important and well-established model to explain group dynamics is described by Tuckman (1965).

Tuckman's model suggests that individuals go through several developmental stages for them to work effectively together in a group. These are the forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning stages. In the forming stage, individuals act in a manner which is socially appropriate, tend to be focused on their territories and carry out things in an established way, yet not a lot is carried out. As the forming stage unfolds disagreements with other group members can occur, by complaining behaviours, leading to team conflicts. This is associated with the start of the conflict stage known as storming. Within the storming stage individuals may challenge each other and act defensively, and have differences, where

they learn how to deal with them and listen to issues raised. If conflict is dealt with successfully, team members can be made aware what they can bring to the group. Once trust is developed the team is in the norming phase, where individuals have rapport, issues are put aside and all group members make mutually agreed ground rules for appropriate behaviours, and for things to get done, in order to move into the performing phase. During the performing phase the team functions well and is flexible and solves problems yet may move back into the forming stage if they were to have a new leader (Mackey, 1999). Finally, the team ends with adjourning as the final stage of group development (Kormanski, 2011).

The interpersonal dimension rather than the task dimension covers human trust, and support as well as being open. Here group members' personal relationships can grow within a team from dependency via conflict, to cohesion and being interdependent. The main obstacle for the growth of interpersonal relationships however is conflict within the team in order to progress from the storming to norming phases (Mackey, 1999).

Griggs & Louw (1995), applied the Tuckman (1965) model to examine diversity in team performance. In the storming phase hostility can occur and individuals may move to extreme positions and appear ethnocentric, where they are out for their self-interest and may lack cooperation. There are thus challenges for other group members to understand the intention and meaning of expression. Team leaders can therefore use interventions to develop understanding, be empathetic and genuine to clarify communication. Leaders also should accept if they have made mistakes to help process development and personal relationships, to aid individuals understand their personal differences (Kormanski, 2011). During the norming stage members find ways to work together and values are set. Communication is more efficient due to cohesion occurring. It is vital for leaders to use feedback to allow members to contribute, show and permit ambiguities to be clarified.

According to Laiken (1993) educational interventions can be based on group vision and problem solving, the learning goals and needs within an organisation. In the performing stage there is cooperation, action planning, and means to deal with conflicts are in place to aid relationships. To enable higher performance, creative tension is permitted as opportunities for learning, gaining insight and increasing performance, where individuals may show their views and talents, make any ambiguities clearer, work together and are able to respect differences of other group members. This consequently promotes healthy working relationships in contrast to conflict situations (Kormanski, 2011; Laiken, 1993).

Drawing together this research, I will next discuss important factors of conflict management in relation to group dynamics and how researchers have attempted to address conflicts in group learning within higher education.

2.1.iii) Behavioural repertoires and conflict management in groups

Conflict is defined as an antagonistic interaction and destructive behaviours between individuals, caused by perceptions of different needs, ideas, goals and interests, and is not always resolved (Corvette, 2007; Msila, 2012; Rosenburg, 2005). When considering any destructive behaviours between individuals the notion of behavioural repertoires and an individual's routine must be considered; this insight is crucial to this research. According to Pederson *et al.* (2015), and Staats (1996), a behavioural repertoire provides an individual with appropriate learning to respond appropriately and adjust their behaviours in different circumstances from their life experiences. When facing different circumstances, individuals must have a flexible behavioural repertoire, as appropriate responses in one situation may not necessarily be appropriate in another. Some individuals exhibit narrow behavioural repertoires, whereby they lack flexibility and are unable to adapt their behaviour according to different situations. For instance, if a person's internal dialogue is "Never let anyone take advantage of you!", and generalised to a variety of different situations, it may cause an inflexible pattern of hostility towards others if their repertoires are restricted, leading to conflict. Similarly engaging in routine avoidance behaviour in response to conflict may lead negative interpersonal experiences without prosocial outcomes (Goldfried & Davidson, 1994; Tolin, 2016).

By contrast adaptive behavioural repertoires allow individuals to modify their behaviour to respond appropriately to different situations. For instance, they may adjust their behaviour when communicating with a colleague at work, compared to in a bar, which promotes prosocial relationships (Morrins *et al.*, 2013; Tolin, 2016). Here prosocial behaviour is described by Bierhoff (2005) as any action taken by an individual which is empathetic to improve a situation by considering the problem from the other person's perspective rather than from merely their own. Luhmann's social system theory describes how individuals or groups may have routines of communication or ways of behaving within specific circumstances (Luhmann, 1995). Pulling this theory together with behavioural repertoires, it means that an individual may have limited behavioural routines which are not prosocial if they are unable to adapt their behaviours according to different circumstances. Self-limiting

behavioural routines may thus cause conflicts in group learning, if individuals respond to interpersonal issues in a manner causing frustrations within the group, drawing on research discussed in this section. Consequently, learning new ways of responding to difficult situations would expand their behavioural repertoires and improve their experiences of group activities by disrupting such routines.

As conflict can be caused by an individual's inflexible behavioural routines, Evertson & Emmer (2013), describe how they may attempt to manage conflict, using ineffective coping strategies such as avoidance or aggression, which is not prosocial. In schools one approach to address conflicts is to teach students social skills by instruction aimed at managing social issues such as bullying. To learn to manage future situations, student role playing interactions can be particularly useful, for personal development, and to develop helpful assertion skills and strategies. By working on social skills students can learn to communicate better and resolve conflicts more efficiently, promote friendship, and respect the perspectives of others. This can be achieved by active listening, and negotiations when addressing disagreements. Empathy can be developed, and these simulations allow individuals to practice new skills for real life situations under controlled conditions when directed by tutors. These simulations require planning and individuals being placed in that situation to learn. Individuals need to reflect, including the reason why they acted in the way they did, where feedback from the tutor is vital to allow learning (Hillier, 2005).

To resolve conflicts and deal with specific issues and find appropriate solutions individuals require good communication and listening skills and understanding of one another (Pincus, 2004). Models of communication, including the interaction model, explore the interaction between a sender sending a message and the receiver (who receives the sender's messages while communicating). In response to the sender's message the receiver provides feedback to the sender and provides insights about their message, influencing the future messages of senders to promote prosocial communication (Narula, 2006). For teams to operate effectively individuals may argue against conventional views and explanations that the group might be adhering to, yet without ignoring ideas to see a different viewpoint for decision making, that gives different perspectives for learning. Difficult behaviours may occur within groups such as a group member maintaining a view or a perspective which the other individuals do not feel is relevant; alternatively, a group member may force their view on the others by attempting to dominate the group, which can cause frustration to other members

(Brookfield & Laiken, 2006). Other difficult behaviours could include hostility or personal criticism towards other members, or individuals being passive (Bratton *et al.*, 2010; Hasson, 2015). Such behaviours may prevent the group from finding a decision on what their goals are and how to achieve these (Brookfield & Laiken, 2006).

Frustrations can have implications for the personal development of individuals. Individuals may have several needs which may not be fulfilled due to certain obstacles. These obstacles may include thwarting (where a response is prevented), reinforcement (a person is conditioned in a specific way), withheld frustration (goals not attained), and conflict situations. In conflict situations there can be two or more incompatible motives, where the success of one motive may block the other, leading to tension as well as conflict (Chauhan, 2009). The process of mediation can be used where an impartial third party intervenes, not to direct the course of action, but guide those who are in dispute towards a solution which is chosen, identified and agreed by all involved. Increasingly mediation can be a successful means for conflict resolution, to improve the situation for both individuals involved and promote harmonious relationships (Clifford & Herrman, 1999).

When an individual has severe obstacles to their goals, is unable to cope with challenges of a situation, and feels threatened by others, it is known as a crisis according to Burgess and Roberts (2005). Addressing thus the needs of that individual is crucial for interventions. In such cases the goals are to establish good communication, to be able to deal with emotions, to acknowledge the event and solve the issue. To deal with these emotions an empathetic and non-judgemental approach must be taken. The problem needs to be defined, when aiming to find positive solutions and implement a plan in a constructive way (McMains & Lanceley, 2003; Vecchi, 2009), which can thus promote prosocial communication.

A major factor impacting on group dynamics is assertiveness. Hargie & Dickson (2014) argue that the functions of assertiveness include making requests from others, preventing aggressive unnecessary conflict, as well as ensuring an individual's rights are not violated. An assertive person behaves in a manner that promotes prosocial relationships, yet individuals may have difficulties in being assertive when expressing their feeling to others. There are several characteristics of assertive individuals. Firstly, Lange & Jakubowski, (1976) describe how assertive individuals stand up for their personal rights and express their thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a manner that is direct, honest, and appropriate, without

violating the rights of other individuals. Secondly, they exhibit behaviour in the absence of exaggerated or undue anxiety or anger (Arrindell & Van der Ende, 1985; Wolpe 1973). Thirdly they make positive requests to others and may also refuse unreasonable requests from others (Reid & Hammersley, 2000). Finally, they are open to making compromises rather than always expecting others to conform to their own needs, nor fearful about how they are perceived when exhibiting such behaviour (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012). According to Ames (2009), assertive individuals are thus able to engage and collaborate with others which means that such individuals exhibit behaviours that engage directly with a problem by expressing their feelings in a prosocial manner to manage conflict. Assertiveness however does not include other forms of prosocial communication such as indirectly bypassing the problem where individuals express their feelings in a subtler manner, to find alternative solutions to the problem. SFDC thus was designed to explore all possible solutions, save violent and abusive behaviour rather than limited to directly engaging with the problem causing conflicts in group learning.

Despite the above benefits of assertive behaviour, not all individuals respond to conflict in this manner and fail to promote prosocial relationships. Jenkins, (1982), describes non-assertive behaviours, as either passive or aggressive behaviours, where such behaviours are exhibited by individuals who experience anxiety or anger. At one end of the spectrum is passive behaviour and at the other extreme is aggressive or hostile behaviour. Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan (2012) suggest that aggressive behaviour includes domineering, manipulative, angry and hostile and blaming behaviour leading to conflict and resentment among individuals. (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012).

Individuals exhibiting aggressive behaviours are often unwilling to compromise with others and unable to adapt their behaviour and be flexible enough in response to different situations (Tolin, 2016). By contrast passive behaviour is behaviour that is submissive. Such individuals fail to openly express their feelings and may agree to all requests made by others, by being silent in these situations. They can often allow others to take advantage of them and enable socially undesirable behaviour to take place. According to Marquis & Jorgensen (2009), individuals can be passive-aggressive when they communicate a message which is aggressive but in a passive way, which involves limited interaction by such an individual. For example, they may try to withdraw from a situation in a manipulative manner. A passive-aggressive individual exhibits behaviour such as not making deadlines or intentionally

conducting work poorly leading to conflicts and frustrations among individuals in a group (Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, 2012).

Within conflict situations many individuals find it challenging to express themselves assertively to produce positive outcomes. If individuals are trained to use strategies to tackle conflict with certain individuals, they could alter their normal response in that situation using theatre-based learning to promote social change and increase their self-esteem. Theatre-based learning provides individuals the opportunity to express their experiences on stage and reflect on new choices that are available to them and compare these with the choices they previously deployed (Clifford & Herrmann, 1999). By learning appropriate assertion skills individuals can thus improve their confidence and self-worth (Hargie & Dickson, 2004), and this would enable them to consider what options there are to find a solution to achieve prosocial outcomes situations.

Lomas *et al.* (2014), argue that to improve and manage personal relationships there thus is a need for effective communication strategies among individuals and groups. In education this is important for effective group work and learning between a teacher and student, two students or within or among different groups (Fine, 2001; Svendsen & Svendsen, 2009).

From work on interpersonal skills in education, Laiken (1993) argues that individuals need to know their learning needs, have a plan and vision, set goals, communicate better, manage conflicts, and solve problems as a group. For team participation to be effective individuals must listen carefully to others and show appreciation of their contributions, with clear questioning and reflection. According to Wallace, (2013), adults within education need to be treated respectfully to cooperate, needs to be positive communication and language, goal setting, sensitivity to their needs, and critical thinking on both individual and collective levels. Wallace particularly suggests using humour as an approach to reduce any hostility and discussing the views of the learner can aid motivation within education.

Previous research explored different strategies to improve group work in higher education, with less instruction. Behfar *et al.* (2008) examined strategies used by students to manage conflicts within study teams and their impacts on group outcome, regarding relationship process and task conflict. These strategies included voting, compromise, debating, open communication of issues, avoidance, rotating responsibilities and using solutions that were idiosyncratic. Groups with good interpersonal interactions used group level strategies to manage conflict which led to positive outcomes (Behfar *et al.* 2008). Wallace, (2013),

explains that it is important to be non-violent and non-confrontational to ensure order to manage disruptive behaviour in adults. The strategies that could be used include using group rules, setting learning goals, questioning and discussing issues, and to be firm on boundaries and not reactive when addressing this behaviour. Wrong solutions however can reduce an individual's confidence and motivation, meaning that there is no single solution that can be generalised across all group work conflicts. This suggests individuals with flexible behavioural repertoires have wider sets of responses to choose from when faced with conflicts in group learning, which may promote more positive interpersonal experiences in this context. By contrast, narrow behavioural repertoires may enhance conflicts from a limited routine of responses to conflict, which in this context includes responding aggressively, passively, or passive-aggressively.

2.1.iv) Criteria to evaluate interventions within higher education

SFDC was challenging to evaluate as it was an integrated coaching intervention with a complex design. It was interdisciplinary, incorporating techniques derived from applied theatre and applied psychology within the context of higher education. As SFDC was an integrated interdisciplinary practice, factors such as intervention aims, type and principles had to be considered rather than assuming only criteria within higher education was appropriate for appropriate evaluation.

According to White (2018) intervention design and development within higher education requires time, resources from the institution and stakeholders who are willing to contribute towards the success of defined program goals. This success requires planning, implementation, and critical reflection to identify what works effectively within an intervention and reasons for this. All education interventions must be evaluated according to the following criteria: i) Acceptability, i.e the intervention is appropriate for addressing the problem; ii) Integrity; iii) Feasibility of procedures and motivation; iv) Understanding; v) Environment and context; vi) Reliability. The environment and context are considered to have a role in determining which interventions are deployed and compatible with the institution. In this instance there is a focus on evaluating methods to apply research findings to routine practice (Briesch *et al.*, 2013; Eccles & Mittman 2006).

These criteria are unsuitable for some interventions. According to Miles (2007), creating a routine practice advocates a gold standard of procedures for evaluating an intervention, yet there are different degrees of feasibility. A shortcoming of some interventions is that they are deemed effective if only a narrow gold standard is met. For example, psychological interventions assisting students with dyslexia are deemed effective if there is only an enhanced performance in reading based on a gold standard definition of a successful outcome, not improved spelling, and processing time from this definition. An intervention's successful outcome should thus be defined within a broad context of improvements to accommodate participant's needs and decisions rather than being required to meet very narrow criteria. On this basis the description criteria that is appropriate for a highly structured intervention may not necessarily be the same for a semi-structured intervention.

When designing evaluation plans for semi-structured interventions, there should be more flexibility to accommodate variations in participant duration. Successful outcomes should be open to a range of important improvements rather than expecting very specific criteria that are relevant to the core aims of that intervention. Similarly, according to Carter (2006), evaluations of coaching interventions are highly individualised focusing on individual outcomes and benefits to determine its success, which is in sharp contrast to program goals within education.

Within applied psychology, the American Psychological Association (APA) describes the following criteria for evaluating interventions, differing from that of education: i) Efficacy, i.e how effectively can an intervention evoke change to meet the intended outcome from empirical evidence; ii) Utility i.e how that intervention can be used across different settings and contexts, (alongside feasibility and accountability of variables); iii) Cost of implementing that intervention (APA, 2002). A problem with these criteria is however that they are primarily aimed at evaluating clinical interventions by quantitative means. This research first involved evaluating SFDC, and therefore generating findings across settings or contexts to account for different variables was inapplicable for this study. Second SFDC was a non-clinical intervention to improve student future experiences of group learning in higher education, in contrast to clinical intervention treatment to remove symptoms of psychological disorders. Intervention evaluations need to consider the type of intervention and relevant research methods deployed to uncover that intervention's effectiveness.

Similarly, evaluating arts-based interventions (including those within applied theatre) are challenging to examine by quantitative means as the design is complex involving a range of different tools (Carswell *et al.*, 2019). Pendergast & Saxton (2009) do advocate that there is substantial case study evidence that applied theatre interventions evoke social change among groups by providing individuals new understandings and empowerment. Moore *et al.* (2015) however describe how complex arts-based interventions fail to show significant quantitative effects. In this instance the criteria of acceptability should also include examining the mechanism of their impact and implementation, to enable effective understanding of such interventions (Carswell *et al.*, 2019). Research using arts-based interventions has also been criticised for a lack of longitudinal follow-ups to determine their sustainability and benefits (Boyce *et al.*, 2017).

Within higher education there is more than one approach to evaluate an intervention. According to Rincones-Gomez (2009) interventions are evaluated in order to determine whether the expected results are obtained, where they can be implemented, what differences are they making to student experiences and whether they meet criteria that is established rather than merely gathering information. In this instance evaluation methods involve: i) Describing the intervention aims, participant base, duration, and changes that intervention intends to bring, including enhanced learning, decision making, actions and behaviours; ii) Creating evaluative questions to ensure interventions are implemented as intended, and reviewing areas for improvement according to the impact of that intervention; iii) Conducting a plan of evaluation to clarify what is being evaluated and intervention timescales; iv) Monitoring the plan according to specific tasks, and finally gather data to determine whether the intervention obtains the desired goals and results are deployed. A problem with this approach is however that it expects the intervention being evaluated to have a fixed duration, which is not necessarily the case.

Raven (2015) however, describes an alternative approach to evaluate interventions within higher education: i) Define what is being evaluated and the purpose of this evaluation; ii) What is evaluation of participant focus and learning outcomes; iii) Describe what evaluation methods are deployed; iv) Describe how data is collected and stored; v) Analysis and reporting of data -include how it will be interpreted. A shortcoming of this approach is

however that not all interventions have learning outcomes that can be defined in advance and is thus unsuitable for more individualised interventions. Evaluation approaches therefore should be flexible to accommodate the type of intervention rather than an overly rigid structured approach.

Within both higher education and psychology, interventions must demonstrate that participants' life experiences are improved to be deemed effective, and researchers must indicate what is relevant to meet such criteria. For example, within education a successful outcome of a teaching intervention might be enhanced student motivation. (Miles, 2007). Gast *et al.* (2017), describe that when evaluating team-based interventions to improve teacher personal development within higher education, interventions are deemed effective if teachers have a positive motivation towards curricula, learn new tools and acquire knowledge to implement new practices. Here the evaluation approach was to describe aims, context and duration of any intervention, which must be described during the evaluation process. A benefit of this approach is that it provides a broad outcome for deeming an intervention effective, yet a shortcoming was is that may not necessarily be appropriate for more individual-based interventions with varied rather than fixed durations. The evaluation approach must therefore accommodate the context and the nature of an intervention rather than having an overly rigid structure. The intervention being evaluated may take a semi-structured approach to accommodate participants' needs and decisions. When designing evaluation plans, intervention duration may vary between participants and there should be thus flexibility with evaluation questions to accommodate such circumstances.

For effective evaluation within this context, intervention type must be considered in addition to these approaches. Harackiewicz & Priniski (2018), describe three main types of interventions to address problems encountered by students within higher education. This is important, as particular kinds of interventions demand specific evaluation models:

First, task-based interventions, which focus on exploring and understanding a specific task to effectively complete academic content. An instructive example of evaluating a task-based intervention is from studies by Rust *et al.* (2003). This study evaluated an intervention aimed at improving student performance and understanding of assessment criteria in higher education for students to successfully complete their undergraduate degrees in business.

Intervention framework was comprised of providing students with sample assignments and assessment criteria, group workshops with tutor guidance, feedback, and review. This intervention was evaluated by student questionnaires on their knowledge prior to the intervention, evaluations of the workshop, understanding of assessment criteria, and self-assessment worksheet after submitting their coursework.

The second intervention type is a framing intervention. These interventions aim to address how students think about common challenges within higher education experiences such as their abilities, self-belonging doubts, or course transitions. Framing interventions are thus cognitively focused, whereas task-based interventions intended to focus on academic tasks at hand (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018). An example of a framing intervention is by Jessen & Elander (2009), who explored a workshop intervention to enable students to effectively make a transition from further education to higher education, which included higher education criteria, and essay writing skills. This intervention was evaluated by questionnaires to cover the impact of the workshop and with assessment criteria concerning student understandings of higher education expectations, and self-surveys among those who had and had not attended these workshops.

When evaluating interventions, the context and dynamics need to be considered to ensure the evaluation approach is appropriate for that intervention. In contrast to the above studies Kanter & Schramh (2018) argue against a one-size fits all, instructional approach to interventions aimed at improving relationship dynamics among couples, outside of an educational context. They describe how targeting communication skills in a prescriptive manner may fail to accommodate for different life circumstances, context and behaviours to ensure long-term effectiveness.

The third type of intervention is a personal-value intervention, which is student-centred and focus on the personal values of students. These interventions are designed to strengthen student identity and self-worth to address challenges within higher education across different disciplines, rather than focusing exclusively on current academic tasks. Personal value interventions thus have broader intentions compared to task-based and framing interventions (Harackiewicz & Priniski, 2018). For example, studies by Layous *et al.* (2017), using questionnaires indicated that personal-value interventions can improve students' sense of

belonging and academic performance in higher education by ranking their core values in terms of importance. Insights into student core values can thus increase their motivation and belonging to enable them to thrive within this context.

Despite the presence of such interventions within higher education, task-based and framing interventions types focus primarily on student understandings of academic tasks and do not address challenges with interpersonal relationships. From these studies such interventions were highly, instructional and tutor-led rather than participant-led, conducted in groups than on a personal level. Such an approach may not necessarily be appropriate for collaborative interventions, conducted on a personal level to address interpersonal dynamics. When evaluating interventions within higher education it is thus very important that the aims and type of intervention are considered to accommodate student needs, as the criteria for addressing academic tasks versus interpersonal challenges is not necessarily the same.

Drawing on the above studies, I designed SFDC to accommodate for variations in participant group learning scenarios and choice of solution during this research. SFDC addressed participant values to enhance their motivation as with personal-value interventions and explored their perceptions of difficulties within group activities typical of framing interventions. This intervention was comprised of elements of both framing and personal-value interventions, which was challenging to define according to a specific model of evaluation when drawing on these studies. Positive outcomes for SFDC to be deemed effective were sufficiently flexible to accommodate for varied participant future group learning experiences after this intervention during this research, rather than restricted to overly narrow criteria.

The criteria for evaluation intervention within higher education, is thus influenced by evaluation approach and the type of intervention of interest. I approached the evaluation of SFDC, by combining appropriate evaluation criteria from these three disciplines. Criteria of acceptability, context, understand the mechanisms, feasibility, and efficacy (in a qualitative sense) were appropriate for evaluating this novel intervention, considering its complexity and individualised approach. Utility was inappropriate for evaluation of this intervention as SFDC was examined within a specific context. SFDC advocated a flexible duration to accommodate different participant experiences of group learning, and personal outcomes

from participants, with collaborative dynamics between facilitators and participants, in contrast to generalised learning outcomes.

SFDC thus had to meet two positive outcomes to be deemed effective in accordance with these criteria: The primary positive outcome for SFDC was an expanded participant behavioural repertoires and enhanced confidence to equip student participants with tools to improve their relationship dynamics in their future experiences of group learning in higher education. Secondary to this was (where possible) evidence of students applying learnings from this intervention to flourish in their future experiences of group learning activities. Throughout this study, evaluation of SFDC was sufficiently open to the frequency of participant future group learning experience post intervention rather than restricted to meeting criteria that was too narrow. SFDC would thus be deemed effective if participants at least met the primary positive outcome rather than expecting all participants to have experienced further group learning activities within this project's short duration

2.1.v) Key interventions focusing on prosocial communication

At present there are only two major interventions focusing explicitly on communication skills to promote prosocial outcomes in personal relationships, beyond addressing internal language cognitions as in Dialectic Behavioural Therapy (DBT) as described by Brown (2015). These interventions are non-violent communication (NVC) and Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP). At the heart of such interventions there is a focus on external communication and language to manage conflict and improve personal relationships aimed at achieving prosocial outcomes.

NVC is an intervention approach aimed at promoting prosocial communication among individuals. The core model in NVC is comprised of four components: first express observations (O): these are facts in the absence of feelings or making judgements. For instance, expressing: "I notice the clothes are on the floor", not "This room is a mess!". Then describe their feelings (F) and needs (N), such as "I feel afraid because I'm needing support" and what specific requests (R), or actions they would like from the person they are experiencing conflict with. Rosenberg describes how a request is only a request when individuals ask the others to do what they want and they agree to it, otherwise this is a demand instead of a request" (Rosenberg, 2005a cited in Dickinson, 1998, p.58-59). NVC is

thus a structured practice, comprised on the routine ONFR model per session, as it does not include specialist techniques or models beyond the core framework that are deployed under specific circumstances. NVC is designed to promote personal empowerment whereby individuals express their needs, detect the needs of others, show empathy when needs are perceived and use positive strategies that are prosocial to find a solution. Not all individuals are however able to express their needs effectively, and criticise others during communication, leading to conflict and frustration, and are thus unable to find a resolution (Chauhan, 2009; Rosenburg, 2005b).

Studies by Nosek & Duran (2017) and Vazhappily & Reyes, (2017), have been supportive of NVC training, which can be effective when addressing marital conflict and improving the conflict resolution skills of adolescents. NVC has also been supported within coaching contexts for individuals to address relationship difficulties, especially those in healthcare (Cox & Dannahy, 2005; Wheeler & Patterson, 2008).

Despite such benefits NVC has limitations. According to research by Altman (2010), Bitschnau (2008) and Oboth (2007) there are several problems with the NVC model. Firstly, it is challenging to define a specific behaviour under what NVC describes as an observation, as particular behaviours have different interpretations among individuals. Secondly a person may find identifying their feelings and needs difficult. Thirdly identifying positive action demands elaborate NVC knowledge, that is time consuming for individuals to fully understand and achieve, which is not always possible in real-life. Bitschnau (2008) further describes other NVC limitations whereby application of the ONFR model encourages unrealistic expectations from others and hiding their own feelings rather than authentic harmony. Kashtan (2012) cited in Juncadella (2013), also describes that NVC training takes time and practice to effectively express the OFNR model in a natural manner. Problems also arise when the receiver translates a sender's message into feelings and needs which lead to inaccurate interpretations of the sender's message, using NVC. This suggests that NVC training is too simplistic and directive, where the effectiveness of this instructional approach is limited to very specific situations and cannot be generalised to all situations.

NLP is an approach that also aims to promote effective communication between individuals. NLP is described by practitioners as a range of techniques and models where individuals use language to explore their subjective experiences to achieve their desired outcomes. It can be applied in coaching, business, education, conflict management and therapy contexts to

promote prosocial behaviour (McCartney & McCartney, 2014). As NLP is comprised of a range of techniques and models, it is thus a relatively, complex, and unstructured intervention to accommodate individual needs and circumstances, without a single routine model in contrast to NVC. NLP is however viewed as a controversial practice and most researchers view it as lacking a clear evidence and question its validity (Beyerstein, 2001; Diamantopoulos *et al.*, 2008; and Heap, 1998). Tosey & Mathison (2003) also describe how NLP has proved challenging to test and empirically evaluate. NLP has an unclear theoretical framework in terms of its phenomenology and discourse analysis, meaning there is a mismatch between NLP practice and academic expectations as it was developed pragmatically through practical application. NLP thus relies on verbal reports of individuals' inner experiences applying a range of models, which is more complex than a routine single model and may be challenging to test empirically by quantitative means. Kandola (2017), particularly highlights practical problems of examining NLP's effectiveness which includes the challenges of comparing studies considering the vast array of tools, models, and outcomes within NLP.

Despite these challenges, supporters Carey *et al.* (2009), Wake (2008) and Churches & West-Burham (2008) have encouraged further study. Criticism of NLP has been challenged by the above authors who argue that studies obtained misinformed outcomes where methodological problems occurred and researchers had poor understandings of NLP models within the interventions.

The present study explored an original individual-based, creative-interactive approach to learn effective strategies to manage difficult behaviours during group learning in higher education based on common values of positive and applied psychology, discussed in later Chapters. This study also intended to address major shortcomings of NVC, and NLP described above, by promoting openness within a structure rather than overt structured, directive approaches that are too routine and ineffective for more complex scenarios. When designing SFDC I attempted to balance such shortcomings without relying on unsubstantiated evidence within highly unstructured collaborative approaches despite their potential for complex issues. I thus designed SFDC as a semi-structured intervention, considering these extremes to promote prosocial communication within this research context. I will now introduce a range of practices which influenced this study's design.

2.II) Applied psychological approaches

In this project I examined functional behavioural assessment and solution-focused techniques from applied psychology.

2.II.i) Behavioural Managements

According to Egan (1976) people can deal with conflict through reflective dialogue, using three main skills: empathy, confrontation, and immediacy. Empathy is required to give the other persons understanding of the world from the others' view and give a description of emotion. During confrontation, the facilitator attempts to give the learner a better awareness of their behaviour in a non-aggressive way and even offers different approaches. Immediacy finally involves addressing what is happening between two individuals with another person. This involves acknowledging what is being experienced and requires high self-disclosure, and by using all these skills individuals can develop their reflective skills (Hillier, 2005).

In education one approach to provide learners a better awareness of their behaviour is to conduct Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA), as part of a problem-solving intervention to address difficult behaviour causing conflict in schools settings (Hansen *et al.*, 2014). Here the problem behaviour is assessed in terms of the current function, under very specific environmental conditions. Behaviours are viewed as something social or physical within these contexts. For example, problem behaviours may include either verbal aggression, anger, or forgetfulness (Cipain & Schock, 2011) than those which are prosocial.

FBA is conducted by a team which includes the student's teachers and other specialists that may include speech therapists (if there are speech issues), instructional therapists (if there are academic issues) and an administrator to create a support plan (Sailor *et al.*, 2008). During the assessment, the behaviour is identified by the team and the purpose is explored, with an awareness of the triggers (by a specific event) and an intervention plan is created to make changes and teach positive behaviours. The positive behaviours are monitored based on current progress and modified if required. Target or problem behaviours are described as specific and observable and data is gathered in terms of the frequency. A treatment strategy is thus laid down where the functional characteristics of the problem situation are addressed, which include why the behaviour occurs, what purpose it serves and what is the reason it is maintained, as well as the conditions that motivate the behaviour in question (Cipain & Schnock, 2011; Hansen *et al.*, 2014). Previous studies have implied that FBA can reduce

disruptive behaviour and emphasise prosocial behaviours, when dealing with problem behaviours. Students are also taught strategies for communicating their needs and setting goals (Ingram *et al.*, 2005; Hanson *et al.*, 2014).

2.II.ii) Positive Psychology and Coaching approaches

For over a hundred years, clients have received psychotherapeutic interventions to explore their problems and deficits, based on an assumption that discussing deficits makes improvements. Although exploring deficits has made huge strides within the field of psychotherapy and reduced symptoms of clinical disorders, these do not necessarily increase individual happiness (Rashid, 2009). By contrast, positive psychology focuses on identifying and increasing individual strengths, happiness, and well-being, in contrast to removing psychological problems like traditional psychotherapy/negative psychology (Boniwell, 2008; Carr, 2011).

Positive psychology interventions are however rare within academic literature, although there is an abundance within self-help literature. Despite this, positive psychology interventions can include focusing on improving individuals' life experiences by coaching non-clinical and reasonably high-functioning individuals than restricted to clinical populations. Such interventions particularly encourage clients to deploy their strengths to combat problems they are experiencing to make improvements (Rashid, 2009).

When applied in education, positive psychology sets goals for solutions to learning issues based on what works for individuals to promote their flourishing (Bannink, 2007; Seligman, 2002). A positive psychological environment in education according to Peterson, (2006), allows students to be more engaged in learning and more enthusiastic, and gives a safe environment for students (Lomas *et al.*, 2014; Peterson, 2006). By using applied positive psychology-based approaches there is an emphasis on the client being the expert, not the therapist leading the client, in contrast to traditional psychotherapy approaches. Using applied positive psychology approaches clients can thus be guided to explore their way to solve their problems collaboratively with the therapist in interventions as with Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (Bannink, 2007; Seligman, 2002); or Life Coaching and other forms of coaching (Boniwell, 2008), which I shall now describe.

Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), was devised by Steven De Shazer and Kim Berg in the 1980s. SFBT is comprised of a range of different techniques. First the miracle question

in SFBT which is deployed to enable clients to define a goal and find solutions that suit them by examining what will be different if their problem is solved (Deshazer, 1985). The Miracle Question allows clients to view their preferred future which currently appears unattainable, by promoting changes in their thought processes. The miracle question enhances the hope that change to the client can occur and can give the client an overview of the benefit of change, and therefore defines a goal which the client and the therapist can agree on (Pichot & Dolon, 2014). A script of the miracle question is: “Suppose that tonight, after our session, you go home and fall asleep, and while you are sleeping a miracle happens. The miracle is that the problems that brought you here today are solved, but you don’t know that the miracle has happened because you are asleep. When you wake up in the morning, what will be some of the first things you will notice that will be different that will tell you this miracle has happened?” (Miller *et al.*, 1996, p.170-171).

Other SFBT techniques include the coping question when examining a particular situation, as well as the strategy of looking for exceptions to the problem for when it is either less significant or does not exist, for clients to think creatively (Kelly *et al.*, 2008; Pichot & Dolan, 2014). In SFBT, clients have from one to ten sessions, where therapists ask the client future orientated questions as described by George, Iveson and Ratner, (1999), “How will you know things are better?” or “What will you be doing differently?”, to define an outcome for a session. An SFBT session is finished when the therapist guides the client collaboratively on what actions they might want to undertake between sessions to make changes (George *et al.*, 1999). Previous research has shown that solution-focused thinking correlated positively with well-being in coaching interventions, and SFBT techniques (miracle questions, and exceptions) increase self-esteem in high school students (Grant, 2012; Taathadi, 2014).

Within the field of coaching, human experiences are promoted based on an understanding of an individual’s behaviour, feelings, thoughts and environment which focuses on enabling non-clinical individuals, in a reasonably healthy state to enhance their future life quality (Grant, 2003). Coaching is described as a collaborate solution focused, result driven process that improves personal performance, life experience, personal growth, and self-directed learning. According to Williams & Menendez (2007) it is a co-creative partnership between the coach and coachee (individual being coached), to enable coachees to obtain their preferred future. It can thus produce benefits that may include improved individual

communication, reduced conflicts and increased cooperation (Greene & Grant, 2003). In coaching, transformation of individuals thus occurs when their life experiences are improving, by attainment of specific goals to enable them to flourish in the future, unlike healing psychological problems as in traditional therapies. This means that within personal coaching there is a strong emphasis on planning and improving an individual's future to enable them to flourish rather than merely accepting the consequences of past events.

Personal or Life Coaching, devised by Thomas Leonard in 1980s, has in recent years grown in awareness worldwide and focuses on concerns of everyday which can include relationships. Coaches work with coachees to enable them to grow, develop and overcome obstacles, focusing on mutually agreed goals. Powerful questioning is used to increase the client's awareness and cognitive tools are used to reframe negative self-talk, acknowledge the client's positive qualities, and encourage accountability for what happens to them, such as setting deadlines. During coaching there is a specific goal for individual sessions using a non-directive (not giving advice or suggestions) approach emphasising a forward-thinking process and a client's commitment, for self-esteem improvement (Dunbar, 2009; Grant, 2000; Skibbins, 2007). Life Coaching is present oriented where the coach guides the coachee to find answers themselves and offers them appropriate support and motivation allowing them to step out of their comfort zone, using tools such as powerful questioning (Greenberger, 2006; Petrone, 2014). There is a collaborative relationship, where individuals being coached are responsible for their choices and find the answer themselves. The focus in Life Coaching is therefore on goal achievement, rather than the analysis of problems, using reflection and discussion, to aid with the client's personal and relationship goals and develop strategies, where coachees typically have on average from four to twelve sessions (Antcliff, 2010; Martin, 2001).

In Life Coaching coachees are encouraged to think creatively for alternative solutions to achieve their goals and define what is the goal/outcome they wish to achieve from coaching (Whitemore, 1996; Martin, 2001), using models such as GROW and ICANDO frameworks which will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In this project, I am thus interested in exploring how coaching tools might be applied to encourage students to think creatively for possible solutions to manage difficult behaviours in group learning more effectively to enable them to thrive in future activities by achieving more prosocial outcomes. I propose that such tools

would enable students to learn and identify new choices when responding to difficult behaviours to improve their interpersonal experiences of group learning in higher education.

There are also integrated coaching approaches such as Solution-Focused Coaching described by Sanderfur (2014), which is comprised of SFBT and Life Coaching techniques. This approach involves identifying the skills and strengths of clients, looking for exemptions and asking the miracle question as well as goal setting, to learn and achieve an improved life skills performance such as that of personal relationships. Coaching frameworks which comprise the main body of Solution-Focused Coaching sessions include models such as PRACTICE (Palmer, 2007), which shall be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Performance coaching is a method to aid learners to make choices and actions, in interpersonal situations within organisations or within business education. It can provide coachees the opportunity to practice their communication skills and strategies (Avolio *et al.*, 1999; Lennard, 2013). Although goals can vary, the core outcome is to empower individuals in terms of relationship building skills and enhance trust, to allow better communication. By developing models of personal performance coaching using theatre-based learning, learners could become more aware of their choices, examine novel behaviours creatively using improvisation, especially for more complex situations (Lennard, 2013). This concept could be applied within higher education to enable individuals to learn new tools to promote more effective group work by expanding on their behavioural repertoires by combining positive psychology and theatre-based techniques. New tools could be learnt by exploring alternative solutions using theatre-based learning aimed at achieving an established outcome derived from coaching criteria. Individuals could thus identify prosocial actions during the process to improve their future experiences of group activities. A Solution-Focused Coaching emphasis would therefore enable individuals to learn and new develop skills as described previously (Laiken, 1993; Sandefur, 2014; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Wallace, 2003), to manage their personal relationships more effectively within higher education.

2.III) Applied theatre and dramatherapy-related approaches

Applied theatre and dramatherapy-related approaches including Psychodrama, Forum Theatre and Ethnodrama will also be investigated in this study.

Applied theatre is described as an umbrella term which includes many different theatrical practices, aiming at providing tools for social change. Participants are often required to work

together to find solutions to creative problems which emerge during productions, yet the main aim is to make changes to the individual or the community group level. Applied theatre thus drives this process towards a specific goal or set of goals (Prenki and Preston, 2013; Synder-Young, 2013). According to Nicolson (2005), applied theatre occurs in a non-traditional setting where the aim is to allow individuals to create new possibilities for everyday living, instead of distancing theatre from other aspects of life. It concerns allowing individuals to move beyond their everyday life and permits them to achieve new insights into social issues allowing social transformation. Types of applied theatre include Theatre of The Oppressed, which covers practices such as Rainbow of Desire and Forum Theatre, Theatre in Education and Ethnodrama (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Dramatic processes are utilised in ways which may facilitate change. When applying creative therapy approaches such as dramatherapy within education context, individuals reflect on their experiences to transform their lives by working through their current problems (Jones, 1996).

2.III.i) Principles of Dramatherapy

Dramatherapy is described as the application of one or more types of drama and theatre for individuals who choose to explore their personal or collective problems and take action to create change with the help of the therapist (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). In Dramatherapy the facilitator works with either individuals or groups over a period of several weeks. During sessions, phases are warm-ups, active exploration of the problem area, and closure. The main process involves individual engagement of the problem area through drama, where closure involves discussions and reflection of the work carried out during the session. All work takes place with defined boundaries that protect the therapeutic space. The key processes as described by Jones (1996) include both dramatic projection and transformation. In dramatic projection individuals are involved emotionally and intellectually to encounter the problem in the form of drama with respect to characters or play materials. They project aspects of themselves during the performance by externalising their conflicts, and by exploring their issues using dramatic dialogue. During transformation, an individual's experience of the expressed problem changes during the session, leading to healing past problems. Life events can thus be transformed into a representation, which are enacted. Previous relationships, ways to respond and events are thus worked on (Jones, 1996).

According to Jennings (2009), change is a result of dramatic processes of expressing and exploring the current issues in dramatherapy. Jennings describes how unlike typical group

therapy these occur without intense and lengthy discussions at the cost of distractions from the task at hand. Dramatherapy can thus give ground for the use of several different creative ways of dealing with the problem (Jones, 1996). The process has several forms and related practices as such improvisation, role playing and theatre performance, where the best known is Psychodrama created by J.L Moreno in the 1920s in Europe and further developed by his wife Zerka Moreno in the United States (Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

2.III.ii) Moreno Approaches: Psychodrama

In education, Psychodrama can be used to resolve conflicts, develop empathy and awareness (Karatas, 2011; Landy & Montgomery, 2012), aimed at achieving a better understanding of an individual's issues, and rehearsing alternative solutions (Blatner, 1996). Psychodrama is a form of therapy devised by Jacob Moreno for individuals to express their emotions openly, and experiment with personal interactions authentically (Carnabucci, 2014). It is a learning process to release emotional conflict where individuals project their inner feelings to make better life adjustments (Chauhan, 2009; Farmer, 1995).

The therapist (also known as the director), balances concerns of the protagonist with the rest of the group (Baim, *et al.*, 2013). A protagonist in Psychodrama is the main character of the enactment, in conflict with an antagonist during the dialogues (Roine, 1997; Tillman, 2011). During enactments individuals spontaneously play roles during an interaction of two or more people depending their problem, and reflect on the experience (Chauhan, 2009; Farmer, 1995). The director has a key role in selecting and organising the situation, assigning roles and examining and interpreting the action, using a variety of themes depending on the individuals concerned (Chauhan, 2009). Psychodrama focuses on an individual's personal issues, where a problem in life is staged as if it were a play, which involves the director, the stage characters, and the audience (Blatner, 1996).

In Psychodrama a protagonist's issues are explored using improvised creation and role interaction (Jones, 1996). A single protagonist emerges focusing on a single conflict in their lives. Other group members play the role of the antagonist, and role reversing occurs (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). In role reversals, players can change the role they are allocated and take on another persona (Jones, 1996). Individuals enact scenes from their lives, gain novel insights and practice novel ways of behaviour, leading to catharsis, after which sharing, reflecting and discussions may occur (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Jones, 1996).

Sometimes, different solutions may thus be suggested by other group members. Behavioural

change can only thus occur when group members view how their behaviour can affect those close to them, for example with family issues. They are thus in a more advantageous position to attempt changed behaviours themselves and make better future choices (Karp *et al.*, 2005).

During Psychodrama, protagonists explore and perform incidents from their lives, which might be from their past or present or even imaginary to address what might have happened or could have happened or is otherwise yet to be (Wilkins, 1999). Psychodrama thus permits individuals to change ways that their past impacts upon their present (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Auxiliary egos described by Moreno, are other participants which take on roles which are decided by the protagonist under the invitation of the director. Psychodrama is composed of three main phases, warm-ups, enactment and sharing. The enactment is the director and the protagonist working collectively telling the story through action. During enactments several techniques occur: role reversal, which is important for scene setting and showing the protagonist's view of key people in the scene and gives auxiliaries information to develop their roles; mirroring where there is the replacement of the protagonist by an auxiliary to allow them to view the action from outside (Wilkins, 1999); and doubling where one auxiliary assumes the protagonist persona (Kipper & Richie, 2003).

The protagonist uses a starting point to initiate the action, which may be a place, an encounter, a movement, or a mixture of these. The director can assist in setting the scene, where the protagonist indicates the place that starts the action, for example “this is my sitting room”. There are no limits to the number of scenes in Psychodrama. In the first scene there can be a heightened awareness of the problem in a different time and place, typically in the past. A second scene of this past event is enacted, and exploration continues further which leads to a last scene where they return to the present with greater understanding, awareness and even resolution of past issues, in a present-past-present format (Wilkins, 1999).

Psychodrama is typically practised in groups, but group Psychodrama can sometimes be too threatening for an individual, who may require an individual one-person audience to accommodate their needs (Baim *et al.*, 2013). According to Karp *et al.* (2005) and personal experience, there can be problems in Psychodrama groups if one individual is more motivated to take part than others, or if two or more group members may wish to take on the role of the protagonist for the whole session, leading to competition and frustrations. As a result, individual Psychodrama may be more appropriate for some individuals.

Individual Psychodrama may involve one or two co-therapists who perform other roles with the protagonist, where therapists alternate between the director's role and performing other roles during the enactment (Baim *et al.*, 2013). The one-person audience can witness the story, validate it prior to the performance to a wider group (Karp *et al.*, 2005).

Important insights have been demonstrated by previous research where participants used Psychodrama, and found reduced negative behaviours (Amatruda, 2006; Karatas, 2011), increased self-esteem, better social behaviours and trust in college and university students (Huamin and Linna, 2011; Karatas, 2014; Kellerman, 1982; Rawlinson, 2000). In Psychodrama groups some individuals may avoid discussing or dramatizing their conflicts, yet there may be improvements as they observe and comment on the performance of others (Baim *et al.*, 2013), meaning this is not always appropriate for all group members to take part in the action.

2.III.iii) Theatre skills in education

Drama has been used by teachers where theatre performance can serve to understand and change a person's life circumstances and behaviour in terms of social learning. The student-actor may reflect upon their experiences by critical thinking and may lead to changes of their world view, mood and understanding. By using theatre within education, there has been an influence of Paolo Friere to promote learning in the form of a dialogue, where creative exchange can occur, for example between students or teacher and student to reflect and make social transformations (Jackson & Vine, 2013; Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

In education, applied theatre is used to address a range of social issues for individuals to develop their socio-emotional skills and life choices (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Like personal coaching, it can give students improved confidence and capabilities by stepping out of their comfort zone (Petroni, 2014; Prendergast & Saxton, 2009). Within education creativity may permit students to express their ideas through imagination and has potential for the collaboration with others, by active learning and building on ideas of one another to enhance individual abilities. Evidence from survey data indicated the drama process can enable students to think and analyse whether an idea works or whether they should try alternatives. (Davis, 2010).

Theatre in Education (TIE) grew as a form of applied theatre practice to make social changes in schools. In education, applied theatre can help address many social issues from bullying,

racism, health, and wellness. Individuals who engage with applied theatre appear to be motivated by the belief that participants' and audience's experience can make changes to the way individuals interact with one another. (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). According to Dorothy Heathcote, applied theatre can be used in colleges or universities involving role play simulations to promote training, human development, and learning to understand situations, as well as explore social problems (Prendergast & Saxton, 2009).

TIE programmes were produced for schools with a well-defined age group for a challenging and key educational aim. (O'Toole, 2009). TIE is a highly collaborative form of educational drama (Landy & Montgomery, 2012), aimed at encouraging students to think and question the issue presented using a problem-solving approach involving learning by doing (Wooster, 2007). A play is thus devised like process drama requiring lengthy preparation where students can participate during the performance (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; O'Toole, 2009).

Process drama is a process where a performance to an external audience is absent but is presented instead to an internal audience which is usually improvised. Here participants and the teacher are the theatre ensemble who engage in drama to make meaning themselves within a classroom setting. Process drama focuses on creating empathy by provoking a dramatic response to a situation from a range of different perspectives when exploring an issue. The teacher's task is to enable students to develop responses to the subject matter using active engagement and reflection in a creative manner (Bowell & Heap, 2013). For example, Teresa Fisher conducted process drama workshops on bullying, aimed at elementary school children, where students played the part of young people to comprehend the drama. The drama teacher encouraged volunteers to perform roles of the victim and the victim's friend, where the others played the part of the bullies, and this performance was followed by reflection to enhance student learning (Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

TIE employs an interdisciplinary approach to learning by using theatre skills, which include disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology (Nicolson, 2009; Prenki & Preston, 2013). TIE is used as an intervention to address cognitions, and attitudes to empower individuals in specific groups to improve wellbeing. The drama is scripted or improvised for educational needs which can include role play and role reversal. Role plays occur when a protagonist simulates an action or circumstance, whereas role-reversal is when the protagonist takes on the role of someone else in the drama, and adopts their position,

behaviour and characteristics (Laney, 1982; Nicolson, 2005; Wilkins 1999; Yardley-Matwiejuk, 1997).

Evidence from interview and survey data on creativity in education using secondary school students, indicated the drama process can permit students to think and analyse whether an idea works or does not work, and to try alternatives, by altering the work (Davis, 2010).

Social theatre can also provide opportunities to empower individuals when they engage with the subject and with one another, learn and share skills for use without outside interferences. Individuals can learn about their relationships by peer support learning, and how to deal with situations using interaction and creativity (Jennings, 2009).

Within theatre there is a long history of learning interpersonal skills. Using improvisation exercises individuals can develop skills such as listening, observation, self-awareness, trust, and collaboration (Stager Jacques, 2012). In education improvisation can have goals to promote social change in the lives of participants who may have experienced either social, political or personal forms of oppression as described by Augusto Boal (Gallagher, 2010; Landy & Montgomery, 2012). During improvisations there are scene elements which include the characters present, the environment, the relationships, attitudes and when the interaction takes place (Tavares, 2012).

Improvisational theatre focuses on exploring problems, possible options and developing solutions to increase learning especially during corporate training (Gibb, 2004; Stager & Jacques, 2012). There are thus examples of the application of improvisation theatre using role play exercises to aid conflict management within corporate settings (Nissley *et al.*, 2004). Learning is therefore connected to self-esteem, where authentic learning along with trust can increase self-esteem. Taking learning risks to improve skills in relationships can thus enhance self confidence in terms of communication (Casdagli, 1999). Drawing on this research improvised theatre can be a positive and empowering approach for individuals to enhance their learning and life experience, which on this basis could be applied within the context of group learning in higher education.

2.III.iv) Boalian approaches and Applied Theatre

The theatre practitioner, Augusto Boal created several applied theatre techniques to address oppression or social problems aimed at inducing social changes (Boal, 1995). I intend to focus on Boalian models of applied theatre namely Forum Theatre and Rainbow of Desire.

a) Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre was created by Boal in the 1960s when Brazil was under a military dictatorship and aims to address social oppression within a community, involving audience discussions and suggestions to promote social change ((Cohen-Cruz, 2012; Leach, 2013). Forum Theatre involves learning using artistic driven games based on a social problem, involving actors and active observers viewing the action (spect-actors). The intention is that Forum Theatre is used as a strategy for collective problem solving within a group, to train individuals in a set of skills and behaviours (Baxter, 2005). Boal's methodology deploys performance as the means of audience-participant to explore and purpose solutions to real world social and political oppressions. These performances intend to rehearse for change in that they equip participants with strategies and tactics that they might deploy beyond the moment of the theatrical event (Boal, 1995).

During these games actors and audiences learn together, while exploring the social problem in a rehearsed or improvised manner, thus "rehearsal for reality". Boal states that Forum Theatre is future orientated, not merely emphasising past events, but to prevent their recurrence in the future (Boal, 2005)

Within Forum Theatre participants actively explore and play out "real life" situations, where conflicts are explored in terms of a scene of oppression (Gibb, 2004). Scenes are either one-acts plays or short scenes, presented to an audience (Nissley *et al.*, 2004). The facilitator, or workshop leader depending on the context is known as the "joker", in Forum Theatre. The joker acts as an impartial intermediary between the performers and the audience (Boal, 2005). They supervise the scene intervention without influencing the spect-actor on their interventions, as the spect-actors have the final say on their decisions for intervention (McCarthy, 2012). The joker also permits the spect-actors and the audience to examine the action, as well as asking hard questions during the process (Baxter, 2005). They thus ensure the smooth running of the game and teaches the rules to the audience. Yet like all other Forum Theatre participants, they may be replaced if the spect-actors feel they are not doing a good job, where any game rules can be changed by the audience (Boal, 2005).

In Forum Theatre there is a contest between actors trying to bring the game to the original ending and spect-actors trying to bring the game to an alternative ending, breaking the oppression cycle (Boal, 2005). It can initiate with an acting company who perform a short play based on an oppression, followed by audience discussion and then the play begins again

(Leach, 2013). Spect-actors may take on the role of the protagonist in the dramatic action by shouting “stop” to start a specific scene and rehearse and show alternative solutions for the situation in hand, which is visualised from different views. According to Boal the process can thus provide the audience members feelings of empowerment (Babbage, 2004; Boal, 1995).

Forum Theatre can be applied in education particularly for specific groups where problems are experienced, where the aim is to alter mindsets and behaviour (Gibb, 2004). Forum Theatre can work from improvisation to depict a scene of oppression where the protagonist is attempting to deal with oppression yet failing due to obstacles (antagonists) causing resistance. According to Baxter (2005) it can thus be helpful in generating information about a dilemma where the process is highly interactive, open ended, showing the feelings of all the protagonists, as well as giving knowledge about the group in question. Similarly, Saldana (2010), describe how Forum Theatre can promote behavioural changes in children by examining power relationships using dramatic improvisation and rehearsal to find possible solutions.

b) Rainbow of desire

Augusto Boal attempted to merge both applied theatre and dramatherapy within what became known as “Rainbow of Desire”. Boal’s Rainbow of Desire was devised with the aim of helping individuals cope with and address internal figures of oppression (Boal, 2013). Here Boal believed that personal struggles originated from personal sources in the form of unresolved conflict, and internal struggles such as parents and children, within the work, or home. Rainbow of Desire occurs within a group that is directed by a facilitator, “the joker”. The process occurs within a group and includes telling stories where protagonists are chosen by group members who dramatize their stories, under the joker’s facilitation. These involve around unresolved conflicts amongst a storyteller and an oppressive individual such as a friend or parent (Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

Within Rainbow of Desire there are a range of techniques for individuals to experience a range of emotions when protagonists address an oppressor (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). These include Boal’s “Stop and think” technique, where the director shouts “Stop” when they believe a gesture is shielding something hidden. Actors thus freeze their movements and remain motionless. The director shouts “Think”, where without censorship and remaining motionless, actors speak all thoughts that are in their minds. After a while, the director says

“Action” where actors resume the improvisation exactly from where they were before the interruption. Another technique is “Opposite of oneself” where the director encourages actors to experiment with opposing personality of themselves by improvisation to provide insights into what it would be like if they behaved in this manner (Boal, 1995). Within the group the spect-actors aid protagonists by finding their desires and actively express their feelings in the form of either monologues or dialogues in role, according to the protagonist’s needs. The protagonist thus expresses their “Rainbow of Desires”, being their full range of emotions with respect to the relationship with that oppressor (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Nicolson, 2005.) Although there is no resolution, there is generation of a deeper awareness and understanding of that conflict. The current evidence is less clear as to whether there is group closure in Rainbow of Desire compared with dramatherapy and Psychodrama, as some participants may have unbalanced feelings from the experience (Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

2.III.v) Ethnodramas

Theatre has a potential to interpret and to enrich research findings and promote thoughts, reflections and engage in emotions (Rossier *et al.*, 2008). Ethnodramas are dramatic performances based on qualitative research data in the form of monologues and dialogues. These performances portray interpersonal conflict and life experience of characters, by showing social issues on stage to enable the audience and researcher to come to an understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Saldana, 1998; Saldana, 2003). These include “real life” vignettes based on interviews or focus on group data, that include a variety of different characters using monologues and dialogues, where dramatic tensions are portrayed, and audiences come to an understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2010; Rossier *et al.* 2008).

An Ethnodrama also shows the experiences of characters on stage to provoke an emotional response to induce social change (Butler-Kisber, 2010). Research data can be transformed into a theatrical text and performance (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The aims are thus to create empathy and allow learning to reach a wide range of audiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

Ethnodramas have limited number of characters stating their objectives, feelings, obstacles and how they attempt to achieve these with defined stage directions. Grybovyh & Dieser (2010) describe an imaginary interdisciplinary ethnodramatic dialogue, on how leisure is related to happiness based on several different academics' opinions (political activists, philosophers, and professors of positive psychology), from positive psychology frameworks

(Gybovych & Diser, 2010). Interpersonal conflicts can thus be shown on stage within a character's life experiences (Saldana, 1998; Saldana, 2003). For example, Sangha *et al.* (2012), describe an ethnodramatic presentation of six scenes based on a research project that depict work related learning and the working conditions of 50 females workers in various precarious work sectors (call centres, supermarkets and garment factories) in Toronto, Canada. Here social issues such as hierarchy, race, language, ethnicity, and work conflicts are depicted.

Previous research on Ethnodrama has addressed themes of attitudes, struggles and tensions experienced within adult education and the workplace among immigrant populations (Sangha *et al.*, 2012; Slade, 2012). Other studies have applied ethnographic plays for teacher education with respect to issues of power, conflicts, misunderstandings, and social goals (Goldstein, 2007). Ethnodramas however haven't previously been explored within group work contexts in higher education.

Applied theatre has thus been used in education to address social issues to promote change. Boal emphasised what alternatives there might be than finding a perfect single solution to a problem (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Nicolson, 2005). Boal also emphasises interaction and participation as solution, where practising artists may only be unaware of conflicts that oppress them. Practitioners may not have answers and use theatre within groups to uncover possible solutions to problems which individuals face in life. Yet there are no social changes which are universally pleasing to all groups (Synder-Young, 2009).

The setting of theatre within dramatherapy-based approaches or as applied theatre, thus can create a space which is typically safe even when dealing with potentially dangerous issues. Such practices abide by specific ground rules to promote comfort and respect among all individuals involved. Participants and audiences can thus choose how they would like to engage with the creative works of theatre practitioners and be open to challenges that these provide that can overlap with real life. It would thus be useful to know, explore, and evaluate what impact these performances are having on the audience and participants in terms of social change (Fisher, 2010; Synder-Young, 2009).

2.IV. Summary of research concepts and justification

In summary, both positive psychology and drama-based interventions discussed in this Chapter can creatively promote personal growth of individuals by collaboration rather than instruction. Improvised role plays in applied theatre and drama-based practices enable individuals to rehearse and learn new life skills to gain further insights and promote social changes, by enhancing an individual's awareness and healing past problems. Longer-term follow-ups are useful as conducted in positive psychology approaches, which have defined purposes and outcomes, to ensure learnt skills are maintained into the future to thrive. Conflict however remains a problem in group learning in higher education where no one solution that fits all scenarios, and students can be unsure how to respond to such conflicts, leading to stress and unfavourable experiences of these activities. This evokes a demand for an intervention for students to expand their behavioural repertoires by identifying more choices of how to respond to relationship difficulties in group learning to enable them to flourish in future within this context. The two main interventions described in this Chapter, focusing on prosocial communication are either too instructional and effective only for specific behaviours or overly complex, or unvalidated by robust research.

In Chapter 3, I will discuss and evaluate interventions from this Chapter in more detail, within fields of education, positive psychology and drama-based practices which formed the basis of SFDC. I will also describe core principles behind these sets of approaches and highlight their limitations which drove the design of SFDC, as a framing and personal-value intervention. I will provide evidence against mainstream cognitive approaches and support examining an integrative coaching framework as a new means of addressing conflicts in group learning within higher education.

CHAPTER THREE: SYNTHESIS AND COMPARISON OF INTERVENTION APPROACHES

This Chapter will have the following core aims. I will first develop further the key concepts influencing the design of SFDC discussed in Chapter 2 and discuss the reason I chose these approaches when creating this intervention. Second, critically evaluate and synthesise these approaches by discussing their benefits and shortcomings as a rationale for creating SFDC. Third, describe how the design of SFDC intended to address these shortcomings and the reason this is important. Finally, highlight core distinctions between traditional therapies, strength-based therapies, and coaching, as I designed SFDC as a coaching intervention with different intentions to psychotherapy for promoting personal transformation.

3.1) Introduction

Personal development is a process which enables individuals to become more aware about what drives them and assists them to explore how their personal histories and values impact on how they think, feel, and behave. It also involves individuals reflecting on their emotional reactions, beliefs, and knowledge in a variety of difficult situations (Bager-Charleson, 2012). This process can therefore promote a better sense of self-awareness, empowerment, personal growth, and individual quality of life (Hughes & Youngson, 2009; Moore, 2013).

Current research into personal development techniques suggests significant possibilities for improving student group learning experiences in higher education. These benefits include learning new skills to deal with difficult behaviours in personal relationships, improving individual self-esteem, and managing stress more effectively. Based on the goal of personal development, a variety of different intervention approaches have been used to increase individual well-being, and personal growth within the fields of education, applied positive psychology, and applied theatre (Fava & Ruini, 2014; Hetzel, 2015; Johnson, 2009; Prentki & Preston, 2013; Southwick *et al.*, 2011).

From these fields I will discuss the practices of Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA), Psychodrama, Forum theatre, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) and Life Coaching from which SFDC was created. Directive and non-directive approaches will be discussed, alongside problem-focused and solution-focused approaches throughout this Chapter. The

benefits of solution-focused approaches will be particularly examined in relation the shortcomings of mainstream cognitive approaches as highlighted in Chapter 1.

I shall now describe and compare these approaches with an emphasis on difficult behaviours, rehearsing and learning new skills and management of personal relationships. I shall commence with examining a Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA) which is a directive approach to personal development.

3.II) Functional Behavioural Assessment

Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA) is an approach in education derived from behavioural analysis, to promote change among individuals or groups. FBAs are used to manage difficult or problem behaviours which are observable to create an intervention for change to promote prosocial behaviours (Legree *et al.*, 2013). The problem behaviours addressed with FBAs can include aggression, self-injury, hyperactivity, or impulsiveness (Cipani & Schnock, 2010). Techniques from this approach thus have potential to promote prosocial relationships in group learning in higher education by addressing difficult behaviours to enhance student future experiences of these activities. The practice may include rewarding or reinforcing positive behaviours to permit behavioural change (Keaning, 2015).

The practice of FBAs is based on behaviourist principles that developed in the early 1900s and which were characterised in Skinner's work in the 1950s. Here Skinner promoted a descriptive relationship between the functional analysis of dependant (behaviour) and independent variables (environment), which can be changed to control behaviours. There was thus a focus on a relationship between stimuli (S) within an individual's environment and their subsequent behavioural response (R) to that stimuli to analyse human behaviour scientifically (Skinner, 1953). Carr (1977), encouraged developing a hypothesis to explain the reason behaviours are maintained and create interventions according to that hypothesis which focus on positive reinforcement of prosocial behaviours whose influence is evident in FBAs.

Within education, a positive behavioural support approach may involve conducting an FBA of an individual to prevent problem behaviours occurring amongst students (Scott & Caron, 2005). A positive behavioural intervention can be applied to reduce the occurrence of problem behaviours and maintain student success at school (Carr *et al.*, 2002; Scott, 2003;

Warren *et al.*, 2003). FBAs are used to observe and conduct a written assessment and diagnosis of a student's problem behaviours, to create a positive behavioural intervention plan. FBAs are complex and time-consuming, particularly used for students where prior interventions have been unsuccessful. Evidence is gathered regarding the intent of a student's behaviour during the assessment. It is conducted with the student, by a team that includes teachers, therapists (such as speech therapists, instructional therapists and occupational therapists), psychologists, parents and an administrator to create a support plan (Riffel, 2009; Scott & Cannon, 2005).

According to Conroy *et al.* (2000) conducting FBAs requires a variety of different skills and competencies. Those trained in FBA also need to be able to develop appropriate interventions for students based on the outcome of the assessment, which need to be implemented. Those competencies may include knowledge of applied behaviour analysis, ability to conduct an FBA effectively and implement planned interventions based on the FBA to decrease problem behaviours and reinforce positive behaviours of students. Team members who are more involved in FBAs such as special education teachers may need more training compared to those less involved, such as school headmasters who may only need a general FBA understanding. There thus needs to be sufficient training of school personnel involved in FBA, for establishing a strong foundation and competence.

A good case example of applying FBA is described by Theodoridou & Koutsoklenis (2013), at an elementary school in Greece. The case was a 9-year-old male student diagnosed with Duchene muscular dystrophy (DMA), who experienced challenges with balance, motor coordination and writing difficulties, and routine tasks, leading to poor academic performances. At school he was aggressive in class and during breaks, by throwing objects at other students and teachers, interrupting the lessons by speaking out of turn and would leave his seat without the teacher's permission. When teachers tried to reseal him, he would cry, fall and refuse to stand up. During playtime activities he was unable to initiate social interaction with other students and often intruded on their games, to gain attention, leading to peer frustrations.

Using FBA from structured interviews with the student's mother, general education teacher, and English teacher, with direct observation of his behaviour in school, the following information was obtained: this student's schedule changed frequently, where the problem behaviour occurred more frequently during English language lessons and breaks. The

problem behaviour was absent during physical education despite his coordination difficulties, as adjustments had been made in these classes to the environment to promote his participation. Using an ABC (Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence) approach, a hypothesis was generated from analysing his behavioural patterns. When he left his seat, he gained attention from his peers and the teacher, where academic tasks that were either too demanding or restrictive, preceded his behaviour. Here the target behaviour was this student's falls and remaining on the ground crying, that was triggered by challenging academic tasks assigned by teachers, especially written tasks considering his coordination difficulties with writing. As he was unable to participate in peer games such as football this could trigger aggressive reactions. On implementing behavioural modifications, teachers were advised to change the exercises they assigned to this student to maintain his academic competence, by promoting oral rather than writing responses in class. He was provided with a computer to assist written assignments, which he was more familiar with, which served to remove his necessity to avoid this task. This student was taught replacement behaviours whereby he was encouraged to ask for assistance from teachers when faced with challenging tasks, using discussion strategies, verbal prompts and feedback reinforcement. He also signed a behavioural contract with his mother and teachers emphasising the praise he would obtain for adopting these desirable behaviours. These replacement behaviours included raising his hand when requiring task help and asking his peers kindly to participate in games during breaks (Theodoridou & Koutsoklemis, 2013).

On evaluating the impact of the positive behavioural intervention based on the FBA there were several beneficial outcomes. There was firstly reduced occurrence of the target behaviours in class and in the playground. Secondly there were improvements to his academic performance, as he actively participated more during lessons and was more with his classmates after the intervention. All these outcomes confirmed the hypothesis that avoiding tasks to gain attention was the primary function of this student's behaviour in class. His teacher confirmed the effectiveness of this support plan by stating: "Philip participates more in my lessons after the intervention, he rarely exhibits the problem behaviour and seems to enjoy more day to day classroom activities" (Theodoridou & Koutsoklenis, 2013, p.8).

Since 1997, FBAs have been used to address behaviour problems and have particularly been deployed in response to the Individuals with Disabilities, Education Act (IDEA), 2004. The requirement of this law is that schools take the necessary steps to address behaviours which

inhibit student learning. Such steps may include the use of an FBA with students and implementing and revising positive behavioural interventions. Based on IDEA, students in education may be disciplined for behavioural problems. During this time the school must by law conduct an FBA, and behavioural intervention plans need to be created in order to remove the problem behaviour, to permit the student to return to school (Bowen *et al.*, 2003; CECP, 2000; Hadaway & Brue, 2015)

During an FBA, the behavioural context and purpose are defined with respect to achieving a particular outcome, and a hypothesis is generated as to why the behaviour occurs (Scott & Caron, 2005; Riffel, 2009). This means that FBAs provide in-depth background information on difficult situations within education, and for this reason tools derived from FBA's field of practice were incorporated into this project's intervention design, with psychological formulations of problems described by Johnstone (2018). The assessment involves the collection and measurement of frequency of the observed problem behaviour, the nature of the trigger, who is present, where it occurs, the consequences to the student of the behaviour, and the reason it is maintained, to generate a hypothesis (Cipani & Schnock, 2010). During the intervention replacement behaviours are taught to the student in addition to looking at routines, rules and expectations with the aim of achieving the same outcome (Scott & Caron, 2005). This means FBAs are directive whereby they impart advice and instructions to students as replacement behaviours instead of being collaborative to encourage student exploration and identification of alternative behaviours themselves

Despite the use of FBAs and behavioural intervention plans since the 1960s under specific circumstances, and their increased use since 1997, there remain barriers to the implementation of intervention plans. There have also been debates as to whether training of professionals conducting an FBA within education is adequate (Couvillon *et al.*, 2009). This is an important shortcoming as Hadaway & Brue (2015), and Theodoridou & Koutsoklemis (2013), have described how positive behavioural interventions derived from FBAs are not well established worldwide within educational systems outside the USA. For example, Hendrickson *et al.* (1993), describe that in-service FBA training can often be time-limited, and unlikely to give teachers the skills required which can be used to address all challenging behaviours occurring in classroom situations. Similarly, studies by Weber *et al.* (2005), have raised issues regarding appropriate education training and practitioners conduct of FBAs. In this study many individuals charged with conducting FBAs often have limited training and

were ignoring the context of the behaviours concerned. This would thus impact on the appropriateness and organisational effectiveness and impact of the interventions derived from FBA.

Loman & Horner (2014) by contrast showed that basic FBA training was suitable to address problem behaviours of students and was valid where there were behavioural problems that ranged from mild to moderate. According to Scott & Caron (2005), Sugai *et al.* (2000) such simple problem behaviours are those that are non-dangerous, everyday behaviours such as non-compliance in class to avoid embarrassment.

More extensive FBA training is required to address more complex problem behaviours where there is a larger team involved including behavioural specialists (Loman & Horner, 2014). Here complex behaviours are more severe or dangerous and require more attention. These behaviours include violent conduct, self-injury, or rule violations which previous interventions have failed to resolve (Cipain & Schnock, 2011; Hanson *et al.*, 2014). This means that the degree of FBA training for teachers to obtain the necessary skills, required for competence and implementation of intervention strategies, depends on problem behaviour complexity.

By contrast, other research on FBA has been more supportive of its effectiveness. Studies by Hoff *et al.* (2005), of an adolescent case showed that using FBA was effective in reducing disruptive behaviours. Here FBA were examined in a natural environment (no experimental manipulation), in a small classroom where disruptive behaviours occurred under very specific circumstances. This case however was very specific rather than involving complex behaviours triggered by many environmental circumstances. Other research has also indicated that interventions based on FBA can be effective in educational settings leading to a reduction in problem behaviours and more adaptive behaviours (Burke *et al.*, 2003; Gage *et al.*, 2012; Kelly *et al.*, 2002).

Another problem with FBA is that when the assessment outcome and hypothesis is unclear obstacles can arise to finding an effective intervention, particularly when the problem behaviour is more severe. Interventions based on a hypothesis that is incorrect, will thus be of no benefit to the individual concerned in such instances (Hanley, 2012; Iwata *et al.*, 1994; Schlichenmeyer *et al.*, 2013). Yet challenging problem behaviours can be reduced in adults who have positive behavioural support (Hassiotis *et al.*, 2014). This research suggests that

hypotheses derived from FBA assessments must be clarified to ensure that interventions are effective for addressing more severe or complex behaviours.

Other studies by Davey & Lignugaris/Kraft (2006), provide evidence that interventions derived from FBAs may require constant reinforcement of prosocial behaviours to sustain change after the intervention as problem behaviours can return to similar levels to those initially observed once interventions are discontinued. Similarly, studies by Filter & Horner (2008) and Ingram *et al.* (2005) also provide evidence that FBAs are limited to reducing pupils' problem behaviours and increase replacement behaviours in school education but fail to remove the problem behaviours entirely. Focusing thus specifically on negative outcomes during FBA such as less aggressive behaviour and attempting change by instruction can be ineffective to sustain motivation for future change.

Throughout the rest of this Chapter, I will examine collaborative, non-directive approaches to personal development in sharp contrast with FBA and highlight benefits of taking a collaborative approach within an intervention, considering these shortcomings. I will next discuss problem-solving approaches within the realm of applied theatre, followed by solution-focused approaches within positive psychology.

3.III) Theatre based interventions using improvisation and role play activities

A dramatic role play using improvisation can be applied to a variety of different contexts and improve communication of individuals, where professionals such as teachers, counsellors, psychiatrists, psychologists use improvisation in their practice (Drinko, 2013). This is important as Jennings & Holmwood (2016), describe how interventions of Psychodrama and Forum Theatre involve role play exercises, where such tools influenced my design of SFDC as discussed further in Chapter 4. Role plays have been deployed widely within research and applied psychology and education. In higher education role plays can be effective in improving students' knowledge and understandings of social situations as they can be used in postgraduate counsellor training to develop skills for dealing with emotions of highly complex clients (Cherney, 2008; Grant, 2006).

A role play is usually a range of activities under simulated circumstances to explore a situation using imagination which can range from a simple to a highly complex situation, and can be applied by an experimenter, therapist or facilitator depending on the context (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997). These simulations are learning experiences, which resemble an actual

experience (Clapper, 2010). A role play can occur at any time during the process of the learning experience; a participant takes on a role and portrays themselves in the form of another character (Haneberg, 2004).

All role plays are comprised of several elements, which are place, situation, characters, characters' goals, and motivation. They can be spontaneous and are typically presented to a group for learning experiences and skill building. A time limit prevents the action from dragging on longer than expected to find a resolution (Haneberg, 2015). Yet it also gives enough time to find solutions during the action of the role play (Nieman & Monyai, 2006), although some individuals may show concerns or anxiety when engaging in role play activities (Taylor & MacKenney, 2008).

Role plays are conducted in an improvised manner. Ellen Veenstra describes three main principles which characterise the common techniques and aims of improvised theatre. These are firstly respect and trust, and a technique called "Yes, and...", which involves both role players contributing to a scene and accepting or agreeing with what the other suggests. The second principle is to be in the moment of encounter. In such cases both partners need to be focused on the present scene, not the past or the future, and respond spontaneously during the scene. The third principle is to let go and that there are no mistakes, where there is no correct way to perform a scene, to encourage exploration in the moment and promote creative thinking (Veenstra, 2011). Role plays can thus improve an individual's personal confidence by exploring and testing their comfort zone. During the improvisation there is thus a blend of creative free play and spontaneity, working around dramatic conventions that have structured limitations, leading to tension which focuses on the problem within scenarios (Spolin, 1999).

The intentions of role play activities are related to flow psychology where an individual's comfort zone is examined and challenged during exercises. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997) describes the term flow psychology, as when an individual is challenged by being pushed slightly to the limit of their creative skill level, intuitively, from a focused and conscious state, with specific goals, and immediate feedback. Flow psychology thus has similar intentions to role plays, as individuals are encouraged to spontaneously step within limits outside of their comfort zone to challenge themselves and increase their confidence. It is a concept linking applied theatre and positive psychology when applied in personal coaching as discussed later in this Chapter.

When role plays are a positive learning experience, they can be very flexible in terms of the broad range of focus: they can offer benefits to the development of an individual's life skills. Role plays might focus on overt behaviours by observations to focus on the attitudes, experiences and events of an individual's experience, involving one or more actors (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997). Characteristically in all role plays, actors take on the role of a character by imitating their behaviours, with defined actions, relationships, circumstances, and objectives to give the experience life (Clapper, 2010; Hagen, 2009).

Since the 1970s there have been unresolved debates on the validity of improvised role plays, where several shortcomings have been identified, particularly in social psychology (Yardley-Matwiejczuk, 1997). Studies by Goldsmith & Mcfall (1975), have shown that role plays can be useful in terms of social skills training and improvement. Curran (1978), also indicated that role plays can be too brief, with limited learning opportunities offered by enacting single scenarios. More recently, Bellack & Herson, (2013), describe that role plays are limited to individuals learning only one response for a situation, which is unhelpful and cannot necessarily be generalised to other settings. There are few technical guidelines for role plays, according to Yardley-Matwiejczuk (1997) which may suggest the lack of development in research and the under use in most therapies.

Despite such shortcomings there are appropriate guidelines to facilitate role plays in higher education in a variety of different disciplines according to Anderson *et al.* (2001) and Rao & Stupans (2012). There is clear guidance on the purpose, expectations, set up, planning, how feedback and supervision are conducted, student trust and the topic of the role play. While designing SFDC, participant information forms and ground rules of the role play activities were based on such guidance, alongside the University of Glasgow ethical procedures, drawing on concepts and recommendations from Life Coaching and Psychodrama. Phases 2 and 3 of this research were well planned, with clear organisation and purpose, where these ground rules also served to ensure participant comfort and trust which shall be discussed further in Chapter 4.

Since 1990 there has been increased evidence that role plays can be effective in education and coaching practices to improve interpersonal skills of individuals which I will now discuss.

3.III.i) Applications of role plays and improvisations

Within education, objectives in role plays can help develop problem solving, decision making decisions and coping skills, as well as rehearsing social skills under a non-threatening setting to explore human interactions (Furman, 1990). Role play simulations can thus help learners make meaning of tasks, develop skills and critical thinking by active learning and reflection concerning real problems under the guidance of a facilitator. During the reflections, learners can be challenged on their feelings, emotions, attitudes, and beliefs from the process to achieve better understandings of these problems. Reflection might be in-action during the role play process, enhancing their decision making (Clapper, 2010).

When teachers aim to improve a student's interpersonal skills, they can take an interactive approach focusing on student needs, for skills learning and constructing knowledge. A role play can thus be used as a learning method, where students may take on a character's role using imagination and interact within a given situation, to imitate a setting of real life. The student is thus encouraged to behaves in a way that they believe the allocated character would respond to the situation (Cheung *et al.* 2009).

According to Joyce *et al.* (2009) and Saunders & Severn (1999), roles plays have three distinct stages, when applied in education: briefing, where the tutor sets the situation, chooses the roles and stresses the aim of the role play to students; action, where participants take on the role and perform the action based on an allocated situation given by the tutor. Observers can watch the participant's action conducted under the tutor's facilitation; debriefing, where the participants and observers discuss the action, for students to develop their observation skills, by the analysis of the role play situation and may include encouraging feedback from the rest of the group. Role plays can thus enable students to become more aware of skills required to able to detect what features may lead to poor communication, due to feedback and reflections. This is particularly important in disciplines that require good communication and interviewing skills for professional relationships

For instance, Mounsey *et al.* (2006) examined teaching Motivational Interviewing (MI) skills to undergraduate medical studies using role plays for use in smoking cessation counselling scenarios. Here an actor assisted the process and students took on roles of both the addiction counsellor and the smoker, during scenarios with an actor. They found that role plays were effective learning to apply MI skills to students, which enabled them to be more empathetic and rehearse their questioning skills. Other studies by Littlefield *et al.* (1999) assessed

medical students' learning using simulated role plays based on a clinical setting, where a student took on the role of the physician to examine decision making of students while others observed the action, followed by reflection. They found an improvement in students' diagnostic skills and ability to form case histories due to role play exercises. Research by Luttenberger *et al.* (2014), also indicated that role plays with an actor as the patient, can be effective for students regarding practising and learning skills, and improving communication, when dealing with difficult patient situations.

Other studies by Kettula & Berghall (2012) examined role plays in a workshop, where business students took on the roles and used their imagination to portray sales managers, production managers and the role of a buyer company. These scenarios allowed students to practice skills based on a real-life situation in a safe environment, allowing them to learn by action, debriefing and the use of reflective journals. Students reported an improvement of communication, negotiation, and teamwork skills due to the role plays. This also included improved confidence, as well as learning not to fear mistakes due to the process.

Students however reported a lack of clarity on how to adequately perform these scenarios from the tutors running the workshop and were anxious about performing such exercises as the only information provided from tutors was that the scenario concerned negotiation between two business companies. The authors however wished to empower students and thus by withholding answers and character details. Their aim was to promote student creativity, increase their motivation and autonomy, where some individuals were more willing to go out of their comfort zone than others (Kettula & Berghall, 2012). This means more background information might be useful when using role plays and improvisation for student learning.

Studies by Miller *et al.* (2013), evaluated a psycho-educational intervention to communicate more effectively in personal relationships, which involved role play exercises. This was a pilot group intervention, using undergraduate students which focused exclusively on addressing relational transgressions whereby hurt occurs damaging those dynamics. The study focused on communication when a victim was distressed (i.e reproach) and responding to this by an apology, using imagined examples of transgressions based on student experiences of hurt within their personal relationships. Communication skills were taught by facilitators (who were mental health counsellors) to these students. Participants acted out their hypothetical scenarios of transgressions in pairs in front of the group using role plays

and gained improved performance in reproach and apology skills. Despite such benefits there are several limitations to this approach. First, while acknowledging this study focused on transgressions, each scenario was described as an offender-victim dynamic and limited to only reproach-apology skills rather than exploring other prosocial solutions to these conflict scenarios. This study thus defines the relationship dynamics as static rather than dynamic, without exploration of protagonist problematic behaviour in these scenarios by labelling them as victims, which is not necessarily representative of all conflict scenarios. Other conflicts may have different dynamics, if both individuals' behavioural choices were problematic which can contribute to conflict and life transgressions. Finally, follow-ups here were only conducted within a short time gap of two to four weeks after this intervention, during rehearsals rather than determining whether participants applied learnings into real life. This study failed to explore whether student learnings from this intervention were sustained in the longer term. It is thus unknown whether students were sufficiently motivated to apply learnings acquired from this instructional intervention into real life after the experience.

Within the context of coaching (typically corporate contexts) role plays have been applied by practitioners as a means for coachees, to learn new skills, under a safe environment, like in education, involving reflection and challenging conversations. This has been viewed as useful for difficult corporate situations as some coachees may be unable to move past their typical ways of behaving or see how others may see them. In such instance this will include creating scenarios with two participants and debriefing the client on their performance and feelings (Forsyth, 2008; Roger, 2012).

Assertiveness coaching had been described by practitioners Fonseca (2004), Nelson-Jones (2007), Neenan & Dryden (2013), who have deployed role plays when rehearsing and enacting real-life situations with their coachees. This may involve both the coach and the client playing themselves and using Psychodrama techniques of role reversing where the other individual takes on the role of the other person within a problem situation. In these scenarios, role playing is intended for coachees to practice their desired behaviours, understand the reaction of the other person to such behaviours, and address any challenges or issues during a debriefing. A coachee is thus challenged on their behaviour and self-talk (their internal dialogue of how they think about themselves), by the coach who questions their communication and action skills to improve their life experiences.

For example, Nelson-Jones (2007) describes using role playing in coaching to rehearse how a coachee could behave and communicate more effectively with a colleague who is late. Here a coachee's communication skills, and coping skills are explored during a debriefing after the action to allow learning and the use of new skills outside coaching, aimed at improving their personal life performance. The application of role plays within coaching contexts however has received limited academic scrutiny. Only a single study by Dassen (2015) examined role plays in coaching contexts. This research integrated drama techniques of Psychodrama, sociodrama, playback theatre and theatre of the oppressed into the facilitating coach repertoire of tools during a group coaching program. Participants became more aware of their self-limiting patterns of behaviour within the team and acquired a need to change by observation and enacting a short scene about their team dynamics. From collaborative process guidance from the coach, coachees were able to think create creatively, design and plan new behaviours. Coachees finally were able to practice new behaviours and skills to improve their future interpersonal experiences, yet this research was limited to corporate environments within teams rather than broader personal coaching contexts outside this setting.

3.III.ii) Interventions using improvisations and role plays

a) Psychodrama

A further field of practice informing the design of this project's intervention was the theatre-based intervention known as Psychodrama. Psychodrama is an intervention typically associated with group psychotherapy, which contrasts with FBA, as the latter focuses on single, specific problems (Baim *et al.*, 2013; Hoff *et al.*, 2005). Kellerman (1992) described Psychodrama as both a dramatic art form and a method of group psychotherapy to address psychological problems. Psychodrama thus is both a science and an arts-based intervention. It is an action-based intervention comprising of a person's body, mind, and emotions, involving the client (the protagonist), other auxiliary group members and the director who guides the action (Baim *et al.*, 2013). Psychodrama involves role playing of a protagonist's past, and present with another individual known as the antagonist (Corsini, 2010). Typically, Psychodrama is practised in a group, and uncommonly practised on a personal one to one level (Baim *et al.*, 2013). According to Moreno (1973), personal Psychodrama is useful for instances when clients are uncomfortable about exploring their problem within a group or where their problems are unsuitable for group situations.

The process of Psychodrama was devised originally by psychiatrist Jacob Moreno in the 1920s, from group therapy practices and refined with his wife Zerka Moreno. Psychodrama is viewed as a holistic approach focusing on the whole person's mind, body, and spirit (Carnabucci, 2014). Jacob Moreno was the founder of "Theatre of Spontaneity" in Vienna aimed at providing local people the opportunity to spontaneously act out their life events unscripted and without professional actors from which Psychodrama developed (Hough, 2014).

According to the BPA (British Psychodrama Association), Psychodrama is the umbrella term covering all action methods devised by Jacob Moreno aimed at enabling individuals to resolve conflicts in their lives using enactment rather than limited to conversation. The process can enable individuals to safely practice novel roles, gain further insights and change (BPA, 2019). Individuals enact scenes from their lives, which is aimed at gaining novel insights and practising novel ways of behaviour, after which sharing, reflecting and discussions occur (Jones, 1996; Landy & Montgomery, 2012).

During Psychodrama there is always a sharing after the action, which must be non-analytical, non-judgemental, without evaluating the performance of another group member. This enables individuals to gain more insights and understanding, where they focus on the similarities with their own situations to transform and promote positive group dynamics (Barbour, 1972). The sharing session in Psychodrama thus contrasts with FBA where there is an analysis of an individual's behaviours as described by Riffel (2009). Here protagonists are seated next to the therapist and all members of the group can share directly with the protagonist about how they related to the drama of the protagonist which can include derolling back to themselves if they took on auxiliary roles. Group members are invited to speak from their experiences, not provide advice or criticism, express their feelings, which can be insightful for the protagonist (Carnabucci, 2014). From personal experience of Psychodrama during sharing, group members may express what the drama reminded them of from their personal life.

Techniques derived from Psychodrama can be applied in a variety of contexts such as education, social interventions, community work, conflict resolution, health and management. The action in Psychodrama refers to all dramatization within the process. This includes all core techniques of role play dialogues, role reversal, doubling, mirroring to address interpersonal relationships, from the point that the protagonist has been chosen to enact

scenes from their lives up until group sharing. Prior to using these core action methods, warm-up dramatic projection techniques are used during the practice (Hare & Hare, 1996; Johnson, 2009; Moreno & Fox, 1987). As Psychodrama takes a strong exploratory approach for individuals to resolve conflicts in their lives and is applied for their personal relationship issues, I thus integrated techniques derived from psychodrama into the framework of SFDC.

In personal and group-based Psychodrama, two core warm-up techniques such as hot seating and the empty chair are used prior to the action. During hot seating, a client sits on a chair, takes on a role, and answers questions in role, asked by the therapist spontaneously. The empty chair technique is when the therapist places a chair in front of the client and invites them to imagine that there is a person sitting there, who is associated with what the client wants to work on. The client as protagonist then changes positions with the other person by a role reversal (Baim *et al.* 2013; Cukier, 2008; Leverton, 2001; Prendville & Toye, 2013).

In personal Psychodrama the therapist may interview the client in another role prior to a role reversal. They may ask them questions such as: “Could you give me some information about yourself?” “What does your husband do for a living?” “What will happen to you?”, during a hot seating exercise. The client must refer to themselves as “I” in the role of that person, where role reversal is when players can change the role they are allocated and take on another persona (Jones, 1996; Vander May, 1980). From experience of personal Psychodrama, this includes dramatic projection followed by role reversal, whereby the client responds in the role of the antagonist, prior to changing back to protagonist role.

During a single group Psychodrama session, an individual’s personal events are thus explored in a spontaneous manner where other individuals are involved in the action under the therapist’s guidance to provide them more insights and promote social change (Jennings, 2014; Karp *et al.*, 2005). Typically, in Psychodrama groups, a single protagonist emerges focusing on a single conflict in their lives. Other members of the group play the role of the antagonist, and role reversing occurs (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Other techniques such as mirroring can occur where another group member replaces the original protagonist, and the scene is repeated to permit the original protagonist to view themselves in the action (Corsini, 2010). Doubling also occurs when the therapist/director stands behind the protagonist to supplement their role and expresses what the protagonist might wish to say but may be withholding (Carnabucci, 2014).

Psychodrama is described as holistic in the sense that it emphasises the personal growth of the whole person rather than an analysis of a single, very specific problem area/dysfunction. Here the person's thoughts, feelings, relationships, and histories are explored. Moreno stresses that the client is responsible for making changes, not the therapist who during the action only guides and supports the client to explore their problems for them to find answers. This contrasts with psychoanalysis where therapists listen and interpret client's problems as described by Sigmund Freud as his dominant model, using conversation only (Jennings, 2014; Kindler & Gray, 2010; Scheiffele, 2008). Moreno particularly criticised Freud of analysing individuals and tearing them apart by separating out their issues, while advocating that Psychodrama enables individuals to integrate these parts back together (Moreno, 2014). He thus wished to provide individuals the opportunity to rework important stages of their lives which may have been traumatic to gain new meanings and integrate these in a more positive manner (Hough, 2014). In Psychodrama resolution thus refers to gaining new meanings and awareness of past issues by healing traumatic events, yet interpersonal dynamics are not explored further to improve client's life experiences beyond that healing to thrive in the future.

Psychodrama is consistent with humanistic principles as it is a client-centred, collaborative approach which focuses on clients having choices and responsibility for what happens to them (Ginger & Ginger, 2012), derived from Rogers in the 1940s. This collaborative approach here means that clients are guided by the therapist by exploring their issues, to clarify their feelings and solve their problems, without interpretation or professional advice (Rogers, 1942). These principles are in direct opposition to behaviourist principles which FBAs are derived from, as Psychodrama is a client-led approach. Psychodrama practitioners evoke behavioural change in clients by exploration of their issues not by diagnosing problems and giving clients behavioural suggestions as with FBAs. The role of such therapists is thus to collaboratively guide clients to find their own answers, resembling aspects of Paoli Friere's "pedagogy of the oppressed" in education, rather than solving a client's problem from a position of power. Friere describes a collaborative approach where educators guide students to promote empowerment than being viewed as experts with power and authority (Friere, 1970; Scheiffele, 2008).

There are some contradictions for Psychodrama as the practice is unsuitable for some client issues and circumstances. Therapists thus screen potential clients prior to allowing them to

join the group to ensure they are compatible with the process. According to Moreno (1973) and Mace (2003) individuals wishing to engage in psychodrama should thus meet the core criteria: First they must have good impulse control. Second, they want to explore specific interpersonal difficulties. Third they should have appropriate support networks between sessions, including support from friends, family, or other professionals. Finally, they are motivated to make personal changes. From personal experience as a Psychodrama client, this screening process involves a discussion with the therapist prior to joining the group, where the therapist assesses client compatibility based on these criteria. Individuals prone to suicide or violent acts are not suitable for Psychodrama

From the literature and personal experience, Psychodrama is less structured than FBA. This sharply contrasts with approaches that have a fixed linear structure whereby participants move from the beginning to end, as Psychodrama is characterised by having several optional models or techniques beyond the core techniques of role plays, role reverse, mirroring and doubling during the action. These are applied in accordance with protagonists needs and circumstances rather than deployed in every Psychodrama session. An example of an optional model within Psychodrama is the spiral model which according to Carnabucci (2014) is only deployed when addressing past traumas. Another specialist technique is future projection for exploring how a client's conflict would be affecting their life at a future time point and uncovering possible consequences of their choices before being brought back to the present. This means that brief future visits can occur in Psychodrama to enhance client learnings beyond past-present explorations of their issues. The client here experiences themselves at a future time point of either two months, or several years' time, where the therapist asks them core questions: "Where are you?", "What are doing?" "What new issues are arising", with spontaneous interviewing (Vander May, 1980). Psychodrama is thus a semi-structured intervention due to these specialist techniques rather than a structured routine framework of practice, to accommodate clients' needs and circumstances.

An instructive example of the Psychodrama process is described by Avrahami (2003) within the context of addiction treatments. This was a case where the client was a drug addict and alcoholic for 19 years and had been previously abandoned by this father. This client was accepted by the group as the protagonist after volunteering. The action included two scenes: the first scene was the protagonist's imaginary trip to New York where his father lived, to build the scenario from his experience. The second scene involved the protagonist knocking

on an imaginary door when visiting his father's house and found his father did not want contact with him, where techniques of role reversal and mirroring were used to allow the client to view the action. With time the client thus achieved more realistic expectations (his father could accept or reject him, not that he must be accepted by his father) and understanding and control on his life, therefore accepting his father's rejection without using this as the reason for relapse (Avrahami, 2003). The benefits of Psychodrama from this study however were limited to accepting past abandonment issues and gaining more understanding of traumatic events. What he could do to thrive in the future was not covered during this dramatization meaning that Psychodrama was restricted to healing a past issues.

Within the field of education Psychodrama has been used as an intervention to resolve conflicts, deal with group anxiety, and develop better awareness and empathy (Landy & Montgomery, 2012). Studies by Karatas (2011), on adolescent psycho-education groups, using psychodrama techniques where participants reanimated events to express themselves, found significant problem-solving ability after treatment, and increased conflict resolution scores. These findings mean that specific behaviours causing conflict can be reduced, promoting cooperative behaviours due to changes from Psychodrama. In common with FBA based interventions, studies by Amatruda, (2006), stated that Psychodrama may help students reduce negative behaviours such as anger and aggression (Amatruda, 2006; Hoff *et al.*, 2005). According to Rawlinson (2000) and Kellerman (1982), psychodrama can thus increase individual self-esteem, empathy, help social relationships, and allow behavioural change (Kellerman, 1982; Rawlinson, 2000)

Despite these benefits, empirical research into the scientific validity of Psychodrama remains limited, where only 4 reviews gave encouraging results (D'Amato & Dean, 1988; Kellerman, 1982; Kipper, 1978; Rawlinson, 2000). Similarly, Orkibi and Feniger-Schaal (2019), describe how to research on Psychodrama is restricted to exploring client experiences, through vignettes and case study reports. A key challenge in assessing Psychodrama is that training occurs within private colleges rather than in academic research institutions, and the practice is more experimental than theoretical. According to Krall (2017), there are variations in how Psychodrama methods such as role reversal, mirroring or doubling are deployed in terms of how and when, to accommodate different situations between the protagonist, auxiliary members, and the therapist. Although these variations have the benefits of creating openness to accommodate individual circumstances, this makes the process of Psychodrama

complex and challenging to empirically assess, compared to common structured research protocols.

However meta-analytic research by Kipper & Ritchie (2003), on the techniques of Psychodrama such as role play, reverse role play, doubling (where one person assumes the protagonist persona) on 25 studies, found the overall effect was high under a clinical setting, giving positive results, despite studies occurring over three decades. Other research by Karatas (2014), on university students indicated that using Psychodrama reduced feelings of hopelessness and increased student well-being. On follow-up however these changes appeared to decrease after 10 weeks, implying that the improvements weren't maintained in the longer term, like FBA. This research thus suggests that a shortcoming of Psychodrama is that focusing on negative outcomes, i.e what individuals do not want can be ineffective for sustained change in the future within higher education.

Another limitation of Psychodrama is that according Perls (1992) auxiliary group members are provided with very limited background information on the protagonist's situation, in contrast to FBA and consistent with role plays shortcomings described by Kettula & Berghall (2012), discussed earlier in this Chapter. Auxiliary group members may thus introduce their own ideas and misinterpretations into the drama that is unrelatable to the individual who experienced the situation being enacted. Exploring the background of scenarios further than in Psychodrama using behavioural analysis may prove more effective in evoking more representative relationship dynamics and scenario understandings during the enactments to enhance individual learning and insights.

b) Forum Theatre

Another theatre-based practice which informed the design of this project's intervention is Forum Theatre. Forum Theatre was created by Augusto Boal into 1960s to address social oppression in a community (Boal, 1995; Landy & Montgomery, 2012). When designing Forum Theatre, Boal was highly influenced by the work of Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Friere's within "pedagogy of the oppressed" (Boal, 1995). Friere believed that educators should take a collaborative approach to teaching. He was critical of what he described as the "bank" model of education in which the teacher is the figure of authority providing expert knowledge by communication to passive students, who are tasked with listening and memorising information. As an alternative, Friere advocated a problem-posing

education model where students actively take part in a dialogue and action between themselves and the teacher. He describes that there should be equal authority in the education of educators and students, to promote students' empowerment and motivation for them to develop, using a collaborative search for solutions using creativity (Friere, 1970, Freire, 1973). Freire's approach was more learner orientated, using a more democratic, problem posing approach to learning by active engagement with the students involving reflection and social transformation (Schugurensky, 2014).

Forum Theatre was derived from a time when Brazil was under a period of military dictatorship. This political circumstance inspired Boal to use forms of theatre as a popular resistance, with an emphasis on rehearsing different solutions to struggles that were shared in the society, aimed to promote social change (Cohen-Cruz, 2012). This practice is a form of applied theatre from "Theatre of the oppressed", aimed at promoting social changes for individuals within a community who may have experienced social, political or personal forms of oppression (Boal, 1995).

The structure of Forum Theatre involves performing a scene which must include a protagonist, who is an oppressed individual, defeated or frustrated by an antagonist, the oppressor, in front of an audience and under the facilitation of an individual known as the Joker (Macdonald & Rachel, 2000). Forum Theatre starts when a scene of oppression is first performed once, then repeated where a spect-actor may shout "stop" at any point when they believe the protagonist should do something different, replacing them and attempting to lead the scene to an alternative outcome. A spect-actor here is an audience member/spectator who becomes involved in the action and becomes the protagonist in the performance than merely a passive observer. In Forum Theatre there is thus an active struggle to alter the reality on stage and active exploration of different behavioural strategies.

Protagonists in Forum Theatre examine both the dynamics of social change, and different behavioural options instead of being given suggestions by the practitioner. This means that it is collaborative like playback theatre but not directive like FBA, with respect to participant content. There are no specific replacement behaviours proposed by the facilitator, and for these reasons techniques from Forum Theatre were integrated into the design of SFDC.

Forum Theatre permits change and empowerment in real life by rehearsal as with Psychodrama (Johnson, 2009; Mangan, 2013; Rauch *et al.* 2014; Riffel, 2009; Scott & Caron, 2005). From personal experiences of Forum Theatre, the behaviours explored can include

extending the scene or making the antagonist(s) feel guilty to achieve different outcomes and increase their insights on the problem. According to Macdonald & Rachel (2000), other example solutions might include confronting the antagonist privately or introducing other characters during the scene.

Forum Theatre is thus an active and spontaneous process like Psychodrama as group members participate in the action, and which is followed by discussion. It is a game involving actors who attempt to bring the game to the original end (the protagonists defeat), and spect-actors attempting to bring the game to another ending, breaking the oppression portrayed. A range of different strategies or behaviours are examined during the action through the attempt to re-write the original scenario during the performance of a short scene representing an unsolved social problem of a group community in front of an audience who are affected (Babbage, 2004; Bishop, 2012; Boal, 2005; Corsini, 2010; Johnson, 2009; Mangan, 2013). Forum Theatre thus explores oppressions on a community group level, whereas Psychodrama addresses life events of individuals.

The drama facilitator in Forum Theatre is known as the “joker” who has a crucial role in mediating between the performers and the audience to guide the action and ensure the process runs smoothly (Boal, 2005). An important role of the joker is to ask audiences whether “magical thinking” occurs, which is when solutions step out of the reality of the scene being performed (Adams & Goldbard, 2005), in addition to inviting them to imagine other actions to take if unsatisfied with a proposed solution as described in Chapter 2.

According to Tudorache (2013), the Joker within Forum Theatre is involved in asking questions to the audience. These questions are asked in terms of what the audience feels and think about the action, what they would like to change, whether this should be maintained or not, and how they could apply learnings from the experience. Solutions are uncovered and their connection to a reality is determined by the audience instead of the Joker. The Joker thus takes on a collaborative role with all audience members, to guide the audience and actors, without taking part in the enactment or sharing his opinion on the dramatic content. They explain the process to the audience within Forum Theatre, including the social problem and scene characters. The Joker also encourages audience members to become spect-actors and be actively involved in the performance to show outcomes to the social situation. On evaluating each solution, the Joker may ask the first spect-actor: “What was your intention and what do you think you managed to achieve?”, and the audience “What did it change?”,

“How realistic is it?”, “How many of you agree with this change”. If the change wasn’t realistic, the performance continues as it was or other spect-actors show alternative suggestions for comparison and reflection during the practice, to promote social change.

If a spect-actor explores an unrealistic solution to the problem, the audience will shout “magic” (Ganguly, 2010). On this basis Forum Theatre is more analytical compared to Psychodrama, as solutions are evaluated by the audience rather than discussing how it relates to their personal experience. This is important as from my own experiences as a Psychodrama client, there was an over emphasis on how issues explored during the action relate to auxiliary group members and therapist’s experiences. To increase their self-awareness and learning, protagonists are only obligated to receive these reflections rather than required to respond to these during the debriefing stage, in contrast to analysing their performances for the future.

Research on Forum Theatre indicates that it can aid collaborative learning and improve communication skills and self-awareness and reflections in both university education and management training (Gibb, 2004; Middlewick *et al.*, 2012). An example of Forum Theatre appears in a case study examined by Gibb (2004), for learning and improving communication skills under management training and development settings. The scene in this example included two characters, both academics, one male and one female and was set in an imaginary university, where both characters were jointly supervising a PhD student who was female. As the scene unfolded the female supervisor found that the male supervisor has had an affair with that student and the student is considering leaving. The action evolved along with spect-actor contribution, raising several issues concerning the dramatic situation as well as their personal reaction to the scenario. The experience gave opportunities for this group to enhance their learning, by examining the social problem and exploring different options, which increased their awareness of ways of behaving in such situations. By reflecting on the experience with their peers, participants explored different behaviours without being limited to options that were deemed right or wrong (Gibb, 2004).

Other studies on Forum Theatre using adolescents in education on bullying, gave students a better understanding of such social issues, yet associated aspects of race and class were excluded during the reflections when exploring the problem (Gourd & Gourd, 2011). Concerns have also been raised is that if spect-actors are unable to empathise and relate to the protagonist’s dilemma they may be less engaged with the process. According to Benice-

Fisher, they may merely copy the actions of others leading to the same outcome rather than suggesting alternative solutions from previous protagonists, which reduces their learning experiences (Baxter, 2005; Synder-Young, 2009). This means that care needs to be taken to ensure participants explore new options rather than repeat the same mistake as previous spect-actors in Forum Theatre. The scene presented in a forum also needs to be relatable for spect-actors to ensure they are engaged and understand the protagonist's dilemma for the process to be effective.

Using Forum Theatre workshops, Day (2002), examined social issues of refugees in education, where such experiences can provide opportunities for students to empathise and explore different behaviours, to be applied into real life. Yet there were limited guidance and opportunities to reflect and act following the workshop on the social issues raised due to the absence of follow-up workshops. Consequently, it is unknown whether the impact and effectiveness of skills learnt during Forum Theatre is maintained in real-life in the longer term (Babbage, 2004; Rae, 2013). This shortcoming is similar to studies on Psychodrama by Karatas (2014) on University student well-being improvements and those by Davey & Lignugaris/Kraft, (2006) on FBA with respect to longer term maintenance after such interventions. This is also consistent with Gibb (2004), who describes how dramatic experiences of Forum Theatre can be limited to occurring there and then, when aiming to create catharsis by exploring solutions to real-life problems.

Another limitation of Forum Theatre is described by Morelos (1999) who argues that some problems may remain unresolved without clear resolution, despite attempting to examine different behaviours to dynamize the audience and promote change into real life. Consequently, the audience may feel frustrated and confused with feelings that what was learnt can be of use in real life, if the situation is unresolved and lacks any clear outcomes (Morelos, 1999; Prentki & Preston, 2009). There is thus limitation of dynamization due to this confusion in the absence of resolution to the conflict, and for this reason I added “reorganisation” into the framework of SFDC to promote resolution which I shall discuss later in this Chapter.

Another issue with Forum Theatre is labelling of an oppressed protagonist and an antagonist oppressor during scenes, as highlighted by Macdonald & Rachel (2000) and consistent with shortcomings of Miller *et al.* (2013) discussed earlier in this Chapter. Labelling players are thus split into one player as oppressed, whereby their behaviour is assumed to be all positive, and the antagonist oppressor's behaviour as all negative. Whilst acknowledging Forum

Theatre was devised to address political oppressions, these assumptions may ineffectively represent non-traumatic, everyday conflicts where problematic protagonist behaviour occurs.

Synthesising the approaches of Psychodrama and Forum Theatre indicates that they provide potential for individuals to explore new behaviours and gain alternative perspectives when exploring relationship dynamics using a collaborative problem-solving emphasis.

Techniques could thus be applied in this research context to promote prosocial relationships in group learning in higher education.

I shall now examine solution-focused approaches derived from positive psychology, in contrast to the problem-solving interventions of Psychodrama and Forum Theatre within the realm of applied theatre.

3.IV) Applied positive psychology interventions

Positive psychology as defined by Seligman, concerns increasing an individual's well-being, positive qualities, personal strengths, happiness, interpersonal skills, hope and optimism. It was developed from humanistic principles, and first introduced by Maslow in the 1950s, and formally established by Seligman in 2000s (Compton & Hoffman, 2011; Seligman, 2000).

Positive psychology was also influenced by human potential movements of the 1960s and flow psychology which focused on promoting happiness and hope to improve an individual's life experiences (Gildley, 2016). By promoting happiness, positive psychology intentions are consistent with outcomes of laughter therapy which according to Ko & Youn (2011) can be effective in improving individual's mood but has been examine outside of clinical contexts.

Seligman (2006) describes how interventions derived from the strengths-based model are derived from positive psychology principles, which emphasise improving an individual's life experiences further beyond removing psychological problems. Positive psychology principles thus address the shortcomings of Psychodrama, as they are intended to improve an individual's future life experience beyond healing rather than being restricted to healing past problems. Applying these principles, resolution of interpersonal conflicts means improving the quality of those dynamics to flourish in the future, beyond increased awareness and understanding of issues causing that conflict. Nobel & McGrath (2013) indicated that positive psychology can be applied in educational contexts to address students' learning issues, goals and outcomes. Interventions based on applied positive psychology focus on positive skill building and learning to address a student's difficult behaviour, with an

emphasis on promoting individual strengths and well-being (Joseph, 2015; Nobel & McGrath, 2013).

Positive psychology-based interventions therefore focus on identifying the strengths and resources of individuals to enhance their personal growth to flourish in the future. Resources here refer to positive actions used in a previous situation derived from Biswas-Diener (2010) checklist. This resource checklist includes social skills, confidence, assertiveness, past experiences, expert knowledge, and emotional self-control. Coaching practices recommend individuals identify two/three commonly used strengths and resources, relevant to the issue they are facing to promote personal growth, because a single strength may not be generalised to other situations. This study thus applied these concepts at the heart of SFDC, within the context of group learning in higher education.

In the next sections, I will discuss core concepts of the strengths-based model which contrast with the deficit model as in traditional therapy interventions. I will then evaluate two main interventions that are derived from strengths-based model principles which are SFBT and Life Coaching accordingly and compare these approaches with others discussed in this Chapter. I shall discuss relevant techniques and models from such practices which influenced my design of SFDC and highlight shortcomings of CBT in relation to the research inspirations.

3.IV.i) Principles of interventions using the strengths-based model for therapies and coaching.

According to Seligman (2006), interventions derived from strengths-based model have different selective attentions to those derived from the deficit-model, typical of traditional therapies (i.e negative psychology). Dewan *et al.* (2004) discussed how such interventions attend to finding alternative solutions to a problem to enable individuals to flourish in the future than restricted to removing dysfunctions as with intervention derived from the deficit-model. The deficit-model is derived from Freud (1938), cited in Krapu (2016), who asserted that all psychological problems are pathologies, as seen in psychodynamic therapy. Seligman thus expanded on Moreno's criticisms of Freud by advocating that psychological therapies should include improving an individual's life quality beyond healing pathologies. He particularly asserted that psychological problems may include, non-clinical issues rather than viewing all psychology problems as pathologies (Seligman, 2013).

Several issues and shortcomings of the deficit-model have been identified. First there is a risk of reinforcing problems individuals are experiencing and increasing their feelings of hopelessness. Corcoran (2005) and Greene *et al.* (1996), describe how such interventions focus on fixing client's deficits, rather than having strengths to promote change and growth, as in the strengths-based model. Problems are attended to during therapy where written homework may risk encouraging a sense of failure among certain types of clients, by beliefs such as "I can't do this", meaning that problems are maintained and amplified. This shortcoming is particularly associated with reinforcing pathological labelling in deficit-model approaches. Studies by Yip (2005), where eight individuals with mental health difficulties were interviewed on their experiences of being able to cope in daily life, uncover that encouraging pathological labels can risk feelings of hopelessness, stigma and increase symptoms of psychological problems. Studies by Coats *et al.* (1996) and Elliot *et al.* (1997), have indicated that if individuals pursue negative or avoidance goals in the long-term, they tend to reduce well-being, as such goals are consistent with the values of the deficit model.

Secondly Yip (2008) describes several other limitations of the deficit-model intervention as derived from negative psychology principles. There is a tendency for individuals attending such therapies to over-focus on the problem leading to that problem being that individual's sole identity, which they are unwilling to leave, leading to problem maintenance. Denial of subjective experience is also a limitation as diagnoses are made by practitioners without an effective awareness of an individual's situation, needs, wishes or feelings. These are routinely determined by an expert therapist and this can lead to disempowerment and reduced autonomy along individuals. Reinforcement of a pathological label in the absence of an alternative can make individuals prone to relapse. Such interventions thus equip individuals with limited survival resources beyond removing that deficit, without exploring their hopes, aspirations, and strengths as an alternative niche to the problem. Third, Krapu (2016) describes that when the deficit-model is applied for all psychological problems, everyday life experiences are viewed as pathologies which may lead to overdiagnosis of psychological disorders and individual disempowerment.

By contrast there are several distinct features and advantages of strengths-based model interventions. First clients' difficulties are explored in the absence of pathological labels where clients are encouraged to identify resources and attend to successful behaviour by finding alternative solutions to the problem than being limited to removing deficits (Kim,

2013; Krapu 2016). This means that problems are normalised to reduce the likelihood of any self-blame from pathologizing problems, which are framed as part of everyday experiences, while still acknowledged by practitioners (Feltham *et al.* 2017; Macdonald, 2011). Second, establishing positive goals in these interventions is according to Elliot & McGregor (2001), associated with improved well-being and academic performances, that is consistent with success behaviour. These practices encourage individuals to uncover alternative solutions in reflective exercises from practitioners Grantham (2016), Harrold (2001), Martin (2001), and Richardson (1998) rather than being limited to healing problems.

Krapu (2016), p.13, states the slogan: “People are creative, resourceful and whole”, as fundamental beliefs in coaching interventions for individuals to successfully achieve their life goals which deploy principles of the strengths-based model. “Whole” in this slogan refers to individuals with a reasonably stable personality who can create and attain a life of meaning and fulfilment. A final advantage of the strengths-based model is that according to Hammond (2010) it can encourage collaboration between clients and practitioners, and such practices are highly individual-tailored rather than encouraging expert reliance with prescribed procedures, unlike in the deficit-model interventions. Here obstacles faced by individuals are viewed as challenges to confront rather than avoid. This is thus aimed at fostering their capabilities and promoting more autonomy and resilience.

The consequence of these advantages is that according to Branden (1994) and Knee (2002), increased autonomy enables individuals to be more open to novel experiences and learning opportunities. They are also able to manage negative emotions such as fear or anger more effectively than less autonomous individuals, as they do not avoid these emotions. Such individuals can effectively modify their behaviour to meet their goals to promote their personal growth and have more effective life experiences. On this basis, more autonomous individuals would have a larger behavioural repertoire, as they are able to behave in a more flexible manner in response to difficult situations including those in group learning in higher education. They would thus respond in a more prosocial manner, rather than engaging in routines of avoidance or anger which limit their learning opportunities as discussed in Chapter 2 and can manage negative emotions more effectively in future situations. This indicates that strength-based model interventions intend to combat relapse occurring in deficit-model interventions such as Psychodrama and FBA focusing on problem removal (i.e. what individuals do not want) and maintain problems as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Strength-based model interventions thus aim to establish an alternative future/niche to the problem by focusing on what individuals do want instead, in a flexible manner to accommodate their needs, increase their autonomy and motivation to sustain change without relapse.

Despite these benefits, few interventions utilise all values of the strengths-based model during the practice, outside of SFBT and Life Coaching. Psychodrama and Forum Theatre tend to adopt many deficit-model characteristics, by attending to removing problems for individuals to acquire better awareness of that problem. From a positive-psychology perspective, problems in forum theatre are labelled as pathologies when using the term “oppressions”, acknowledging Forum Theatre’s origin in exploring social and political problems. The practice of forum theatre however has characteristics of the strengths-based model because it is a collaborative process to enable participants to acquire life skills by a creative search to find solutions, as previously discussed in this Chapter. Applied theatre approaches thus may fail to identify alternatives to the problem nor establish explicit outcomes for the practice. This contrasts with applied positive psychology interventions, considering that Forum Theatre does not promise the above criteria as it was designed to explore imagined collective scenarios rather than personal issues and psychodrama was designed to address past traumas. Consequently, there is no definitive assurance of longer-term monitoring of these skills outside the rehearsal when attempting to improve an individual’s life experiences using principles of the deficit model. By contrast there is more careful monitoring of skills between sessions with interventions derived from the strengths-based model which I shall discuss further in the next two sections of this Chapter.

3.IV.ii) Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT)

Solution focused brief therapy (SFBT), is a goal focused intervention, emphasising the personal strengths and resources of the client, to create change and a hopeful future and empowerment (Miller 1996; Picot & Dolon, 2014). Corey (2013) defines SFBT as a strength-based therapy where other therapies in this category of interventions include Motivational Interviewing (MI).

SFBT was devised and developed pragmatically in the 1980s by husband and wife Deshazer and Berg, from family therapy practices with additional influence from hypnotherapy (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012; Kim, 2013; Ratner *et al.*, 2012). It is an individual-based practice, highly flexible and open to clients' needs by taking a solution finding emphasis to address the

client's problem but doesn't involve in-depth analysis of the problem as with FBA (Cipani & Schnock, 2010; Riffel, 2009). Such flexibility is important as proponents of SFBT state that no two individuals have the same resources, life experiences or stressors, rather than attempting to generalise their experiences (Simon *et al.*, 2007).

Although SFBT is a goal-focused approach like FBA (Miller, 1996; Riffel, 2009), where identified by the client by collaborative guidance between them and the therapist without therapists making suggestions from a position of authority. SFBT therapists deploy in-depth questioning to explore the client's situation and validate their feelings than challenging a client assumption (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012). Client problem are always validated by the therapist according to the client's definition than the therapist's, to maintain their autonomy without cognitive dissonance from the therapist (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012; Miller *et al.*, 1996). Such concepts are consistent with other strength-based therapies such as MI, by focusing on identifying client resources to promote behavioural changes, than teaching skills to clients (Miller & Rollnick, 1991).

According to Connie & Metcalf (2009) cited in Henson (2013), p.13, SFBT's core assumptions include: "The solution is not necessarily related to the problem. If something is found to be working, do more of it. If something is found to be not working, do something different. Small steps can lead to big changes". This contrasts with many traditional therapies which first focus on the problem leading to a solution. SFBT thus first develops a picture of a solution when the client gives a description of what their lives would be like when the problem is solved and works back to achieve their goals (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012), consistent with success behaviour descriptions. SFBT duration is always determined by the client, where goals are typically achieved between three to six sessions (Ratner *et al.*, 2012).

SFBT focuses overwhelmingly on a client's present and future, save brief past visits for clients to identify learnings from their past experiences, (Deshazer & Dolon, 2012), consistent with resources described by Biswas-Diener (2010). This contrasts with Psychodrama's primary emphasis on past events (Corsini, 2010). The focus of SFBT is on what client's want rather than what they wish to remove as described by Simon *et al.* (2007), consistent with positive psychology practices to uncover an alternative to the problem. Therapists ask clients: "What would you like to see instead of the problem? (Bannick, 2015), meaning that they attempt to establish a positive goal with clients, by establishing that alternative outcome beyond removing deficits.

Like Augusto Boal's "Rainbow of Desire", which addresses personal issues by focusing on individual oppressions due to unresolved conflicts (Landy & Montgomery, 2012), SFBT also addresses personal conflict. SFBT however has several differences from applied theatre in terms of focus and conduct. First SFBT is overwhelmingly present-future focused in sharp contrast to rainbow of desire and Psychodrama which focuses primarily on past issues in relation to the present. Second SFBT is conducted typically one to one, whereas rainbow of desire, typical Psychodrama and Forum theatre is conducted in groups. Third SFBT never focuses on imagined scenarios or collective oppression, unlike Forum Theatre. (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Slavik & Carson, 2007)

As SFBT is typically practised on a personal level, therapists must respond effectively to clients' needs and responses, by validating their definition of the problem they are experiencing. During the first SFBT session, therapists initially ask: "What changes have you noticed that have happened or started to happen since you called to make the appointment for this session? If the client's response is that their circumstances have started to improve then the solution-talk can begin to emphasise the strengths of the client, where therapists may ask "If these changes were to continue in this direction would this be what you would like?" By contrast if the client's response is that their circumstance is unchanged, therapists may ask: "How have you managed to keep things from getting worse?" aimed at promoting solution-talk, to uncover information about the client's previous solutions and exceptions (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012, p.6-7). This means that therapists must adequately redirect conversations within SFBT towards solution-talk to identify client's resources and increase their autonomy by careful questioning skills to ensure they progress effectively.

During follow-on sessions therapists may ask clients "What's been better since our last session?" "How did you do that?", "What are your best hopes for this session?" (Connie, 2017), to promote solution-talk. Solution-talk is promoted from the beginning of SFBT sessions, with limited problem analysis, meaning that SFBT has opposite concepts to FBA. SFBT is infrequently practised in groups according to Sharry (2007), in contrast to Psychodrama.

SFBT has several core techniques. First the miracle question to enable clients to imagine what will be different if their problem is removed in terms of their preferred future and permits them to develop and clarify their goals based on their unique frame of reference (Miller 1996; Picot & Dolon, 2014; Slavik & Carson, 2007). An alternative script of miracle question to that in Chapter 2 is: "I am going to ask you a rather strange question (pause). The

strange question is this (pause). After we talk you will go back to your work.....and you will do whatever you need to do for the rest of today.....In the middle of the night a miracle happens and that problem that prompted you to talk to me today is solved! But because this happens while you are sleeping you have no way of knowing that there was an overnight miracle...So when you wake up tomorrow morning, what might be the small change that would make you say to yourself, wow something must have happened—the problem is gone?” (Berg & Dolon, 2001, p.7). As there are alternative versions of the miracle question, it means that this technique is flexible enough to be adapted for different contexts, to accommodate clients' circumstances.

Therapists ask clients to consider the importance of that preferred outcome, behaviourally what they will be doing differently, alongside how they might think and feel differently. They will also ask who will be the first to notice such changes, and what other aspects are better if that miracle took place (Bannick, 2015), to elicit creative visualisations (Macdonald, 2011), meaning it is a very linear protocol due to these criteria. Practitioners may use prompts such as: “What would you do next?”, “What else?”, What would you notice next? Would it please you? (Connie, 2017). It is always important that the client’s expectations are realistic to ensure they progress effectively towards that miracle to ensure change occurs (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012).

There are a variety of other core SFBT techniques apart from the miracle question, which focus on what is already working for the client and how they want their lives to be, where questions build on others towards the miracle question (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012). These include firstly coping questions, to allow clients to identify their strengths and resources regarding how they are dealing with their current situation, to find solutions. Secondly there are other enquires where the therapist will probe for exceptions to the problem, and what the client did during when the problem was absent or less, and finally scaling questions which invite clients to rate their progress towards their goals typically from 0-10 (Franklin, 2011; Miller *et al.* 1996; Ratner *et al.*, 2012).

Therapists may spontaneously probe clients for success and resource details by asking: “What did you do differently?” or “How did you manage to do that?” (Bannick, 2015), when clients are unable to find solutions from their past experiences using the coping question (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012). When therapists use scaling questions, they explore how the client maintains improvements with their situations by moving up and down the scales, and probe

for what the client is doing to prevent their situation getting worse (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012; Franklin *et al.*, 2011). While scaling a client's management of their problem a practitioner may ask clients the following questions to scale their progress and to identify resources they are using: "What puts you at that number?", "How do you know you're not at zero?" "What have you done to prevent the situation from going down the scale?", "What else have you done to get yourself to that number?", "If you moved one point up the scale towards realisation of your desired outcome, what is the first time you'd notice?" (Connie, 2017). In SFBT there is also a period known as "problem free talk" to ensure an absence of hierarchy during therapy aimed at promoting collaboration at the start of the process, prior to deploying the core questioning techniques described (Franklin, 2011; Ratner *et al.*, 2012).

Therapists in SFBT may prescribe homework tasks for the client between sessions such as practical observation tasks for clients to monitor their progress (Franklin, 2011), meaning there is more careful monitoring of the client's progress compared to Psychodrama. Here worksheets are sometimes used to promote creative thinking of clients to make improvements, which are explored either during sessions or by take away homework based on the client's needs and motivations. Such worksheets can be semi-structured and be adjusted according to client responses during sessions rather than a routine set of questions (Deshazer & Dolan, 2012; Grantham, 2016). Similar to Psychodrama (Baim *et al.*, 2013), SFBT has a variety of different techniques including specialist tools within SFBT. Examples of specialist tools are Deshazer's prediction task aimed at enhancing client hopes and success behaviours by daily personal scales of prediction. Another example is contextual pattern intervention aimed at altering client's patterns of behavioural interactions, including their repertoires and uncovering the differences by discussion and task setting between sessions to enhance their wellbeing (Deshazer & Dolon, 2012; O'Hanlon & Bertolino, 2013).

Contextual pattern intervention thus has similar intentions to "opposite of oneself" from rainbow of desire (Boal 1995), yet further exploration by enactment is absent and is limited to discussion. This suggests a semi-structured approach, flexible to accommodate individual circumstances than a routine, gold-standard structure as in FBA. Such specialist tools, particularly contextual pattern intervention have not been independently evaluated beyond broad SFBT examination, despite the relevance to this study. I thus used FBA derived tools within SFDC design as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

SFBT has a variety of different applications, which include improving the client's personal relationships and other relationship problems, decision making and dealing with stress alongside addressing client disorders (Zamarripa, 2009). A good case study example by Ng *et al.* (2012), demonstrates how SFBT can be used to address relationship problems which include social and behavioural issues. This case was a 21-year-old female student who had experienced the end of a romantic relationship. After the client described her reactions including social withdrawal, academic performance concerns and having feelings of being unsupported during the initial session, the therapist questioned the client to establish her preferred future. Her answer to the miracle question was that she wanted to be more independent.

Through therapy she indicated that she coped using daily scheduling, making a routine allowing her not to think about the ended relationship, bringing up personal skills and strengths to function during the day. She was able to let go of that relationship and adjust to her partner not being there after only three SFBT sessions. This also resulted in her having more positive social interactions by keeping busy with her friends as solutions, in order to resolve her abandonment fears. At a 6-month follow-up, she was more confident to manage life challenges, and had more favourable social interactions (Ng *et al.*, 2012). This implied that there were positive changes that were maintained at least six months after therapy.

Evidence from Davey & Lingnugaris/Kraft (2006) and Karatas (2014) note that in Psychodrama, FBA and Forum Theatre, improvements on well-being and life skills may not be maintained during follow up and in the longer term. Day (2012), also describes how opportunities to take Forum Theatre outside the rehearsal are limited, due to a lack of follow up, where it is unknown whether these learning are sustained in the future. As research by Ng *et al.* (2012), provides evidence that SFBT evoked positive improvements which were maintained after a six month follow up, it suggests that SFBT can enable the client's skills to be maintained in the longer term in contrast to Psychodrama, Forum Theatre and FBA. This means approaches using the strengths-based model can be better at maintaining improved life experiences than approaches derived from the deficit-model, for individuals to thrive in the future.

When considering limitations of FBA described by Davey & Lignugaris/Kraft, this means that collaborative approaches derived from the strengths-based model such as SFBT are more effective than instructional approaches derived from the deficit-model to maintain

improvements in the future. Individuals can thus be more motivated to make improvements when they have autonomy and guidance to identify resources and create ideas themselves, rather than being given instructions as in FBAs to which require constant reinforcement to maintain behavioural change. Change by collaboration was thus maintained in the longer term for at least six months after the SFBT intervention than being limited to short time gap of four weeks as with instructional approaches when drawing on Miller *et al.* (2013)

In SFBT complex problems, comprising of several distinct issues are addressed during therapy by encouraging the client to take small steps towards positive change. For example, in education such steps could involve aiding students to monitor their behaviours and actions of others and thereby improve their confidence and self-esteem. A low achieving student may be asked as homework to monitor how teachers and parents react to their success, so they react constructively in new situations without any anxiety, to promote positive changes. Studies by Daki & Savage (2010), on using SFBT with students with reading difficulties, showed increased student self-esteem, better use and learning of acquired reading skills, and demonstrated lower anxieties, based on personal meaningful goals. This means that SFBT is effective in helping students improve their skills and can increase their confidence by focusing on personal strengths and monitoring success.

Research on SFBT by Taathadi (2014), also indicates that using SFBT in education can improve adolescent self-esteem, and students were able to reflect and effectively look for solutions to personal issues. This is similar to Forum Theatre (Babbage 2004; Johnson, 2009; Schonman, 2011), by actively looking for solutions for change, and Psychodrama by being effective in improving students' self-esteem (Rawlinson, 2000). Unlike Forum Theatre, SFBT focuses on personal problems and may include a variety of relationship issues which is similar to both Psychodrama and Boal's Rainbow of Desire (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Slavik & Carson, 2007). Other studies have showed that SFBT can be effectively applied to improve communication skills outside of education, especially relationship issues. Evidence from Gingerich and Peterson (2013), Ramisch *et al.* (2009), and Seedall (2009), on couple and family therapy concluded that SFBT techniques can be effective in improving confidence, communication, and reducing stress among individuals to promote more positive relationships.

Despite the above research on the effectiveness of SFBT, the overall amount of research is limited. No single SFBT technique has been researched enough to strongly back up the

findings in present studies, and there is insufficient research to give the therapist a guide about when, how and with whom SFBT interventions should be used (Franklin, 2011). Yet when considering the culture of SFBT practice, Deshazer & Dolon (2012), describe how the approach is comprised of several core techniques which build on each other throughout the practice. SFBT is thus similar to Psychodrama, as the core techniques build on each other towards the miracle question instead of evaluating each technique independently. Within SFBT there is also a focus on how these techniques work together within the broad practice to determine whether the intervention is effective. Here independent evaluation of specific SFBT techniques is thus irrelevant due to an intervention culture different from highly structured approaches. This also means that like Psychodrama there are challenges with empirically assessing SFBT due to its complexity, and technique variations compared to more structured approaches, beyond broad case studies.

Another shortcoming of SFBT is that the amount of studies which focus on individual client's experiences and SFBT effectiveness is limited (Franklin, 2011). Gingerich & Eisengart (2000) examined research of SFBT, where a synthesis of studies demonstrated significant benefit, with another showing no benefit from other types of therapy. Stalker *et al.* (1999) have also highlighted SFBT's shortcomings and describe how there are limited discussions on history of problems which can make it less effective for more severe problems, such a trauma or abuse. When considering this shortcoming, there can be more extensive past discussions in Psychodrama for such issues as described earlier in this Chapter, unlike SFBT.

Due to these shortcomings, other therapies are more widely used and considered to have a stronger evidence base than SFBT. For example, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which is highly promoted within higher education. CBT is typically a short-term psychotherapy, which focuses on clients' thoughts, thinking patterns and behaviours, which developed from clinical observations. The core principle in CBT is that our responses to specific events are influenced by our thoughts and feelings (Gaudiano, 2008; Simmons & Griffiths, 2013). CBT frames some thoughts as dysfunctional for example "I am going to mess up", which are negative or unhelpful to the client (Ledley *et al.*, 2011). The focus is on changing negative or dysfunctional thoughts to change an individual's behaviour. CBT was derived from Beck in the 1960s based on the cognitive model of psychological disorders, which described how dysfunctional thinking influences the feelings and behaviour of an individual when they experience psychological disturbances to life events. If individuals

learn to evaluate how they think in a more realistic and adaptive manner, their emotional state and behaviour will improve (Beck, 2011). In CBT therapists challenge the client's dysfunctional thinking patterns to promote positive change (Hofmann, 2011), meaning that these thinking patterns are labelled as pathologies consistent with deficit-model principles.

During CBT written homework is routinely given between sessions which is exclusively thought records, where clients must report their personal thoughts or beliefs, feelings, emotions, physical sensations and behaviours to situations (Hofmann, 2011; Simmons & Griffiths, 2013), suggesting a highly structured approach. Unlike SFBT, homework in CBT is exclusively written exercises instead of practical or written tasks for clients to learn new skills and is more directive, where the therapist is viewed as the expert than being client-led (Franklin, 2011; Miller *et al.*, 1996).

According to Hofman *et al.* (2012), CBT can be effective for the treatment of a range of different issues including clinical disorders. CBT is used for very specific problems, similar to FBA yet is typically used for clinical disorders such as depression and anxiety (Hall & Iqbal, 2010; Hughes *et al.*, 2014; Riffel, 2009). According to Gaudiano (2008), the highly structured nature of CBT has made it particularly effective to empirically evaluate, whereby the approach has an extensive research base, from mood disorders, anxiety disorders to chronic pain (Butler *et al.*, 2006), in contrast to SFBT and Psychodrama.

Despite its popularity and apparent evidence-base of CBT several criticisms have been made of this practice. These highlight that CBT is not effective for all individuals, which was a core motivation behind this research project as described in Chapter 1. Richards (2007), president of BABCP (British Association for behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies), cited in Ryle (no date), describes the growing criticism of CBT. He asserts the apparent evidence base for CBT is very selective and based on small and poorly executed meta-analyses, where qualitative evidence is ignored and exaggerates its real effectiveness. He also states that it is unproven whether evidence from research using CBT in highly controlled environments is applicable on a broader scale. The real effectiveness of CBT is thus questionable which suggests an over-reliance on quantitative evidence that is small scale and unreliable, while ignoring qualitative studies. This means that a one size fits all perception should be discouraged as CBT fails to accommodate different individual needs. Richard's perspective on CBT is reinforced by Allen (2019), who proclaims CBT can be very invalidating towards clients' feelings, as therapists evoke the idea that psychological

problems are due to an individual's irrational thinking rather than a reasonable reaction to stress induced environments. This idea within CBT can cause harm and make clients' symptoms worse and can be ineffective among some individuals.

Allen (2019) and Richards (2007) opinions have been supported by several studies evaluating the effectiveness of CBT if both qualitative and quantitative research studies are considered. A crucial study questioning the effectiveness of CBT is by Barnes *et al.* (2013), who conducted a qualitative study by using CBT among 234 individuals with depression with an emphasis on the challenges faced from in-depth personal interviews. First there was evidence that CBT was invalidating towards clients' experiences where the context of the problem was ignored: "The therapist I had basically didn't want to know about my MS at all, really. But that was the reason for the depression, and yet....I felt like I had to try and disregard that....and felt a little bit uncomfortable with the fact that.....she was trying to push, put another reason behind why I was having the depression", in sharp contrast to normalising and validating client feelings as in SFBT. Second, there was evidence that homework in CBT, aimed at managing depression can create client distress: "I didn't like it at all. It was actually getting me stressed out because I'm supposed to have this thought diary and basically, I was almost making stuff up just to put something on the page". Third in several self-reports some individuals were resistant to the written homework in CBT aimed at challenging their negative thoughts, for example: "I've got to record something every 5 min....What a tall order, because she wants to analyse it, why isn't it saying enough? I started to get frustrated because I am not being listened to...I thought do they think that your depression is structured, standard thing that you can comply and conform into their models? Cos it isn't, not for me" (Barnes *et al.*, 2013, p.362-364). CBT therapy in this study thus made some participants feel worse and drop out of therapy, as there was too much writing required and distress caused when exploring negative thoughts. This means that CBT can be overly structured, and negative and unaccommodating towards individual needs, which is consistent with deficit-model shortcomings described by Yip (2008) earlier in this Chapter.

Other qualitative studies by Schermuly-Haupt *et al.* (2018), provide evidence that CBT can cause resistance and harm to clients. From interviews of CBT therapists, a range of negative side effects were reported from their experiences of over 100 clients with a range of psychological disorders. These side effects included suicidal feelings, hopelessness, emotional breakdowns and rumination, feelings of shame and guilt due to experiences of

CBT. For example when referring to the experience of one female client with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, one therapist reported: “Increased symptoms of dissociation, dissociation in the domestic environment, which has not happened before the patient felt stressed by talking about what happened, insufficient coping strategies and feelings of overburden”, meaning that CBT made this client’s symptoms worse. In this study there was also indications of homework resistance and reduced motivation for one client with obsessive compulsive personality disorder according to participant reports: “Neglects homework, refuses exercises, criticizes interventions, anxious that her therapist might be into Buddhistic religion, complaining about poor match with her therapist, speculated about drop out of therapy”, indicating that CBT isn’t effective for all individuals (Schermuly-Haupt *et al.*, 2018, p.224-225). Consistent with the above study, qualitative research by Dunn *et al.* (2002) on client homework experiences of CBT for psychosis indicated further evidence of resistance and where the process wasn’t always effective for all individuals as one client reported: “It would have been more helpful if there’d been less writing and more practical work, it hasn’t really helped me in the long run” (Dunn *et al.*, 2002, p.367).

Previous research including quantitative meta-analysis (Bados *et al.*, 2007; Hans & Hiller, 2013), on the personal and group use of CBT under clinical settings, identified other problems with CBT and showed high drop-out rates, which challenges its true effectiveness further. Some individuals experienced no improvement, were dissatisfied with CBT interventions, and lacked motivation for the process. Bados *et al.* (2007) particularly describe among 203 individuals a high drop-out rate using personal CBT of 43.8%. The effectiveness of CBT is thus less than what it seems when drop-out rates are considered.

Similarly, studies by Najavits (2005), showed that if CBT is used for more complex issues where there is more than a single area of dysfunction, there can be high client drop-out rates. Evidence from Najavits (2005) and Splisbury (2012), suggests that CBT is only effective for a single problem area or dysfunction, and is less effective for more complex problems compared to SFBT that involve several problem areas. Ledley *et al.* (2011) also describe how for some clients, CBT is overly structured and problem-focused and fails to accommodate their needs leading to dissatisfaction with the process.

These studies mean CBT can be unaccommodating for individual needs and values, is too rigidly structured and inflexible, reducing motivations for clients which leads to therapy drop-outs consistent with my own experiences. CBT is only effective for very specific

issues consistent with NVC shortcomings described in Chapter 2. It also ignores the bigger picture leading to reduced effectiveness by focusing exclusively on very specific issues, which is inappropriate for certain clients with more complex issues, confirming that the evidence-base for CBT is exaggerated

From these studies, just because CBT is simple, highly structured, and easy to empirically evaluate, it does not necessarily mean it is more evidence-based than less structured, highly complex, and individualised interventions which are more challenging to evaluate. Despite its shortcomings SFBT tends to be more individualised, more flexible and accommodating for individual needs than CBT, than rigidly expecting clients to complete routine exercises between sessions which causes resistance if qualitative evidence is considered (Cipani & Schnock, 2010; Deshazer & Dolon 2012; Pichot & Dolon 2012).

From studies (Ng *et al.*, 2012; Gingerich & Peterson, 2013; Rawlinson, 2000; Spilsbury, 2012), SFBT like Psychodrama is effective for interpersonal issues, reducing stress and improving the self-esteem of individuals. SFBT has been applied for relationship issues regardless of their severity from minor disagreements to severe cases of domestic violence (Kim, 2013), considering the above studies. SFBT thus had a wider scope than CBT as these issues can vary from clinical to non-clinical issues, whereas CBT was only designed to address clinical issues according to according Hofman *et al.* (2012). There are also substantial qualitative studies supportive of SFBT, where SFBT is more flexible in duration, to deal with more complex problems than CBT. Solutions are maintained in the longer-term to improve wellbeing and life experiences, by promoting creative thinking as it is a collaborative, non-instructional approach rather than directive, instructional approaches which merely removes deficits.

For these reasons I thus incorporated tools derived from SFBT and Psychodrama when designing the framework of SFDC, considering this was a cross-disciplinary study and this intervention was aimed at enhancing student's future interpersonal experiences of group learning in higher education.

A common challenge in all talking therapies regardless whether they advocate deficit-model or strengths-based model principles is the possibilities of stuck episodes during therapy sessions. Stuck episodes are defined as specific moments in therapy sessions where clients feel unable to change, due to sustained cognitions and behaviour. (Ferandez *et al.*, 2012; Herrera *et al.*, 2009). There are several indicators of stuck episodes from problem denial,

avoiding personal responsibility of their behaviours, blaming other individuals, unwilling to consider new ways of behaviour, unable to describe these or unwilling to change. Previous studies by Masias *et al.* (2015) and Mellado *et al.* (2017) examining psychodynamic, CBT and gestalt therapy sessions identified that during stuck episodes there is limited therapeutic alliance hindering client change and progression during therapy. Similar studies by Lloyd and Dallos (2008), and Strong *et al.* (2009) on SFBT uncovered that some clients find the miracle and scaling question challenging to respond to, which is indicative of stuck episodes.

The presence of stuck episodes within talking therapies, including those that are positive psychology, provides evidence of limitations of identifying solutions by conversations alone in these interventions, alongside the absence of practising new behaviour as with drama-based interventions. These challenges provide insights into the possibility of exploring and identifying effective solutions by dramatic role play enactments as an alternative means to conversations to combat this problem if clients are unable to describe alternative behaviours and solutions by conversations. At present there are no previous studies or practitioner evidence of stuck episodes within Psychodrama or Forum Theatre, whereby it is unknown whether they exist significantly within drama-based practices. This provides the potential to explore using enactments in addition to conversations to address these challenges within talking therapies, alongside the opportunity to practice skills during sessions. SFDC thus advocated identifying solutions with further enactment to address these positive psychology shortcomings and gain more insights. This intervention also aimed to promote strengths-based model principles with defined positive outcomes and follow-ups to address applied theatre shortcomings.

3.IV.iii) Life Coaching

a) Core features and distinctions from psychotherapies.

A final field of practice from applied positive psychology influencing the design of this project's intervention is Life Coaching, which has core features that are both similar and distinct from psychotherapies, which I will now explore. Life (or personal) Coaching was devised by Thomas Leonard in the 1980s and was developed from practices within fields such as executive coaching, organisation development, mentoring and human potential movements (Grant, 2005).

Life Coaching, similar to SFBT and Psychodrama, was derived pragmatically from professional practice. The International Coach Federation (ICF) in USA, (co-founded by Thomas Leonard and others) describes Life Coaching as a creative process for clients to maximise their potential in their personal lives (ICF, 2012). The Association for Coaching (AC) being the major coaching professional body in the UK defines coaching as: “A collaborative, solution-focused, result orientated and systematic process in which the coach facilitates the enhancement of work performance, life experiences, self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee” (AC, 2015). Coaching tools are comprised of solution-focused, cognitive/behavioural and rational emotive components during the practices (Whybrow & Palmer, 2006), meaning that coaching has similarities with SFBT and cognitive approaches.

Like SFBT, Life Coaching is a collaborative approach between the coach and coachees to find solutions to achieve a positive, personal, specific goal to enhance their personal growth (Gooding, 2003; Picot & Dolon, 2014). Life Coaching is holistic whereby it does not cover issues in only one life area, but considers all the life areas of that person, despite a primary topic of exploration. These may include areas such as career, health, relationships and life balance (Chan, 2012; Rydner, 2012) and like SFBT (Gingerich & Peterson, 2013) can be applied for relationship management issues (Martin, 2001). Leonard (1999), describes that individuals engage in coaching to obtain better goals, make better decisions, have a person to collaborate with to find solutions creatively, and manage stress better to improve their life quality.

Coaches work with coachees for them to grow and develop, from their current state rather than focusing on healing past problems. They use cognitive reframes to address any self-talk which limits them from moving forward in their lives and emphasise the coachee’s positive attributes or strengths. Like SFBT, coaching emphasises the coachee’s motivations to improve their self-esteem (Dunbar, 2009; Grant, 2000; Skibbins, 2007). Coaches listen, offer support, guidance and ask challenging questions to evoke changes in coachees (Leonard, 1999), who are thus encouraged to analyse and solve their own problems (George, 2013). They do not diagnose problems nor are directive like with FBA. This collaborative guidance is therefore compatible with concepts of Friere (1973), SFBT, Psychodrama and Forum Theatre as highlighted previously in this Chapter.

Synthesising research from Allen, (2013), Buckley, (2007), Corcoran (2005), George, (2013), Griffiths & Campbell (2008), Kim, (2013), Krapu, (2016), Newnham-Kanas, (2010), and Williams & Menendez, (2007), coaching is a very distinct practice compared to all psychotherapies and mentoring. Coaching has different intentions, power dynamics, selective attention with both strengths-based therapies and traditional therapies (see Table 1, Appendix 1). Drawing on Passmore (2014), major coaching professional bodies such as the AC require qualified coaching practitioners to meet a range of competencies to distinguish themselves from qualified therapists, alongside standards for good ethical coaching practice.

Synthesising the research above, coaching is an equal and co-creative approach where the coach aims to promote insight and self-discovery from the coachee, in terms of both content and process. A coach makes coachees responsible for what happens to them between sessions where they are accountable to the coach for achieving an agreed goal towards life improvements. By contrast the therapist is usually responsible for what happens to clients. This means however that like Psychodrama individuals being coached are responsible for what happens to them between sessions drawing on Kindler & Gray (2010) and Scheiffle (2008).

Coaching also contrasts to traditional therapy where coaches target their approach to each coachee, to support and improve coachees' life performance in terms of their personal skills, resources and creativity. Coaching is thus aimed for clients who are from the normal or non-clinical population and/or coachees focusing on non-clinical issues rather than mental health disorders, in sharp contrast to CBT. From personal experience as a coachee, Life Coaching as with group Psychodrama is inappropriate for individuals with suicidal feelings, which in this instance is the main motivation against its application for severe emotional issues to meet the AC standards of practice. Coaching is also concerned with taking actions outside sessions to address all areas of a client's life within a dominant issue coachees wish to work on. "Actions" here refer to specific, mutually agreed tasks between the coachee and the coach, to help coachees flourish in the future and achieve their desired outcomes from coaching (Gooding, 2003; Martin, 2001). This sharply contrasts with the term "actions" in Psychodrama whereby dramatizations occur as described earlier in this Chapter. On this basis Life Coaching could be described as an applied positive psychological approach that is a purely non-clinical form of personal development for individuals to improve their future

life experiences as opposed to CBT. Coaching also contrasts with mentoring as coaches do not provide expert instructions according to Williams & Menendez (2007).

Coaching has other techniques and features distinct from therapies. One core coaching technique is powerful questioning which is less prevalent in therapies. Vogt *et al.* (2003), described powerful questions in coaching as an art aimed at providing coachees with new insights, learnings, more awareness and understandings, and promoting creative and critical thinking to improve their life experiences. Similarly, Vaughan Smith (2006), p.67-68, describe how powerful questions aim to engage coachees in conversation, shift their perceptions, alongside challenging their beliefs. These questions are framed in a specific, short and uncomplicated manner such as: “What did you learn?”, “What do you want?” “What will happen if you do nothing? On a scale of 0-10 how important is this issue? What’s stopping you? What would a good outcome look like? similar to evaluative questioning from the Joker in Forum Theatre to identify coachee strengths and positive actions.

Powerful questions in coaching are asked spontaneously and unexpectedly by the coach. They are asked more frequently in place of in depth listening within therapies. Due to this spontaneity it means there is an art to asking such questions in coaching where practitioners use appropriate intuition to provoke a strong impact on the coachee and expand on their learnings, rather than objective pre-planning. This means that Life Coaching has both scientific and artistic characteristics like Psychodrama. Coaching is thus an art as coaches must act spontaneously using powerful questions or specialist models to adapt to different coachees' responses and needs, as specialist models are deployed under specific circumstances than in every session. Coaching has also a scientific structure to it, using core methods and coaching models such as ICANDO (Martin, 2001; Passmore, 2014). This means that like Psychodrama there is space for spontaneity and individual adjustments within Life Coaching practices, unlike interventions with routine methods like CBT, meaning that it is a semi-structured practice.

As with improvised role plays described by Drinko (2013) and Veenstra (2011) coachees are encouraged go out of their comfort zone during Life Coaching (Ryder, 2012), consistent with principles of flow psychology, discussed earlier in this Chapter. Yet according to Martin (2001) this occurs by the coachee taking actions between coaching sessions without role play improvisations as in Psychodrama and Forum Theatre (Landy & Montgomery, 2012;

Veenstra, 2011). Consistent with SFBT any actions thus only occur between sessions, without opportunities to practice skills unlike applied theatre interventions.

On this basis solutions in Life Coaching are only discussed by conversation but not explored further by rehearsal during a coaching session, to provide further insights into what these would look like as in Forum Theatre and Psychodrama. This means that a core shortcoming of both SFBT and Life Coaching, is that action is limited to only what occurs between sessions. Despite such positive psychology interventions establishing outcomes as an alternative future to the problem and better monitoring of individual's progress than theatre-based practices, due to more follow-ups and accountability, they are limited to conversations. Coaching sessions lack opportunities to explore different behaviours by rehearsal during session as with Forum Theatre and Psychodrama to gain further insights beyond solution conversations as discussed earlier in this Chapter. Although such positive psychology practices thus address shortcomings of Forum Theatre and Psychodrama, such theatre-based practices address this crucial shortcoming.

To encourage coachees to step outside their comfort zone, Life Coaching practitioners according to Martin (2001), can deploy specialist models during the practice. An example of a specialist model is the closed loop which is composed of three main components: a person's mental image of themselves (self-image or perception), their self-talk and resulting behaviour. This can be explored in Life Coaching to identify coachees' cognitions which are limiting their personal growth. The closed loop on that basis and personal experience, is consistent with specialist Psychodrama and SFBT techniques than deployed in every session and open to adjustments according to coachee responses and circumstances. Other examples of specialist tools in Life Coaching are the wheel of life exercises, where coachees explore their life satisfaction using personal scales to integrate all areas of their life, which includes their personal relationship, careers and wellbeing to indicate where they want to improve to achieve balance and better experiences (Walsh, 2017). An alternative approach to exploring coachee life satisfaction and uncover what improvement they want to make, is the coaching chart described by Martin (2001), without personal scales.

There are thus different tools and styles of coaching, should coachees find scaling challenging, leading to stuck episodes consistent with limitation of talking therapies highlighted earlier in this Chapter. These three practices are semi-structured unlike a routine of structure per session, using these specialised tools to enhance individual autonomy and

motivation more than expert-led approaches. Life Coaching, unlike therapies is also holistic in the sense of exploring the whole person and integrating all their life areas rather than focusing on a specific issue at one time.

Additional specialist tools in Life Coaching and several integrated coaching practices are visualisations to promote coachee empowerment, personal growth and achieve success in their lives by attaining such goals. Coachees are encouraged to think creatively to imagine the positive aspect of achieving their desired goal, aimed at creating hope, by experiencing what that their preferred future might look like and evoke an image of this. During visualisations coaches spontaneously ask coachees several future-focused questions including: “What will the weather look like?”, “What will my office look like? “What surprises will hold?” (Biswar-Diener, 2010; Lionnet, 2012). This suggests visualisations are similar to hot seating in Psychodrama by promoting creative thinking yet are entirely spontaneous without defined core questions and attend to a future outcome rather than focusing on problems. Visualisations in Life Coaching are thus more open, flexible, non-linear and less structured than linear protocols used in SFBT visualisation.

Studies by Kudliskis (2013), have provided insight that visualisation exercises in education can promote students to engage more in learning and enable them to improve their academic performances. Students shifted using this exercise from a present emotional state and were anchored into a more positive, relaxed emotional state in this study which increased their motivation for learning in class. The process of state control to change their mental states was explored here, as described by Andres & Andreas (2000) and Martin (2001). Coaching visualisations were thus integrated with future projections tools from Psychodrama while designing SFDC, aimed at anchoring them into a positive relaxed state to promote their engagement with the process as discussed further in Chapter 4.

According to Ives & Cox (2015), there are no formal assessments of a potential coachee, within coaching practices, unlike many therapies which use pure scientific/objective structured approaches to determine an appropriate treatment. Assessment in coaching only includes open discussions to ensure the coach is aware of the coachees' aims and values by exploring their life experiences, to meet their needs. Coaching like SFBT, thus involves coachees strength and positive action exploration throughout the practice without formulating a hypothesis on problem behaviours as in FBA. Both Life Coaching and Psychodrama thus

screen individuals to ensure the process is appropriate for them according to Buckely (2007), and Mace (2013).

This open discussion takes place prior to establishing a coaching agreement, where the coach explains the process of coaching, including the coach's and coachee's responsibilities where the coachee is made aware what coaching is and is not, to meet AC competencies for best coaching practice. It also thus ensures there is a match between the process and a potential coachee's desired outcomes and expectations from coaching, and coaching is appropriate for their intentions compared with counselling or therapy (Auerbach, 2005; Griffiths, 2008, Passmore, 2014). Boundaries between coaching and counselling or therapy are ensured, as coaching doesn't address mental health disorders, aimed at individuals who are mentally healthy and doing reasonably well (Buckley, 2007). These boundaries are important to maintain coaching ethics, considering that studies by Griffiths and Campbell (2008a), have indicated that potential coachees can unearth issues more appropriate for counselling during the coaching process. This means that like Psychodrama, there is exclusion criteria in Life Coaching to ensure the practice is appropriate for any potential coachees.

Research by Newham-Kaus (2010) uncovered that Life Coaching has many similarities and differences with MI consistent with all interventions based on the strengths-based model as highlighted by Corcoran (2005). Their findings indicated that in both Life Coaching and motivational interviewing, the coachee/client sets the agenda for each session, to increase their autonomy, similar to SFBT. This contrasts with Psychodrama whereby the nature of the scenes enacted are chosen by the therapist from client information, meaning the therapist largely sets the agenda while at the same time clients in Psychodrama have autonomy to be spontaneous during the action. Corcoran (2005) also describes how in MI there are more problem discussions compared to SFBT in terms of how the problem affects the client's motivation for change, which suggests that MI has similarities with Life Coaching, as in Life Coaching self-limiting beliefs of the coachee are explored outside of defining the problem. SFBT is thus an intervention which tends to have the most solution-focused discussions compared to other strengths-based model interventions, taking into consideration the shortcomings described by Stalker *et al.* (1999) discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Drawing on Pichot & Dolon (2014) and Rawlinson (2000), there are other similarities with Life Coaching, SFBT and Psychodrama. Coachees are guided by coaches rather than given

advice or instructions, to promote their empowerment and increase their self-esteem. The cognitive elements of Life Coaching may include addressing obstacles such as negative/limiting beliefs that hold clients back from personal growth (Martin, 2001), which is consistent with framing interventions as described by Harackiewicz & Priniski (2018). As therapies such as rationale emotive behavioural therapy (REBT), appear to also focus on challenging and changing client's beliefs to make improvements (Dryden, 2004), Life Coaching could be viewed as having similarities with REBT.

Like Forum Theatre and SFBT (Babbage 2004; Johnson, 2009; Schonman, 2011; Taathadi, 2014), there is an active search for solutions in Life Coaching, exploring potential options as to what coachees could do make personal changes, by promoting creative thinking. Life Coaching tends to focus on a single option at a time, subject to monitoring based on an action plan like FBA, yet unlike FBA the practice is collaborative not directive, according to coachees creative suggestions (Cipain & Schnock, 2011; Hanson *et al.*, 2014; Martin 2001). Mutually agreed goals are set by clients, not forced by the coach. According to Wade *et al.* (2015), it is important for life coaches to assess what success and achievement means to each coachee, as individual perceptions may vary, to ensure appropriate commitment and motivation, when applying coaching within education. This means coachees must be committed to the process and know what they wish to achieve for Life Coaching to be effective. By contrast SFBT as a therapy can be applied for clients who are both motivated and unmotivated in their lives, as SFBT may address more severe issues such as clinical disorders, whereas coaching is restricted to everyday issues.

During Life Coaching coachees are guided like in SFBT to develop strategies to achieve their goals and it is typically short term from four to twelve sessions on average, which addresses extensive durations of humanistic interventions (Antcliff, 2010, Martin, 2001; Pichot & Dolan, 2014). Agreed action goals (i.e homework tasks) may be set between sessions, which could include people to contact, observations of personal relationships similar to SFBT, yet may also include reflective written exercises, like in CBT. Yet tasks are set by the coachee under the coach's guidance, unlike by therapists in SFBT and CBT (Martin, 2001, Franklin 2011; Miller *et al.*, 1996; Wilhelm & Philips, 2012; Williams & Menendez, 2015). On this basis there is a mix of SFBT and CBT elements, where Life Coaching is both cognitive and solution focused. Goals in coaching are broken down into smaller steps to ensure they are

manageable for coachees to ensure attainment and improve their life experiences (Grant, 2012b), alongside framing goals as positive, specific and personal.

Life Coaching has similar patterns to Forum Theatre in that both practices involve exploring several potential options consistent with dynamization. There are however several distinctions from Forum Theatre. First, Life Coaching additionally involves narrowing down such options to those deemed effective by the coachee in accordance with their desired outcome, which lacks clear establishment within Forum Theatre. This has the potential to address problems of confusion in Forum Theatre described by Morelos (1999), evoked by dynamization without resolution. Second, active participation occurs between coaching sessions where coachees mutually agree to complete actions (i.e tasks) between sessions rather than during sessions as in Forum Theatre. This means that although dynamization occurs in Life Coaching like in Forum Theatre, this is limited to coaching conversations as enactments are absent. There is thus an additional component in Life Coaching to narrow down possibilities to those that are deemed effective by coachees when setting specific goals between sessions to evoke transformation (Gooding, 2003; Martin, 2001). For this research I will name the process of narrowing down possible options to those deemed effective by the coachee “Reorganisation” which I integrated into SFDC’s framework, as distinct from evaluating coachee progress within Solution-Focused Coaching. From personal experience as a coaching client this can include narrowing down options to one or two possibilities as actions between session, to promote flourishing and resolution of relationship difficulties without the confusion which can occur in Forum Theatre. The framework of both practices has potential to complement one another due to these similarities and differences which I explored in this study when designing SFDC.

Another core component of any coaching practice is identification of coachees' personal values, which is absent within therapies like CBT according to several studies and associated with client drop-out from therapy as previously discussed in this Chapter. This means that when applying intervention categories described by Harackiewicz & Priniski (2018) Life Coaching could be categorised as having features of a personal value intervention. Personal values are attitudes and beliefs which individuals hold, formed due to a combination of many factors during a person’s life experiences. These factors include parental influence, interaction with friends, education, siblings, work and cultural influences (Chason, 2012). Each personal value is a behaviour, which is personally preferable for every individual,

which can include happiness, independence, honesty, and responsibility...etc (Kahle & Chung-Hyun, 2006; Rokeah, 1973). By understanding what is important to the coachee, a coach can increase their awareness of exactly how they could improve their life experiences. Values in coaching are uncovered from coachees by asking what is important for them in a specific context such as work, health and relationships, where their values are prioritised for that context to promote goal achievement and motivation (AC, 2018). Such values are also important because if these are ignored by others, or clash with those of another person, it can lead to frustration, and relationship conflicts. If coachees set goals, inconsistent with their values, they may feel dissatisfied when these are achieved or lack commitment to achieve these goals. This can lead to a lack of contentment and unfavourable life experiences with less motivation (Grant, 2012; Hill, 2012).

Less frequently, Life Coaching is practised in groups than strictly on a personal level, which sharply contrasts with Psychodrama, and has proved to be effective according to Spence and Grant, (2005) for individuals to attain their goals successfully and improve their life satisfaction. Group coaching can involve exploring possibilities where group members are open to listening to the perspectives of other group members, in a non-judgemental manner (Brown & Grant, 2010). During the process individuals can analyse their assumptions by listening to other perspectives to gain new insights and learning (Schein, 2003). This contrasts with Psychodrama which is non-analytical as highlighted earlier in this Chapter.

Here the coach invites each coachee and the whole group to reflect on a topic and the group is encouraged to make meaning of what is said by a coachee to provide them with new learnings and awareness, to gain perspectives from other group members, aimed at improving their life experiences. The coach may ask all coachees: What did you understand by her view? What was your internal dialogue when you were listening to that? Can you integrate the broader group perspective? The coach must always be flexible to the needs of all coachees to ensure there are positive group dynamics where ground rules are adopted for their comfort (Brown & Grant, 2010, p.39), like theatre-based interventions.

Alongside generic and group coaching, specialist Life Coaching practices exist. This is important as SFDC's core aim was to manage students' personal relationships more effectively within group learning in higher education, and thus primarily focused within the area of relationships. Specialist coaching according to Gavin & Mcbrearty (2013) and Martin (2001), are emerging fields within the coaching literature and include the following areas:

Relationship Coaching, career coaching and health/wellness coaching, without being mutually exclusive to generic Life Coaching. Although the majority of time is spent in a single area of specialism, this area is explored within the context of a coachee's whole life performance to include discussions of all life areas.

Relationship Coaching covers issues of family, romantic relationships, personal friendships, relationships among colleagues rather than restricted marital relationships like relationship counselling. A core difference between coaching and counselling couples, is that Relationship Coaching typically only works with one individual at one time who wishes to engage in coaching (Martin, 2001). Ives (2010) and Ives & Cox (2015), describe the process of Relationship Coaching, for use on a one to one level, instead of with couples and families in groups, by exploring possible changes in behaviour with coachees to improve their relationships. This practice also bypasses challenges in couple therapy as described by Gurman & Burton (2014), and Sheras & Koch-Sheras (2008), which include lacking commitment to the process by refusing therapy due to coercion by their partner or anger/conflict amongst the couple that may intensify.

Other forms of coaching can include Somatic Coaching where patterns of behavioural actions are explored, changed, yet are limited to corporate settings rather than those of wider personal coaching. These are artistic concepts examining an individual's emotional awareness, thoughts, listening, verbal communication and body language/movement using intuition, considering non-verbal communication. New choices of action or possibilities are uncovered leading to transformation by enhancing coachees' learning and awareness to break free of repeated self-limiting patterns of behaviours (King, 2016; Strozzi-Heckler 2014). Like contextual pattern intervention with SFBT, there has been no independent evaluation of Somatic concepts, despite an exploration of behavioural patterns relevant to this study. For this reason, I adopted other techniques within SFDC's design.

Several studies and have provided insights into the benefits of Life Coaching, in terms of both its applications and its contrasting scope to psychotherapies and counselling. Griffiths and Campbell (2008), identified several similarities and differences between Life Coaching and counselling from interviews of five ICF coaches and nine of their current or past coachees on their experiences. The process of coaching had a broader scope than counselling by focusing on coachees' feelings, values and thinking than being limited to exploring individuals' feelings like counselling. This finding is consistent with the holistic nature of

coaching practices described by Chan (2012) and Rydner (2012). Unlike counselling coaching can provides coachees the opportunity to explore a range of issues than restricted to a single aspect. One example in this study was of a coachee needing assistance with work difficulties, where coaching provided them the benefit of exploring other problems in their lives including relationship issues (Griffiths & Campbell, 2008). These findings indicate benefits of coaching due to taking a holistic approach by exploring several interconnected problems across different life areas during sessions, unlike focusing on a very specific problem as in therapies. This has the potential to thus address shortcomings of CBT described earlier in this Chapter, when addressing complex problems. For these reasons, techniques derived from Life Coaching, alongside SFBT were integrated into the framework of SFDC, alongside focusing on non-clinical issues for improving students' future experiences of group learning in higher education.

Griffiths & Campbell (2008), also provides evidence in favour of coaching using collaboration, and insights into shortcomings of instructional approaches in counselling. Here two coachees both wished to have a more meaningful life, having experienced past trauma, and found coaching more effective than counselling. One client particularly had learnt techniques taught from their counsellor which they were required to practice but were unable to sustain and relapsed, in contrast to coaching, consistent with positive psychology benefits. Coachees were also drawn to coaching from a reasonably stable basis and wished to do better, consistent with Carroll (2003) who describes how coachees are mentally healthy, whereas the clients in counselling can experience psychological disorders. These research studies uncovered that coaching is a very alternative practice with different intentions to psychotherapy and counselling.

Other studies have also been supportive of Life Coaching. Research has indicated that Life Coaching is effective for improving an individual's well-being, self-esteem and confidence. Evidence from (Wagland, *et al.*, 2015) on cancer survivors used Life Coaching for participants to select three specific personal goals to attain based on their values, and found an increase in self-esteem, improved confidence and health. Life Coaching gave participants the opportunity to learn and develop new coping skills from up to six coaching sessions over 12 weeks, with a follow up interview a month later. This is similar to a case study on SFBT by Ng *et al.* (2012), where personal skills and improvements were maintained by monitoring and careful follow up.

Qualitative research by Ammentorp *et al.* (2013) on individuals experiencing coaching with follow-up interviews were also supportive that Life Coaching can be effective in improving personal confidence, self-esteem and well-being in other contexts such as higher education, to manage difficult behaviours during group learning. Similarly, a case study research by Curtis *et al.* (2013) on 8 coachees who took part in personal telephone Life Coaching sessions, uncovered that the experience enhanced their autonomy to improve their quality of life by identifying their personal strengths

Studies by George (2013), also provided several insights and other benefits to the practice of coaching, where 25 coaches were interviewed on their experiences, including ICF trained life coaches, career coaches, and relationship coaches. For example, one coach expressed: “Its ok to reach out to a coach. I don’t think there is the same stigma around reaching out for a coach as there is when you reach out for a therapist”. Similarly, another coach made the following statement when referring to the benefits of coaching: “I think people will begin increasingly to see it as an alternative to therapy and a positive approach where you can change your life...talking about the future and not digging into your childhood...that is appealing” (George, 2013, p.193-194). Such reports thus address the challenges uncovered by Yip (2005), where labelling of issues can cause stigma which is encouraged in deficit-model derived therapies but absent in coaching adopting strengths-based model principles.

There has been increased interest in examining coaching practices within higher education settings as Franklin & Doran (2009), Fried & Irwin (2016), Short *et al.* (2010), demonstrated benefits of enhance student academic performance, decreased psychological distress and promote more effective stress management from coaching. Similarly coaching can accommodate the needs of different individuals to improve their life experiences within this context. Here studies by Swatz *et al.* (2005), showed that coaching enhanced organisation skills among ADHD students and studies by Greene (2004), demonstrated that coaching can enhance confidence among students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. This is important as Turner *et al.* (2007), cited in Lancer & Eatough (2018) and also Lancer (2019) assert an increasing number of students seeking counselling services with longer waiting times for a range of different issues within recent years.

A crucial study by Lancer & Eatough (2018), examined the experiences of nine students from arts and social sciences disciplines using coaching within higher education. These coachees were given six coaching sessions and follow-up interviews on their experiences, six months

after their final coaching session. The students reported several benefits of coaching within this setting for example: i) Problems becoming more manageable and more effective time management: “Setting small goals to do certain stuff by a certain date and just, generally managing my time better”. ii) Better balance and focus: “It is being able to reorganise clutter in your head” and “I just remember being very focused after our session and knowing what to do”. iii) Improved confidence and assertiveness: “One of the major things was more confident in lectures and tutorials at actually speaking”, and “I’ve become more assertive going up to people you don’t know and interacting”. iv) Validating a solution: “I think for a lot of things it was less finding a solution and more validating a solution that I had already found but didn’t really know if it was the right solution” (Lancer & Eatough 2018, p.81 and p.84). This research particularly provided evidence that coaching assisted students in making holistic links to different areas of their lives within higher education, for instance reduced confidence affected their career choices and relationships to enhance their personal growth. These findings are supported by evidence from Adam (2016) examining coaching in education which indicated that coaching can improve teacher confidence, and wellbeing based on questionnaire data of a single case.

Studies by Lancer & Eatough (2018) thus provide a potential for using coaching as an early intervention to address student challenges within higher education than waiting until problems develop into severe psychological issues requiring counselling or therapeutic support. Such benefits could therefore provide an incentive in evaluating coaching practices further within higher education, in relation to examining SFDC. This study however failed to provide information on which coaching techniques were used by practitioners, and it was unknown whether some coaching styles were more effective than others to enhance student wellbeing within this context which is consistent with studies on SFBT and Psychodrama.

At present there is no academic evidence which indicates the presence of stuck episodes in coaching as in talking therapies, discussed in earlier in this Chapter which might hinder transformation. Yet practitioners Russell and Surin have indicated the stuck episodes can occur within coaching, which is defined as moments when coachees are unable to describe or consider solutions to enable progress towards their goals, by a “I don’t know response”. Several coaching questions are recommended by the ICF and AC to address this and facilitate transformation during coaching. Examples of these are: “If you knew nothing you said would be considered wrong, what answer would you give?”, “What resources do you have

already that can help you make progress?”, “What behaviours, if any, are undermining your progress?” “And you don’t know. And when you don’t know, how do you know, you don’t know?” (Russell, 2016; Surin, 2017). These recommendations suggest that time and energy is required by coaches to promote coachee transformation using such questions if coachees find describing solutions by conversation alone challenging like with SFBT. Exploring solutions by enactment with drama methods may prove a means to address these challenges within coaching as coachees can become stuck in the session like in talking therapies.

Despite the expansion of Life Coaching the amount of empirical research is limited regarding its effectiveness (Grant, 2000), like with other more holistic approaches such as Psychodrama (Rawlinson, 2000). Studies by Spence & Grant (2007) particularly found that during a 10-week group Life Coaching programme, this study found that participant well-being had little improvement with Life Coaching, despite the author mentioning an attraction from individuals with mental health issues that were inappropriate for coaching.

Prior to 2002, the coaching profession was unknown and lacked awareness in academia (Brock, 2014), taking into consideration that coaching was derived from executive practices within corporate environments. Another challenge is a lack of a unified coaching crediting body, although there are efforts underway to create a unified accreditation under the International Coach Federation guidelines (Grant, 2006). Yet since 2012, the Global Coaching and Mentoring Alliance was created between the ICF, AC and the European Council for Coaching and Mentoring (EMCC) in the EU as the three major coaching professional bodies worldwide. This alliance was formed to ensure there are common standards of practices by coaches trained under these professional accrediting bodies (EMCC, 2012).

I shall now discuss two core coaching models, from which I drew when developing SFDC. The first model I shall discuss is the ICANDO model followed by the PRACTICE model of coaching.

b) Core models of Coaching

Practitioners have developed a variety of core coaching models, where their framework discussed in this Chapter has similar patterns, not strictly linear, and components build on others within process to enable coachees to successfully achieve their goals.

The ICANDO model, created by Martin (2001) is a model unique to Life Coaching practice. This was adapted from the John Whitmore's GROW model from executive coaching, where both models can be used as a Life Coaching framework. Practitioners such as Daniels-Lake (2010) describe the ICANDO model as a basic generic model of Life Coaching which can be applied in all areas of a client's life, such as relationships, well-being, careers, leisure, and wealth.

This model is highly flexible to address a client's overall life aim and achieve the outcome or results they would like. I is Investigate, the reason the client would like help and what is important for them. C is their Current situation, followed by A (Aims), which includes what goals they wish to achieve. N refers to the Number of possible ways to achieve their aims, and by what Date (D), they want their aims achieved, finally followed by what will be the Outcome (O) indicators to show that they have been successful. Consequently Martin (2001) recommends that coachees are encouraged to be flexible and open to suggesting at least two to three routes to achieve their aims in the coaching process. This ensures that they have sufficient choices available should a single decision they suggest be unsuccessful, in order to improve their life quality and flourish.

Martin (2001) created the ICANDO model for application in Life Coaching practices rather than being limited only to executive coaching. Most coaching studies by Bishop (2015), Brown & Grant, (2010), Grant, (2011) however examined the GROW model, and no previous research on the ICANDO model's effectiveness. Despite this limitation the O component of this model, is highly consistent with the aims of the miracle question within SFBT, designed to focus on outcomes of success during coaching practices. This means that it could be integrated as an added prompt to establish coachees' desired outcomes and success using a powerful question for further insights, in addition to SFBT tools.

Some coaching models integrate Life Coaching with SFBT techniques (i.e Solution-Focused Coaching) which according to Sanderfur (2014) can be applied for life skills performances and personal relationship improvement among individuals. Research using Solution-Focused Coaching on student populations was associated with increased attainment of personal goals, decreased stress and increased hope and well-being. This approach can thus allow individuals to have an improved psychological functioning, self-efficacy and life changes compared to problem-based approaches (Grant, 2003; Grant & Gerrard, 2019; Green, *et al.*, 2006).

An example of a Solution-Focused Coaching model is the PRACTICE model designed by Palmer (2007). The PRACTICE model is comprised of seven-steps which can be applied for Life Coaching, and can be useful for stress management, study problems, conflict management and career coaching (Palmer, 2011). The components of this model are:

P=Problem identification. Here the coachee is asked to define the problem they are experiencing, what they would like to change, and confirm what would be different if their situation was improved. Exception questions like in SFBT are used, for example: “Any exception when it is not a problem?”. This is followed by R=Realistic, relevant goals developed where coachees are asked what specifically they would like to achieve from coaching. The next component is A=Alternative solutions generated, where the coachee is invited to think creatively for possible solutions, followed by C=Consideration of consequences, when exploring each individual option and to rate the effectiveness of each solution they considered from 0-10. T relates to Target the most feasible solution after considering such consequences, followed by I=Implementation of client chosen solution(s), (C) to take actions. Finally, there is an E=Evaluation on how successful their chosen solution was and rate that success from 0-10 (both T and E components are used in follow-on coaching sessions). Coachees are asked by the coach to reflect on what they have learnt at this point, and whether they require further coaching based on the success of the solution they choose.

According to Palmer the coach will attempt to make the coachee attend to and identify their strengths, and find examples where the problem is slightly less, during the coaching process. Scaling questions are used to monitor the coachee’s progress and what they would need to do to increase their rating. Palmer (2008) and Palmer (2011) revised the PRACTICE model to include scaling and the question derived from the miracle question while identifying the problems, which are always tailored to coachees’ needs.

Palmer (2007), provides a good case example of using the PRACTICE model, adapted from Neeman & Palmer (2001). The case was a male client who was experiencing challenges with managing stress when making presentations at work. On identifying the problem, he was anxious about how the audience may perceive him if his hand was shaking and believed this was difficult to control. On developing relevant goals, he identified a positive goal which was to control his hand shaking better or at least accept this behaviour. He suggested seven possible alternative solutions by creative thinking:

i) “Keep my hands in my pocket the whole time. ii) Not the present the paper. Pretend I’m ill; iii) Mention my nervousness to the audience to justify the shaking just before I give my paper. Get it out of the way; iv) Take tranquillisers; v) Accept that my hands shake. So what? vi) Make a joke every time my hands shake; vii) Give the paper and see what happens rather than automatically assuming the conference will turn out badly” (Palmer, 2007, p.73).

On considering the consequence of all these solutions by rating their effectiveness, he chose options v) and vii) as feasible solutions from the above possibilities. When implementing these solutions this coachee reported that he managed to accept his hand might shake in front of an audience and agreed to practice his skills at presenting to evaluate his performance between sessions. During the following weeks he reported that he stopped trying to control his hands shaking and was able to share with others that he could still feel nervous in front of an audience. He wished to have a rehearsal before the conference so the coach arranged a practice run in front of his colleagues, which was videotaped so the coachee could evaluate his skills as an action plan. The coachee received constructive feedback on his performance which enabled him to be more confident. On evaluating his performance during the conference, he expressed that redirecting his attention to giving the presentation, rather than trying to control his hands shaking was a successful strategy. He also came to the realisation that his hands might shake at times, which he was more accepting of (Palmer, 2007).

Coaching approaches thus enable individuals to clarify their goals and examine possible options to meet these, particularly when attempting to resolve conflicts, with an understanding of the situation using self-reflection (Leving-Finley, 2014). Coaches can try to focus on performance improvement to allow individuals to adjust or create novel responses based on a different situation by action learning, and for coachees to develop their skills in conjunction with a personal learning goal (O’Neil & Marsick, 2014). Past resources used by the coachee, which have been successful are also addressed in the process (Biswar-Diener, 2009), meaning coaching is similar to SFBT, as positive learning is identified from brief past visits despite being overwhelmingly present-future focused.

Evaluating SFBT and Life Coaching provides insights that techniques from collaborative, solution-focused approaches promote an explicit focus based on an outcome to an intervention, and more careful monitoring, and unlike in applied theatre interventions to prevent relapse of learnings. These are of benefit and were combined with applied theatre to

explore and define solutions which can be applied in this context to obtain a focus to enactments when exploring relationship dynamics within this research context.

3.Vi) SFDC's framework and epistemology

SFDC had a complex epistemology derived from the different philosophical perspectives discussed in this Chapter. These different philosophical perspectives, i.e behaviourist, humanistic and positive psychology were integrated together and resolved as follows within SFDC's framework, which primarily adopted positive psychology concepts: I first in Phase 1 resolved these differences by deploying FBA derived tools only during this Phase of SFDC to explore difficult behaviours within this context and gather information for Phase 2 to address Psychodrama shortcomings. I deployed Solution-Focused Coaching techniques from positive psychology at different stages of SFDC to accommodate for differences with behaviourist and humanistic principles of FBA, Psychodrama and Forum Theatre. In Phase 1, I aimed to promote positive outcomes to address the shortcoming of FBA and Psychodrama to prevent relapse of learning, which positive psychology advocates by focusing on alternatives to the problem. I attempted to unearth past learning from participants to enable them to identify their strengths using Solution-Focused Coaching derived tools when gathering information prior to the enactments.

Second in Phase 2 of SFDC, I integrated humanistic and positive psychology approaches described in this Chapter when participants dramatically explored their scenarios, in an outcome-driven, collaborative manner. I resolved the different emphasis of these approaches by encouraging participants to consider and define their choice of solutions, typical of Solution-Focused Coaching, then enact these further using Forum Theatre and Psychodrama tools using personal scenarios to increase motivation. I also asked participants to imagine the scenario was ongoing to promote a present-future derived positive psychology, contrasting with a past focus within drama-based practices to meet the positive outcomes of SFDC. To promote a semi-structured approach, enactment dialogues could be adapted to accommodate for participant needs and choices of solution, consistent with common values of positive psychology and applied theatre. This was aimed to address challenges of stuck episodes challenges when describing solutions as in SFBT and coaching, and practice exploring choices during this intervention to expand their behavioural repertoires to thrive in the future. Considering that Forum Theatre and Life Coaching have not previously been integrated within an intervention, I intended to dynamize and reorganise solutions to resolve the

conflict. This was explored in this intervention by narrowing down participant choices to those that were effective to unearth resources and expand their learning and address limitations of dynamizations, by dramatic rehearsal to practice skills beyond coaching conversations to promote transformation.

Third, Phase 3 was a follow-up to address the limitations of Forum Theatre and Psychodrama, using enactments to enable participants to deploy skills learnt from Phase 2 in several scenarios to address positive psychology limitations described earlier in this Chapter. In Phase 3, I aimed to resolve these by determining whether tools learnt from the intervention were maintained using Forum Theatre, Solution-Focused Coaching and Psychodrama tools at different stages. These involved coaching narrations to define the problem and desired outcomes for each scenario enactments, Psychodrama warm-ups and Forum Theatre like enactments of personal scenarios to increase motivation that were goal focused, consistent with coaching to determine whether learnings were maintained.

Finally, in Phase 4 these were resolved by exploring the impact of the intervention and whether the positive outcomes highlighted in Chapter 2 had been achieved. I asked participant coaching derived questions to determine whether the experience had expanded their behavioural behaviours, improved their confidence, whether they had and what happened if they deployed learning from SFDC into real life within this research context. This was intended to improve relationship dynamics and promote flourishing in future group learning activities rather than remaining in the rehearsal to further resolve applied theatre limitations. I shall expand further on the design of SFDC in the next Chapter.

3.Vi) Summary of evaluations

Synthesising interventions from disciplines of higher education, applied theatre and therapy, and applied positive psychology provide insights that these approaches can improve the well-being and life performances of individuals, by promoting new skill learning during the processes. Applied positive psychology and drama-based approaches have not previously been integrated together and formally examined outside corporate coaching contexts, to manage interpersonal challenges within the context of group learning in higher education.

It would thus be important to investigate and verify whether these could be used to communicate effectively in complex interpersonal situations to find appropriate solutions and behavioural responses for effective group learning. This can be conducted by guiding

individuals without providing instructions, to promote their empowerment, based on principles of strengths-based model interventions and learning of new skills by role play activities. Such approaches would be integrated for participants to identify resources they deployed to learn new skills to promote more effective group learning experiences and increase the likelihood of deploying such learnings to flourish in the future.

Central to this project was that this approach aimed to expand participants' behavioural repertoires by learning new tools for effective group work, promoting prosocial behaviours, and disrupting self-limiting routines which didn't lead to prosocial outcomes, to flourish in future activities. This served to enable participants to be more flexible in their responses by expanding their learning to manage difficult behaviours better in the future. Resolution of participant interpersonal conflicts thus meant adopting positive psychology principles, which advocated improving the quality of interpersonal dynamics to flourish in future experiences of group learning activities in higher education, expanding on providing increased awareness and understanding of problems from applied theatre.

By developing an intervention using a Solution-Focused Coaching approach with theatre-based learning using improvisation towards an individual-based goal, personal relationships and difficult behaviours could be effectively managed to improve student experiences of group learning. As follow-ups are limited in applied theatre, short-term follow-up interviews were conducted drawing on participants' experiences of the intervention to examine whether skills learnt were maintained in their future. Yet practising skills during sessions is absent within positive psychology, so applied theatre tools would enable participants to enhance their learning further alongside tools in coaching interventions to promote personal growth.

An integrated coaching practice combining approaches discussed in this Chapter, may enable individuals to explore the wider relationship dynamics rather than a specific issue at one time like in therapeutic approaches, to promote prosocial relationships within this research context. Such a practice aimed to promote openness and creativity by collaboration and solution-focused emphasis rather than inflexibility, to avoid resistance, involving discussions of solutions to focus enactments with role play, to gain further learnings for future experiences. Although these approaches have been examined less than cognitive practices, they provide more openness and flexibility to accommodate variability of group activities across different disciplines which influenced the design of SFDC.

More flexibility may provide individuals to explore and choose different solutions creatively when examining their effectiveness by dramatic rehearsal, leading to personal transformation involving dynamization and reorganisation within this integrated approach. This has a potential to minimise stuck episodes described in all talking interventions that may hinder personal change. Identifying prosocial solutions and resources using SFDC, students could choose to apply these to their lives either during events of conflict or via private conversations with the individuals they experience conflict with to flourish in future group learning activities in higher education.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.I) Overview of research methodology

This project's methodology was case study and experimental comprised of interview and participant observation methods which were broadly semi-structured to meet the core intentions described in Chapter 1. Such methodology was aimed at addressing the shortcomings of previous research on group learning in higher education, alongside those of positive psychology and applied theatre practices discussed in Chapter 3. This research had a social constructivist ontology drawing on Creswell (2007), based on participants' real-life experiences of group learning issues in higher education. These experiences were examined holistically consistent with coaching dynamics highlighted by Lancer & Eatough (2018). I thus validated participant definitions of the issues they experienced in group activities to enhance their autonomy and provide authentic representation of their perceptions based on this ontology. I also resolved challenges between research and positive psychology concepts throughout this study.

Throughout this Chapter I will discuss: ii) The research trustworthiness and how it was maintained throughout the research ii) The rationale for using a case study and experiment methodology comprised of methods highlighted above to evaluate SFDC and determine whether it met the appropriate evaluation criteria and intended positive outcomes highlighted in Chapter 2; iii) The application of participant self-reporting within this project's social constructivist ontology to meet both research objectives; iii) Take the description of SFDC's design and epistemology in the last Chapter for further development; iv) The pilot study and subsequent amendments made to the main study procedures due to this experience, and an in-depth description of the main study procedures focusing on how the intervention was practised; v) My research analytical strategy with consideration to this project's aims and challenges of evaluating semi-structured interventions discussed in earlier Chapters.

4.II) Research trustworthiness

This study met trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability for qualitative research drawing on Shenton's (2004) recommendations. Research credibility is applying well established qualitative research methods and ensuring effective participant sampling and honesty. Here participants should be allowed to refuse to take part to ensure data is derived from those that are genuinely willing to take part and

provide information openly. Researchers should thus encourage participants to be honest and open about their experiences from the outset by affirming there are no right or wrong answers. I ensured credibility was met by taking several steps. First, I ensured participant honesty from the research outset of Phase 1, by checking my interpretation of the data with the participants using active listening to clarify my understanding of what they expressed. Second participation was always voluntary as highlighted in the information and consent forms (Appendices 2 and 3), where sampling criteria was from postgraduate students from the University of Glasgow within disciplines of education, psychology or theatre studies who had experienced difficult situations in group activities. Third I also applied well established qualitative methods of interviews and participant observations in this research.

Credibility was maintained by ensuring research findings were consistent with the content reported by participants. This was achieved by first ensuring my interpretation and analysis of quotes were drawn from the transcripts, where I validated participants' definition of the problems they expressed throughout this project. I particularly clarified and reflected back on what they expressed during interviews to ensure I had understood what was meant. Second regular supervisor meetings, using multiple data sources, and making notes throughout interviews to ensure research findings were from participants without exaggerating issues reported in the transcripts by pathological labelling, nor dismissing these either. (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). Drawing on Billieux *et al.* (2005) this ensured everyday life experiences reported by participants were presented as authentic perceptions of their group learning challenges consistent with positive psychology principles described in Chapter 3 than causing problematic disempowerment by over-pathologizing their experiences. These decisions were equally inspired by my positive psychology training in recent years.

According to Shenton (2004), researchers must also ensure credibility by using reflexive commentary to evaluate the project and include data patterns emerging and their own background and experience. Morrow (2005) and Korstjens & Moser (2018), advocate that reflexivity occurs when researchers describe how their experiences, preferences and assumptions are to themselves and others and how these impacted on the investigation. Reflexivity also includes the relationship dynamics between researchers and participants and how these dynamics impact on participant responses. It can be achieved if researchers use reflective journals throughout the study, comprised of their experience, responses and awareness of any assumptions that may be present. I thus kept reflective logs on my

experiences, feelings, and decisions throughout this research, particularly during the data analysis to conform to this recommendation which I shall expand on later in this Chapter. Such logs were written reflections which also include methodological details, modifications of analytic strategies which I shall expand on later in this Chapter.

Etherington (2004) expresses that reflexivity has an interpretivist nature derived from social constructivism where researchers are required to acknowledge how their own predispositions may affect the inquiry. This is important considering interpretivist researchers focus on participants' views of the phenomenon being examined and the impact of their own experiences (Creswell, 2003). These predispositions include their thoughts, beliefs, culture, environment and social history, impact on conversations with participants and how that is transcribed and represented in findings to ensure rigour of effective qualitative research. Reflexivity thus enables readers to understand and validate researcher interpretations who are provided information on their position in relation to the study and involvement (Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity is also a component of ability criteria for trustworthiness for coaching practice according to Schiemann *et al.* (2019) and thus is an important issue for evaluating SFDC's effectiveness.

Transferability is the extent which findings are applicable to other situations while acknowledging the small scaled nature of qualitative research compared to quantitative studies. Transferability here advocates whether participants' findings can be applied to future difficult interpersonal situations within group learning activities within this context. To meet transferability, it is recommended that researchers provide a detailed background information on the project's context and phenomena under investigation as highlighted in Chapter 2. This is important ensure readers have an effective understanding of this phenomena, to allow them to compare descriptions of this within the research reports with their own experiences.

Dependability by contrast ensures processes within a project can be reported in detail to allow future researchers to repeat the work with sufficient understanding of the methods (Shenton, 2004). This includes providing recommendations for further research that is supported by data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). As SFDC was semi-structured and individualised, dependability means determining whether participants met the positive outcomes described in Chapter 2.

Confirmability was met acknowledging my experiences which shaped my actions during this project. This was important to provide reflective accounts of my experiences to be consistent

with social constructivist epistemology described by Etherington (2004) for this reason. To ensure this criteria was met, I first acknowledged my CBT experiences, having dropped out of this intervention, consistent with narratives of several personal friends as highlighted in Chapter 1. This experience particularly acknowledges the negativity and unnecessary routine writing exercises and rigid structure of CBT, which ignores personal values, despite its promotion by University of Glasgow's psychology department and true effectiveness. The consequences of this acknowledgement is that CBT can be portrayed as being objective but often fails with several individuals due to this negative and rigid structure consistent with Bados et al. (2007), Barnes et al. (2013) and Schermuly-Haupt et al. (2018) findings discussed in Chapter 3.

My research position was also shaped by my positive experiences of Life Coaching and Psychodrama as a long-term client and NLP within the short-term. Such experiences shaped my values of flexibility, towards individual-based practices, consistent with the nature this research. Third the influence from my positive psychology practice training, University of Strathclyde, and City of Glasgow college experiences, towards promoting creative, collaborative approaches to guide and empower individuals. This contrasts with expert-led instructions that can be disempowering, where learnings are rarely maintained by individuals. This was reflected in my theatre experiences where tutors aimed to empower students by learning how to resolve interpersonal difficulties themselves within group performances for their future career rather than intervening leading to disempowerment. Such values particularly advocated against pathologizing everyday life experiences by labelling symptoms of such problems as dysfunctional, as in CBT, regardless of the context, leading to client disempowerment. Common perspectives from my Life Coach and Drama therapists were that classic research analytical approaches are suited to evaluating highly structured interventions but fail for less structured interventions due to their complexity.

I shall now provide an in-depth description of the case study and experimental research methodology with the rationale for using these approaches to meet the credibility criteria for this project's trustworthiness.

4.III) Case study structure and rationale

Mason (2004) defines a case study as an approach that allows an investigation into the real-life experiences of individuals. There is also an investigation of phenomena in depth within a

case study and, as a result, case studies can provide rich data on the phenomena being investigated (Yin, 2014).

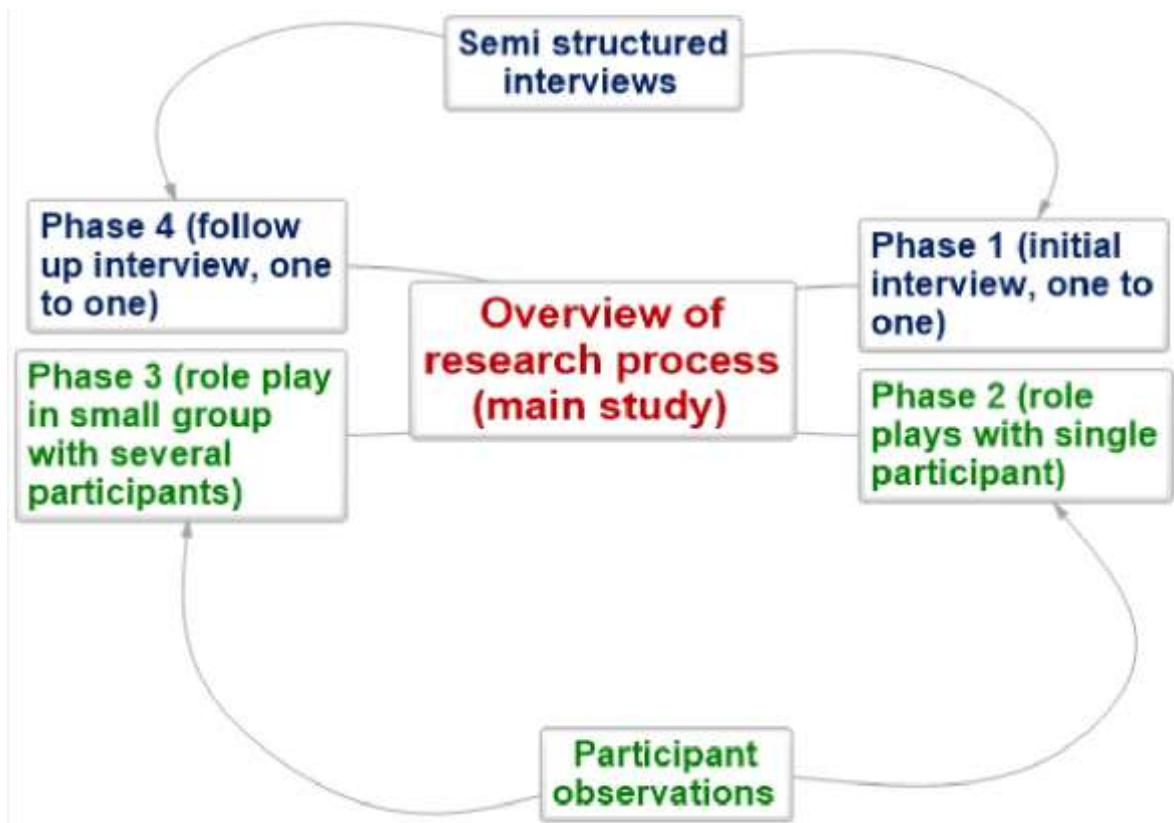
Case study approaches can provide researchers several possibilities in the form of single or multiple cases under investigation, where for the latter each case is compared with the others (Starman, 2013). The broad rationale for using this approach was because, firstly, case studies can include multiple sources of evidence. This enables findings to be confirmed, where a broad range of behavioural issues are merged using these multiple sources to meet the research questions (Yin, 2014).

Secondly, multiple types of evidence within case studies can clarify and expand further on the information gathered from interviews to increase the reliability of the data, which is derived from multiple methods, for example interviews and participant observation (Yin, 2014). As Golafashani (2003) recommends using multiple methods of data collection to examine data effectively in qualitative research, I thus used observation and interview data to elicit further information from participants to evaluate SFDC effectively as part of the experimental research methodology. In the present study the information was thus gathered from the self-reports in Phase 1 and was examined further during Phases 2 and 3, maintaining credibility and confirmability criteria for trustworthiness described by Shenton (2004).

I chose a multiple case study design as the best approach to evaluate the intervention SFDC for examining highly individualised experiences of students within group learning in higher education to meet the primary intention of this study. I thus treated all participants who engaged in this project beyond Phase 1 as cases with an experimental design. Additional rationale for this choice was for several reasons: Firstly, case studies were comprised of several stages, which synthesised a mix of different approaches for gathering data as highlighted in Figure 1. Here personal semi-structured interviews took place with a single participant during the initial interview in Phase 1 and the follow up interview in Phase 4. Secondly, participant observations took place in the form of improvised role plays with either a single participant, or with a small group of participants. Secondly, Phase 2 involved improvised role play enactments where myself, a director, an actor, and a single participant were present. Thirdly, Phase 3 was similar to the previous phase yet with small group of participants, as follow up to Phase 2. These benefits were important as techniques derived from Psychodrama and SFBT made up the design of this intervention, where such practices have been extensively examined using case study approaches as discussed in Chapter 3. A

detailed description of the procedure for all phases of the research study will be explored later in this Chapter.

Figure 1: Core methods used in this project to meet both research intentions highlighted in Chapter 1.



A key motive for choosing this approach for SFDC evaluation was because according to Starman (2013) an individual's experience of a phenomena may vary across different cases within the wider population. Research cases should thus be selected based on some knowledge of the phenomena under investigation to ensure representative case sampling. I therefore examined cases across different disciplines within the student population at the University of Glasgow. This was aimed at providing a more representative and detailed analysis of student experiences of group learning in higher education than previous studies by Colebrook (2014) and Jarvenoja & Javerla (2009) which were restricted to single discipline. This decision also drew on my prior knowledge of group activities as a postgraduate student and lifelong learner within disciplines of psychology, theatre arts, and to a lesser extent education. Drawing on these experiences the research phenomena varied from group performances, group projects to group class activities across these disciplines in higher education. My role as a researcher was thus to find and examine cross-disciplinary cases

from these experiences, while maintaining a collaborative, co-creative dynamics in terms of participant content rather than an expert-led approach throughout this study. This role drew on common dynamics within positive psychology and applied theatre described in Chapter 3, to maintain participants' engagement in the research and minimise their resistance.

Roller & Lavrakas (2015), advocate that using a case study approach requires defining the unit of study within a qualitative research project which is the portion of content on which researchers based their decisions for the analytical process. This unit of study can be at the individual level ranging from a paragraph to their entire responses to interview questions (Milne & Aldler, 1999), and researchers' decisions must consider data content, complexity, and meanings. If researchers choose a unit of study that is too weak, it can lead to the following outcomes: i) too precise, leading to an analysis that is too narrow omitting important contextual information which requires more time and complications than had a broader unit been chosen. ii) too imprecise, leading to an analysis that is too broad whereby important connections and contextual meaning are missed causing misinterpretations of data. They recommend that qualitative researchers define a unit of study that retains the context required to derive meaning from the data. They should thus use a broad, context-based unit of study rather than being too narrow or being too imprecise with their analysis according to the circumstances and research context (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015).

To meet these recommendations, I defined the unit of study as individual postgraduate students' experiences of group learning in higher education within the disciplines of education, theatre studies, or psychology at the University of Glasgow. This unit of study included important findings from semi-structured interviews and participant observations which I shall elaborate on later in this Chapter. I chose this unit of study to focus on the explicit context of group learning in higher education while being flexible to accommodate the individualised nature of Life Coaching, SFBT and Psychodrama derived tools and participants' experiences during this project. This unit of study adopted the common value of integration within these tools whereby common data patterns were integrated across different participants, rather than separating participant findings and responses to these tools considering the challenges of analysing semi-structured interventions discussed in Chapter 3.

In the next sections I will expand on this project's ontology and epistemology further than those developed in earlier Chapters.

4.IV) Participant self-reporting

This project's social constructivist ontology was participant self-reporting derived from their subjective experiences of group learning in higher education. Participant self-reporting was applied during the personal interviews in this study. These also took place during stages of briefing, reflections, and debriefing of all role play sessions later in this project to meet both research intentions highlighted in Chapter 1. The core rationale for this ontology was to assist participants in reflecting on their own behaviour and that of others while exploring their experiences of conflicts during group activities, drawing on behavioural analysis and solution-focused techniques discussed in Chapter 3.

Participant self-reports are techniques applied in research during qualitative interviews or questionnaires, which can also be used alongside other methodologies such as observational studies. Participants will report their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings for the researcher to gather data (Javis & Russel, 2008; Vangelist, 2004). Such self-reports rely on participants recalling events that occurred during their experience to meet research objectives (Stone *et al.*, 2009). This study followed several criteria for self-reporting in accordance with Laing (1988): participants must clearly understand what is being asked and are willing and motivated to express relevant research information. Researchers thus need to be able to adequately interpret the data provided by participants.

Participants will usually express an account of their experiences from a specific time-period in their lives (Stone *et al.*, 2009; Fisher, 2006). In this study, the specific time-period was thus participants' overall experiences of group learning as a student in higher education. I encouraged flexibility to allow participants to discuss group learning situations from both their undergraduate and current postgraduate studies, as their experiences of this activity may vary.

Other rationale for using participant self-reports in this research was as follows, considering advantages and disadvantages of this single qualitative method. The first advantage is that self-reports can provide an elaborate range of responses from individuals who experienced the research phenomena under investigation (Columbus, 2014). Self-reporting involves asking participants directly on their feelings or beliefs about their life experiences and thus can obtain data that would be challenging or impossible to gather by alternative methods, (Polit and Beck, 2010). Such reports gathered from interviews can provide a participant's perspective on a situation and can be helpful when gathering information across time periods

and different situations (Vangelisti, 2004). This means self-reports are more authentic rather than simply relying on second-hand accounts of events, as participants' real-life experiences can be explored without restrictions of time periods, particularly when using participant observations. Self-reporting also enables participants to explore their perceptions by asking them about hypothetical behaviour of others, in the third person, which can make participants become more relaxed during the research procedures (Braun *et al.* 2017).

Gamba and Oskamp (1994), emphasize that self-reporting can provide in-depth information on participant performance when investigating individual behaviours in a specific environment. Self-reporting is thus effective for coaching practices, as this has potential to provide more authentic behavioural information on group learning issues from student perspectives than being limited to second-hand accounts from academic staff. This technique thus enabled an-depth exploration of students' interpersonal challenges within group learning for this study, across different disciplines and expanded on previous studies. Self-reporting particularly provided an opportunity to also explore what participants perceived were the hypothetical characteristics of the person they experienced conflict with during Phase 1.

The second advantage of self-reporting is that it is highly flexible which enables researchers to respond appropriately to the different responses from participants when discussing a research inquiry. This means that some research questions can be omitted to accommodate participant needs and responses empathetically, rather than adopting routine sets of questions in a very rigid manner (Braun *et al.*, 2017). Thirdly, self-reports are also relatively easy to implement in terms of the time required on the part of either the researcher or the participant involved (Hepper *et al.*, 2007). Finally, self-reports are usually conducted face to face in the presence of the researcher during an interview, which allows participants to provide more detailed information than in questionnaires, as they enable researchers to prompt participants for more detail during the procedure (Javis & Russel, 2008).

There are however disadvantages of using participant self-reports in research. Firstly, Bachrach *et al.* (2009), Michelson (1990) and Columbus (2004), described how problems can occur when participants may attempt to create a positive image of themselves during an interview. Participants may attempt to create strong social desirability where they may present themselves to a researcher in a manner that would make them look positive instead of expressing their actual feelings or behaviour. As a result, they may produce distorted recollections of an event, which was an important challenge to address during this project,

despite being more authentic than second-hand account observations. This means self-reporting during interviews can be limited to exploring events from a single perspective than also covering hypothetical information from other perspectives on the situation. Secondly, participants can find recalling events challenging as the details of when, where, and how can be subject to memory errors. Fisher (2006) also explains how participants may report only certain aspects of the research phenomena being investigated while ignoring other aspects of similar importance during the interview. The current research focused on participants' personal experiences of group learning, and thus self-reports were used in to elaborate on issues students experienced during group learning, considering the advantages and disadvantages of self-reporting highlighted in this section.

The advantages of participant self-reports enabled myself as researcher, to first obtain in depth data from their personal experiences of group learning and provide clarification on their desired outcome for the intervention during Phase 1. Second, drawing on Life Coaching concepts as described in the last Chapter, data on participants' values, and expectations for positive group learning varied between individuals due to different life experiences, which consequently could not be obtained by quantitative means. This approach was thus sufficiently flexible to adjust my responses to that of participants during the interview and (if required) prompt them for further information to obtain important data for this study, which is not possible using a structured questionnaire.

I also took steps to address these disadvantages of self-reporting in this research study, in to maintain credibility, minimise any distorted recollections and social desirability biases. To minimise distorted recollections, I prompted participants to compare their perceptions at various points during the whole project for further insight and clarity. This occurred when exploring group learning events during the initial interview in Phase 1 and inviting participants to expand and compare their recollections during Phase 2 and Phase 3 with those of earlier phases. I also took the following steps to minimise any social desirability biases from participants. First inviting participants to examine their experiences from other group member perspectives in Phase 1. Second, in addition to self-reporting, I used participant observations in Phase 2 of this research, which included role reversal exercises for participants to consider how their behaviour contributed to the conflict rather than assuming it was only the behaviour of the other person causing problems. This was aimed at expanding participants' learnings and assumptions rather than allowing them to present their behaviour

in these scenarios as entirely positive, if this was not the case which shall be discussed in more depth later in this Chapter.

4.IV) Pilot study

Gerring and Seawright (2008) and Yin (2014) recommend that researchers conduct a single pilot case to test, edit, and identify any issues with the research design and questions asked. This pilot can thus assist the researcher to refine their data collection methods and can be important both in terms of the research context and procedures carried out. On this basis a pilot study of a single case was first conducted to test the research design and procedures in order to identify any issues with the methodology being used. The pilot study also formed part of my ethical clearance process where it was a way of assuring the ethics committee that the research process was coherent, rigorous, and ethical. Drawing on the above, the structure of SFDC was first tested through a pilot case where any necessary amendments to the design of the model were made before commencing the main research. The pilot study was a case study which included data sources from a personal interview with a participant and myself, and from a personal role play session.

As the pilot study was a single case participant, Yin (2003) and Schaltegger *et al.* (2006), describe two types of case studies. Firstly, exploratory case studies where an intervention is evaluated based on specific situations without a single set of research outcomes. Exploratory studies aim to identify characteristics of the research phenomena, examine reasons for particular practices and stimulate the researcher's sensitivity for asking questions on the background of the context. Secondly there are descriptive case studies which are used when describing an intervention using the real-life context of when it occurred. Descriptive case studies may investigate real life events over time and can provide a complex account of the phenomena uncovered during the research process.

When considering the above types of single case studies, the pilot case used for this project was primarily an exploratory study, as the focus was to evaluate an intervention, although the participant had a defined outcome to aim towards in the intervention during Phase 2. I thus first conducted a pilot study to test the design of SFDC and will discuss this experience further in the next section of this Chapter, where a single participant agreed to take part at this stage to help test research methods. This will include how the pilot participant, actor and director were recruited and the procedures involved at each stage. I will also describe what

amendments I made for the main study from the pilot experience and expand further of the epistemology described in Chapter 3.

4.V.i) Participant recruitment

Following ethical approval for the project, a single participant was recruited by word of mouth at the University of Glasgow for the pilot study. The participant was a female, 2nd year PhD student in her 40s in the discipline of education, under the pseudonym “*Mrs Bennett*”, that I chose for this research.

The pilot study (*Figure 2*), constituted an initial one to one interview based on Phase 1, a single role play session based on Phase 2 involving an actor and director, and a final follow up one to one interview modelled on Phase 4. This follow up interview included a reflection on the methods used (see Appendix 4). The whole process lasted approximately 3 months considering the availability of the participant, actor, and director.

4.V.ii) Recruitment of actor and director

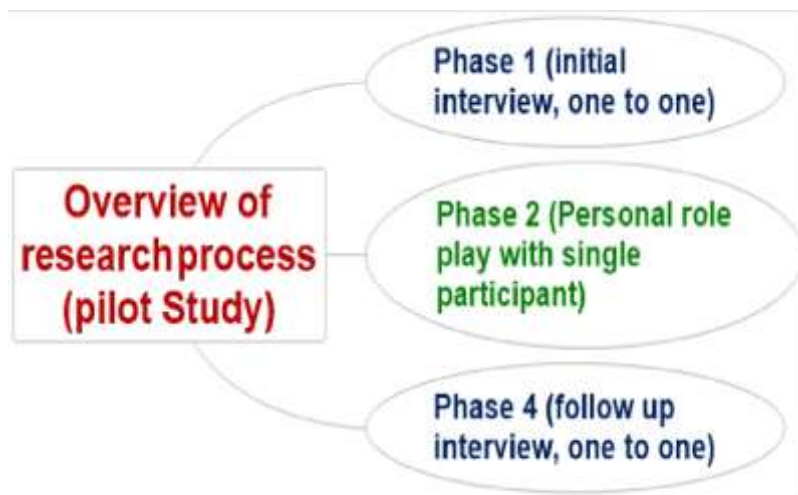
Prior to the commencement of Phase 2 an actor and director were required to be recruited for this project based on several abilities in accordance with criteria for effective role play improvisation described in Chapter 3. For the actor these were an ability to improvise and be creative, had previous training and experience of theatre improvisation, could take direction well, understand, change, and develop characters, and effectively respond to different improvisation scenarios. For the director, these abilities were previous training, experience of directing, and running improvisation workshops, and able to work well with actors to effectively create performances between different individuals in a collaborative manner, to ensure their expertise was consistent with SFDC dynamics.

Both the actor and director were recruited directly online via the University of Glasgow’s websites such as Student Voice and online advertisements via the University of Glasgow’s student theatre society, STAG email newsletter or by word of mouth to meet the above abilities. I thus discussed respondent’s experiences in more detail before they were involved in the project.

I discussed the process individually with all respondents to these advertisements, to ensure that any potential actor had the abilities described above. I asked more detail of all actors’ experiences of improvisation in addition to descriptions in my advertisement, which included what training they had, and what performances they had undertaken. The actors used for the

study were undergraduate students in theatre and psychology. The actor's role was to perform dialogues with the participant in the role play exercises, and the director served as a co-facilitator to coach the process alongside myself.

Figure 2: Overview of the pilot study process.



The director was a postgraduate M.Litt student in theatre studies. Similarly, as with potential actors, on meeting any respondents interested in the role of the director, I asked those interested about their directing experiences in more detail to ensure they met the core abilities and experience highlighted earlier. I particularly asked what improvisation skills they had, such as familiarity with running role plays and theatre workshops, hot seating exercises, and guiding actors to create performances, to ensure that the process would run smoothly.

4.V.iii) Procedure

Following providing information on the research to this participant and their signed consent, I interviewed this participant on her experiences of group learning in higher education during Phase 1. Mrs Bennett agreed to enact a situation with a teacher from a GTA (graduate teaching assistant) course where she reported that this teacher was intimidating and behaved in a bullying like manner. This was followed by a follow-up interview aimed at providing insight into the effectiveness of methods used and making necessary amendments prior to the main study.

4.V.iv) Amendments made to the procedures prior to the main study

Following completion of the pilot study the data gathered was examined by writing a brief report on the practice, so I could reflect on the outcome of the pilot study and make necessary amendments before starting the main study. Prior to starting the main study, I made the following amendments to the research procedures and epistemology:

a) During Phase 1, I decided to amend the language used when inviting participants to reflect on a resolved situation, which was aimed at uncovering an example where the participant achieved understanding with the person they experienced conflict with which drew on positive psychology concepts as described in Chapter 3. In the pilot study, the participant explored an example where she avoided further conflict with the person, she experienced interpersonal difficulties with, rather than achieving resolution where improved relationship quality. To ensure participants in the main study understood what they were being asked to discuss, I revised the language used in Phase 1 to “successful outcome” from “resolved situations”.

b) During the initial interview the participant was at first unclear whether the examples were to be based on her experiences in class or more specifically from group projects. I decided thus to emphasise this more clearly that the context of the difficult situation could range from group projects to group activities in class or tutorials.

c) I reduced the number of role reversal exercises in Phase 2 of the main study to only once during the scene specific enactment component and the open dialogue component of the intervention. The reason for this was to ensure these exercises were worthwhile, where main study participants would gain further insights from such enactments. These were excessive during the pilot study which led to not only a prolonged process lasting an hour and a half, but such exercises failed to provide this participant with further learning beyond these two exercises.

d) The participant’s responses also indicated that the framing of the first hot seating exercise needed to be clarified so that the “preferred future” was understood as a group situation that was positive.

e) The process of the main study was to remain relatively informal, consistent with coaching by taking a collaborative approach drawing on strength-based model concepts to identify resources to enhance their future interpersonal experiences in higher education as highlighted

in Chapter 3. These dynamics contrasted with deficit-model psychotherapies that are therapist-led and prescriptive approaches, for individuals to understand their past experiences more effectively. From the pilot experience, the director must ensure participants are always focused on the process, without becoming distracted by discussing content irrelevant to the research (e.g. their teaching field or holidays...etc). I expressed such issues to the director prior to commencing the main study, without inappropriate micromanagement to meet these amendments. I wished the actor and director to have reasonable autonomy during this project, whereby I respected their skills and experience without unnecessary interference. They thus agreed that I would only intervene should the process move in incorrect directions or they requested my assistance to ensure effective running of SFDC.

In the next section I will describe the research design, rationale of methods used and procedure at each stage of the main study as a multiple case study approach, drawing on the amendments to the research design as a result of the pilot experience.

4.Vi) Main study

4.Vi.i) Research design

In the main study, the research project was divided into four phases within a complex epistemology, as previously highlighted in Chapter 3 that took place over a six-month period. This main study covered examining participants' experiences of group learning to meet both research intentions described in Chapter 1, rather than being restricted to evaluating SFDC's effectiveness, and determining whether participants met the positive outcomes for this intervention described in Chapter 2. I analysed data of the scenario participants wished to enact to determine what information was relevant for sharing with the actor and director. In accordance with ethical approval, I thus shared this relevant data information by email with the actor and director to assist the role play in both Phases 2 and 3 with participant consent and under pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. I thus ensure research findings were credible by creating an environment where participants were supported to be honest and open in accordance with Shelton's (2004) recommendations for trustworthiness. I particularly affirmed that there were no right or wrong answers to questions asked throughout this research to maintain trustworthiness criteria and encourage them to discuss their experiences of group learning in higher education.

4.Vi.ii) Participant recruitment

Drawing on Starman's (2013) recommendations. I sampled participants according to three main criteria. The first criterion was that participants were from disciplines where group learning was common in higher education, whereby they were postgraduate students from disciplines of education, psychology, or theatre studies. As this participant base was cross-disciplinary, there was potential that their experiences of group learning activities varied according to group activity type (i.e group project, performances, class/seminar groups) and behaviours experienced. This criterion was important to provide a wider scope than previous studies on student experiences of group learning in higher education, Colebrook (2014) and Jarvenoja & Javerla (2009) beyond a single discipline. Participants' group learning experiences were thus highly individualised rather than assuming they could be generalised to avoid research prejudice based on social constructivism. The second criterion was that participants had experienced difficult situations in group learning during their higher education experiences. The third criterion was they must have encountered and be willing to explore an unresolved interpersonal scenario from their group learning experience to progress in this project beyond the initial interview, derived from screening processes in Psychodrama and Life Coaching highlighted in Chapter 3. A key contradiction for SFDC was that if participants' experiences of group activities in higher education were limited to academic task problems without interpersonal issues, they were unable to take part beyond this interview.

11 participants (8 female and 3 male), were recruited based on these criteria at the University of Glasgow. They were postgraduate students (i.e. MSc, Ph.D., Mlitt..etc) from the disciplines of either psychology, theatre studies or education, who had experienced difficult situations in their previous encounters with group learning activities (Table 2, Appendix 1). Participants were offered the opportunity to take part in the research in the initial interview alone, or the full research study which served to screen participants for their suitability for Phase 2 drawing on Life Coaching and Psychodrama exclusion criteria described in Chapter 3. I recruited these participants either online (via the University of Glasgow student websites such as Student Voice), written advertisements on campus or by word of mouth around the University of Glasgow according to specific criteria described earlier.

As with the pilot study, participants gave their consent that all interviews and role plays could be audio recorded and were content that I could take written notes. All participants'

transcripts were also kept in a password protected personal laptop and folders under pseudonyms in a secure location at the University of Glasgow, St Andrew's Building.

4.Vi.iii) Phase 1: initial interview

a) Context and rationale

The first method I used in this research was semi-structured interviews. The initial interview and follow up interview were created in a semi-structured manner which allowed participants to reflect on their experiences and later to explore what they had learnt from their performances in the role plays, consistent with SFDC semi-structured design. Drawing on Herson (2011) and Galletta & Cross (2013), I used open questions as each participant's experiences and feelings about group learning may be different, to provide flexibility by tailoring to their responses (Table 3, Appendix 1). I shall now provide a detailed rationale as to the reason semi-structured interviews were used in both the pilot and main study.

All interviews need to be based on a line of inquiry, and questions need to be asked in an unbiased manner which fulfils the needs of that inquiry. With all types of interviews, researchers may be interested in the participant's opinions or attitudes to gain insight into behavioural events. Researchers may thus wish to gain a feeling about the prevalence of these opinions or attitudes by a comparison with those of other participants. Interviews are a key component of case studies and provide insights into participants' history of situations which can aid the researcher in identifying relevant evidence. These are verbal reports about behavioural events and how these occur. During an interview a participant's response can be subject to issues such as poor recall or inaccurate articulation of their personal experiences (Yin, 2014).

Semi structured interviews are types of interviews that allow a repertoire of possibilities and are structured enough to address topic areas which are specifically related to the research phenomena. A participant's life history is often covered in a semi-structured interview, which allows them to reflect on a time period in their lives that is meaningful. The researcher can therefore look for themes and patterns within the data. Complex topics can be explored depending on the effectiveness of the opening questions and the last segment of the interview. While conducting an interview, trust is first built between the researcher and the participant and the researcher can ask the participant both general open questions and those that are very specific. Questions that are more specific to the topic of interest are usually

asked in the middle part of the interview. Finally, there may be an opportunity for the researcher to return to points within the participant's narrative that need to be explored further in depth (Galletta & Cross, 2013).

In contrast to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews do not have a predetermined list of questions carried out in the same order, where in such cases there are few boundaries to the topics discussed (Galletta & Cross, 2013). Participants are encouraged by the researcher to discuss their experiences and questions can be adjusted according to their responses (Dearney, 2005), consistent with common dynamics of Psychodrama, SFBT and Life Coaching described in the previous Chapter.

Semi-structured interviews were used in this project for several reasons. Firstly, they can be used in a case study to guide the conversation between the participant and the researcher according to the research context and aims. Secondly, questions asked during that interview are framed so that participants' responses are interpreted appropriately by the researcher. These interviews can thus give insights amongst people, events, opinions, and explanations on specific situations. The data gathered can also give very personal information concerning attitudes, and views of situations which can be compared with other cases (Yin, 2014).

Thirdly, semi-structured interviews were used in this research because as Galletta and Cross (2013) argue they allow for a great deal of flexibility and allow researchers to tailor an interview to different participants' responses and life experiences. In this study, participants' interviews ranged from 15-45 minutes considering the diversity of disciplines and group learning experiences (see Chapter 5). Semi-structured interviews may be used alone during a research study or can be one of many methods where there is always reciprocity between the participants and the researcher. When used as one of many methods during a study, these interviews involve interpreting, analysing, and reflecting on the implication of the findings gathered (Galletta & Cross, 2013). The interviewer however still covers all important topics, yet plays the interviewer by ear, permitting the conversation to flow (Coolcan, 2009).

Finally, such interviews are helpful in this context because they can be structured into segments. Drawing on Galletta & Cross (2013), this was applied in the current research by structuring the initial interview segments for participants to reflect in depth on their experiences of difficult situations in group learning activities, and explore participant values, strengths and positive actions within this higher educational context.

When semi-structured interviews are conducted on a personal level, there is the opportunity for in-depth exploration of research topics more than in focus groups (Ryan *et al.*, 2009). This is consistent with specialist Life Coaching, particularly Relationship Coaching, where coaches work only with one individual on a one to one level (Martin, 2001). Researchers can obtain more detailed information about the participant's experience, opinions, beliefs, motivations, feelings, and attitudes on the issues being discussed. These are however more time consuming compared to focus groups to achieve successful outcomes (Ryan *et al.*, 2009). On this basis detailed reflections of their experiences could be explored during the interviews.

In semi-structured interviews, conversations are flexible enough to vary and may change between different participants, as not every question is relevant to all participants and interviewers ask what is important per participant unlike structured interviews (Herson, 2011). Semi-structured interviews were thus appropriate for this research, as this methodology is consistent with positive psychology dynamics to enable flexibility to accommodate participant responses and experiences as described in Chapter 3. From work by Carter (2006), Gast *et al.* (2017), and Miles (2007), routine structured procedures fail to accommodate for differing responses and experiences by participants, whereas semi-structured procedures are highly individualised and open to differing responses. This was important as this study was cross-disciplinary where an openness to variability in participant experiences of group learning activities was required, by having a flexibility of questioning to accommodate for this variability.

The data produced early on gives a context to explore the participant's understanding of the issues addressed during the study. There can also be an emphasis of the lived experiences of participants as well as covering subject areas of interest. Complex topics thus can be covered during the interview. In depth information can be gathered from semi structured interviews, however time is required to prepare the questions prior to the interview, (Galletta & Cross, 2013), as well as deciding what the researcher is looking for from each participant (Dearnley, 2005).

From an ethical perspective, this type of interview can also be useful to discuss topics that are sensitive. Researchers can halt the interview at any point for the safety of participants and can give prompts if necessary (Herson, 2011). For example: "How do you feel about...?", are used spontaneously to ensure researchers are empathetic and nonleading when discussing

topics (Wilson, 2013, p.29). They require strong trust between the researcher and participants, as well as confidentiality when discussing any sensitive issues, so participants feel comfortable (Ryan *et al.*, 2009). According to Dearnley (2005) once that trusting relationship is built, the quality of data gathered can be increased. Participants need to be interviewed in an appropriate private, yet informal venue where they are comfortable to tell the researcher how their experiences are.

b) Procedure

All participants were provided with an information form about the study which included support services available at the University of Glasgow, as with the pilot study. Following participants' signed consent, interviews in Phase 1 were designed by integrating techniques from FBA, SFBT, Life Coaching (see Table 3, Appendix 1), which served to meet both research intentions as highlighted in Chapter 1. These were combined, and intended to build on each other, as participants were prompted to explore their experiences of group learning during the procedure.

To meet the first and part of the second research objective highlighted in Chapter 1, I invited participants to recall past events, their responses to these events, and what they perceived were factors which might have contributed to these during this interview. I asked participants to reflect on examples of difficult situations within group learning that were resolved and unresolved using exploratory questions derived from FBA and Solution-Focused Coaching. Concepts derived from Relationship Coaching drawn from Ives & Cox (2015) were applied in this context, whereby participants were invited to explore their group learning experiences, events, perspectives and attitudes, during the behavioural analysis. Exploring past examples of group learning in higher education was particularly aimed to expand and address shortcomings of previous research (Borg *et al.*, 2011; Burdett, 2007; Colebrook, 2014; Hassanien, 2007; Naykki *et al.*, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2006).

To set the foundation for SFDC and prepare for Phase 2 of this intervention, such techniques aimed to build on one another in two directions aimed at meeting the second research objective, highlighted in Chapter 1: i) Establish participants' desired outcome for the intervention and ii) Assist participants with a homework task for Phase 2. Drawing on Life Coaching and Psychodrama there was an exclusion criterion for participating in Phases 2 and beyond. Participants were only suitable for Phase 2 if they identified examples of unresolved

conflicts from their group learning experiences for the enactments, as SFDC primarily aimed to address relationship issues, not challenges with academic tasks during group activities. Drawing on my previous research, Colebrook (2014) difficulties with academic tasks here included, for example challenges with statistics during group projects. I thus cut interviews short if participants only experienced challenges with academic tasks in the absence of relationship issues during their group learning which SFDC was not designed for.

I thus examined information provided from all participants in Phase 1 to assess whether they met the following core intentions of the intervention. Firstly, to test whether the proposed coaching was compatible with the information gathered from participants. I thus screened participants drawing on Life Coaching and Psychodrama concepts, to ensure that their personal experiences and information gathered made them appropriate for coaching further. Secondly, this stage of the process was used to identify any minor amendments for Phase 2, especially when exploring more complex scenarios which shall be discussed further in Chapter 5.

To meet this part of the second research objective, information was gathered from Phase 1 of SFDC which anticipated specific responses from participants to a range of techniques described in Appendix 1, Table 3, in order to progress further in later phases of this research should they wish to. These anticipated responses considered SFDC's complex epistemology, which drew primarily on strengths-based model concepts from positive psychology, while acknowledging techniques derived from humanistic and behaviourist approaches within its framework as described in Chapter 3. These concepts were identifying participant values, strengths and resources within this research context contrasting with formulating hypotheses on group learning issues. SFDC was thus deemed effective at this research stage, if participants framed their responses according to these sought aims. This would confirm whether they met criteria to take part in Phase 2 onwards.

The first aim of the interview process during Phase 1 was to gather participants' responses which would provide insights into aspects of their personal values that were relevant and important for positive group learning. This aim was based on participants' self-reports of what they believed were positive features of these situations. Insights into these values were important for participants' goals for further coaching in Phase 2, as drawn from Ives and Cox (2015) in Relationship Coaching. I intended to clarify whether participants met this aim when I invited them to discuss a positive example of their experiences of group learning in

higher education to be consistent with personal-values interventions from work by Harackiewicz & Priniski (2018), discussed in Chapter 2.

The second aim was for participants to identify their personal strengths and resources during the interview using solution-focused coaching tools derived from the coping and exceptions questions, and to invite them to identify what they had learnt from these past experiences by inviting positive reflection. Such responses also served to assist with the establishment of their desired outcome for the intervention explored later in the interview.

The interview's third aim intended to encourage participants to think creatively to assist "homework" in preparation for Phase 2, building on their responses to the second and fifth aim stated later in this section. This aim served to firstly address group learning challenges described by Colbeck (2000) by enabling participants to consider new ways of responding in conflict scenarios within this context, for dramatic exploration later in the intervention to gain additional insights and flourish in the future. I deployed a question drawn from the A (alternative solutions generated) component of the PRACTICE model (Palmer, 2007).

Participants would meet this aim if they expressed at least two alternative solutions to the situations explored during the procedure. This aim was influenced by Biswas-Diener (2010) and Martin (2001) in coaching practices and Forum Theatre, when searching for solutions rather than being limited to a single solution which might be ineffective during Phase 2. Participants thus would be encouraged to consider other possibilities, to provide them more choices than a single self-limiting behavioural routine that may not have prosocial outcomes. Participants were open to suggest any well-defined possibility that involved direct verbal communication with the person they experienced conflict with, when responding to this tool.

Most importantly, I asked participants to identify a final goal during the interview to aim towards during Phase 2 of the intervention, firstly using an SFBT-derived script of the miracle question to meet the fourth aim of the interview. The fourth aim built on responses to the first and second aims above, alongside identifying what their needs were from the person they experienced conflict with. This involved asking each participant to describe what their ideal group working relations would be like. Their perception of that successful outcome was established in terms of what collaboration with the person(s) the participant had experienced conflict with would look like, consistent with success behaviours description. Participants would meet this fourth aim if they framed their responses in a positive, specific, and personal

manner consistent with criteria for goal settings using the strengths-based model as discussed in Chapter 3 to promote maintenance of learnings from SFDC in the future.

I invited participants to establish their desired outcome further using techniques derived from Life Coaching (i.e O component of the ICANDO model), as both SFBT and Life Coaching tools have the same intention when synthesising Deshazer & Dolon (2012) and Martin (2001) as discussed in Chapter 3. I only deployed this prompt if more detail was required in addition to their miracle responses.

The fifth aim of the interview was that while reflecting on the unresolved situation, participants would identify what they perceived were behavioural characteristics of the person involved to assist their homework for Phase 2, alongside the second and third aims highlighted earlier in this section. Using behavioural analysis tools, my intention of this aim was that participants would also consider these behavioural characteristics when responding to the homework task, and address shortcomings of Psychodrama from work by Perls (1992) as described in Chapter 3. I shall use the term “accessory behaviours” for the rest of this thesis when referring to these behaviours, in sharp contrast to behaviours that participants reported as causing conflict during learning, which I define as: participants’ perceptions of other behavioural characteristics of the person they experienced conflict with which they didn’t define as the problem causing conflict in the group.

Participants' responses would meet this aim if such behaviours were well defined, relevant to each scenario and specific to the individual participants experienced conflict with, in these examples. Identification of such behaviours was important for SFDC because when exploring the unresolved situation this provided them further insight on what responses were effective while performing scenarios with the actor. Such responses were designed to influence their decisions and actions in Phase 2 to promote prosocial outcomes that led to resolution during the enactments.

Before finishing this interview, I invited participants to complete mutually agreed “homework” for Phase 2 as a foundation for scenario exploration during SDFC. This homework task involved inventing up to five different solutions to address the behaviours of the individual(s) participants had experienced conflict with to achieve their desired outcome of social capital as a final goal of this intervention. This task was very flexible for participants to consider many creative ideas from simple or more complex approaches, on the condition that such approaches enabled communicating with the actor directly. The task was

conveyed in this manner with the intention to provide participants sufficient time to reflect on such possibilities rather than expecting spontaneous answers during Phase 2, to increase their comfort.

Prior to Phase 2, a summary of the data collected of the unresolved difficult situation was emailed to the actor and director, under a pseudonym to ensure participant anonymity with the participants' consent. Perls (1992), describes how in Psychodrama auxiliary group members are provided with limited background information on the protagonist's situation and can introduce false interpretations into the drama. Drawing on this limitation, by providing the actor and director increased background information on each participant's scenario, I intended to promote more relatable relationship dynamics and understandings of each scenario for all individuals involved.

Participants could self-select their pseudonyms in the interview, to enhance openness, collaboration and to balance the power between the participant and the researcher as well as the director, as far as possible, drawn from Dearnley, (2005). This was aimed to make the process more egalitarian and co-creative, typical of Life Coaching, as described by Griffiths & Campbell (2008), and Williams & Menendez (2007) as discussed in Chapter 3.

In the next sections of this Chapter, I shall describe the rationale, foundations, and detailed procedures of Phases 2-4 of the intervention to meet the rest of the second research objective highlighted in Chapter 1.

4.Vi.iv) Intervention (i.e Phase two and Phase three)

a) Context and rationale

The second method adopted in this research was participant observation. Phases 2 and 3 comprised the main intervention, which involved participant observations in the form of improvised role plays, alongside stages of participant-self reporting, adopting a range of techniques described in Table 4, Appendix 1. This type of method aimed to address challenges of group learning in higher education and shortcomings of previous research on positive psychology and applied theatre as described in earlier Chapters (Colbeck, 2000; Dassen 2015; Day 2002; Fernandez *et al.*, 2012; Herrera *et al.*, 2009; Karatas, 2014; Lloyd & Dallas, 2008; Masias *et al.*, 2015; Mellado *et al.*, 2017; Morelos, 1999).

During Phases 2 and 3 participant observations were used because according to Aagaard & Mattisen (2016), the researcher can gain access to events or groups being studied, whereby there can be no other means of obtaining evidence other than participant observation for some topics. It can therefore be a useful addition to verbal reports of participants. Participant observation of events during a case study can occur either on personal level or by studying how individuals behave more collectively in groups. There are opportunities for the researcher to provoke changes to these events under investigation and consequently lead to changes in responses of participants (Yin, 2014). This is of key importance as qualitative research is a form of interpretative research, not post positivist as with quantitative research. Qualitative research can focus on one or a few individuals' views, understandings, and experiences to discover meanings within the issues under investigation, in contrast to using large samples as in quantitative research (Morrow, 2005).

Participant observations are described as a specific type of observation (Yin, 2014). This includes taking part in the lives of a group or community during a research study (Chandra & Sharma, 2004). In such instances, researchers take on a variety of roles within a case study and can take part in the events being investigated (Yin, 2014). It is one of the most common types of qualitative data collection, yet these also require time to plan and that can take months or years (Trochim *et al.*, 2016). In this study I did not actively take part in the role play exercises which were led by the director, in contrast to typical participant observations defined above.

A direct observation contrasts with participant observation in a variety of ways. In a direct observation the researcher or observer is not typically involved in the research context. As a result, the observer attempts to maintain distance, so they do not influence or bias the data by their presence (Trochim *et al.*, 2016). Although direct observation can gather information about behaviour, language, life, conduct of individuals being observed, it differs from participant observation in that the observer is completely detached and objective when gathering data (Chandra & Sharma, 2004). Here the observer is only watching the actions taken. For example, this can be done by videotaping the research phenomena under investigation or observing from behind a mirror or sitting in a classroom. Finally, direct observation is usually more structured and less time consuming than participant observation, in a specific controlled environment such as a laboratory. In such instances the observer is examining specific sample situations or individuals yet without being immersed in the entire

context (Trochim *et al.* 2016). Consequently, I designed the observation used in this study, where I was actively involved in guiding, briefing, and debriefing sections of the role play session of this project. I did not merely passively observe the enactments between the actor and participant as with a direct observation situation (see later in this Chapter).

A main strength of participant observations is that they enable researchers to unearth and examine new behaviours as they occur, without prior assumptions and are open to new behavioural explanations (Morrison, 2002). They have been used widely to explore behaviours that participants may find difficult to discuss (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002). Participant observation was thus an effective research method for this study where I intended to gain more information on prosocial behaviour which promotes effective group learning rather than interview data. I thus aimed to use this method to expand on and address limitations of SFBT and Life Coaching conversations, discussed in Chapter 3.

Improvised role plays can thus draw on the above strengths of participant observation when applied in research contexts, by providing individuals the opportunity to practice and gain more insights on new behaviours beyond conversations to promote their personal growth. These dramatic methods had potential to address challenges of stuck episodes within interventions as discussed in Chapter 3. In this study I was thus actively involved in guiding the briefing and part of the debriefing stages of the role plays rather than observing the action from a distance like direct observations discussed above. This project deployed an active form of improvised role plays whereby participants take on a defined character role within situations and simulate the feelings and behaviours of a character (Johnson, 2009). In Psychodrama and Forum Theatre they actively take part in improvisations rather than merely passively observing the action on stage. Participants are asked by the researcher to reflect on the feelings, reactions and behaviours occurring during the role play situation presented. The researcher may often note the types of behaviours observed in both types of role plays (Coohican, 2009).

During a participant observation the researcher needs to observe what goes on during the study, and how individuals interact with each other and their surroundings. Zahle (2012, p. 56-58), describes some main types of participant observations as follows:

“Type I observations: the social scientist may make observations of individuals’ action which are met with approval or disapproval by competent assessors...suggestive as to how it is appropriate and/or effective to act.”

“Type 2 observations: the social scientist may make observations of a competent performer’s actions and interactions with other individuals and their surroundings. An action carried out by a competent performer is suggestive as to how it is appropriate and/or effective to act”.

“Type 3 observations: the social scientist may make observations of her own actions as these are met with approval or disapproval by competent assessors...suggestive of its being appropriate and/or effective”.

“Type 4 observations: the social scientist may make observations of actions of other individuals as well as her own, that she, as a competent assessor, meets with approval or disapproval”.

The current research combined type 1 and 2 observations because the effectiveness of actions was primarily decided by each participant. This study did not use type 3 and 4 observations as the actions were performed between the participant and actor, not myself as the researcher, nor was it my decision as to whether such actions were appropriate. So only the participant decided whether they achieved their desired outcome. I never decided whether the participant’s actions achieved this outcome, as it could be disempowering, create resistance, and reduce participant engagement with the process drawing on Life Coaching and SFBT recommendations from Martin (2001) and Deshazer & Dolon (2012). In Phase 2, successful actions were dependent on the participant’s perspective based on the action taken during the role plays, and their reflections (i.e during debriefing), in line with type 2 observations.

As participants evaluated the effectiveness of the solutions they explored to achieve their desired outcomes, while still considering insights from the actor who was the receiver of such solutions during the role plays so participants thought about the actions they took, this was in line with type I observations. Such reflections were intended to enable participants to make positive decisions by extra insights from the receivers of the solutions they explored to progress effectively in Phase 2, as examined in the next Chapter. The aim was to promote critical thinking on the part of each participant and expand on their view of the situation, alongside addressing shortcomings of personal Psychodrama research described by Carnabucci (2014) and Vander May (1980) in earlier Chapters. This also served to indirectly challenge participants’ assumptions, as an alternative manner of perceiving circumstances aimed at increasing their insight and learning, as in group Life Coaching. Viewing the situation from merely their own perception was likely to be self-limiting, based on coaching concepts described in Chapter 3. While acknowledging that SFDC was a participant-led

rather than expert-led approach, such insights also served to expand participants' learning, evaluate their choices of responses and improve their interpersonal dynamic quality for future experiences of group learning activities.

The participant role however can require too much attention in comparison to that of the observer role. A participant-observer may be unable to take notes or ask questions about the events from a different perspective, as might good observers, due to time constraints (Yin, 2014). Another problem as stated by Zahle, (2012) is the researcher misinterpreting the situation based on the four types of observation. This can be either in terms of the competent assessor (i.e themselves, a participant of interest, or another individual in the group being examined within the context), or an absence of other relevant contexts for the research phenomena under examination. In such cases there is a problem when the researcher believes there was approval of action by the competent assessor when this did not take place. To address this problem, earlier observations can be compared with later observations of actions taking place, where the researcher can compare and revise their interpretations of such actions. Researchers can overcome this problem by obtaining more observations about the phenomena of interest and consider the behavioural differences according to different situations (Zahle, 2012). Drawing such recommendations, I aimed to compare and examine my interpretations of the participants' actions during Phase 3 with Phase 2 of SFDC, which shall be expanded on later in this Chapter.

b) Foundations for SFDC practice when applied for group learning in higher education

To lay foundations for evaluating SFDC as a coaching practice with strong distinctions from therapeutic practices, participants had to conform to several principles if they wished to take part from Phase 2 and beyond. This was important as the interdisciplinary techniques that informed the design of this intervention had varied origins and intentions, due to SFDC's complex epistemology to ensure participants progressed effectively in this study to flourish in their future experiences of group learning activities. SFDC depended on these foundations for several reasons, as the core body of the practice occurred in these stages, while respecting participants' right to withdraw from the research at any time according to University of Glasgow's ethical procedures (UoG, 2018). These foundations were:

Participants were responsible to complete the agreed homework task set during Phase 1, whereas myself and the director were responsible for what happened to participants and the actor during role play sessions, in accordance with SFDC's ground rules (Table 4 Appendix 1). This foundation was influenced by coaching principles discussed in Chapter 3, to promote a collaborative process, alongside the director's expertise in guiding individuals in theatre workshops. The process would be deemed more challenging for myself and the director, if any participant were unable to complete the task without good reason, to effectively create an action plan during Phase 2. Participants would successfully complete this homework if they proposed at least 2-3 alternative solutions during the briefing stage of Phase 2, while reflecting on this task between Phases 1-2, where I offered all participants the opportunity to contact myself should they have challenges with this task.

SFDC was designed to promote participants' creativity rather than merely considering the most obvious solution, to encourage participants to think laterally "outside the box" when exploring alternative options. Participants could explore any individual solution involving direct verbal communication with a receiver. Solutions suggested by participants must be specifically defined to promote a focus for enactments and effective progression through this intervention, drawing on Solution-Focused Coaching recommendations highlighted in Chapter 3. Participants were encouraged to identify any effective resources (prosocial actions) from their learning experiences for implementation into their future experiences outside the rehearsals in accordance with the strengths-based model principles.

This intervention was semi-structured and collaborative, meaning that it was a semi-structured approach consistent with common dynamics of applied theatre and positive psychology as discussed in Chapter 3. The process was participant-led in terms of content as participants could choose which episodes they wished to enact and were open to choosing which solutions they wish to explore based on their response to the above homework task. This was aimed at ensuring participants were effectively engaged with the process, promote their personal growth and autonomy in a co-creative manner instead of myself or the director imposing episodes or solutions causing resistance.

SFDC was designed to explore the relationship dynamics in these episodes, encourage participants to react spontaneously to attain an outcome representative of their miracle question responses, to provide insights for effective group work in higher education. The intervention was thus intended to be a coaching practice drawing on strengths-based model

principles distinct from a therapeutic practice based on deficit-model principles, as stated in Chapter 3. The conflict was deemed resolved if participants identified resources explored during the enactment enabling them to reach an understanding with the other individual involved in the conflict. Drawing on studies on positive psychology and applied theatre (Avrahami, 2003; Carroll, 2003; Elliot & McGregor, 2001; Fried & Irwin, (2016; George 2013; Gibb, 2004; Gourd & Gourd, 2011; Karatas, 2011), resolution here applied principles of coaching within positive psychology, expanding on those within applied theatre. These principles were enhancing participants' quality of interpersonal dynamics to flourish in future experiences of group activities, rather than being restricted to gaining further awareness of a past conflict. This type of resolution also had to be representative of participants desired outcome as described in Phase 1 of the intervention.

The first hot-seating exercise was designed for participants to identify alternative feelings and behaviours by visualising an imagined positive group learning example in the future, which were different from the problem discussed in the briefing. Drawing on coaching recommendations discussed in Chapter 3, an exclusive focus on academic task details beyond a broad description of a future group work example would risk compromising core aims of this exercise. This is very important as SFDC's core aim was to address interpersonal issues in group learning in higher education not academic tasks, alongside ensuring participants shifted into a resourceful state from this exercise and expand further on insights into their values for positive group learning than in Phase 1.

The actor was encouraged by the director to provide reflections on the effectiveness of solutions participants examined as they were involved in dialogues with the participants as the receiver of solutions they explored. This reflection was from an outside perspective, where the actor must not evaluate participants' performance and be encouraging towards them, in accordance with ground rules to enhance their personal growth. Such concepts draw on group coaching recommendations discussed in Chapter 3 to invite non-judgmental, non-expert led insights from other coachees as outsiders when discussing a specific topic. These reflections were thus intended to provide participants with new insights beyond senders, to enable them to make effective decisions and progress during the experience and encourage a collaborative process. A collaborative dynamic was designed to be consistent with positive psychology and applied theatre practices, alongside addressing shortcomings of directive,

expert-led approaches such as CBT from previous studies (Barnes *et al.*, 2013; Dunn *et al.*, 2002; Schermuly-Haupt *et al.*, 2018; Turner *et al.*, 2007).

The core intentions of the Phase 3 group workshop were to firstly, to examine whether the tools participants had learnt in Phase 2 were maintained while they performed their own scenarios again a month later, drawn from Solution-Focused Coaching recommendations. Secondly, examine whether tools participants developed in Phase 2 can be applied in other scenarios. These intentions were aimed at enabling participants to acquire new resources and insights from the model, consistent with values of the strengths-based model and promote thriving in future group learning activities.

If participants identified effective resources from SFDC, alongside experiencing conflict in group activities between Phases 3 and 4, I intended to provide them with the choices and inspire them to apply these to their future lives within this context, either: i) when future events of conflict occur in the moment or ii) via private conversations with the individual(s) they experienced conflict with, based on their experiences during the two major stages of dramatic explorations in Phase 2, which I will describe in the next section of this Chapter, integrating Psychodrama and Forum Theatre tools within this intervention.

c) Phase 2 procedure

Phase 2 was comprised of personal role play sessions based on data gathered from the unresolved difficult situation of each participant in Phase 1, from their group learning experiences. This was SFDC's most crucial phase, where there was a variability of participant duration rather than fixed duration, typical of education interventions, to meet the primary positive outcome described in Chapter 2. Participants were encouraged to dramatically explore their chosen scenario aimed at identifying new resources for expanding their behavioural repertoires and improving their future interpersonal experiences of group learning. Phase 2 thus aimed to address challenges in group learning within higher education described by Colbeck (2000) and develop new ways to respond to conflicts within this context. I designed these role plays by integrating techniques primarily from Solution-Focused Coaching, Forum Theatre and Psychodrama (Table 5 Appendix 1), expanding on studies by Dassen (2015) where a single participant, actor, director, and myself were present.

These role plays were divided into three stages: briefing, action, and debriefing. Considering my experiences of positive psychology but not directing, I facilitated the process in the

briefing and most of the debriefing stage. The director was the main facilitator of the action stage by coaching participants during the role play exercises, the warmup exercises, and derolling exercises in the debriefing. Participants were invited to perform dialogues with an actor during these exercises, where all techniques used were influenced by amendments from the pilot study.

Phase 2 occurred within a few days to a month after Phase 1 and was conducted in a private room, set up in semi-circle in the School of Education, University of Glasgow. There was a specific seating arrangement for all individuals present during the briefing and debriefing phase, and a performance area of two chairs for the participant and actor, where the enactments would take place, and a list of ground rules (Table 4 Appendix 1) placed on a white board throughout the process.

Prior to participant arrival, I discussed each participant's scenario (under a pseudonym), with the director and actor to ensure the process ran smoothly. I provided the actor and director detailed descriptions of the exercises involved to ensure they adequately understood what would happen and knew what to do, what to say, and where to be. This also included guidance for the director when to stop the action (see later in this section). I also offered them the opportunity to ask questions to clarify their understanding of each participant's situation. I clarified the director's requirements at each stage and updated them on the amendments to the process due to the pilot study experience.

If some participants' situations were more complex than others, I discussed these situations further with the director to ensure those role plays were enacted in the most effective way possible. I refer to more complex situations as those of more than a single event within the same relationship situation, or situations involving more than one person with whom the participant had experienced conflict. This would be subject to what participants' session goal was (i.e like breaking goals down into manageable steps in Life Coaching, see Chapter 3), for first sessions.

I provided participants with ground rules as highlighted earlier in this Chapter, derived from my personal experiences of Psychodrama, and promise documents described by Martin (2001) within Life Coaching for practitioners to effectively support coachees to achieve their goals. This is important as in both group Psychodrama and Life Coaching ground rules are used for individual comfort as discussed in Chapter 3. These ground rules also drew on best practices in the ethics guidelines, conforming to the University of Glasgow's code of good

practice in research to show honesty, respect and support for participants' comfort throughout the procedure (UoG, 2018a).

These ground rules were mutually agreed by all participants, and I discussed these in the presence of the actor and director when I briefed participants at the beginning of Phase 2. Participants were also given a copy of this and the list of ground rules was on display during all role play sessions, near the performance area. I also invited participants to add any additional ground rules should they see fit, for their comfort.

Briefing

During this Phase, I informed participants they would be offered up to four role play sessions to achieve their desired outcome for personal development noted during Phase 1 and asked them to imagine their scenario was ongoing to evoke a present-future focus consistent with positive psychology. I proceeded to ask participants to provide a brief overview of the difficult situation for the actor's and director's benefit, to expand on the background information I had emailed to the director and actor, if further clarity was required. I coached participants to clarify if any further information on relationship dynamics were required for the enactment drawn from the P component of the PRACTICE model.

I thus prompted participants to choose a specific event to enact from the relationship situation in question as a session goal for the first role play session, to form an action plan in order to focus the session, drawn from Life Coaching principles. I also invited participants to expand further on the content of their final goal for personal development if there was any ambiguity from their responses, drawn from the R component of the PRACTICE model as with the pilot.

Prior to the action stage, I had the following conversation with each participant aimed at setting a foundation and focus for the enactments. During this conversation I proceeded to explore each participant's "homework" from Phase 1, (i.e propose up to five different alternative solutions).

Here participants had been invited to consider at least 2-3 solutions to explore typical of positive psychology principles discussed in Chapter 3, drawing on the A component on the PRACTICE model to be consistent with foundations highlighted previously in this Chapter. I invited each participant to imagine that the scenario they were exploring was ongoing, to create a present focus, before passing guidance of the session over to the director for the

action section. For flexibility, I invited participants to express any further creative solutions throughout the process to either myself or the director.

Action

This section of the role play session involved the following components, based on the outline of the process used to brief the actor and director. The director could reframe questions in this outline to accommodate different participant's responses, to ensure participants progressed effectively during this phase. These aims were determined by the director unless the director required further clarification from myself. The action section was comprised of the following stages/components:

Future-focused hot seating: This stage took the form of warm-up exercises intended to focus the participant on an imagined positive group scenario that would occur in the future. Participants were coached to visualise an imagined scene by the director, aimed at establishing an alternative outcome to a difficult group work situation discussed in the briefing. The director asked the following core questions: “Can you describe that situation?” “Where are you?” “Who are you working with?”, “How are you achieving that success?”.

Present-focused hot seating: By contrast to the previous exercise, this exercise invited the participant to imagine that the difficult group work situation they had described during their interview was happening in the present. The director asked both the participant and the actor core questions drawn from Psychodrama such as “Where are you?” “What type of environment are you in” “What are you doing?” “Who are you working with”.

Enactment of a specific event: In this first section the participant was invited to rehearse different approaches to the conflict event, with the actor taking on the role of the person with whom the participant had experienced conflict. This stage combined techniques from Forum Theatre, Psychodrama, and the A component of PRACTICE model. These approaches were identified during the briefing and drawn from the participant’s creative ideas from their Phase 1 homework. This was an enactment of the conflict situation as described by participants in their initial interview.

Participants were then invited to explore each of their proposed strategies/solutions in turn using improvised dialogues with the actor. After each solution was trialled, the participant and actor also reversed roles so that they could reflect on the consequences of each solution, the use of improvisation, and iterate on each approach. The intention here was for

participants to refine and consider all solutions they examined to progress effectively during these exercises.

The director shouted “freeze” during the action if they decided that if either of the following conditions were met during the practice: i) the scene was going dead or becoming repetitive, whereby nothing new was being added to the scene, stalling the participant’s progress, i.e: a stuck episode, where the participant, actor or both were running out of things to say in the dialogue (or at the request of the actor or participant under such circumstances); and ii) the dialogue was getting emotionally charged, leading to frustrations on the part of either the participant and/or actor, without finding any successful solutions. After each enactment the director asked the participant and the actor to reflect on their feelings about each approach used.

Though the participant was invited to consider the response of the performer (i.e actor), the process primarily mirrored principles of type 2 observations by privileging the participant’s capacity to determine which approach was most effective, as participants were always the competent assessor. Yet the director was the competent assessor of when to stop the dialogue, based on their directing expertise. All dialogues were open to adjustments depending on the nature of the approach participants agreed to explore, with respect of when to start and end enactments. Towards the end of this stage, participants evaluated all approaches they had explored so far and narrowed down to those achieving successful outcomes, combining principles of dynamization and reorganisation as highlighted in Chapter 3. This was drawn from E, C, I, and T components of the PRACTICE model, prior to commencing the next set of exercises of the action section.

Open dialogue with the antagonist. This stage was based on the outcome and successes of the enactment of the specific event. Here techniques derived from role play and role reversing of Psychodrama were combined with implementing participants' chosen solution(s) derived from Life Coaching, during role play exercises. The core intention of these exercises was for participants to apply approaches they deemed successful from the previous stage into a private conversation with the actor to find resolution to conflict by meeting their outcome described in the briefing to enable transformation. They used either a single or a combination of successful approaches based on their experience of previous enactments in this dialogue. These exercises were similar to the enactment of a specific event yet intended to be more holistic by addressing the wider relationship dynamics within the scenarios rather

than single episodes of conflict. The role reversal exercise was also conducted once during these enactments, aimed at providing participants additional insights and perspectives on the situation, beyond the single event already enacted. The director stopped each dialogue in a similar fashion to the previous role play exercises of SFDC.

Debriefing

This section of the procedure integrated techniques from Psychodrama and Life Coaching. This was the last stage of Phase 2, where deroling of the participant and actor first took place under the director's guidance, as with the pilot. The director then asked them to sit down away from the performance area and gave guidance back to myself. I first gave the participant a moment to relax in the space, in the event of tiredness. I then asked the participants to reflect on their performance and feelings about the enactments, to determine whether they met the first positive outcome of SFDC. I asked various questions which prompted the participant to reflect on their experiences of the enactments, drawn from Life Coaching when evaluating their performances. These included: "How do you feel you got on in the enactment?", "What do you feel you learnt?" "What was successful?" The participant was given the choice as to whether they would like further role play sessions, to develop their practical skills for Phase 3, if their final goal was achieved during the first session. After this I proceeded to summarise the successes of each participant prior to closing.

During any follow-on sessions in Phase 2, I gave participants the choice as to whether they wished to enact the same event of the scenario from the previous session or (if the situation included several different events), or a different event based on their performance so far. After all role play sessions, I created short scripts to narrate during Phase 3, as described in the next section which were based on participants' data derived from Phase 2 of SFDC.

d) Phase 3 (small group role plays) procedure

Phase 3 was a short term follow up to Phase 2, around a month later which was a group workshop with several participants, the interviewer, actor and assisting director, and myself as researcher. The process was divided into briefing, action, and debriefing, where a core intention was to ensure the participants' learnt skills had been maintained in the short term. During this phase I compared my participants' observations with Phase 2 to meet this core intention, drawing on recommendations from Zahle (2012). I particularly aimed to provide

them the opportunity to practice using these skills using role plays exercises to gain more insights, beyond coaching conversations as highlighted in Chapter 3.

Another core intention of this workshop was for participants to apply the skills they learnt from Phase 2 in other difficult scenarios of learning to determine the extent of transferability.

This workshop was conducted in a private room at the St Andrew's Building in the University of Glasgow, and set up in similar way to Phase 2, though with more participants. The room was set up in a semi-circle with a performance area involving two chairs for the action stage, and a seating arranged outside of this for the briefing and debriefing stage for the actor, director, all participants and myself. A list of ground rules was also pinned up as with Phase 2.

Briefing

During the briefing, the participants were reminded of all the ground rules and were invited to make any additions they wished, as with Phase 2. An ice-breaker exercise was used to introduce participants to each other and bond. Here all individuals present (participants, actor, director and myself), expressed three statements about themselves which included two truths and one unknown lie (the lie was not identified to others), where the other individuals present had to guess which statement was the lie. After this exercise I gave an overview of the process prior to starting the action section.

Action

The action stage integrated techniques of Life Coaching, Psychodrama and Forum Theatre (see, Table 5, Appendix 1). When preparing for Phase 3, I designed short, summarised scripts drawing on ethnodramatic principles where participants' scenarios were framed as: defining the current problem each protagonist was experiencing and highlighting what their aims and desired outcome indicators were for each scenario. Such framings were designed to provide participants with relevant information per scenario, establish the purpose for all enactments by combining Forum Theatre and Life Coaching tools to promote prosocial relationships within the context of group learning. I first randomly narrated these scripts anonymously prior to commencing the enactments. This anonymity was aimed at encouraging participant creativity instead of simply copying the behaviour of previous protagonists who were viewed as experts.

Once I handed guidance to the director for the action, the director encouraged a participant to volunteer as the first protagonist to start the process. This was followed by hot seating of the first protagonist and the actor as the antagonist before starting the dialogue, as a warmup exercise based on Psychodrama. During the dialogue, the protagonist performed an improvised private conversation for each situation, and I informed participants to use the skills they learnt from Phase 2 during the enactments. When another participant wished to be the protagonist/substitute themselves as the protagonist, they were to shout “freeze” in a Forum Theatre like manner and continued the scene as that protagonist. If the dialogue had run its course before the dialogue was halted by a participant, the director would start the dialogue at the beginning with the new protagonist. Once all participants had taken part as the protagonist for that situation, a new narration of a selected participant’s situation would take place and the process would be repeated.

As Phase 3 was a group workshop with several participants, I took more notes while observing each protagonist per scenario (observation log, Appendix 1), unlike Phase 2 that was conducted on a personal level with single participants. Here it was important to know which participant protagonist it was, when the protagonist changed and which participant scenario it was, while examining the observation and to meet the aims of this workshop. I highlighted occasions where successful collaboration occurred between the protagonist and the antagonist per dialogue, where protagonists asserted their needs and feelings effectively to achieve resolution of the interpersonal conflict. Such occasions indicated that the protagonist achieved their desired outcome set out in the narration.

Debriefing

The debriefing stage took place once each participant had performed in their own scenario and those of the other participants, which integrated techniques from Psychodrama and Life Coaching. The director deroled the actor using Psychodrama techniques as with Phase 2, after which guidance was handed back to myself to coach the rest of the process. I encouraged participants to actively reflect on their performance during each scenario using Life Coaching techniques. This focused on applying the skills they learnt from Phase 2, in a variety of different difficult situations of group learning. Here, I asked participants to actively reflect on what they learnt from the action in a supportive manner, without any judgements from others present. Finally, there was group discussion and participants were able express their feelings on the action they saw as a non-active observer, and as the protagonist, when

they took part on stage (in their own situation and that of others), drawn from Psychodrama mirroring. SFDC was intended to be more active and analytical than understanding the problem better as in Psychodrama. Reflections focused on participants' learnings as protagonist, drawn from Life Coaching and Forum Theatre principles discussed in Chapter 3, aimed at identifying their achievements and prosocial resources to improve their future group learning experiences. I invited the actor and assisting director to express their views on the action before closing, if they had any further comments aimed at making participants think further, as with Phase 2.

4.Vi.v) Phase 4: follow up interview

Phase 4 took the form of a semi-structured follow-up interview conducted two months after Phase 3, designed to address shortcomings of applied theatre studies by Babbage, (2004), Gibb (2004), Karatas (2014), Rae (2013), by determining whether learning were taken outside of the rehearsal into real life. This interview focused on the short-term impact of the intervention. Each interview lasted around 10 minutes.

This interview had an entirely solution-focused emphasis, with more space for spontaneous questioning unlike Phase 1 (see Appendix 4). In this interview I asked participants to reflect on the impact of the intervention on their wellbeing, and whether the skills they learnt were maintained after the intervention, and how they might have used these to meet SFDC's positive outcomes described in Chapter 2. The process drew on coaching principles described in Chapter 3, as the interview included core questions and provided space for using powerful questions, according to participants' responses.

I invited participants to first comment on their overall views on the intervention and potential benefits that took place, considering what their expectations and values were for effective group work. There was also an opportunity for participants to reflect on the whole intervention, which was aimed at uncovering what resources they had acquired from the experience, and their feelings on the whole process. The interview thus focused on what improvements had occurred for the participant's future learning in groups within higher education from this experience.

After this follow-up interview, I chunked (split recordings into subsections) and transcribed participant data using Audio Note Taker 3 for analysis to meet both research intentions highlighted in Chapter 1. This was stored on a personal password protected laptop and

private folders under pseudonyms at a secure location at the University of Glasgow, to meet good ethical practices in research (UoG, 2018a) and be consistent with AC's guidelines for good coaching practice (AC, 2018).

In the next section of this Chapter, I will discuss my analytic strategy to address all data obtained in this study, to meet both research objectives described in Chapter 1, and the reason I chose the analysis during this study.

4.Vii) Research Analytical strategy

On obtaining participant data from all phases of this study, I analysed the data by two core means in relation to both research objectives and the variety of research techniques discussed previously in this Chapter. Phase 1 explored group learning problems and specific aims which participants had to meet to progress effectively during Phase 2 and beyond of this project. Here participant data was examined to determine whether their response met criteria for the first research objective and part of the second research objective. By contrast participant data during Phases 2-4 of this study was examined to determine only if their responses met the second research objective. Phases 2-4 were more individualised and open to exploring solutions suggested by participants, in contrast to examining specific aims or problems as in Phase 1. For this reason, I deployed a coding strategy for all Phase 1 data, and a modified headlining approach with extended themes to examine data from Phases 2-4, which I shall explain further in the next sections of this Chapter. I thus particularly took a holistic approach to analysis by making links between different codes or headlines throughout this research, to provide a wide scope for vast exploration of group learning issues and participants' responses to the intervention, consistent with studies on Life Coaching by Chan (2012) and Rydner (2012). This approach aimed to address variations in participant duration, responses to intervention techniques, and the complex issues identified in this study, and shortcomings of Lancer & Eatough (2018) on evaluating coaching practices within higher education.

Throughout the analysis, I adopted a strengths-based approach, characteristic of positive psychology-based interventions such as SFBT discussed in Chapter 3, when discussing issues participants experienced in group learning and evaluating this intervention. This type of analysis was aiming at providing a realistic representation of these issues and effectiveness of this intervention. Issues examined were participant-led, by validating participants' definition of the problem, as Life Coaching and SFBT are collaborative and non-expert led approaches

aimed at providing individuals more autonomy. This was aimed to address shortcomings of CBT described by Barnes *et al.* (2013), and promote assertions of Feltham *et al.* (2017), Krapu (2016), Macdonald (2011) and Yip (2008). A strength-based analysis thus aims to prevent cognitive dissonance to meet a pathology or inappropriate amplification of an issue's severity, to encourage empowerment and promote personal growth of individuals. Such definitions were thus intended to evoke more authentic representations of student perceptions of challenging issues in group activities rather than inauthentic representations of an outsider.

A major challenge in this study was to mediate between principles from positive psychology practices and those of research, as SFBT practitioners aim to validate a client's life experiences, discouraging theorising and labelling of client issues for the above reasons.

While SFBT practitioners discourage theorising and labelling of issues, this assertion focuses on clinical contexts to empower individuals and increase their wellbeing rather than pathologizing their problems, consistent with positive psychology principles. This assertion accounts for SFBT's pragmatically development as with Psychodrama and Life Coaching, where theorising issues was less prevalent than research, as discussed in Chapter 3. By contrast this study focused exclusively on a non-clinical context of group learning issues in higher education. I thus resolved this challenge by only labelling communication aspects experienced by participants important for effective management of group learning without pathologizing such issues as a compromise between these principles.

To maintain trustworthiness for qualitative research, I wrote several reflective logs on my feelings, experiences, challenges, and decisions during the experience as affirmed earlier in this Chapter. These logs informed the process by firstly ensuring awareness of any emotional challenges with participant content and clarified ways to approach this, particularly if findings were close to my own experiences of group learning in higher education or other events within my personal life. Second these logs enabled me to review and amend my analytical strategy as classic case study approaches were unsuitable for this research due to the complexity of findings. Third such logs led to coding and headline changes throughout the analytical process to provide an effective report of all-important findings within transcripts to meet all aims of Phase 1 and both research objectives. For example I drew codes from these logs such as "Behaviour experienced" (which I divided into subcategories "Passive behaviour", "Passive aggressive", and "Passive-aggressive behaviour"), "participant obstacles to prosocial relationships" and "Impact of participant wellbeing" to

meet the first research objective. I equally drew codes in relation to the sought aims described earlier in this Chapter such as “Participant group learning values”, “Strengths and resources”, and “Responses to goal setting” to meet part of the second research objective. I reflected on these codes and modified the framings, if further clarification was required when writing the analysis report.

I approached all transcripts based on approaches to data analysis described by Lancer & Eatough (2018) recommendations for coaching in higher education to meet these criteria. I analysed all group learning experiences of participants derived from transcripts and examined the data to uncover patterns across different participants. I read and re-read all transcripts per participant case, across different phases, and participant transcripts highlighted key phrases, and themes to meet the research objectives that were then adapted based on these reflective logs and discussions with supervisors to ensure a consensus was made.

j) Challenges with evaluating coaching interventions

When conducting this study there are several challenges to evaluating coaching interventions by common research methods. According to Zwart & Kallemeyn (2001), a major challenge is that the individualised nature of coaching practice can make case comparisons difficult, as coachees may experience issues in a unique manner requiring a variety of coaching techniques. This challenge is reflected in research by Lancer & Eatough (2018) on coaching in higher education which lacked descriptions of the coaching techniques used for this reason beyond broad student reports on their coaching experiences. It is equally reflected in the absence of extensive evaluation of techniques within SFBT and Psychodrama beyond broad case study and interview data (Franklin, 2011; Krall 2017) due to their complexity compared with more structured approaches.

Although the field of coaching has expanded since 2003, it is less established than counselling and psychotherapeutic interventions. Researching coaching practices is considered more expensive in terms of the time required and complexity. There are thus credibility challenges as coaching interventions lead to a variety of different outcomes between coachees due to the individualised nature. For evaluation this mean no absolute evaluation criteria may be established considering a varied set of desired outcomes between coachees. Success criteria is required to be explicitly defined to meet credibility criteria for research (Carter, 2006), which would otherwise impact on research trustworthiness.

I addressed these challenges by first defining what an expanded behavioural repertoire was. This meant participants identifying new choices to improve their future interpersonal experiences of group learning to meet SFDC's primary positive outcome. These new choices could vary between different individuals to meet this outcome, with an openness to explore a variety of choices within ethical constraints rather than expecting identical choices across participants. Second, I defined the secondary outcome of this intervention as participants applying learnings from SFDC for future interpersonal challenges within group activities. Third Stober (2005) advocates the use of case studies for evaluating coaching interventions, which I consequently used as a favoured methodology for this research. Shortcomings of Lancer and Eatough (2018) however mean that semi-structured, complex, individualised coaching interventions should be evaluated in an alternative manner to common research methods that are more suited to structured interventions as discussed in Chapter 3. This was particularly important to account for participants' responses to complex techniques within SFDC framework, beyond broad reports of their experiences.

I adapted a classic case study approach for this reason within this research, particularly as Phases 2 and beyond of SFDC's framework were less structured with more complex techniques than Phase 1. I thus applied an integrated case analysis using extended themes to address these shortcomings, expanding on Lancer & Eatough (2018) within a broader social constructionist epistemology. This integrated case analysis was adapted from a pure headlining approach to address credibility challenges for this research, which I reflected on and modified during the analytical process to enable an extensive examination of participants' responses to techniques within SFDC.

ii) Coding approach

Information from all 11 participants was examined during the initial interview in Phase 1 in relation to the two research intentions of the research study, using a coding approach as this phase was more structured compared with later phases of this study. The rationale for this approach was because Creswell (2015) and Elliot (2018) describe how this process can enable researchers to map and break down participant data to develop understandings and make meanings to answer the research question. Coding must therefore be conducted in relation to the research study, methodology and aims in mind during the project. This was the most suitable approach to examine data from this interview, as I could thus break down

participants' responses on their experiences of group learning activities into specific codes to meet the first research objective and part of the second research objective.

The first research objective was to examine and elaborate on issues faced by students in group learning situations, from previous studies (Bratton *et al.*, 2010; Behfar *et al.*, 2008; Brookfield & Laiken, 2006; Colebrook, 2014). To meet this intention, I gathered participants' data from their responses to techniques adapted from behavioural analysis as described in Table 3, Appendix 1. These issues were investigated when participants reported on examples of difficult situations which they perceived were both resolved and unresolved.

Phase 1 transcripts were examined to synthesise issues participants recalled from their experiences of group learning. Participants' situations were examined to identify a range of issues which they defined as problems in group learning activities. These codes always reflected participants' definitions of the problems they experienced, rather than an outsider's definition, inspired by SFBT principles described in the previous Chapter. Such coding approach was also consistent with in vivo categories described by Straus & Corbyn (1998), where codes were derived directly from words used by participants within transcripts which will be explored further in the next Chapter. I coded important phrases and themes into categories and subcategories of group learning issues based on participant content to meet the first research objective. I particularly commenced reporting findings by analysing patterns of difficult behaviours within group learning activities described by participants, consistent with the heart of this project as discussed in Chapter 1 and linked these to other categories of issues during the report.

The second research objective was to examine the effectiveness of SFDC aimed at improving student experiences of group learning to develop more educational resources for this activity to enable them to thrive in future activities. Information was gathered from Phase 1 of the intervention which anticipated specific framed responses from participants, which SFDC depended on, to enable participants to progress effectively in later phases. If participants framed their responses according to these aims it would demonstrate that the intervention was effective at this stage of research, and ensure participants met the criteria to take part in Phases 2 onward.

I examined these aims holistically whereby participants' responses to a single aim would influence their responses to others. Participants' responses to these aims will be examined in the next Chapter within the wider context of the whole interview process, as these built on

others as highlighted in Chapter 3 and this Chapter, consistent with open coding to examine data category similarities and differences remarked by Strauss & Corbyn (1998). I thus took an integrated approach by acknowledging that issues and responses impacted on others previously described in the analysis.

ii) Headlining

During Phase 2 and beyond of the study, the intervention was examined to meet the rest of the second research intention as highlighted earlier in this Chapter and determine whether SFDC met the positive outcomes as described in Chapter 2, whilst considering participants' future experiences of group learning activities after the intervention. Data from participants who agreed to take part further in this research project was analysed in the form of multiple case studies.

Case findings were integrated together and analysed to provide insights on the effectiveness and shortcomings of the intervention using long headline statements applying Flick's (2009) recommendations, which are framed as sentences and are a rare approach to qualitative research. As this is a rare approach to qualitative research within social sciences, I had credibility concerns. I thus adapted this approach to integrate the case findings and find patterns consistent with social constructionist epistemology to maintain trustworthiness. Such headlines were extended themes within the data, building on Lancer & Eatough (2018) rather than focusing on specific issues considering the complex nature of coaching, SFBT and psychodrama derived tools within SFDC's framework.

For example the theme of: "Perceptions of which types of people would benefit from coaching and at what times in their lives" (Lancer & Eatough, 2018, p.77), provides a wider scope consistent with a headline compared to framing specific problems using themes, "CBT homework" (Barnes *et al.*, 2013, p.364). Such framings had thus potential for flexibility when analysing, less structured, complex and individualised findings during this study. There is no clear differentiation between long emergent themes and those that are shorter such as "Balance and focus" (Lancer & Eatough, 2018, p.77) by these authors. I thus define these modified headlines as long framing sentences derived from participant content contrasting with common emergent themes or codes within qualitative data that are comprised of a few words or shorter phrases during an analysis. The content of these headlines included an integrated case analysis to find common patterns across different

participant data but sufficiently flexible for accommodating highly individualised findings due to challenges of evaluating coaching practices described by Carter (2006).

These headlines were analysed in a non-linear, holistic manner where the rationale for this decision was: First to accommodate for variations in participants' choice of solution, research duration, and synthesise patterns across different participants and stages of the intervention, in contrast to examining issues and participant responses to specific aims as in Phase 1. SFDC was thus less structured at this stage and more open to differing participant responses and choices within ethical constraints, in relation to meeting the positive outcomes of the whole intervention highlighted in Chapter 2. Second to effectively engage readers by focusing promptly on important findings due to SFDC's complex interconnected techniques comprised of approaches from Deshazer & Berg, Leonard, Boal, and Moreno within the design. This was important considering challenges of evaluating semi-structured practices within higher education by conventional means due to this complexity, compared with structured practices as described in Chapter 3, which headlining had the potential to address.

Data within these headlines was subject to qualitative examination to determine whether SFDC met the following evaluation criteria within the context of higher education: acceptability, context, understanding the mechanisms, and efficacy as highlighted in Chapter 2, considering the aims and novelty of this intervention and complex epistemology. This was important as SFDC was a novel, semi-structured intervention to accommodate different participant choices and experiences of group activities, with more variability of techniques than typical structured interventions with routine procedures.

Participants' findings were examined holistically where their responses to stages of the intervention will be linked to the whole picture of SFDC's effectiveness like Phase 1, building on Lancer & Eatough (2018) studies on coaching practices within higher education. An integrated case study analysis was conducted consistent with common values of applied theatre and positive psychology practices, as discussed in Chapter 3. During the analysis I separated headlines from the main body of the intervention (Phases 2 and 3), comprised of role play activities by participant observations, from those of Phase 4 interviews focusing on the short-term impact of SFDC, due to different research methods.

I thus approached analysis of Phase 2 transcripts and beyond in a similar fashion to Phase 1 but applied this modified headlining approach due to less structure and more complex content. I first combined findings from Phases 2 and 3 as that were derived from participant

observations. Drawing and expanding on Lancer & Eatough's (2018) recommendations for analysing coaching in higher education, I first created two superordinate headlines as general extended themes to determine whether the primary research objective was met. I particularly expanded on this study by first integrating common patterns across different participant cases within Phase 2, including more specific themes and interrelated responses within these headlines. Second integrating important participant findings across these phases to clarify whether participants met SFDC's primary positive outcome. I created other more specific emergent headlines, linking these with the content of the main headlines, to determine how participant responses to techniques of SFDC built on and impacted on others to meet this outcome. I equally acknowledged headlines that were based on highly individualised participant findings considering the flexible duration of Phase 2.

I took a similar approach to analysing the content of Phase 4 transcripts to verify whether SFDC's primary positive outcome was met by participants in this follow-up interview to further ensure credibility criteria. I also determined whether the secondary positive outcome for SFDC was met by participants based on transcript contents derived from these interviews.

In this Chapter's final section, I will provide an overview of important challenges and ethical considerations for this research. I will also expand further on my roles as the researcher, in relation those of the actor, director and participant in this study.

4.Viii) Research challenges and ethical considerations

There were several ethical considerations for this study. Prior to commencing this project, I obtained permission to carry out the research from the University of Glasgow's ethics committee during which I set out measures safeguarding all participants and met evaluation integrity described in Chapter 2. The measures included providing all participants with information on what will happen during the study, and obtaining their signed consent that they agreed to take part, were content with the procedures, their participation was voluntary, could withdraw at any time, and that all data collected will be entirely anonymous.

In accordance with the best practical procedures identified during the ethics clearance process, participants throughout the research were provided with an information form detailing the process and terms of their participation. This also included the contact details of the University of Glasgow counselling & psychological services and the University of

Glasgow harassment volunteer network and advisors, for their support and to meet their needs.

While obtaining ethical clearance to meet the second research objective, I also described how I intended to evaluate SFDC drawing from Gast *et al.* (2017), Raven (2015), and Rincones-Gomez (2009) recommendations for evaluating interventions in higher education, while acknowledging the interdisciplinary and semi-structured design of SFDC. This evaluation approach included describing the aims of evaluation and context of this intervention. There was openness to accommodate variations in participant duration for Phase 2 of SFDC, to account for any variations in group activity type and behavioural experience, in contrast to fixed duration typical of higher education. I described the practice, types of methodology used and how data would be collected and stored, whilst acknowledging that SFDC desired outcomes were aimed to be participant-led, consistent with positive psychology concepts, not generalised learning outcomes across different participants. Finally, I highlighted the intended changes SFDC wished to evoke, described evaluation questions, and addressed whether participant progress was maintained by a follow up interview, to determine whether this intervention met the positive outcomes described in the previous Chapter.

It must be noted that all role play sessions in this research were subject to ground rules (see Appendix 1, table 3), which participants had to agree to. This was aimed at ensuring participant comfort and protection during the pilot and main study, by obtaining their active consent to take part in this project.

Throughout, I took on several roles in accordance with the University of Glasgow's ethical procedures for research during both the pilot and main study of this project. These roles considered my experiences in positive psychology, but not directing prior to this research, and the complex status of the director and actors in this project. My first role was to arrange personal interviews and role play sessions with participants, actors and the director. My second role was to interview and coach participants during Phases 1 and 4, and briefings and debriefing of Phases 2 and 3, where. I provided participants with all research information, including the safeguarding measures to ensure their comfort through the study. My third role was to recruit an actor and director prior to all role play sessions, brief them on their role during the research, and email them relevant participant data under a pseudonym to respect participant anonymity in preparation for Phase 2. Participant data deemed relevant for the actor and director was as follows, which focused on important background information on the

relationship dynamics of each participant scenario: who was involved, behaviours of the other individual(s), the scenario circumstances and consequences for the participant and what their desired outcome was for this intervention. Sharing of this information was highlighted on the participant consent form which participants agreed to, which I reminded participants of towards the end of Phase 1 to maintain their consent. Active participant consent was sought as each new stage was introduced.

In all phases of this research, participant data was audio recorded and steps were taken to ensure participants were not identified by name. These steps were i) Recording of all of participant data under specific pseudonyms from transcripts on a secure, password protected laptop, accessible only by myself to protect their identity. ii) Placing participant consent forms and written notes, in private folders under pseudonyms at a secure location at the University of Glasgow, St Andrew's building which was under lock and key. iii) Gain an oral agreement from prospective actors and director, to respect participant anonymity prior to engaging in this research project, where data would be kept in the performance space. iv) Reaffirming participant anonymity during the onset of the research, at the end of the first interview and when briefing them during all role play sessions which all parties involved had to agree with to ensure they were comfortable before continuing.

During this project I worked with three actors and one director. I also briefed the actor and director on the research process for the pilot study. They agreed to always act in a supportive, non-judgemental manner towards participants, to ensure safety and comfort of both participants by conforming to all ground rules for this project. I also briefed them on the draft process of the main study which would be subject to any changes drawn from the pilot study (see amendments section). They also agreed to maintain participant confidentiality of what occurred during the role play sessions, where participants would not be identified by name or be disclosed. I took steps to ensure a measure of participant pseudonymity where I offered participants to self-designate a pseudonym via email, otherwise I gave participants a specific pseudonym in both the pilot and main study.

To ensure comfort and respect of actors and directors, the following measures were agreed upon while briefing them on the process. I first assured them that anonymity of their role in the research will be respected throughout. Secondly, I informed the actor that I will intervene to stop the process in the event of distress or tiredness during the role play exercises before resuming, and should the director require further clarity during the procedure. I gained oral

consent from all actors and the director described above, who agreed to be involved in the research project, and I put in place the above measures for their comfort throughout the whole process. Both the pilot and main study thus conformed to these ethical criteria throughout this research. All these steps were designed to ensure research trustworthiness criteria as discussed earlier in this Chapter, and coaching practice trustworthiness ability and benevolence criteria highlighted by Schliemann *et al.* (2019) when evaluating SFDC. These practice criteria were specifically achieved by being open, honest, flexible, and supportive towards participants and all other individuals involved in the project.

Throughout the next Chapter I will provide an account of the research findings which shall be examined to meet both research objectives of this study, using a both coding and headlining analysis of data obtained from participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this Chapter I will examine and analyse participants' responses to meet both research intentions highlighted in Chapter 1. I will take a holistic approach to data analysis, where different participant findings will be integrated and linked together to examine important patterns to meet these intentions, expanding on Lancer & Eatough (2018) studies on student issues within higher education.

This Chapter will be split into two major sections which focus on different stages of the research which used different forms of analysis as highlighted in the previous Chapter. Part one will examine participant data from Phase 1 transcripts of this study, using a coding analysis. In this section I will: i) Examine and make links with issues participants reported were a problem for effective group learning, to meet the first research objective; ii) Evaluate the effectiveness of SFDC as an intervention for promoting prosocial relationships and developing educational resources to manage group work in higher education more effectively at this stage, to meet part of the second research objective. If participants framed their responses according to aims described in Chapter 4, it would determine whether they met criteria to take part in the rest of the intervention.

Part two of this Chapter will examine participant data from subsequent SFDC phases using headlining, where case findings will be integrated together, as discussed, from participants who met the criteria to take part beyond Phase 1 of this study. These headlines will acknowledge variability of participant duration within Phase 2 of SFDC, unlike typical higher education interventions. Participants' responses to SFDC will be examined to determine whether this intervention was effective within this research context to meet the positive outcomes described in Chapter 2, to expand participants' behavioural repertoires to flourish in their future group learning experiences. SFDC will be therefore evaluated according to criteria of acceptability, context, understanding the mechanisms, and efficacy as highlighted in the last Chapter.

PART ONE: SYNTHESIS OF PHASE 1 FINDINGS

5.1. I) Synthesis of issues faced by participants in group learning (first research objective)

Phase 1 transcripts were examined to synthesise the issues participants recalled from their experiences of group learning to meet the first research objective. These issues were reported by participants on a behavioural, cognitive, or emotional levels, which I coded based on their phenomenology using the following main categories:

The first category was difficult behaviours experienced. This category was coded further according to how participants defined these difficult behaviours, as: i) Aggressive behaviour; ii) Passive-aggressive behaviour; iii) Passive behaviours; v) Other behaviours not defined as any of the above. These codes which were derived from the research data, are related to well-established communication concepts described in Chapter 2, within the broad field of conflict management.

The second category was obstacles to prosocial relationships in group learning reported by participants, which was related to cognitive aspects within Life Coaching, highlighted in Chapter 3. This category was divided into the following subcategories framed in terms of internal and external issues affecting the group environment.

i) Obstacles of participants' internal dialogues, influencing how they reacted to the difficult behaviours reported in the first category.

ii) Obstacles of how group learning was conducted in higher education, (participants' broader perceptions about the running of group activities, influencing participants' internal dialogues and difficult behaviours reported in the first category).

iii) Other obstacles to effective group learning (e.g. external obstacles to the group which influenced the difficult behaviours reported in the first category, different from the other two subcategories highlighted above).

The final, third category was the consequences of these issues on participant well-being.

i) Difficult behaviour experienced

Participants defined a variety of behaviours they perceived were difficult which led to ineffective group learning experiences with personal relationships that were not pro-social

where cooperation within the group environment was inhibited. I will now examine each category of difficult behaviour derived from participants' responses accordingly.

1) Aggressive behaviour

Participants reported behaviours they defined as aggressive or reported characteristic features of aggressive behaviour identified by Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan (2012), and Tolin (2016), as the problems causing ineffective group learning. These characteristic features of aggressive behaviour are domineering behaviour, hostility without providing clear explanations, manipulative behaviour, blaming others, unwilling to compromise with others, or adapt their behaviour to different situations.

Charlie reported experiencing aggressive behaviour while describing actions taken by some students during one group project:

“The biggest conflict was very close to the deadline for handing it in... me and the other guy had muted the possibility of reinterpreting our stats with another analysis and two of the guys wanted to spend as little time as possible and became aggressive.....they were wanting to push for let's just take what we've got there's nothing wrong with the analysis”. (Phase I: Charlie, p.4).

Here there was a division over the nature of the work tasks, between Charlie and another individual, and two male students with differing opinions. On this basis this division is representative of task conflict as characterised by Behfar *et al.* (2008), described in Chapter 2.

Drawing on Chason (2012), two participants experienced clashes of personal values and gender issues. Heidi reported experiencing behaviours that were difficult, as aggressive and confrontational:

Very strong opinions and aggressive. It was very confrontational and very aggressive.... one of the guys is from Romania and I don't know if it is a cultural thing but the way he approached situations and spoke to people was inclined to be offensive and I don't think it was meant that way. (Phase I: Heidi, p.5).

Heidi perceived the behaviour of this male student as offensive, as he was unable to adjust to a different cultural environment with different norms, resulting in poor cooperation in the group, with interpersonal relationships that were not prosocial.

When exploring this situation further Heidi reported gender issues, as she was frustrated due to competition for dominance between two male group members, who argued over who was right, and was “an alpha male thing” (Phase I: Heidi, p.1). Here Heidi reported experiencing domineering behaviour, which is a specific feature of aggressive behaviour by Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan, (2012), and Tolin (2016).

Similarly, Hermia reported experiencing dominating behaviour from male students which she defined as gender related from the following statement:

A very confident man, who took over the class...when the Chinese students tried to speak, he felt he had to interpret for them. We had a lot of discussions between the two of us and it was difficult. I find gender interesting. (Phase I: Hermia, p.2).

George Dillion reported that in one example some group members were unwilling to compromise with others, which was difficult and not prosocial, leading to poor interpersonal group experiences (Phase I: George Dillon, p.4). Unwillingness to compromise is another feature of aggressive behaviour as characterised by Tolin (2016), as with domineering behaviour reported by Hermia.

These participants reported a range of aggressive behaviours that led to ineffective group learning experiences. They defined these behaviours as either domineering, confrontational, or unwilling to compromise with others, which led to frustrations and poor cooperation.

2) *Passive-aggressive behaviour*

One participant characterised the difficult behaviour they had experienced as passive-aggressive. Two other participants reported specific features which Marquis & Jorgensen (2009), and Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan (2012) characterise as passive-aggressive behaviour. Such features are manipulative behaviour by withdrawing from a situation, conducting work poorly, or purposely forgetting tasks.

When providing an example of an unresolved situation, MXI experienced the following behaviours by a male student during one group project:

Very passively-aggressive for example, we shared our research interests so he asked for my number.....then text me at all hours....I didn't feel comfortable with it and wouldn't reply to the messages and he would carry on messaging me....I felt uncomfortable in the group because when we were all in the group he was totally respectful. The minute anyone else in

the group left he would say “Why don’t you reply to my messages? This is so rude”. (Phase I: MXI, p.2).

From this statement, this person’s behaviour was complex and shifted according to whether other group members were present, meaning interpersonal issues outside the group meeting were being brought into this, causing negative experiences. MXI defined this person’s behaviour as bullying, while exploring this example further (Phase I: MXI, p.3), indicating the severity of this student’s behaviour.

MXI remarked that the text context was innocent as the timing was the problem, while progressing through SFDC (Phase II: MXI, p.4). She never described this behaviour as “harassment” despite how an outsider might perceive this and will not use this term in accordance with principles of strengths-based analysis to provide an honest representation of her perceptions of these behaviours without cognitive dissonance.

Charlie reported experiencing features of passive-aggressive behaviour by a female student. Charlie remarked that this person wished to leave meetings early, failed to contribute to the work, and was persistently on the phone, meaning that he perceived they were unmotivated towards the work (Phase I: Charlie, p.9). On that basis this student exhibited withdrawal behaviour which is a feature of passive-aggression. Charlie was frustrated by this behaviour and felt this was a negative attitude to the group project. Charlie also expressed: “I found the first project stressful because I found people were moderately passive-aggressive” (Phase I: Charlie, p.7).

Queenie defined the problem behaviour as withdrawn, when reporting how a female student disrupted the group meeting by not attending group meetings, consistent with passive-aggression features (Phase I: Queenie, p.1 and p.8). Queenie suggested this person was angry and lacked motivation because the project idea wasn’t theirs, as they were a dominant individual (Phase I: Queenie, p.2), as the source of this behaviour.

Like MXI, Queenie knew this person as a friend, outside the group work activities (Phase I: Queenie, p.8). The friendship between Queenie and this person seems to have impacted on the group project, as Queenie was more tolerant of this behaviour than other group members and would not get frustrated (Phase I: Queenie, p.3), which means that Queenie behaved passively towards this person, enabling this behaviour.

3) Passive behaviour

Passive behaviour was identified by several participants during the group learning environment, from participants' self-reports and the features of passive behaviour, as with aggression and passive-aggression. For two participants passive behaviour occurred, as described by Sommers-Flanagan & Sommers-Flanagan (2012) and Tolin (2016). These characteristic features of passive behaviour were submissive behaviour, agreeing to all requests made by others, or not openly expressing their feelings to others.

For example, when exploring the unresolved situation further, Sam remarked the following when describing the behaviour of the director, in one example she experienced:

He was very passive and overly supportive, and it was just confusing because I don't know if he thought...he was somehow disillusioned enough to think it was actually going well, or he was just unable to be negative (Phase I: Sam, p.10).

When exploring these behaviours further, Sam felt the director in this situation was unable to direct or say no to any suggestions, indicative of passive behaviour (Phase I: Sam, p.9). Sam also remarked that the director was "people pleasing" as he said "yes" to all requests which is a feature of passive behaviour according to the features above.

One participant experienced both passive behaviour alongside withdrawal behaviour.

Queenie also defined the problem as passive behaviour when describing the behaviour of the female student from the example previously discussed (Phase I: Queenie). This situation was thus complex, comprising of passive-aggressive (i.e. withdrawal) and passive behavioural features.

Other participants remarked how in some group situations there were individuals among international students, who were passive, as they were not confident in their English communication (Phase I: Charlie, p.2; Phase I: Alison, p.1; Phase I: Sam, p.3).

For example, Mags expressed:

I think when you put a lot of international students together there is always this kind of problem with communication if some students prefer not to speak because they are not confident with their language level and end up speaking a foreign language between people in the group (Phase I: Mags, p.1).

Mags reported that from her experiences, international students whose first language was different from English, did not express their feelings during the group meetings because of issues with confidence in language communication. This is a feature of passive behaviour. This belief could be viewed as judgement and a negative generalisation about environments with international students as she stated: “always this kind of problem”. Mags remarked how this environment led to group divisions based on language ability, between students whose first language was English and other international students, which was frustrating for her, as she was confused as to whether these individuals agreed with the material discussed (Phase I: Mags, p.1).

iv) Other difficult behaviours

Participants also defined several other difficult behaviours from their experiences of group learning which were not reported as aggressive, passive-aggressive, passive or as specific features of these behaviours.

For example, Alison identified rude behaviour from her experiences (Phase I: Alison). She reported that she was frustrated because one person in the group was openly rude and dismissed the group’s ideas, i.e. “See what I am trying to tell you!” Consequently, Alison was annoyed by this person’s manner of communication, leading to poor cooperation.

Charlie also identified similar behaviours when reporting on the behaviour of a female student who made complaints about the process such as “This is a bit stupid”, and dismissed the group’s ideas, which made him frustrated (Phase I: Charlie, p.10).

Sam expressed that a male actor yelled at her in one example she explored during the interview (Phase I: Sam, p.10). She believed this individual was unwilling to brainstorm ideas, where this person’s beliefs and style of working conflicted with that of the others. Sam also remarked how the actor accused her of taking over the scene when she was making suggestions, where the director in this example, as she proclaimed: “The director just kind of sat there”. This director’s response failed to meet Sam’s expectations because she wished him to intervene during the conflict with this actor, leading to poor interpersonal experiences of group learning, which is consistent with group learning challenges described by Burdett (2007) and Hassienien (2007) highlighted in Chapter 2.

Other participants such as Stanley reported argumentative behaviour towards the tutor in a group situation in class, where he felt students reacted to their beliefs being challenged

(Phase I: Stanley, p.3). This suggests an intolerance and inflexibility of different ideas where it seems the conduct of this class went against these students' values when debating issues and opinions different from their own.

In another example, Charlie was frustrated when other group members did not do any reading for an important literature review for the project (Phase I: Charlie, p.2). These individuals lacked motivation and did not meet his group learning expectations. Sam also experienced difficulties with an undergraduate student in one group project with two postgraduate students who in Sam's view behaved immaturely and were unwilling to engage in the project (Phase I, Sam, p.5).

Other participants reported that different life experiences among group members were a problem, leading to arguments over how tasks were done. Some participants felt that individuals had different beliefs on the content of group project work, due to different educational backgrounds.

For example, Mags expressed her feelings about some individuals during one group project:

For example, when you write a piece of lab report.... you mention that "Hey it's not ok!" because that's not how it works here they were like "Well this is how we do it in our country, this is how my background was!"...it's harder to dispute when they refused to change. (Phase I; Mags, p.6).

Here education differences caused arguments between group members, where according to Mags, these individuals were unwilling to change how they wrote up reports, and there were cultural issues with statements: "this is how we do it in our country", when referring to how they refused to listen to the advice of other students, which frustrated her. Mags remarked that they were only willing to listen to feedback from tutors and change how they worked in response to this feedback (Phase I: Mags, p.6). As they only changed how they performed these academic tasks in response to tutor feedback, this means that they would only listen to individuals of authority rather than students.

This behaviour was also experienced by Heidi who reported that a male individual was resistant to differences in how reports are written compared to his country (Phase I: Heidi, p.6). Although Heidi and Mags experienced behaviours that led to conflicts over academic tasks, such conflicts arose because such individuals were unwilling to change their behaviour from how they performed tasks previously. By contrast, these students were willing to

change their behaviour after receiving feedback from the tutor, meaning that they respected individuals in a position of power. These participants experienced task conflict as defined by Behfar *et al.* (2008), as there were disagreements over academic tasks.

By contrast, Petra reported that different working styles were an issue. In her experience some individuals worked stepwise, whereas others leave the work till the last minute. Petra thus felt these differences can cause frustration among individuals, so a compromise between the two is required for effective cooperation (Phase I: Petra, p.1).

ii) Obstacles to pro-social relationships in group learning

Participants defined several obstacles to pro-social relationships from their experiences of group learning, consistent with Life Coaching concepts discussed in Chapter 3. I will now examine participants' responses further by focusing on each category of these obstacles which played a role in behaviours identified in the previous section.

i) Obstacles of participants' internal dialogues

Some participants provided insight into their internal dialogues, which were obstacles to effective group learning in the examples discussed. These internal dialogues were derived from statements participants made about how they might be perceived by other individuals if they complained about a person's behaviour, influencing their responses to these situations rather than specific self-perceptions.

For instance, MXI reported that she was worried about how she might be perceived by the department or other group members while discussing the behaviour of a male student who had a different ethnicity:

I was worried about how I would be perceived if I complained to my peers and by faculty members....I was worried they would perceive me as racist, because the guy was from an African country and so am I (Phase I: MXI, p.3).

Summarising this statement, MXI's internal dialogue was: "If I complained about this person's behaviour, they'd accuse me of racism". MXI also perceived that this person would bully her further if she complained, making her delay dealing with the situation due to such worries (Phase I: MXI, p.3), which was an obstacle to effective group learning.

Hermia also reported she was anxious about being perceived as racist, if she challenged the behaviour of the male student in the example discussed earlier (Phase I: Hermia, P.10). This

student came from a non-European country and differed from Hermia's ethnicity. Consequently, she delayed responding effectively to this male students' behaviour to improve the situation and believed that tutor was not very approachable to assist (Phase I: Hermia, p.5). From these participant reports there were cognitive (internal) and behavioural (external) obstacles, which led to ineffective group work experiences due to their self-talk and responses. Such internal dialogues as reported by participants thus influenced their reactions to these difficult behaviours.

Mags expressed that was she concerned about how she was perceived by other group members in one example by remarking: "students who speak English and speak up were viewed as intimidating", which concerned language issues (Phase I: Mags, p.8). Mags believed she might be viewed as aggressive by contributing more and taking over the group, and made Mags question her reputation (Phase I: Mags, p.10).

Charlie was also concerned about how he might be perceived by others in one group project due to age differences as he was in a group with younger individuals:

I think because all these people were much younger than me.... everyone was in their early 20s....it was very difficult to not come across as telling people what to do and I think in a couple of occasions maybe exasperation was visible (Phase I: Charlie, p.3).

Charlie was concerned about appearing controlling towards the other individuals, if he gave advice. On summarising the above statement, Charlie's internal dialogue was: "Group members will be irritated if I came across as telling them what to do". Other group members thus expected Charlie to take charge because he was a mature student, which was frustrating as he stated: "I ended up playing daddy" to manage the situation (Phase I: Charlie, p.1). This also means that Charlie reacted in response to these behaviours by being instructional, although this was not his intention.

These internal dialogues were self-limiting beliefs resembling concepts of Life Coaching from Martin (2001) and were obstacles to effective group learning. These beliefs either prevented participants from taking action to express their feelings to other group members or to tutors and other faculty members or made them question their behaviours during these group projects. Such beliefs made participants' experiences unfavourable, blocking prosocial relationships in these examples.

ii) Obstacles of how group learning was conducted in higher education

Participants made statements which provided insight that some academic staff conducted group activities in a manner which influenced the behaviours discussed in the last section, which was an obstacle for effective group work.

For instance, MXI made the following statement on the learning conduct of group learning in higher education:

I think sometimes you are thrust into these groups and nothing else is considered, and you don't know people and do not feel comfortable to speak about other things in the group. (Phase I: MXI, p.10).

The consequence of being placed in groups with strangers was that she was uncomfortable to discuss non-academic issues in the group, particularly manipulative behaviours when MXI referred to the example with the male student highlighted in the last section. She also perceived that there was poor communication within the group, where other members avoided this person (Phase I: MXI, p.9-10). MXI's expectations for group learning were not met by this type of conduct, which was an obstacle for effective group work, as this prevented her from discussing such issues with strangers. Here MXI thus did not experience prosocial relationships, due to obstacles such as a lack of communication and self-limiting beliefs about how she might be seen by others if she discussed this issue with the group. It must be noted that no formal complaint was made despite the University of Glasgow having clear guidance on bullying behaviour.

Sam also reported feeling frustrated with the experience of a male undergraduate student, and the tutor's organisation of one group project (Phase I: Sam, p.6). Here, Sam expressed that this student failed to listen to other group members, who were postgraduates, nor engaged with the work in a mature manner, and was merely brought into the group by the tutor for auditing the course. She remarked that the tutor forced a specific number of individuals to work together in the group, regardless of age or experience, which caused problems, and an obstacle to pro-social relationships.

Heidi additionally remarked that group conduct can be problem. She believed academic staff force students to work with strangers while organising group activities, which can cause stress without consideration as to whether individuals will cooperate or not (Phase I: Heidi, p.2-3). She was thus uncomfortable with the conduct of group learning, as she was unable to

choose whom she could work with. Yet it can also be argued as to whether this expectation is realistic, helpful, or representative of work after university, as individuals working in groups cannot choose whom they work with. If individuals avoided working with strangers, with limited background they may end up disempowered, nor could they acquire skills to manage difficult situations which could arise in work situations after university, drawing on studies by Carol *et al.* (2000).

For Alison group size was an obstacle when focusing on the group environment, if groups were large and some individuals were less motivated towards the work:

We were in groups of five and three of us did all the work and were ok with that because the two people who were in it that didn't participate much.... we didn't think they were contributing (Phase I: Alison, p.2).

Several other participants expressed that there was an unequal contribution of work during their experiences of group activities (Phase I: Petra, p.2; Phase I: Sam, p.6; Phase I: Alison, p.5).

Here the experience of group learning failed to meet these participants' expectations, who became frustrated and influenced how they might be perceived in the group and this was an obstacle to positive interpersonal experiences of group activities.

iii) Other Obstacles to effective group learning

Some participants expressed other obstacles while exploring their experiences, in contrast to the overall conduct and organisation of group learning and their perceptions and beliefs about how they might be perceived. These were obstacles of the group environment and external obstacles which played a role in the problem behaviours.

Firstly, when exploring the group environment in one example, Hermia reported that there were divisions in the group and suggested that these divisions were due to language difficulties, where some individuals were unable to integrate, in an English language environment:

I don't know what conversations are going on in the university around internationalisation and some of the challenges that brings in a group....there are Chinese only language stuff but it doesn't resolve people's behaviour in the classroom or seminar group by separating out certain populations of students it should be about integration (Phase I: Hermia, p.10).

In the group environments, other participants reported that education differences made the work challenging. For example, MXI expressed her views on working with some Asian students in a group project, who did not behave as she expected:

I think they had done their undergrad and honour in like an online sense, so they weren't aware of like referencing or stuff like that. That made it harder as a group if you are at different levels (Phase I: MXI, p.5).

From this statement MXI seems to have preconceptions about these students when exploring this example.

Secondly English communication was reported by Alison as an issue within group environments, yet this intervention was not designed to address this issue the intervention. Here she expressed that students whose first language was different from English were not proactive, which is a negative generalisation. In particular, she believed that these students were unable to grasp the academic concepts which was a problem for her. Alison referred to an individual whom she felt was not contributing to the work by expressing: "He left going home to his own country for different reasons.... he was never around!" (Phase I: Alison, p.1).

Thirdly, Queenie and Charlie reported how external obstacles played a role in the behaviours they experienced, which were outside of the group learning environment. Queenie suggested one group member did not attend meetings due to work commitments, where they were over committing to these requirements and taking on too much (Phase I: Queenie, p.3). This was also reported by Charlie where one group member rarely turned up for meetings due external work commitments (Phase I: Charlie, p.3). All these obstacles influenced one another and made participants frustrated, leading to poor cooperation within these groups.

iii) Consequences on participant well-being

This section will highlight what was the consequence for participants of the issues discussed in earlier sections, including both cognitive and behavioural issues which led to ineffective experiences of group learning in higher education.

Firstly, Sam reported experiencing sleep difficulties due to the issues of one group project:

I found it difficult to sleep, got more agitated and stopped being able to do other things that I have going on, because I got really focused on this one thing that I am worried about as there was coursework that I wasn't doing (Phase I: Sam, p.4).

Secondly these issues built up with time which made participants change groups or consider this course of action. For example, MXI was worried during a project situation with a male student as described earlier, which led to avoidance behaviour, because she did not attend tutorial sessions due to worries about the male student's behaviour. She responded in a manner that was self-limiting and within a closed loop (see part 2 of this Chapter), because of this avoidance behaviour. This experience had a severe impact on her wellbeing, where such feelings increased, resulting in MXI changing groups due to this student's behaviour (Phase I: MXI, p.4). This experience had similarities with the example Hermia reported earlier, where she considered leaving her course (Phase I, Hermia, p.4).

Both examples indicate that the group environment of these difficult situations made MXI and Hermia delay responding to the problem to enhance their interpersonal experiences with the person they experienced conflict with, due to avoidance behaviour. Consequently, these conflicts built up due to the behaviour participants experienced and their worries about how they might be perceived by either the group or faculty members if they made a complaint. From Life Coaching principles, MXI and Hermia had self-limiting beliefs during these experiences because these beliefs prevented them from addressing the problem effectively to achieve a better experience of group activities. Such reports thus expand on studies by Colbeck (2000), whereby both participants were unsure how to respond to these interpersonal group learning issues, and consequently delayed addressing these behaviours due to these cognitive concerns which negatively impacted on their wellbeing

Similarly, stress due to the timing of group learning also seemed to be an issue with Charlie, who felt that one group project coincided with demanding dissertation commitments (Phase I: Charlie, p.4).

Thirdly the consequence of the issues reported by participants made them less motivated towards the projects. For example, MXI perceived that in one group project, other group members expected her to run a focus group as students whose first language was different from English were unwilling and lacked confidence to take on this role, even though MXI had not previously agreed on this. (Phase I: MXI, p.4-5). Here MXI expressed the following:

Just the frustration and demotivated...I don't want to be responsible for doing the focus group when I haven't volunteered (Phase I: MXI, p.5).

Like MXI, Heidi expressed that the behaviours she experienced in one group project made her less motivated towards other group activities in contrast to other academic work, which created a negative image of group learning (Phase I: Heidi, p.1).

Finally, a related consequence of these issues was that the behaviour of one individual impacted on the behaviour of another, leading to uncooperative relationships and made one participant consider quitting the performance. Sam reported how the director (in the scenario described earlier in this Chapter) was passive and didn't block the entire play.

This resulted in Sam feeling as though she needed to cross boundaries to compensate in response to this director's behaviour, by offering suggestions to the actors, who yelled at Sam in response. These behaviours made Sam feel stressed and reduced her motivation for the performances, where she considered quitting the show (Phase I: Sam, p.9-10), similar to Hermia's experiences.

From Sam's reports it seems as though she engaged in a pattern of compensatory behaviour which played a role in both this example and another discussed earlier in this Chapter, which irritated other group members. These behaviours were part of a routine because she either conducted more academic work than was necessary or made additional suggestions in response to an individual's behaviour. When viewed in relation to the social system theory (Luhmann, 1995), and a somatic coaching perspective as described in previous Chapters, the nature of these routines amplified group frustrations. Sam thus engaged in a behaviour repertoire that led to ineffective group relationships, where both her responses and the behaviour of the individual(s) she experienced conflict with had a role in the conflict.

From these findings, participants successfully met the first research objective as they reported a vast array of interconnected issues which led to ineffective experiences of group learning in higher education. When viewed holistically, these findings unearthed complex issues that were behavioural, cognitive or emotional/wellbeing issues, which impacted on one another, from areas of careers to wellbeing, which led to poor interpersonal dynamics within the group. This included external issues impacting negatively on participant experiences. Participants reported complex examples, comprised of either several difficult behaviours, or more than a single individual they experienced conflict with, leading to ineffective

experiences of group activities. These cross-disciplinary findings expand on previous studies on group learning in higher education (Borg *et al.*, 2011; Burdett, 2007; Colebrook, 2014; Hassanien, 2007; Naykki *et al.*, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2006).

I will now examine participants' responses to part of SFDC with an emphasis on addressing interpersonal group learning issues described by Colbeck (2000), alongside shortcomings of Dassen (2015) and Lancer & Eatough (2018) highlighted in earlier Chapters. Here I screened participants' responses to the aims discussed in Chapter 4 using a coding analysis to meet this part of the second research objective and determine whether their experiences made them suitable to volunteer for the rest of this intervention. SFDC will be evaluated during Phase 1 based on participants' responses, followed by their responses to Phases 2 and beyond later in this Chapter.

5.1. II) Synthesis of participant's responses to the intervention during initial interview (second research objective)

In this section I will first discuss how participants responded to techniques from positive psychology, followed by their responses to behavioural analysis techniques to meet all aims of SFDC described in Chapter 4, in preparation for later intervention phases.

i) Positive Psychology techniques

During the initial interview, I asked an array of questions using positive psychology techniques, characterised by a solution-focused emphasis within coaching conversations, to explore participants' values, strengths, and positive actions within this context. These were techniques derived from SFBT, and Life Coaching (see Table 4, Appendix 1). In the next sections I will synthesise and examine participants' responses to these intervention techniques to determine whether they met the aims described in Chapter 4 and were suitable for later phases of SFDC. These responses will be explored by focusing on each aim of the intervention, considering that responses to these aims built on others, which were important to enable participants to effectively progress through the intervention

1) Insights into personal values for positive group learning

During Phase 1 interviews, I prompted participants to give insights into their personal values for group learning, from features they expressed that were positive from their experiences, to meet the first aim discussed in Chapter 4. SFDC would be effective, if participants expressed

at least two specific behavioural features which were important for positive group learning experiences to meet this aim.

Here SFDC was effective as most participants discussed their group activities values within higher education, and met this aim (Phase I: Stanley, p.6; Phase I: Charlie, p.6; Phase I: Sam, p.1 and p.9; Phase I: Petra, p.4; Phase I, Alison, p.5).

For example. MXI expressed the features she believed were positive from her experiences of group learning:

I think that structure is really important. That is one thing I've learnt, and like openness and communication (Phase I: MXI, p.7).

When MXI was prompted for other dynamics of group learning she made the following statements when discussing experiences of her undergraduate degree: "we had a tutor who really facilitated open conversation without issues" and "we learnt through the help of this tutor how to put forward our opinion in a constructive way" (Phase I: MXI, p.7).

These features gave insights that structure, respect, honesty, and open-mindedness are important values for MXI so that group work is positive.

The intervention was also effective for Queenie, who provided insight into her personal values for group learning and met this aim. For instance, she expressed that having a director, open to hearing suggestions from other individuals was a positive feature from an example during her undergraduate studies in theatre and film (Phase I: Queenie, p.6). Such statements provide insight that collaboration, open communication, and respectfulness, are important values for her, because the director was open to hearing other suggestions and she expressed "we all got on well", which promoted prosocial relationships. Sam also met this aim by providing insight into her personal values of group work, where she described three features during the interview (Phase I: Sam, p.1).

By contrast SFDC was less effective for three participants. For example, Hermia provided insight into one of her personal values for group learning and where this aim was partially met. While reflecting on a positive example of group learning she expressed that: "allowing people to develop the autonomy to go and develop on their own" as a positive feature for her, suggesting that autonomy is one of her values for positive group learning. Despite this,

Hermia attended only to academic task problems while discussing this example (Phase I: Hermia, p.7).

As SFDC was less effective for these participants than others, more explicit, spontaneous questioning was required to meet this aim for participants to identify at least two values to assist establishing their outcome for the intervention as highlighted in Chapter 4.

2) Prompting for personal strengths and resources

During this interview, participants were asked to reflect on examples of difficult group learning situations which were successfully resolved. The primary purpose of providing such examples was so that participants would meet the second aim of SFDC, by identifying their strengths and resources, derived from positive psychology concepts discussed in Chapter 3. I thus intended that participants' responses would attend to solutions to meet the second and third aims of the intervention, building on their responses to the final aim as discussed earlier.

From these concepts, identifying merely a single strength or positive action would limit the expansion of participants' behaviour repertoires, specifically what they could do to manage difficult situations in the future, drawing on Martin (2001) and Biswas-Diener (2010). From these recommendations, my intention was that if participants were encouraged to think creatively to identify effective solutions from their experiences, such information could be explored further in Phase 2. Using such information would enable participants to expand on their behavioural repertoire in phase 1, beyond a non-prosocial, self-limiting routine to enhance their future interpersonal experiences of group activities.

i) Strengths and resources identified from group learning experiences

Characteristic of the strength-based model that focuses on individual capabilities, this second aim focused on identifying participants' strengths and resources using three coaching questions (coping, exceptions and reflecting on their past learnings), when exploring their experiences of group learning as described in the last Chapter. SFDC would be effective if participants expressed statements about prosocial actions in these examples or identified positive self-perceptions that promoted effective group work.

The intervention was effective for three participants who met this aim, by providing insights into their strengths and resources used which were effective in managing the group work.

For example, Queenie expressed:

I think I'm quite a patient person in a group learning experience, I'm happy to take a step back and let somebody else lead.... I'm able to accept when people come up with good ideas.....being diplomatic and saying: "I really like your idea but also like your idea (Phase I: Queenie, p.3).

Here SFDC was effective for Queenie who understood the process effectively by identifying her personal strengths and resources, which focused on what skills she had learnt and the positive actions she had taken during her group learning experiences. Her self-perceptions were that she is patient, accepts different ideas and is diplomatic, and expressed that mediating effectively between different group members, was a positive skill to use in this situation (Phase I: Queenie, p.3). Queenie also suggested that allowing group members to "give what they want and allowing her to feel like she has control" (Phase I: Queenie, p.4), was a positive skill to manage personal relationships in group learning.

When examining the above strengths and resources it must be noted that these were Queenie's self-perceptions from these techniques but doesn't necessarily mean that other group members viewed her that way. Consequently, it would have been more reliable to deploy further questioning to determine what Queenie believed other group members or individuals within her personal life perceived as her strengths, as additional insights drawn from positive psychology techniques described in Chapter 3.

The intervention was effective for several other participants, where this second aim was met. Charlie provided in depth information about strengths and resources used while exploring his experiences (Phase I: Charlie, p.5, 8 and 11; Phase I: Mags, p.11; Phase I: George Dillon, p.3; Phase I: Sam, p.7; Phase I: Stanley, p.3-4). Charlie here explored situations which were resolved in terms of achieving an understanding with the individuals concerned, which was the ideal scenario for SFDC (Phase I: Charlie, p.5), by obtaining detailed insights.

By contrast SFDC was less effective for Hermia where this aim was partially met. Hermia expressed that she acted by providing the teacher with feedback on their performance, when recalling a difficult example with a male student (Phase I: Hermia, p.3). She identified resources from actions she took by expressing her feelings to other individuals in the group and the teacher, to manage the problem (Phase I: Hermia, p.10).

Hermia's response to the exception question complements the above information. Hermia was the only participant where this tool within SFDC was relatively effective, as she stated

how she was resourceful by asserting her feelings directly to a male group member about his behaviour:

It did reduce and the second guy did take on board his behaviour, and a few times when he did go back into class and then do whatever it was...he would be taking control and say “Oh right “Hermia” told me not to do that”than owning his behaviour (Phase I: Hermia, p.5).

As Hermia asserted boundaries, this was identified as a resource and an exception to the problem, rather than avoiding the situation or moving to a different component of the group learning activity. Hermia responded as anticipated to the exception question by stating how she took very specific action, leading to incidences where the problem did not occur as this person involved took note of his behaviour. Despite this, no explicit information was obtained on how she expressed her feelings to this male student and the teacher, where further clarification by powerful questions drawn from Life Coaching tools, could have been adopted spontaneously to provide this information.

By contrast, Queenie expressed that the situation only changed when the project moved onto a different phase in response to the exception question, rather than identifying resources that improved the interpersonal dynamics at the time (Phase I: Queenie, p.3). This technique thus was ineffective in this research context, considering that relationships were short term during participants' group learning experiences, nor was the problem causing ineffective group work a daily occurrence in such examples. Consequently, identification of exceptions to the problem was an overly high expectation for participants within this research context. As the exception in SFBT was designed to focus on ongoing situations rather than past conflict as discussed in Chapter 3, this also means that this technique was unnecessary and problematic for the focus of this study.

Similarly, SFDC was less effective for MXI, who provided limited information on her strengths and resources, where this aim was partially met. MXI was resourceful while describing the unresolved situation of her choice. She expressed that she discussed the situation with her friends and family for support (Phase I: MXI, p.9), which resembles the resource of family support, Biswas-Diener (2010) checklist, as discussed in Chapter 3, yet identified no further resources during the interview.

Additional SFBT tools could have been deployed as described by Shazer & Dolon (2012) for these participants to shift the coaching conversations from problems towards solutions, to

provide more specific insights on how participants managed these situations, if they only attended to problems. This was evident when MXI remarked “I didn’t deal with it very well”, (Phase I: MXI, p.3), which was an opportunity to prompt MXI further and reframe this response to identify further resources rather than focusing on problems. Here there was opportunity to prompt MXI further using the scaling question protocol discussed in Chapter 3, to identify how well she managed the situation and stopped the problem getting worse. An alternative approach was to spontaneously ask further open questions without scales to describe her successes in this situation and shift the conversation towards solutions.

SFDC was ineffective for participants Alison and Petra where the second aim was not met as they attended only to problems they experienced instead of expressing any actions they took that were positive, and focused exclusively on academic tasks rather than group relationships (Phase I: Alison, p.3-4; Phase I; Petra, p.2-3). From such findings, there were *conflations* within the intervention between relationships issues and academic tasks, as the context was group learning in higher education in academia rather than interpersonal issues outside academia. Behavioural analysis tools deployed prior to these solution-focused techniques that were problem-focused to meet the first research objective, thus compromised the intervention’s effectiveness at this stage. This means that there were structural challenges with the intervention due to selective attention conflict between solution-focused and problem-focused tools during the interview.

When prompting participants to focus on personal relationships, the intervention’s effectiveness in meeting this aim varied between other participants. Most participants explored situations which covered interpersonal problems, where this was effective for Mags and Queenie, and partially effective for others. SFDC was ineffective for Alison and Petra who provided examples that were resolved by either completing the academic tasks or removing themselves from these situations which this intervention was not designed for. There was thus a problem with SFDC due to interpersonal and academic task conflation, alongside conflict between problem-focused and solution-focused techniques.

Another problem with SFDC was a limited research context due to demands of the first research objective, and there was no possibility of exploring resolved conflicts outside of this context such as those with friends, family, partners, and colleagues to meet this aim or the wider interpersonal difficulties within higher education. As Solution-Focused Coaching tools can be applied in all relationship issues, participants' strengths and resources could have

been unearthed from these other contexts, if they had limited group learning experiences. Participants could have discussed resolved situations outside of this context, as it was unnecessary to conduct a strength and resource exploration within the confines of group learning.

ii) Creative thinking for alternative solutions to the problem situation

Participants were also coached to imagine alternative solutions to the difficult situation discussed to meet the third aim of SFDC, which built on their responses to the second aim. This technique was drawn from the A component of the PRACTICE model, by Palmer (2007), as highlighted in Chapter 4. This technique was also designed to enhance behavioural flexibility if participants effectively understood the process by suggesting multiple ideas that were well-defined rather than a single approach.

The intervention was effective for several participants where this third aim was met. For example, Queenie provided two alternative ideas. She suggested making the person feel valued which was very specific and talking to the person in question about their behaviour (Phase I: Queenie, p.4). In this instance her suggestion to make the person feel valued, built on her responses to the second aim, where she identified the ability of mediating successfully between people by appreciating their ideas to promote positive interpersonal experiences of group work.

This intervention was also effective for MXI who met this aim, and suggested three alternative solutions when reflecting on examples from her experiences of group learning:

I could have confronted the person, maybe got the group involved like at a group level. (Phase I: MXI, p.4).

In this statement her second suggestion lacked clarity as to what specifically this would mean, in order to enhance her learnings. MXI also suggested becoming more self-aware about other cultures, by playing to their strengths rather than imposing her values and expectations (Phase I: MXI, p.6), which was more explicit. This suggestion was however unsuitable for the role play exercises by lacking direct communication with the receiver, which did not meet SFDC's intention.

Considering this intervention's design and intentions, participants' suggestions should have been limited to solutions suitable to dramatic exploration with direct verbal communication

under the following framing: what they might say (words), how they might say it (tone), and how they wanted receivers to feel (sensation). Further guidance should have been given to participants in the event of such responses, to define further the behaviours involved in these suggestions.

SFDC was also effective for Petra where this aim was met, who suggested two alternative solutions (Phase I: Petra, p.3), although one of her suggestions was not specifically defined in terms of how she would communicate her feelings.

This intervention was less effective for other participants' responses who provided only a single alternative approach to the difficult situations, where the third aim was only partially met (Phase I: Mags, P.4; Phase I: Charlie, p.4; Phase I: Stanley, p.4; Phase I Alison, p.3).

For example, when examining participants' responses, Sam suggested:

I think I should probably have asked him to leave nicely earlier....it is fine to do that (Phase I: Sam, p.7).

This solution thus involved expressing her feelings directly to this person. Similarly, when reflecting on another resolved example Sam considered sending messages to group members, while reflecting on a situation where there were disagreements over the nature of the project, as examined during the analysis of secondary research intent in this Chapter (Phase I: Sam, p.4). Here further prompting to encourage Sam to consider at least another approach would have been useful for Phase 2 according to recommendations in Life Coaching practice but was limited due to academic ethical constraints.

SFDC was ineffective for Hermia and George Dillon as this aim was not met. These participants responded in a problem-focused manner rather than thinking laterally for possible solutions (Phase I: Hermia, p.5; Phase I: George Dillon, p.3 and p.5). Behavioural analysis techniques adapted from FBA were used to meet the first research objective, focusing on exploring problems in group learning to identify issues participants experienced. By contrast, the third aim of this intervention built on participants' responses to the second aim and focused on finding solutions, which was thus affected by these behavioural analysis techniques earlier in the interview. SFDC's effectiveness was therefore compromised by a broad tension between Solution-Focused Coaching and problem-focused FBA derived techniques within its design, which made participants respond in a more problem-focused manner than required. These findings mean that detailed problem analysis to meet the second

research objective was unnecessary beyond validating participant definition of the group learning problem at this stage of the project. The research intentions should thus have been examined in separate interviews during Phase 1.

This problem was reflected in Hermia and MXI attending to problems more than required, which limited their ability to identify resources by becoming fixed in the problem, which compromised their progress to meet these aims consistent with stuck episodes as described in Chapter 3 (Phase I, MXI, p.1-2; Phase I: Hermia, p.1-2; Phase I, Sam, p.2).

The findings mean that participants' responses to the second and third sought aims of SFDC were compromised by the intervention's structure during the interview, as these problem-focused techniques were used to explore issues of group learning prior to exploring participant values, strengths and resources using solution-focused techniques. As most participants expressed only a single approach, powerful questioning should have been adopted to enable participants to define at least two alternative possibilities, drawn from Vogt *et al.* (2003) recommendations within coaching practices, in a spontaneous manner. Such questioning would therefore assist in clarifying the content of participants' suggestions to define solutions more effectively and require less time during the briefing stage of Phase 2.

3) Participant responses when goal setting for Phase 2

SFDC would also be effective if participants identified what their needs were from the individual(s) they experienced conflict with, and their final goal for the enactments in Phase 2 to meet the fourth aim described in Chapter 4. I will first examine participants' responses to identifying their needs, which will be followed by their responses when establishing their final goals of this intervention.

Petra and Alison's experiences were incompatible with Phase 2 of the intervention, because they were unable to identify an unresolved group learning situation and thus unable to participate further in this research. As SFBT was restricted to the context of group learning activities, these participants had limited conflicts within this context, considering wider interpersonal difficulties within higher education were not explored in this study. There was thus a possibility that recalling their past conflicts was challenging, as their reports provide insight that their group activities definition was limited to group projects rather than other types of group activities within higher education. A wider research context has potential to

determine whether they experienced conflicts in other activities, beyond group project due to these responses.

i) Identification of participants needs

Prior to establishing the final goals for coaching in Phase 2, participants were prompted to identify what their specific needs were for the unresolved situation, building on their responses to the first aim. This was important to determine what they would like the person they experienced conflict with to do differently in these examples. Positive identification of participants' needs when exploring these difficult situations was important for further coaching in Phase 2, as discussed at the start of this Chapter. The primary purpose was to assist them when establishing their final goal at the end of the interview to meet the fourth aim of SFDC.

Most participants positively identified their needs which assisted them to establish their final goal for Phase 2 of the intervention. For example, Queenie made the following statement:

I just needed her to contribute more...so everybody was carrying their equal weight on the group learning experience. So, everybody was able to put their input and she wasn't (Phase I: Queenie, p.9).

Her response supported her participation in SFDC's next phase, as she attended to alternative behaviours instead of problem removal. As Queenie wanted everybody to carry their equal weight, this statement builds on her responses to the first aim, which provided insight that respectfulness was one of Queenie's personal values for effective group learning. Queenie thus met this part of the fourth sought aim of the intervention.

By contrast one participant, MXI framed her needs in a global and non-specific manner:

Well Like an apology.... this sounds so dramatic but to be treated as an equal academic. (Phase I: MXI, p.10).

From this response she was concerned about coming across as "dramatic" at this point in the interview. This response was framed in terms of removing deficits rather than identifying an alternative desired behaviour, from her understanding of the process, in contrast to my intentions and values of the strengths-based model. Her response did not explicitly define what being treated as an equal academic was, and thus further prompting would have been useful for more clarity and insight to meet the above criteria.

The intervention was thus effective for most participants as this part of the fourth aim of intervention was met, except for MXI. Such exploration provided them assistance with setting their final goal for the intervention later in the interview, as examined in the next subsection of this Chapter. Respecting the example MXI explored was more complex due to being comprised of two behavioural episodes, with more severe behaviour than those of other participants, MXI's response to this technique lacked a clarity on her needs. This response is consistent with studies by Altman (2010), Bitschnau (2008) and Oboth (2007), where identification of personal needs can be challenging for individuals to understand, especially with addressing complex behaviours. Consequently, this tool was too simplistic for this example.

ii) Identification of participants' final goal for coaching in Phase 2

I invited participants to establish their final goals using techniques described in Table 4, Appendix 1, aimed at identifying their desired outcome for the intervention by providing a preliminary vision of what would be different if their interpersonal experience of the scenario was improved. These responses would determine when Phase 2 should end if this outcome was achieved during the enactments. These goals were established primarily from participants' responses to miracle question techniques derived from SFBT, and responses to O (outcome) of the ICANDO model drawn from Life Coaching (Martin, 2001; Deshazer & Dolon, 2012), if further clarity was required from participants.

SFDC would be effective if participants framed their responses positively according to strengths-based model criteria for goal setting as described in Chapter 4, to meet the fourth aim of this intervention. This aim built on responses of the first aim and identification of needs, examined previously in this Chapter.

The intervention was effective for several participants as the fourth aim was met. For example, Queenie expressed a clear personal goal as she stated, "I think..." rather than a goal for someone else and was specific to what that looked like. Her response was framed in a manner which attended to an alternative behaviour that was positive by expressing: "turn up... putting in her input", consistent with coaching criteria. She thus described an alternative outcome, instead of removal of a problem which was consistent with SFBT and Life Coaching concepts described in Chapter 3. Queenie identified what she believed were the benefits for the group, which meant better decision making, where tasks were performed

on time (Phase I: Queenie, p.9). On that basis Queenie responded positively to this desired aim, by clearly establishing her final goal for further coaching in Phase 2. She particularly expressed the following goal, in response to the miracle question:

She would be more proactive.... be turning up and putting in her input.... being involved as well.... I think in some way she could take that leadership role she wanted (Phase I: Queenie, p.9).

Here she provided further details about what successful cooperation would look like, where she wanted the other individual to give more input into the work as identified in the previous subsection of this Chapter.

SFDC was effective for Queenie as her response here built on those she stated were her needs, by providing more detailed description on what successful cooperation would look like by expressing: “she would be more proactive” to establish her desired outcome for this intervention. She clarified this outcome further in response to Life Coaching techniques, by reporting that if this goal was achieved the group would make better decisions, and tasks would be completed on time (Phase I: Queenie, p.9). This provides insight that the miracle question and Life Coaching techniques derived from the ICANDO model worked effectively together during the interview.

The intervention was effective for most other participants where the aim was met, as they framed their goals consistent with Life Coaching criteria for goal setting (Phase I: Sam, p.12; Phase I: Hermia, p.11; Phase I: Charlie, p.12; Phase I: Stanley, p.10; Phase I: Mags, p.12). Sam’s response was that cast members would be more respectful and listen to each other, where the director was more assertive by providing more direction, as explored further in part 2 of this Chapter.

SFDC was however only partially effective for two participants. Respecting that MXI experienced bullying in the example discussed earlier, and this was more severe than other examples, she framed her main goal in negative manner, focusing on problem removal rather than expressing positively what she wanted to achieve as an alternative outcome. In response to the miracle question MXI reported:

I wouldn’t second guess coming to school, thinking about our times, Because I still avoid the person like the plague.....I wouldn’t feel like I had to avoid them (Phase I: MXI, p.10-11).

This response was reasonable considering the conflict in her scenario whereby MXI's response was specific and personal. Yet this was negatively framed by expressing: "I wouldn't feel I had to avoid them", rather than framing the goal positively (i.e. I would), which is consistent with the deficit-model criteria as described in Chapter 3. This framing was focused on removing a problem rather than what she would positively like to achieve, indicating an alternative outcome to flourish in the future.

When I attempted to redirect this response to a positive outcome, using Life Coaching techniques, MXI stated she would like an apology from this person, meaning that she continued to focus on problem removal rather than providing insights into a positive outcome (Phase I: MXI, p.11). Her responses to what her needs were and that of the miracle question influenced each other during the interview, meeting only two of the criteria for effective goal setting in coaching, which was not ideal at this research stage. This response provides insight that it was challenging to establish a positive goal during the intervention for more severe conflicts in group learning, using the above tools alone, meaning less structure was required to redirect this response towards a positive outcome. Reframing of this response to a positive outcome was thus required during Phase 2 to meet the framing criteria of SFDC.

ii) Behavioural analysis techniques

Alongside these positive psychology techniques, the intervention included behavioural analysis techniques (Table 4, Appendix 1), to meet this project's second research objective. These techniques focused specifically on the fifth aim of SFDC at this stage of the interview, described in Chapter 4, to address shortcomings of background information within Psychodrama, as discussed in Chapter 3.

To prepare for Phase 2 of the intervention, information was gathered as participants reported what they believed were the behaviours of the person concerned, while focusing only on unresolved difficult situations of their choice, from their past experiences of group learning. Information was gathered using behavioural analysis and included accessory behaviours of the other person whom the participant experienced conflict with, contrasting with problem behaviours causing conflict in these group work scenarios. This information particularly served to promote further critical and creative thinking from participants, so they considered these behaviours while completing their homework for Phase 2 in relation to their responses to the third aim.

SFDC was effective for several participants where fifth aim was met. For example, Sam identified the following behaviours of the director she had experienced conflict with. These were articulated in addition to the primary behaviours explained during the analysis of the first research objective:

He felt very approachable.... he was a nice gentleman but on the other hand you couldn't approach him with anything negative because you might hurt his feelings...his supportiveness only went so far (Phase I: Sam, p.10).

Sam particularly articulated information on what she perceived were the overall behaviours and strengths and weaknesses of the director. Sam reported that the director was a friendly individual yet had no idea how to direct a play, nor could provide negative feedback (Phase I: Sam, p.9-10). The intervention was thus effective for Sam who provided a balanced response which was comprised of positive and negative characteristics of this director.

Participants Queenie and Mags also articulated their responses in a compatible manner with SFDC. Queenie identified several behaviours as the strengths and weaknesses of the person she experienced conflict with (Phase I: Queenie, p.7-8), in addition to the problem behaviours she reported were difficult. Here Queenie's perceptions of this person's behaviours were as follows: their strengths were that they were articulate and had good ideas, but their weaknesses were that they did not confront issues. She also remarked that this person was opinionated about what she believed, although she found this challenging to classify as a strength or weakness. Queenie also remarked that this person was "withdrawn", overall, in this situation (Phase I: Queenie, p.7). Queenie had provided further details about what she perceived were this person's behaviours from her response in addition to the third aim. She believed this person to be a dominant character and liked to be the leader in group situations (Phase I: Queenie, p.4), considering that she suggested making this person feel more valued in response to the third aim of the intervention.

SFDC was thus effective for Queenie where the fifth aim was met. She provided behavioural information which was useful for herself and the actor during the performances in Phase 2 and influenced her performance during the enactments. Queenie knew this person as a friend, as well as a peer, and remarked that she was more familiar with their behaviours, which means that identification of accessory behaviours was easier for her, compared to other participants.

The intervention was also effective for Mags, who expressed behavioural information on what she felt were both the overall behaviours and the strengths and weaknesses of the person she experienced conflict with (Phase I: Mags, p.9).

By contrast, SFDC was less effective for MXI, where this aim was partially met. MXI stated that the person involved was dedicated to their work yet had poor interpersonal skills (Phase I: MXI, p.8), and thus she attended only to the negative characteristics of the person she had conflict with while exploring this situation. MXI reported additional, problem behaviours such as “manipulative” and “overpowering” rather than accessory behaviours. She articulated responses that were unbalanced by focussing only on weaknesses which means that this intervention was less effective for MXI than other participants.

SFDC’s fifth aim was also ineffective for several other participants who attended exclusively to academic tasks, providing vague responses, or repeating the primary problem behaviours previously reported in this Chapter (Phase I: Stanley, p.8; Phase I: George Dillon; Phase I: Hermia, p.8). They used language such as “unprepared” or “can’t really contribute to the discussion”. Such responses were not important to promote critical and creative thinking from participants to assist with their Phase 2 homework task and focused on academic tasks rather than behavioural information relating to interpersonal dynamics.

For instance, Hermia provided generalised behavioural information on the other person involved rather than being specific to the conflict. Hermia perceived the person she experienced conflict with was “bright” and “unwilling to socialise with white western women”. These statements weren’t useful for the enactments to influence her performances with the actor and assist her with the homework task for Phase 2, as these were generalised cognitions than specific to episodes of conflict. Otherwise Hermia reaffirmed those she believed were the difficult behaviours (as described during the analysis of the first research objective), instead of accessory behaviours (Phase I: Hermia, p.8), meaning that limited behaviour information was unearthed from the intervention.

It was thus challenging to expect participants to separate their perceptions into strengths and weaknesses during this intervention, which led to responses that lacked clarity and were vaguely defined. More direct questioning aimed at promoting participants to identify specific accessory behaviours according to what they experienced would thus have been more effective, drawing on Solution-Focused Coaching techniques, providing a broad pattern that more spontaneity was required throughout the intention.

I now shall evaluate SFDC further based on several participants' data from Phases 2 and beyond.

PART TWO: CASE STUDIES ANALYSIS

During Phase 2 and beyond of the study, SFDC was examined to meet the rest of the second research objective. Data from participants Queenie, Hermia, MXI and Sam who agreed to take part further in this project was analysed in the form of multiple case studies. Throughout the remainder of this Chapter, participant findings will be integrated together to provide insights on the effectiveness and shortcomings of the intervention using headlining involving an integrated case study analysis as described in Chapter 4.

While analysing participant data from Phases 2 and 3, I will refer explicitly to the actor as the receiver of solutions participants explored, and participants the as sender, in relation to models of communication described in Chapter 2. The exception of this dynamic was under role-reversed setting, where the actor was the sender of solutions and participants were receivers respectively.

In the next sections I will first present participants' case information from Queenie, Hermia, Sam and MXI who chose scenarios for exploration in Phase 2 based on Phase 1 findings, highlighted earlier in this Chapter. This will be followed by an integrated analysis of SFDC's effectiveness in Phases 2 and 3, and follow-up interviews in Phase 4 to meet this research objective.

5.2. 1) Case presentations

Participant “Queenie” was a mature female student following an MSc in Psychological Studies. She had a mixed background in theatre studies & film, social work, and psychology, with experience of group learning. Queenie enacted the situation with the female student, under pseudonym “Jane” who was late or did not attend group meetings

Participants Hermia, Sam and MXI were able to take part in all Phases of the research project, where their responses to the intervention will be examined during this Chapter, in addition to the responses of Queenie: Hermia was a mature female student following a PhD in Education and an experienced teacher and had experiences of group learning from seminar groups during her master's course and PhD studies. Hermia explored the situation with the male student under pseudonym “Paul”, who she reported spoke over female Chinese

students during group meetings by finishing their sentences to translate for them. There were ethnicity issues in this scenario, as Hermia was anxious to confront Paul about his behaviour due to fears of being called racist, as this person came from a different country from Hermia, although she did not specify where this was.

Sam was a female MLitt student in Theatre Studies with experiences of group learning from seminar groups, presentations in class and performances in theatre during her current and undergraduate degrees. Sam explored the example of conflict with a director (pseudonym “Scott”) who she expressed was passive, and a fellow actor (pseudonym “Jessie”) from her undergraduate studies. Sam reported that Jessie yelled at her by accusing her of taking over the scene in this scenario.

MXI was a female PhD student in Education. She had a previous background in both psychology (MSc in Psychological Studies) and undergraduate degree in Politics, with experiences of group learning from tutorials and seminars in her psychology and undergraduate degrees. For the benefit of this analysis and the dynamics of the conflict, MXI was of European descent and the male student in her chosen scenario (pseudonym “SAM”) was of Nigerian descent. This scenario was from her psychology studies as she reported an absence of group activities during her PhD experiences. Ethnicity differences were important for this scenario and contributed to the conflict, but more pronounced compared to those in Hermia’s scenario. MXI reported she was worried about being accused of racism if she challenged SAM on this behaviour considering such differences. She also reported that this person was bullying, passive-aggressive, during the experience.

During this Chapter I will use the name SAM (in capital letters) to refer to the person in MXI’s scenario, to avoid confusion with participant Sam.

5.2. II) Insights from participants responses to the whole intervention

In this section I will examine and integrate participants Queenie, Hermia, Sam, and MXI responses to Phases 2 and 3 of SFDC to provide insights for effective tools that promote prosocial relationships for group learning in higher education, using headline statements. This intervention’s effectiveness will now be examined based on participants' responses.

Superordinate headline 1: Solution-focused enactments were highly effective in obtaining resolution and enhanced interpersonal dynamic quality

Within Phase 2 enactments (i.e dramatic dialogues), SFDC enabled participants to deploy and unearth several resources, which broadly met evaluation criteria of efficacy and understanding the mechanism as highlighted earlier in this Chapter. This intervention was more effective for Queenie and Hermia who engaged in solution-focused enactments with the actor, expanding on studies by Grant & Gerrard (2019) described in Chapter 3. This enabled them to identify and develop more pro-social resources leading to resolution and enhanced interpersonal dynamics in group learning, compared with problem-focused enactments as stuck-episodes were absent. These resources were:

i) Redirecting and bypassing the problem.

Firstly, both participants. Queenie and Hermia redirected the conversations away from the problem to search for an alternative solution leading to resolution. Queenie redirected the conversation to find an alternative time for the group to meet during the role play exercises, acknowledging Jane's external work commitments. Similarly, Hermia redirected the conversation between her and Paul to focus on the group by promoting an open expression of feelings, instead of discussing personal issues between her and Paul. Hermia believed this approach was more prosocial than what happened during the actual scenario.

ii) Make receivers feel valued.

Secondly, Queenie attempted to involve Jane more in the project by asking her for ideas so Jane would feel more valued and contribute more, which means that she found a common ground between her and Jane and reduced the power difference within the relationship dynamics. Queenie acknowledged Jane's suggestions instead of attempting to persuade and expressed that making Jane feel more valued had a positive outcome during this dialogue, which thus contributed to resolving the conflict.

iii) Senders being explicit and reducing personal differences.

Like Queenie, Hermia reduced the personal differences between Paul and the group during the dialogues. Hermia made the following statement after the role reverse exercise:

It was like you gave it to the group, whereas when I was saying it, I didn't feel I gave it to the group. I don't know what it was you said it felt like it went out there and moved the control. (Phase II: Hermia, p.14).

From this statement the role reversal exercises of SFDC enabled Hermia to progress further during the intervention by comparing her responses as senders with the actors due to outcome variability, which enabled her to think critically and gain further insights. Hermia thus believed the actor was more explicit as she stated how they managed to give more to the group to reduce Paul's power. This means that the actor performed powerful actions from this reflection, providing Hermia with more insight, awareness and promoted critical thinking to improve the interpersonal dynamics.

iv) Depersonalising conversations.

SFDC also enabled Hermia to explore finding alternative ways to encourage other group members to contribute more and feel included during the enactment, similar to Queenie, to enhance the interpersonal dynamics. Here Hermia suggested involving all group members in a depersonalised manner rather than focusing directly on Paul's behaviour. Hermia was attempting to persuade Paul without acknowledging his concerns about the situation, using generalisations: "Everyone here is trained in the area. So, everyone should have something to say".

v) Focusing on individual contributions and feelings.

This intervention also enabled Hermia to identify that focusing on each group member's contribution was an effective resource. Here Hermia expressed: "if we can go around and take individual contributions from people", where both Paul and Hermia agreed to brainstorm during this dialogue. Alongside this resource Hermia attempted to encourage other group members to share and clarify their feelings during this dialogue, leading to a positive outcome, by encouraging other group members to express what was important to them in terms of what their needs were. This outcome means that SFDC enabled Hermia to deploy a range of resources spontaneously within a structured process, which were prosocial during the enactments which enhanced the interpersonal dynamic quality.

These resources mean that SFDC enabled Queenie and Hermia to explore their scenarios holistically by focusing on solutions they defined in the briefing and being spontaneous outside of these solutions during enactments. Such conversations were effective in

promoting prosocial relationships in group learning activities, consistent with Salmon & Young (2011) that effective communication includes using core tools and being spontaneous creative. Feeling conversations were also effective which included spontaneous responses such as being empathetic to Jane's feelings, and circumstances in the case of Queenie. Hermia's and Queenie's actions during the intervention mean that integrating positive psychology and applied theatre tools promoted prosocial relationships by engaging in solution-finding conversations, expanding on findings from Dassen *et al.* (2015).

v) Negotiating to accommodate receivers' feelings.

Resembling recommendations from Zartman *et al.* (2007), Queenie performed negotiations with Jane during the open dialogue, where she was diplomatic by validating Jane's concerns and acknowledging her situation to accommodate Jane's needs. As Queenie identified being diplomatic as one of her strengths in Phase 1, these responses during the dialogue were consistent with strengths-based model intentions of coaching practices which led to a prosocial outcome with improved interpersonal dynamics. Queenie thus used learnings from Phase 1 and applied these during Phase 2 enactments to find resolution to this conflict scenario.

The intervention enabled Queenie as sender to use this strength to put her points across successfully to Jane and make her acknowledge her behaviour, from the following statement:

It does put her on the spot a bit to the fact that she is late and acknowledging that she is not contributing as she should be. I think that is good that she realises that she needs to pick up on her contributions to the group. (Phase II: Queenie, p.20).

From this statement SFDC enabled Queenie to uncover effective solutions to encourage Jane to behave differently in the enactment, by accommodating Jane's needs by changing the time of the group meeting. Using this approach thus led toward resolution and bypassed problem-focused discussions, consistent with SFBT concepts. Queenie remarked that she would not typically express such issues, meaning that the intervention enabled her to behave in an alternative manner to her typical way of responding in conflicts. Queenie thus acquired new insights and learning from this intervention from the solutions, in contrast to a routine of avoidance behaviour, as she was frustrated by Jane's behaviour in this example but was unwilling to say anything to Jane (Phase I: Queenie, p.2). SFDC enabled Queenie to expand her behavioural repertoire as she progressed during the process, by exploring alternative

possibilities, which provided her more flexibility when responding to interpersonal issues in group activities.

There were limitations to SFDC, as Queenie's reflections focused on enactment outcomes with restricted information on actions performed. Drawing on Solution-Focused Coaching, it would have been useful for the director to prompt Queenie further using powerful questions to provide further insights on what positive actions she had deployed during this enactment to achieve resolution, as this was restricted due to ethical approval constraints. More spontaneity questioning was thus required to promote effective running of this intervention as with earlier stages of this intervention.

vi) Acknowledging receiver's positive intent empathetically.

During the open dialogue the intervention enabled Hermia to deploy other resources which promoted prosocial relationships, when she focused on finding solutions. Here she was empathetic to Paul by considering his experiences and motivations to make the group work experience positive. Hermia was thus identifying and drawing attention to Paul's positive intent behind his behaviour, as to the reason he was taking charge of the group, to achieve a positive understanding. This resource resembles recommendations from Elson & Spohrer (2009) from NLP which enable teachers to communicate effectively to individuals in education. Hermia remarked that in real life she was more forceful than how she behaved in this enactment, meaning that the intervention enabled Hermia to explore different actions and expand her behavioural repertoire.

vii) Creating surprise and depersonalised.

Hermia also expressed the following after the role reversed exercise:

I think you said something that did make me stop actually, I think said that we could try and get the group more involved and I thought you think it's about us....I quite liked that. It made me stop to think (Phase II: Hermia, p.20).

Overall Hermia's was positive about the outcome of this enactment. This response thus improved the relationship dynamics between her and Paul, as from this statement the actor made her think critically by creating surprise to improve the situation, as she reported the actor made her stop and think. Consequently, she was able to transform the conversation by

shifting the focus onto getting the group more involved, rather than focusing on Paul's behaviour which was prosocial, and improved the interpersonal dynamics.

Superordinate headline 2: Stuck episodes occurred during problem-focused enactments causing fewer effective outcomes and learnings than solution-focused enactments

In contrast to Hermia and Queenie, SFDC was less effective with MXI and Sam who exclusively engaged in problem-focused enactments and identified fewer resources from the experience. These resources were:

- i) Being firm to develop boundaries.

Although like Queenie, MXI expressed her feelings in the dialogues, the intervention enabled her to develop a boundary between her and SAM, yet was focused on removing the problems rather than finding a solution, considering the nature of her scenario: "I didn't feel I needed to reply". Here MXI was creative by offering explanations to SAM including: "It doesn't fit with my timetable".

MXI particularly expressed:

I thought it was cool like being firm but not like aggressive is quite powerful...I would never do that though (Phase II: MXI: Session 2, p.10).

MXI reported here that being firm was a powerful action meaning that this action was insightful whereby she unearthed a prosocial resource from her experiences of these exercises, unlike how she usually behaved. Identifying this resource meant MXI expanded her behavioural repertoire during SFDC.

Despite these benefits, there was evidence that engaging in problem-focused conversations during the intervention made players prone to becoming stuck in the dialogue. This is consistent with stuck episodes described by Lloyd & Dallos (2008) in Chapter 3, meaning that these can occur within drama-practices than eliminated completely, where redirecting the focus of such enactments toward solutions should occur, due to their absence within solution-focused enactments.

For example, the above dialogue became repetitive where the actor found it challenging to respond to (Phase II: MXI: Session 2, p.10). Similarly, dialogues became repetitive with

Sam where the conflict was maintained during the intervention as the actor (as Jessie) expressed: “I feel you embarrassed me! I feel the way you made me look stupid”, where a prosocial outcome wasn’t achieved during the intervention, limiting change, which is consistent with a stuck episode.

There was also evidence that SFDC was unable to sufficiently address participants' role in these interpersonal conflicts if their responses were prosocial, as Sam reported:

“Trying to play Jessie I feel is very difficult for me to come up with more excuses to say to myself who is doing like reasonable things and making fairly logical argument....it was definitely difficult for me as Jessie to keep that going”. (Phase II: Sam, p.15).

As Sam expressed that she was doing reasonable things it means that she was attempting to justify her behaviour in this scenario, which questions whether Sam had effectively viewed the situation from Jessie’s perspective, or considered her the role in the conflict, which was a stuck episode that compromised her progress through SFDC to meet her desired outcome. Consistent with values of coaching described by Martin (2001), this means that Sam was unwilling to have her beliefs challenged in this exercise, as on reflection she stated she was doing “reasonable things”, which restricted learnings from the intervention.

This pattern continued when the actor was Scott, from statements: “I feel like people have been really disrespectful.... We haven’t got a lot of direction and blocking from you”, which failed to find a clear resolution with improved interpersonal dynamics while exploring this scenario as discussed earlier in this Chapter.

There was thus clear evidence that if participants did not attempt to compromise with receivers, SFDC was ineffective. This was the case with Sam which led to the problem maintenance and restricting her learnings, whereby the interpersonal dynamics were unchanged. This finding also provides insight that tools derived from FBA were ineffective in managing conflict during her scenario. Such tools made Sam explore her scenario in an unbalanced manner, as SFDC explored only the behaviours of the individuals, she experienced conflict with, without the possibility that her response amplified the conflict further when exploring this scenario. There was evidence that both Sam’s and Jessie’s behaviours weren’t prosocial in this scenario, restricting Sam's learning. This challenge provides insights that this intervention should have explored participants' role further to enhance their future interpersonal experiences of group learning.

At best Sam made following statement during this stage of SFDC:

I think there is something achieved. Scott is listening, but I am not sure if he understands the extent to which this is a problem. He had said he'll talk to Jessie which is good. But has become someone's specific problem than on the group dynamic. (Phase II: Sam, p.21).

Here Sam perceived the outcome of this dialogue was positive, by making Scott listen. Yet the conversation was restricted to the dynamics between her, Jessie and Scott rather than the whole group dynamics, and was inconsistent with the framing of her desired outcome for the intervention. Sam was expecting Scott to manage the situation rather than exploring what she could do, which is disempowering and unrepresentative of other group learning scenarios, expanding on group learning challenges described by Burdett (2007) and Hassianien (2007) in Chapter 2. This finding means Sam's responses were limited to dramatic projections without clear transformation, providing evidence that participants required more information on the differences between personal drama interventions and group-based interventions. This is important to maintain their engagement and ensure they have realistic expectations from SFDC, considering the rarity of persona drama interventions outside Psychodrama as highlighted in Chapter 3. SFDC was thus limited to addressing scenarios with a single individual participant experienced conflict with, where further adjustments were required to explore more complex dynamics

ii) Expressing feelings and negotiating with receivers.

SFDC was by contrast, more effective for MXI who performed a negotiation with SAM during her open dialogue, as with Queenie. Here MXI was willing to and successfully obtained a compromise during the dialogue where they agreed to work together in the group but with no contact outside, by expressing: ““Let's see each other at school but not talk to each other outside of that”. From such statements she was expressing her feelings and developing boundaries as a realistic outcome considering the nature of this scenario.

While reflecting on the outcome of the open dialogue MXI expressed:

I think that I am aware that I really do not enjoy confrontation with people or standing up for myself out of anything....at least I'm identifying it and try and put into practice mechanism. (Phase II: MXI: Session 1, p.19).

From this response SFDC enabled MXI to gain more self-realizations and awareness of her attitude to all conflicts, yet on further reflection she remarked that she was defensive in this dialogue and a resolution was not obtained during the first session (Phase II: MXI: Session 1, p.18). Problem-focused enactments were thus less effective promoting prosocial relationships rather than solution-finding conversations at this stage of the intervention, in order to improve the interpersonal dynamics.

During the intervention negotiations focusing on removing the problem were less effective than those focusing on finding alternative solutions. Although the outcome of the dialogue was consistent with her miracle question response, where MXI was prosocial and managed to achieve an explanation for SAM's behaviour, her responses failed to improve the relationship dynamic quality beyond reducing the conflict intensity. This response confirms what Hasson (2015), recommends as a realistic outcome when managing impossible behaviour such as bullying. Attempting to find solutions was not an obvious choice for MXI, considering the conflict of her scenario which was more pronounced than that of other participants as resolution was not achieved.

MXI deployed resources resembling tools from NVC model, such as making requests. Here she expressed "can you please respect that", to place a boundary between her and SAM. MXI expressed the following on reflecting on her performances, after the role reversed exercise:

Yeah, I suppose there is a way to shoot something down... but to say something without feeling you have to over explain it was good (Phase II: MXI: Session 1, p.12).

Here MXI remarked that expressing her feelings during the dialogue without over explaining her position was prosocial. During the experience MXI was anxious from the statement: "that is not my personality", meaning that performing the dialogue with this alternative way of behaviour was outside of MXI's behavioural repertoire and comfort zone

iii) Creating surprise.

During the intervention, MXI found it challenging to respond when the actor as SAM asked: "Why not?" and reacted by saying "I don't know...". MXI's response here means that the actor blocked the dialogue by this short question. This question made MXI stop and think by creating surprise, which was positive and a different response than she expected, as this prevented further engagement with the problem, resembling deflections described by

Chambers *et al.* (2012), yet resolution was not achieved during this enactment. MXI also deployed a deflection during the follow-on session in the moment, during her second session in Phase 2, which was a powerful action based on insights from the actor, as discussed further in the next subsection.

These responses mean that if enactments were exclusively problem-focused, participant progress was restricted compared with solution-focused enactments, as the latter promoted more insights and learnings for improving their future interpersonal experiences of group activities. SFDC effectiveness was thus determined by enactments direction when considering these outcomes, where enactment redirecting was required to achieve resolution in these conflict scenarios. Both MXI and Sam tended to view SFDC as therapy rather than coaching, by focusing more on removing problems and expressing their feelings rather than attempting to find alternatives, which reduced creative possibilities.

Emergent headline 1: Actor's perceptions expanded participants' learning to make more insightful decisions to effectively progress through SFDC

Considering the evaluations of SFDC discussed in the last subsection, the actor's perspective as receivers provided most participants with new insights and learning during the enactments. These insights were important if these perceptions were considered by participants which enabled them to progress effectively during this intervention to achieve their desired outcomes.

This part of the intervention was effective for Queenie, as the actor's reflections enabled her to gain further insights during enactments of her scenario. Here the actor stated that Queenie's actions put them on the spot and forced them to make decisions. This information made Queenie think critically by reflecting further on Jane's feelings, where she drew attention to her perceptions of Jane's characteristics as a dominant individual. Queenie thus referred to the accessory behaviours of Jane as identified during Phase 1, meaning that examining these behaviours was useful for her during SFDC.

The actor expressed the following after another enactment with Queenie:

It felt like a little patronizing, that I was kind of being brought in the: "Oh you should have a look at this". It felt it was a little kind of disingenuous (Phase II: Queenie, p.14).

This statement provided Queenie with new information, elaborating on her reflections on the dialogue, where she previously expressed that the timing of this solution was inappropriate if expressed in the middle of the group project. This information made Queenie think more critically about the situation, as she acknowledged that such statements were patronising and ineffective. These insights derived from the enactment thus provided Queenie with further clarity beyond coaching conversations, and enabled effective decision making to progress during SFDC, which expands on findings by Lancer & Eatough (2018) as described in Chapter 3.

Queenie therefore considered what she could do differently to achieve a more prosocial outcome during the intervention, by expressing:

Yeah it must sound patronising: “Oh what do you think of this opinion?”, “What would your contribution be?” I think that when it is coming to lateness it’s how you value their opinion when you are coming to spoon feed what you have already discussed (Phase II: Queenie, p.14).

Evaluating the outcome of these approaches from the enactments, Queenie considered new information provided by the actor, where her preferred solutions were a combination of the first and third approaches, which she decided to implement in the open dialogue, as the second approach was less effective. Exploring potential solutions by enactment which integrated techniques from applied theatre with Solution-Focused Coaching thus enabled Queenie to narrow down these solutions to those that were effective during this intervention, by reorganisation after dynamization of solutions explored to progress during SFDC

Similarly, this part of SFDC was effective for MXI as the actor made the following statement to her, after an enactment:

I feel that gave me a bit of a reality check, that you’ve went to this extent to complain and other people have as well. It kind of shocks you, it can change the way you’re acting. (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.12).

From this statement the actor provided MXI with new information, by expressing created shock for SAM by this reality check. His response means this was a powerful action and was a deflection by surprising the receiver and increased his awareness of his behaviour. MXI considered this perception was useful while evaluating her progress prior to the open dialogue, by reporting:

I was just trying to think about the difference between the first and second one, when you said you got a bit of a shock or reality check” (Phase II: MXI: Session 2, p.13).

This response means that the actor's perception expanded MXI’s insights on a solution she explored, which encouraged her to think critically to make effective decisions prior to the open dialogue. Here the actor believed the first solution reduced SAM’s power to some extent but was more significant when MXI deployed the second solution defined in the briefing, based on outcome of these enactments (Phase II: MXI, p.13). The receiver’s perceptions mean that MXI identified an alternative possibility that was powerful yet chose not to implement this for the open dialogue nor was this explored further by re-enacting the scenario to achieve resolution.

MXI’s preferred solution was thus the first approach and she agreed to implement this for the open dialogue, evaluating the outcomes of the solutions she explored at this stage of the intervention, and narrowed down solutions she explored during the enactments. As MXI explored two solutions that were both effective, it was unnecessary to narrow these down during SFDC, as combined solutions were appropriate for the next stage of this intervention. Reorganisation post dynamization of solutions during SFDC thus did not require narrowing down of solutions if all possibilities are deemed effective by participants.

The actor’s perception also provided MXI additional insights during the open dialogue by reporting:

In terms of coming to a solution that was the most appropriate way, just being like stop taking to me.... we have to work together, and let’s leave it at that and keep it a professional relationship (Phase II: MXI: Session 1, p.18).

His perception provided MXI with further information to made her think critically, which was validating that this was the most realistic solution considering the nature of her scenario, as MXI reported that a resolution wasn’t achieved in the process, consistent with benefits of coaching practices within higher education described by Lancer & Eatough (2018).

Similarly, this part of SFDC was partially effective for Hermia as the actor provided her with new insights only during the open dialogue of this intervention. Despite this, when Hermia evaluated the solutions she explored during the enactments of her scenario, she narrowed down these solutions to a single approach for implementation during the open dialogue as with Queenie.

During the open dialogue stage of SFDC the actor reported:

You were choosing your words carefully.... that made me listen more.... you were talking quite slowly and weren't trying to say the wrong thing....I wasn't dismissing what you were saying (Phase II: Hermia, p.18).

Here the actor identified that Hermia's actions promoted prosocial communication, by an effective use of language and listening skills and pace of communication, which promoted insight and critical thinking on the part of Hermia, who had responded well during the dialogue.

Although this insight was useful and supportive, his reflection focused on her overall actions rather than specific solutions she chose to implement in the open dialogue from the statement: "You were choosing your words very carefully". Reframing this response to focus specifically on solutions Hermia implemented during this private conversation, would have been more useful to provide her with more insights to meet the aims of this dialogue.

Hermia's responses were however consistent with recommendations by Gribben (2016) for effective communication where language content needs to be considered and expressed to give a clear message to receivers. Consequently, this insight moved the open dialogue in a positive direction, as Hermia reported as follows, after the role reversed exercise:

I think it does disarm very important people, when you talk about us rather than you (Phase II: Hermia, p.20).

From these statements Hermia considered language aspects consistent with new insights from the actor as the receiver, while she was progressing during the final enactments of the intervention. Consequently, she identified that depersonalised language such as: "us" was an effective resource that promotes prosocial communication and reduces power differences. These findings mean that specific languages issues are important actions to improve the interpersonal dynamics group learning beyond broad solutions, which is consistent with Somatic Coaching concepts as described in Chapter 3.

Emergent headline 2: Positive goal framing encouraged solution-focused enactments, which enhanced participant insights

During Phase 2, participants who framed their goals positively and in a specific manner during the briefing stage gained more insights from the process, as these responses

encouraged solution-focused enactments. SFDC was thus more effective for Queenie and Hermia who expressed positive goals while creating an action plan during the briefing.

Here Queenie expressed:

It would be really trying to include her and saying, “Your ideas are good but try and incorporate some of the ideas too”, so she felt more valued (Phase II: Queenie, p.3).

For Queenie, group cooperation meant ensuring Jane was feeling valued and included, in addition to turning up on time and getting work done on time, and better decision making, which was positively framed and specific. Queenie understood the process well, by framing this response consistent with strengths-based model principles, to find solutions to thrive in the future.

Similarly, Hermia expressed:

I would have spoken earlier and maybe involved the whole group. So, while it was happening in the group to maybe do some ground rules a wee bit (Phase II: Hermia, p.4).

This statement means that Hermia attended to what she could do differently, which was positively framed as with Queenie. Hermia provided a clear response which was a positive goal during Phase 1 and the above response had no impact on the progress, considering her responses during the dialogues, as examined in the previous subsection of this Chapter. Both Queenie and Hermia’s understanding of the process encouraged solution-focused enactments which enabled them to uncover resources to promote prosocial relationships in group learning. It must be noted that the scenarios Hermia and Queenie explored in Phase 2 were milder and more recent compared to MXI and Sam, which was easier in framing their desired outcomes positively.

By contrast this stage of SFDC was less effective for Sam and MXI. Sam remarked:

People would be paying attention to their bodies on the stage.... aware of their body and presence (Phase II: Sam, p.3).

This statement was framed as a positive goal yet attended to alternative behaviours of the whole cast and was non-specific because Sam did not state explicitly which people should pay attention to their bodies on stage. This means that Sam wished to focus on the whole group dynamic rather than specific individuals who were the source of the problem. This

response led to challenges with exploring her scenario the intervention, whereby further adjustments should have been made to SFDC, as described earlier due to this limitation

While Sam's expectations for the director to block the scene were reasonable, her further expectations for him to control all arguments arising between cast members were unrealistic, considering the role of a professional director in theatre. This response provided insight that unrealistic goals may arise from the practice, consistent with criteria for unrealistic miracles in SFBT, discussed in Chapter 3, that hinder personal growth. Consequently, additional coaching to break goals down further into more steps should be considered for participants to progress effectively during the intervention.

As SFDC was ineffective for Sam, this framing influenced the whole process and may not necessarily have been a realistic expectation, considering Sam simply made no attempt to compromise with receivers during the enactment beyond dramatic projections. This is important as rigid expectations without compromise lead to negative relationship dynamics and further conflict according to several studies (Foran & Slep, 2007; Neff & Geers, 2013; Lemay, 2015; Lemay & Venglia, 2016).

This stage was also ineffective for MXI from the following statement:

That I didn't feel intimidated by anyone and that would have to come from the person changing the way they interacted with me and giving an explanation as to why he was doing that (Phase II: Session 1: MXI, p.3).

From this statement, MXI expressed a negative goal consistent with traditional therapy, whereby she would not feel intimidated, rather than expressing how she wanted the male student to behave instead during interactions with her. This response was consistent with framings of the deficit-model for healing past problems, rather than framing goals in a positive manner as with the strengths-based model for flourishing in the future, not meeting SFDC intentions. Although MXI's provided a reasonable response considering her scenario involved bullying and was more severe than other participants, this was more challenging to frame positively. As SFBT advocates positive goal framing regardless of issue severity according to Kim (2013), there was no justification to compromise such principles during the intervention which might risk relapse of learnings as discussed in Chapter 3, to ensure learnings are maintained in the future.

When attempting to reframe this response to a positive goal, she merely confirmed that she

would be “feeling more comfortable”, where more clarity on what feeling comfortable meant would have been useful to establish her outcome of the intervention. Further prompting using more powerful questions would thus have been helpful to clarify this statement and redirect her response to a positive outcome, in a spontaneous manner. This means that reframing of participants' responses to a positive goal should be conducted as early as possible during SFDC.

The consequence of this framing was that MXI engaged in problem-focused enactments which focused on removing deficits. Such dialogues were less effective in achieving new insights and her desired outcome to promote prosocial relationships in group learning.

Emergent headline 3: Effective Phase 1 homework completion and understandings of the future-focused hot-heating exercises promoted participant engagement with SFDC

During Phase 2 of SFDC, the Phase homework task was effective for participants Queenie, MXI and Hermia. They also had a good understanding of the future-focused hot heating exercise, enabling them to shift from a problem-state to a more resourceful state, regardless of whether participant provided academic or non-academic examples.

The task from Phase 1 of the intervention was effective for Queenie as she suggested three alternative solutions: i) Asking the person for suggestions so they are more involved, ii) Make sure the group roles were more established, iii) Make sure the group appreciates each other's ideas and feel valued. As Queenie referred to suggestions i and iii during Phase 1, unearthing these possibilities assisted this homework, as a foundation for the intervention. Such responses enabled effective exploration of her scenario for the role plays during SFDC with a clear action plan. Queenie thus thought creatively and defined these solutions in terms of what she might say and what feelings she wanted to evoke for exploration during the enactments.

The future-focused hot seating exercise of the intervention was effective for Queenie as she understood the exercise well and expressed alternative emotional and behavioural information of a future group scenario, different from the problem scenario. She identified features which would make a group experience positive, which were individuals making compromises, listening better and being respectful, effectively using each other's skills, which would make them feel more confident. These features expanded on insights from

Phase 1 responses, regarding what values were important for Queenie to promote effective group learning. Consequently, Queenie became more relaxed after this exercise, and was anchored into a resourceful state which was effective within SFDC, which made her effectively engage in the process.

The homework task of the intervention was also effective for MXI, who had a good understanding of the requirements by suggesting two solutions during the briefing stage of phase 2, which were: i) Being firm “Just back off”. ii) Tell the group about this situation.

She also suggested referring to the course admin during the second session of Phase 2. From the statement she defined clearly the first possible solution as being firm and was specific on the meaning as she defined that the solution would include saying, “Just back off”. Her responses drew on her suggestions from Phase 1 as discussed earlier in this Chapter, such as being firm and addressing the situation at a group level, which enabled her to think creatively to complete this task. Her suggestions in Phase 1 were compatible with approaches i and ii, where she clearly defined the first solution she suggested, meaning her Phase 1 suggestions assisted the process. The second alternative solution she suggested was less effectively defined as it was unclear whether this meant addressing the problem as a group or asking others to deal with the problem.

The future focused hot seating exercise of SFDC was effective for MXI as she was placed into a positive, relaxed state by expressing statements such as “the experience has been good”. During this exercise she made the following statement while discussing a non-academic group example:

It’s been lovely, everyone’s been really nice to each other and supportive, helping each other and lending yoga mats. The experience has been good.... respectful of each other’s space and opinions, listening to each other (Phase II: MXI, Session 1, p.6).

Here MXI expanded on her responses from Phase 1 and provided further insights into her values for group learning, while exploring this positive example, which were individuals listening to each other, being supportive and helpful. MXI also identified behaviours which were absent in the problem by expressing “respectful of each other’s space”, and there would be “open communication”, which was a description of success behaviour, contrasting with framing her final goal negatively. This response provides more insight on MXI’s personal values for group learning as positive features of this vision, where this exercise was effective

for her. These findings provide insights that links should have been made with her responses to this exercise, the research context, and those when establishing her final goal for SFDC to redirect the enactments to those that were solution-focused to expand her learning further during this intervention.

Effective responses to this exercise of SFDC promoted MXI's engagement with the process from positive statements: "It was so good for me....I really enjoyed it" during the debriefing stage of her first session, when this exercise was conducted. As this exercise was absent in the second session, MXI reported: "I was a bit more frustrated this time compared to last time". The exercise thus also enabled participants to manage emotional intensities more effectively that might arise.

A similar homework task was effective for Hermia as she suggested the following alternative approaches when action planning for the role play session: i) Address the issues at a group level (not making the situation personal). ii) Express directly how she felt during the class.

Although the third aim of SFDC during Phase 1 was ineffective for Hermia, it had no impact on this task, as her suggestions focused on what she might say, how she did say it, while defining these solutions. All the above approaches she suggested were appropriate for all role play exercises as verbal communication with the actor was required, meaning that the third aim of this intervention was useful for some participants such as Queenie and MXI, but not always essential for others during Phase 1.

The first hot-seating exercise of SFDC was effective for Hermia. She was anchored into a positive state at the end of the exercise as she made statements: "just wonderful" which were enthusiastic, which increased her engagement with the process and this intervention's effectiveness. Hermia expressed behavioural and emotional information features of this example, different from the problem including "everybody would have a space to speak". She stated that the environment in this vision was supportive, structured and well-meditated for learning. The response provides insight that Hermia's values for group learning are support and structure.

By contrast to other participants, the homework task of SFDC was ineffective for Sam who was unable to engage positively for Phase 2, from the following statement: "I don't know outside of trying to talk to him," (Phase II: Sam, p.4). Here Sam suggested a single solution, consistent with her response when I prompted Sam for alternative solutions in Phase 1 of

SFDC, meaning that responses in Phase 1 influenced those later in the intervention. This response means that SFDC's foundations as described in Chapter 4 were challenging for Sam.

The consequence of this challenge with the intervention was that myself and director required more time to prompt Sam than other participants, beyond this single suggestion, should a single suggestion be ineffective. When I attempted to encourage Sam to define this solution more specifically during the briefing, she still provided a vaguely defined response: "Talk to him directly.....have a personal conversation" (Phase II: Sam, p.4). This definition was non-specific and lacked clarity on what she would explicitly say or do, despite such prompts. When considering the above findings and those from the action of stage of Phase 2, this means clear solution definition was crucial for effective participant progression during the intervention.

The first hot-seating exercise of SFDC was ineffective for Sam, unlike other participants, from the following statement:

Hopefully it would be good....by then I would be more confident in sort of leading workshops and having a better idea about what I am doing (Phase II: Sam, p.6).

Although Sam provided emotional information about her feelings in this imagined scenario by expressing that it would be good and she would be more confident, yet no further behavioural insights were provided. There was an over-attendance to specific academic tasks, compromising the exercise's impact. Sam was thus maintained in a neutral state rather than a resourceful, relaxed state which did not meet the aims of this exercise. Consequently, this exercise influenced her responses later in the session and reduced her engagement with SFDC. Such findings mean both this exercise, correct goal setting and clear solution definition are vital for effective participant progression in SFDC, where further spontaneous questioning was required to react to these responses.

Emergent headline 4: SFDC was limited to solutions involving direct verbal communication despite participants making alternative suggestions

During Phase of SFDC, MXI and Same suggested solution outside direct verbal communication to their Phase 1 responses, which was unanticipated.

For instance, MXI considered body language while exploring her scenario which this intervention was not designed to address, meaning she understood the enactments literally rather than focusing on the broad relationship dynamics. Considering the nature of communication skills discussed in Chapter 2, body language issues are not inseparable from solutions involving direct verbal communication. It was thus mutually agreed between MXI, the director and myself that such issues were unnecessary to separate. Yet this finding means participants unearthed specific actions outside of general solutions involving direct communication during SFDC.

MXI proposed solutions outside direct verbal communication creatively by expressing: “Writing a letter to him, getting a guy to phone him”, and “Phone him and speak to him”. While the latter suggestion was reasonable considering the conflict in this situation, this should not be generalised to milder conflicts and would be disempowering if MXI expected someone else to address all conflicts she experienced, as this may not always be possible.

Similarly, Sam suggested to text the director in her scenario which was outside direct verbal communication. To explore such suggestions more time was required to prepare and could only be determined during the first role play session, which I had not obtained ethical approval for. Freedom to invite participants spontaneously to set agreed goals between sessions was absent in the intervention for exploration in follow-on sessions.

Emergent headline 5: SFDC enabled one participant to identify their progress during Phase 2 follow-on sessions

During the whole project, MXI was the only participant who took part in a follow-on session during Phase 2 of the intervention. MXI made the following statement when I prompted her to clarify her learnings from the previous session:

I enjoyed like not being myself and then being shown different ways that you can conduct yourself that are maybe outside of my personality. So that was cool. So, I learnt a lot... I'm not really a confrontational person but it is ok (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.3).

SFDC thus provided MXI with more awareness, insights and understanding of her current behavioural repertoire, by being shown ways to behave outside of her perception of her personality. From this statement she thus had an image of herself as an individual that is not confrontational. Such awareness draws attention to the self-image component of a closed

loop in Life Coaching concepts from Martin (2001). MXI framed this response well in a normalised manner as she stated: “It is ok”, consistent with positive psychology concepts described in Chapter 3. As MXI identified different ways to conduct herself outside of her personality, it means that at this stage of the process, she had expanded on her behavioural repertoire. Further prompting would have been useful for MXI to clarify what these different ways to conduct herself were.

When I coached MXI to consider the positive emotional and behavioural information she had provided from the first sessions, she responded to the intervention as follows when evaluating where she was in relation to achieving her final goal at this stage of SFDC:

I think there have been changes...I don't think I have changed because it is my personality, but I do think that I am more aware of you know like character defect where I am not being confident to say well no (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.5).

From this statement MXI had gained more self-discovery but made vague statements such as “there have been changes”, yet this stage of the intervention provided limited insights on her progress. Spontaneous prompting would have been useful to expand further in these learnings and shift the conversation toward solutions similar to those I described in Phase 1, to clarify MXI's insights further.

Emergent headline 6: Follow-on sessions must explore new possibilities to provide new participant insights

Although SFDC enabled MXI to identify her progress during the first session of Phase 2, the second session had limited effectiveness, as MXI explored only one new solution and made the following statement during the debriefing:

Just the same as last time how that there are alternative ways to handle myself not just being a people pleaser and then moving to the extreme of losing it.... there is a between ground (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.16).

From this statement MXI didn't enhance her learning further in the second session, considering that the intervention explored a past situation, and restricted participants' learnings to what happened during the rehearsal. There was no opportunity to apply and examine such learnings outside the rehearsal into real life, unlike an ongoing scenario, to determine whether such resources improve the scenario dynamics. Examining thus the

impact of such resources to address an ongoing conflict outside the rehearsal would increase the necessity for follow-on sessions in Phase 2.

MXI also expressed that she was more frustrated compared to the previous session. After a check-in MXI expressed that referring to the admin was an effective solution, although she did not explain how effective this resource was (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.16). From these statements it might apply that participants must only explore new possibilities to enhance their learning in follow-on sessions, to promote more effective experiences in future group activities.

Emergent headline 7: Resources effective in collective situations were ineffective in personal situations although Phase 3 provided space to spontaneous rehearse new actions

Throughout the whole process participants explored situations that were either collective or personal. I define a collective situation as a situation where the behaviour of select individual(s) impacted on the whole group dynamics causing conflict in the group. I define personal situations as a situation where the behaviour of select individual(s) caused conflict with a limited number of individuals in the group rather than the whole group dynamics and concerned personal relationship dynamics.

Evidence from Phase 3 of SFDC, provided insights that resources (i.e. tools) effective in collective situations can be applied for similar scenarios but cannot be generalised to personal situations, as Hermia had explored a collective situation in Phase 2, whereas MXI and Sam explored more personal scenarios.

For instance, the workshop in Phase 3 of the intervention was effective for Hermia, when exploring her own scenario, whereby the first intention of the workshop was met. The intervention thus enabled Hermia to maintain resources acquired from Phase 2 at this stage in the short term, a month later, by using such tools while enacting her scenario in the workshop. These tools were:

Redirecting the conversation to involving the whole group, rather than confronting Paul on his behaviour, as rehearsed in Phase 2: “What strategies could we have as a group to help”

Brainstorming for ideas that involved the whole group by asking a variety of questions to reduce differences between Paul and the group. Hermia was empathetic and acknowledged

Paul's positive intent of his behaviour by expressing: "I know you are trying to liven it up, I absolutely get what you are doing". The dialogue was redirected towards solution-finding conversations to find an alternative outcome and led to collaboration in the dialogue. The actor as Paul responded pro-socially by suggesting alternative possibilities such as "give everybody a wee board", and "some games" to involve the group more. Hermia thus effectively communicated her points across to Paul, leading to positive outcome during the enactments, which resolved the conflict that was consistent with framings of the goal I read in the narration.

The second intention of the workshop was less effective for Hermia when exploring MXI's scenario as protagonist during Phase 3, in sharp contrast to her own, as she expressed: "Your behaviour is outrageous", to the receiver during the enactment. Throughout the whole dialogue she attended to problem removal, considering the nature of MXI's scenario, whereby the conflict was unchanged, and the narration's desired outcome was not achieved. Hermia was attempting to make the actor as SAM take responsibility for his behaviour during this enactment. This stage of the intervention thus was ineffective as Hermia was unable to apply tools, she learned from Phase 2 in this scenario. This means that tools successful in a collective situation weren't necessarily appropriate for personal situations.

As the intervention enabled Hermia to maintain tools in her own scenario but was unable to apply these in MXI's scenario, this means that further exploration on how participants could use learnings in other scenarios was important while closing Phase 2 to provide a smoother transition between phases.

There was evidence that the group workshop in Phase 3 of SFDC was more effective for Sam than Phase 2. While exploring her own scenario as protagonist in Phase 3, there was a moment of cooperation during the dialogue, yet the conflict was unresolved nor was the outcome of the narration met. Dialogues were more prosocial, where this stage of the intervention enabled her to respond more spontaneously, using several tools which were:

Firstly, asking questions and using tools resembling those from NVC. For example: "Are you assuming that this is going to stop being a problem on its own if that is what you are saying?" "I just feel that's not how conflict gets resolved".

Secondly, Sam attempted to make the director in her scenario feel guilty about his behaviour by expressing: "the person that is meant to be sort of leading.....you allowed him to yell",

yet this tool left the conflict unchanged as the actor as Scott replied:” Once you do a few more shows you get more experience you’ll find these happen all the time”,

While performing Hermia’s and MXI’s scenario SFDC enabled Sam as protagonist to be empathetic to the actor as Paul from the following statement:

I think if you are worried about getting a word in edgeways and people talking about things that are not group work then there is a way to do without shutting other people down, don’t you think? (Phase III: p.15).

Here, although Sam was empathetic by being concerned, with the actor as Paul, the conflict was maintained as Sam here didn’t make specific suggestions and Paul replied: “You want me to be like the lecturer?”, which was accusatory than prosocial.

Note that I checked-in with the actor during Sam’s enactment of MXI’s scenario due to emotional breakdown concerns by stopping the dialogue prior to continuing, considering this was the last scenario explored in Phase 3 of the intervention. The actor’s responses provided insights on the intensity of the performances in Phase 3, as three scenarios were explored during this workshop, without role reversing exercises as with Phase 2, meaning that exploring three different scenarios during the workshop was ineffective.

The workshop in Phase 3 of SFDC thus provided participants an opportunity to ensure learnings from Phase 2 were maintain in the short term and apply these to other conflict scenarios of group learning activities. These findings also provide evidence that Phase 3 allowed participants to spontaneously rehearse other tools during the dialogue and expand on their learnings further, within the structure of the intervention.

Emergent headline 8: SFDC’s effectiveness was influenced by different disciplinary dynamics

In this study, there was evidence that SFDC's effectiveness was influenced by different discipline dynamics with varied values and expectations. Firstly, during Phase 2, this was apparent when Hermia explored referring to Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed during the open dialogue with the actor as a possibility, derived from a theoretical model for adult education. After this enactment, the actor expressed:

I think in a situation where I actually understood the content of what you were saying, I think I would have been more open to it (Phase II: Hermia, p.23).

As the actor was from disciplines of psychology and theatre, rather than education they found responding to this solution challenging due to such discipline differences, as they were unaware of this education theory. Similarly, Hermia remarked: “I was quite pleased, but I don’t think I convinced you” meaning that a prosocial outcome was not achieved by this approach. This finding provides insight that solutions derived from complex academic theories requiring expert knowledge and are discipline-specific weren’t very effective in attaining prosocial relationships. By contrast simple solutions derived from creative thinking e.g. making the person feel valued, that were considered spontaneously by participants without expert knowledge were more effective in obtaining prosocial relationships as examined earlier in this Chapter.

Consequently complex, discipline-specific, theory-based possibilities should be discouraged during this intervention, as the actor was only required to respond to participants' choice of solution and these possibilities may not necessarily be effective outside that specific discipline with expert knowledge of education techniques.

Similarly, different discipline values and expectations caused challenges during Phase 3 of the intervention. This was evident when Hermia and MXI performed Sam’s scenario as protagonist, as they were from different disciplines than theatre studies. While performing this scenario the actor took on the role of Scott, the director in Sam’s scenario. The consequence of bringing together participants from different academic disciplines for Phase 3 of the process was that SFDC made participants respond as follows during Sam’s scenario:

Hermia obtained a degree of collaboration during this dialogue where she obtained collaboration and understandings between her and the actor as Scott yet was not maintained. The intervention enabled Hermia to attempt alternative possibilities spontaneously by expanding on resources she acquired from Phase 2 which were:

First using humour. For example: “I absolutely see that you are doing this really well” and “Oh I must write that down that is such a good statement”. Second, Hermia made statements resembling NVC tools by expressing her feelings directly to persuade Scott: “I am feeling quite angry and quite undermined”. Scott as receiver attempted to explain his position by proclaiming: “What I am trying to do is to take a hands-off approach and let you deal with it...There is only so much power I have”.

Hermia here perceived the role of a director like a teacher and attempted to persuade the director in this scenario to react like a teacher. Although expecting Scott to be supportive was reasonable, Hermia was expecting Scott to be more hands-on, typical of a teacher. By contrast, the actor's interpretation of Scott was that he wished to be hands-off, typical of a professional director, aimed at enabling the protagonist to learn how to deal with such conflicts. Here there was thus a clash of expectations between both individuals, due to discipline differences without a prosocial outcome, as Hermia's background was in education not theatre and she was unaware that the role of a professional director is different to a teacher. The second intention of the workshop was ineffective for this scenario as Hermia was unable to apply group level approaches, she had identified during Phase 2 of intervention, meaning that tools she developed in Phase 2 were not effective in all scenarios.

Like Hermia, this scenario was ineffective for MXI as protagonist during Phase 3 due to these different disciplinary dynamics. Although some understandings and cooperation between both individuals was achieved in the dialogue, it wasn't maintained. This stage of the intervention provided MXI the opportunity to expand on tools she identified in Phase 2, and try alternative possibilities during the dialogue, where she deployed the following tools:

First MXI used humour from statements: "Is it not the role of the director like to kind of direct? The actor as Scott attempted to explain his position during the dialogue with:

"The best directors and the best producers are those who do not have to raise their voice and they do not have to put their hand in all the time. I firmly believe that". (Phase III: p.25).

Second MXI also attempted to persuade Scott and redirected the conversation by encouraging Scott to behave in an alternative manner. Here MXI engaged in a solution conversation by referring to suggestions by expressing: "To say that you were suggesting a hands-off way.....we like made changes maybe it would have avoiding him behaving the way he did", whereby she didn't specify what these changes were. MXI still deployed tools she identified from Phase 2 resembling those from NVC from statements: "Obviously I feel uncomfortable", meaning the first intention of the workshop was effective.

Yet MXI, eventually became stuck in the dialogue and couldn't respond further by proclaiming: "I don't know what to say". Like Hermia, MXI was from a different academic discipline from theatre (i.e. psychology and education), which presented the same problem when performing Sam's scenario. The second intention of the workshop was thus ineffective

for this scenario, considering the above circumstances whereby the conflict was unchanged where resolution was not clearly obtained.

As both participants thus were not necessarily aware of the differences in roles between a professional director in theatre and a teacher, SFDC was thus ineffective for this scenario in Phase 3, suggesting there were limitations with this intervention when participants explored scenarios from disciplines different from their own.

Emergent headline 9: Effective tools in personal situations were maintained short-term but only partially effective for collective scenarios

As MXI's scenario was a more personal conflict between her and the male student rather than the whole group, SFDC was less effective for MXI during Phase 3 compared to Hermia, where she deployed the following tools:

While exploring her own scenario as protagonist, MXI made observations and expressed feelings during the dialogue, resembling NVC recommendations. For example: “I don’t like the way you are acting towards and giving me this jacket”, where the dialogue obtained the same outcome as Phase 2, considering the nature of this scenario when she proclaimed: “I just don’t want you to text me or...talk to me outside the group. We can chat in the group but not outside”.

While performing Hermia’s scenario, the intervention was partially effective as there was a short moment of collaboration and understanding, where the actor as Paul acknowledged his behaviour. During this dialogue MXI deployed communication tools:

Firstly, MXI attempted to persuade Paul to acknowledge his behaviour by asking questions. For example: “If you and I were objectively looking at a sky view of the group, do you think there is one person who talks like more than anyone else?”.

Secondly, MXI acknowledged Paul’s motivation and attempted to make him take responsibility for his behaviour during the dialogue rather than merely projecting her feelings. MXI expressed: “How do you help them by finishing their sentences? Here the actor as Paul acknowledged his behaviour as he stated, “I don’t mean to be rude”. This outcome means tools MXI acquired from Phase 2 weren’t suitable for this scenario, and that the same resources aren’t necessarily effective in every conflict situation, as with Sam’s scenario.

Emergent headline 10: Participants identified multiple resources during SFDC which promoted prosocial dynamics in group learning in higher education

During the debriefing stages of Phases 2 and 3, SFDC enabled three participants to identify a range of resources that are effective in promoting prosocial relationships in group learning from their experiences of the role play exercises, which met the evaluation criteria of acceptability within higher education. These were:

i) Addressing the problem source and being firm.

Queenie identified that addressing the source of the problem was a positive resource, in contrast to enabling such behaviour to continue (Phase II: Queenie, p.22). On reflecting further on the experience, she expressed:

I definitely need to be firmer...nor think it is going to be the end of the world if you tell them you know? They are not going to start being argumentative back to you, they have got to accept why there is a problem (Phase II: Queenie, p.22).

From this statement, the intervention enabled Queenie to be more confident and less fearful to express her feelings to improve her future experiences of group activities in higher education. The experience thus expanded her learning and challenged her self-limiting beliefs as she expressed that individuals aren't going to be argumentative if she was firmer, when facing future conflicts. This statement provides insights that Queenie expanded her behavioural repertoire at this stage by identifying this resource and met the primary positive outcome of SFDC

Similarly, Hermia made the following statements during the briefing in Phase 2:

It was really useful to reflect on the assumptions that I had about Paul. So yeah it made me much more compassionate towards Paul (Phase II: Hermia, p.25).

Here Hermia explained that her assumptions about Paul were challenged by the intervention as she became more compassionate. This statement means that SFDC enabled Hermia to discover her self-limiting beliefs, which held her back from improving the relationship dynamics between her and Paul, and she had a more empathetic understanding with Paul.

ii) Shifting dialogues to the group.

Hermia reported shifting the dialogue to the group level was effective, which she identified as a useful resource from the experience (Phase II: Hermia, p.25). The intervention thus enhanced Hermia's learning by exploring alternative possibilities which promoted pro-social relationships in group learning. Such framings were consistent with intentions of the strengths-based model which bypassed the problem and focussed on solution-focused enactments. From these responses, Hermia identified resources/tools from the intervention, which enabled her to expand her behavioural repertoire consistent with SFDC's primary positive outcome

iii) Brainstorm for alternatives.

The intervention continued to be effective for Hermia based on her reports in Phase 3 of SFDC. While evaluating her performance Hermia reported:

I think in the first scenario which was more familiar to me I think I was able to be less confrontational than I had been in real life.... put that tactic of what is it you think you can do (Phase III: p.37).

From this statement Hermia maintained learning from Phase 2, and was encouraged by the experience of the intervention, as she was able to be more prosocial using the approach of asking what Paul could do, aimed at brainstorming for alternative ways of running the group. This was validated after some peer support by the actor who confirmed asking questions was prosocial from his perspective as receiver in the dialogues (Phase III: p.37). This was consistent with the benefits of coaching as described by Bieher & Snowman (1997) and Lancer & Eatough (2018), by a supportive engagement with other individuals present. Hermia however reported this resource was ineffective in the other scenarios (Phase III: p.37), confirming that the same resource cannot be generalised to all group learning scenarios.

iv) Use of powerful actions.

MXI made the following statements during Phase 2:

I actually learnt about wording like there are a lot of things that the actor as me that was like "Oh wow" wording that way that doesn't need over explanation to flower something out. That's really helpful! (Phase II: MXI, Session 1, p.20).`

SFDC was thus effective for MXI at this stage, where she perceived that the actor deployed action with powerful language during enactment, as she expressed that the wording was positive and powerful by an “Oh wow”, which was insightful to her. These actions provided her with further insights and awareness in order to manage the relationship explored. Yet what specifically she had done that was powerful remained unclarified. Further prompting at this stage thus would have been helpful to clarify these actions.

MXI also expressed:

I suppose seeing a scenario like that from more of an outside perspective or more detached perspective....and to step back and see it and I suppose like the actor was saying “I just want to make pals or something” I didn’t believe it.... there are better ways to handle this (Phase II: MXI: Session 1, p.21).

From this statement MXI believed that viewing the situation from an outside perspective provided her with more insight and understanding of her scenario which was helpful. The experience thus enhanced her learning and insights on the situation consistent with coaching, rather than fixating on problems, in contrast to her responses earlier in this session. The process challenged her self-limiting beliefs, as she stated that she did not believe the actor’s performance of SAM’s intentions during her scenario.

Although MXI acquired restricted learning from the second session in Phase 2 of SFDC, she made the following statement about her experiences of enacting the solution: referring to the admin, explored during this study:

I felt like guilty and then when you were speaking as SAM and got a reality check, it made me feel more justified in doing something like that in the future (Phase II: MXI, Session 2, p.16).

MXI expressed that although she was feeling guilty after performing the approach of referring to the admin, the actor’s perspective provided her with more insight and learning. Consequently, the intervention challenged her beliefs, as she stated that she felt more justified in using this resource which enhanced her learning to some extent, consistent with coaching criteria. Her response also means that this action was a powerful resource, and acceptable to use in conflict situations and made her think critically.

v) Put the situation into someone else’s court.

While evaluating her experiences in Phase 3, MXI expressed:

That's a good strategy kind of putting it in someone's court and....in my scene I feel that I was like more confrontational than I was in real life.....from this I learnt that it's maybe good to consult someone else who's objective that this is happening.....it's good to get an outside validation that what you are feeling is ok and this kind of not normal (Phase III: p.38).

MXI was encouraged by the experience of the intervention and identified that putting the situation in someone's court was a useful resource. Yet further prompting on what this statement clearly meant in practice would have been useful to provide her with more insight. From this statement she learnt to expand on her behaviour repertoire by being more confrontational, which was clarified as "just setting boundaries", instead of avoidance behaviours. As MXI expressed that she obtained an outside validation, it means that the other participants provided effective peer support and insights, by viewing her situation as an outsider, which was a positive learning experience for MXI.

The intervention was ineffective when I opened up the conversation to the whole group during Phase 3, which shifted to a therapy-like conversation rather than coaching, focusing on understanding past problems better without expansion of participants' learnings further for future flourishing. Here MXI referred to deficits from statements such as, "What would it say about my personality" which was inconsistent with coaching framings. Although SFDC was described as a coaching approach on the participant information form, there is still limited awareness of coaching within academia, as described in Chapter 3. This means participants should have been provided further information on the distinctions between coaching and psychotherapy before engaging with this intervention.

vi) Asking receivers questions.

Sam identified the following resource during Phase 3:

On one hand being more patient, and kind using those certain phrases...I think all three of us we would ask the antagonist questions.... how they viewed things or themselves or how they viewed the situation, and that does pull out a lot of logical inconsistencies to.... maybe get your point across.... (Phase III: p.38).

From this statement, Sam identified that asking questions to the person they experienced conflict with was an effective resource during these scenarios of SFDC.

Despite the above resource, this intervention had minimal effectiveness for Sam, who reported:

Well I think I confirmed what I suspected when I suggested trying to be more firm and more angry with Jessie that isn't going to work and that is equally as pointless as sitting there trying to be calm and weak. (Phase II: Sam, p.26).

As from this statement Sam expressed that the experienced confirmed what was ineffective and was "pointless", it means that she was less engaged with this intervention than other participants and wished to confirm her assumptions. This statement highlights that SFDC is ineffective for less engaged participants with certain assumptions who may appear resistant to having these challenged.

5.2 III) Insights on the short-term impact of the intervention

In this section participants' information will be integrated to provide insights on the short-term effectiveness of the intervention, using headlining as with evaluation of Phases 2 and 3 of SFDC. I will now discuss these insights derived from participants' responses during the follow-up interview in Phase 4.

Superordinate headline 1: SFDC expanded two participants' learning, personal growth, and behavioural repertoires

During Phase 4, MXI and Hermia made statements that the intervention provided them with new insights, expanded on their learning and promoted personal growth, meeting the primary positive outcome for SFDC as described in Chapter 2, and criteria of acceptability. MXI expressed:

It was so good because....it just allowed me to see situations objectively....it was amazing, honestly. I think it helped me learn a lot about me as well.... how to see situations from other people's point of view.... which was good! (Phase IV: MXI, p.2).

MXI was able to learn more about herself due to the intervention and view the situation from alternative perspectives, and from the view of other individuals. This statement means SFDC

equipped MXI with new insights to improve her future interpersonal experiences of group activities in higher education.

MXI and Hermia made statements which provided insight that their behavioural repertoires were expanded due to the intervention. MXI remarked:

I learnt other ways of dealing with situations that are outside of my natural character and that was really positive for me, because I am not a really confrontational person... I learnt when other people were being me in the group being confrontational and standing up for yourself are two different things (Phase IV: MXI, p.2)

This response means that she had expanded her behavioural repertoire because of having the opportunity to learn and explore other ways of dealing with situations by behaving in a manner that was different from her natural character, which were positive actions to take. She met thus the core aim of SFDC from this statement. MXI gained new insights that there is a balance between standing up for yourself without causing conflict, to achieve prosocial relationships (Phase IV: MXI, p.2). She learnt such insights from exercises in Phase 3, resembling mirroring as described Chapter 4, when other participants performed her scenario which enabled MXI to view her situation as an outsider. MXI was also able to step outside of her comfort zone and behave in an alternative manner, which was positive, as she previously expressed that she tended to avoid conflict (Phase II, MXI Session 1, p.19; Phase III: p.8). This self-limiting routine was disrupted during the intervention, by exploring new responses rather than avoiding conflict, meaning that SFDC equipped MXI with new prosocial tools and insights.

This statement was consistent with that of Hermia who expressed that she was more reflective and aware of her responses as result of the experience (Phase IV: Hermia, p.4). As she became more aware of these responses, the experience thus expanded on her behaviour repertoire to enable her to be more flexible when responding to future difficult situations. SFDC's core purpose was met and thus effective for Hermia, as described in Chapter 1, as she had explored group level approaches, beyond the most obvious response of directly challenging individuals about their behaviour.

MXI also perceived that the intervention had a positive impact on her beliefs:

Challenging my beliefs like, Oh I am so scared tell anyone.... I'm so scared to stand up to him because everyone is going to think I am like whatever you know. So, like challenging

that in the role play it was actually...no! So, it's making it worth me going challenging my ideas (Phase IV: MXI, p.5).

From this statement, MXI's self-limiting beliefs and self-talk were challenged due to the experience, which resembled coaching concepts from Martin (2001), as she stated: "challenging my ideas". Statements indicative of MXI's self-talk were: "I'm so scared to stand up to him", which were challenged due to the role play experience. SFDC thus made her more aware and challenged her assumptions on this scenario, by exploring new responses to the conflict, which addressed group learning challenges by Colbeck *et al.* (2000) discussed in previous Chapters.

MXI made the following statement on the impact of SFDC for managing stress in group activities:

I mean interpersonal things are stressful. Hopefully if I use tools, I learnt from the group work, I think it would be less stressful if I had like a) approached fellow group members or b) stood up to an antagonist. I think be less stressful for me instead of the isolating thing (Phase IV: MXI, p.5).

MXI provided insight that she became more aware that addressing a difficult situation differently using tools from the intervention would enable her to manage stress better when responding to conflicts in group activities, instead of avoidance behaviour, as she refers to "the isolating thing". Using such tools would improve her well-being to manage difficult situations better in the future, as she also remarked that she was more confident to manage personal relationships from the experience (Phase IV: MXI, p.4). Drawing this together with other benefits within coaching concepts, the experience challenged MXI's closed loop, and promoted empowerment and new insights rather than engaging in self-limiting routines which enhance stress in group activities, preventing cooperation in the group. SFDC increased MXI's awareness that avoidance behaviour is an ineffective response to conflict, enhancing stress of individuals. Like MXI, Hermia remarked that the experience made her more confident to address the situation rather than avoiding it, when dealing with future difficult situations. (Phase IV: Hermia, p.5).

MXI remarked that another benefit of this intervention was that she became aware of what her group role is and how she works in groups (Phase IV: MXI, p.5). Here she remarked how the experience made her more confident to express her feelings, which was a useful tool if an

individual behaved inappropriately in front of other group members, and she was less anxious about what others may think (Phase IV: MXI, p.4-5). She learnt this tool, which made her more resourceful due to this improved confidence from the intervention, to promote prosocial relationships in the future. Like MXI, Hermia also remarked that the intervention provided her with further understanding about her role in this situation, and provided the space to explore this creatively, and gain clarity about her role in groups (Phase IV: Hermia, p.2 and 5).

Hermia expressed several other positive results from the intervention. Firstly, she remarked the following benefit:

I actually thought they were brilliant and really offered insight and clarity around possible strategies for intervention. I was actually really surprised about how powerful they were and seeing it from someone else's view or somebody else doing it (Phase IV: Hermia, p.2).

Hermia was positive about her experiences of SFDC, which were helpful to provide further insights as the process enabled her to view the situation from an alternative perspective in addition to her own.

Secondly, when I prompted Hermia to discuss the impact the intervention had on managing stress and personal relationships she remarked:

I think it really helpful in the sense that it was less about me and how it lands on me, using that technique. It's much more putting that issue to the group about what they'd said. I carried the frustration less (Phase IV: Hermia, p.4).

Hermia expressed that putting the issues to the group was a useful tool, which had a more positive outcome than making issues personal. This approach thus promoted prosocial communication to enable Hermia to manage personal relationships better.

By contrast to MXI and Hermia, Sam reported limited benefits from the intervention from the following statement:

In the group, in the last things that we did was really validating to go through that again.... I'm sure that will be helpful for future situations (Phase IV: Sam p.2-3).

Sam found the experience validating which was positive for her and which confirmed her understanding of the problem. She achieved better clarity and understanding of the past problem, this was inconsistent coaching aims as she was unable to identify resources beyond

this to improve her future group learning quality. Her personal growth was thus restricted, as Sam was unable to meet SFDC's primary positive outcome.

Superordinate headline 2: One participant applied resources acquired from SFDC outside the rehearsal to flourish in future group learning activities

Hermia provided evidence that she was inspired to apply resources she had learnt from the intervention into real life in one future example of group learning, meeting the secondary positive outcome of SFDC. SFDC enabled her to identify new resources and deployed these when responding to future conflicts within this higher education context, addressing interpersonal group learning challenges described by Colbeck *et al.* (2000). Here she reported:

There was a scenario in one of the groups and there was a very difficult discussion about a woman in the group and wasn't there at the meeting...I decided what I would do was simply reflect back what everyone else in the group had said and they were really shocked! (Phase IV: Hermia, p.4).

Hermia expressed that using group level tools derived from SFDC promoted prosocial relationships for the future because the person she experienced conflict with became more aware and insightful about their behaviour (Phase IV: Hermia, p.4). The outcome was powerful as this improved Hermia's experiences of group learning, where tools she had learnt from the intervention were maintained in the short term. This finding also provides ground that solution-focused enactments which led to success behaviour made this participant perform this behaviour in the future, as these learnings from SFDC were maintained and used.

Such findings support using collaborative approaches to promote prosocial relationships in group learning which provides evidence that learnings were maintained and applied into life, outside the dramatic rehearsals. This statement also means that the open dialogue stage in Phase 2 of SFDC was useful to Hermia, by choosing to deploy tools acquired from the experience during a private conversation with the person she experienced conflict with rather than during future events of conflict. This report provides insight that not only did the main enactment stages in Phase 2 enable Hermia to identify tools to thrive in future group learning activities and choose how best to apply these to manage conflict more effectively by promoting prosocial relationships within this context.

The above scenario was however collective, and similar to the example explored during SFDC because all group members were involved, rather than a personal situation affecting a limited number of individuals in the group. Although this tool was effective in this collective situation as the interpersonal dynamics were improved, it doesn't necessarily mean it will be effective for personal situations. These findings mean that responses that are effective for collective situations but cannot necessarily be generalised to other situations considering the subjective nature of communication described by Salmon & Young (2011) and outcome variability arising from a receiver's responses.

MXI however had not experienced another difficult group learning situation since Phase 3, considering her definition of group learning and perceptions that those were absent within her current studies reported earlier in this Chapter. It was thus unknown whether MXI had experienced interpersonal difficulties within her wider experiences of higher education, and applied tools from the intervention to improve the dynamics as I had not obtained ethical approval for such conversations.

Emergent headline: Participant engagement with SFDC influenced their learnings

During Phase 4, participants made statements which provided insights into their engagement with this intervention which was related to their responses to Phase 2 of SFDC.

Participants Hermia and MXI made the following statement about their experiences of the intervention:

I thought the structure of it was very good and very well thought out to encourage reflection and breaking through to some sort of learning about it was brilliant (Phase IV: Hermia, p.3).

This response means Hermia was positive about the experience which provides insights that she was very engaged with the process as a result, considering that she unearthed several resources during the Phase 2 of SFDC.

Similarly, MXI made statements that were positive about the experience for instance: "It was so good....it was amazing" when reporting her experiences of the intervention, meaning that she was very engaged with SFDC and acquired new learnings from Phase 2.

By contrast to MXI and Hermia, Sam remarked:

It wasn't something that I am personally connected to. It wasn't like an experience with a good friend that would constantly be going back to....it happened....it doesn't have any effect on my day to day life (Phase IV: Sam, p.2)

This statement means Sam was less engaged in SFDC than other participants, as she lacked a personal connection to this situation, meaning this scenario was not particularly important for her, consistent with features of stuck episodes described in Chapter 3. Considering this statement and that this intervention was ineffective for Sam during Phase 2, these findings mean SFDC effectiveness required participants to be engaged in the process.

Interestingly, as Sam here referred to experiences with friends, it suggests she would have been more engaged if she had explored conflicts within a wider research context, that were ongoing and longer-term. She also made statements such as: "Figure out how to give up or get out of this situation", which suggested a lack of engagement, mild resistance and wished to avoid such situations. This means that confirming what is important for participants, drawn from MI principles described by Passmore (2014) has potential to ensure their engagement with the process, which should have discussed more explicitly during SFDC.

5.2. IV) Summary of SFDC evaluation

SFDC thus met all suitable evaluation criteria within three participant cases. Acceptability was met by these participants who had expanded their behavioural repertoires to improve their future interpersonal experiences of group work within higher education. The second positive outcome was also met by one participant who has experienced conflict in group activities after this intervention and has applied learnings from SFDC to flourish in one future example. This provides insight that enactments of success behaviour enabled this participant to respond differently in a similar future scenario, to resolve the conflict and improve the interpersonal dynamics in this context. Criteria of understanding the mechanism and efficacy was met as SFDC enabled participants to explore alternative behaviours using techniques derived from positive psychology and applied theatre, to meet desired outcomes that facilitated transformation. Exploring group learning scenarios by enactment of several new possibilities enabled participants to challenge any self-limiting assumptions, in an alternative manner to cognitive approaches. This provided these participants with new choices of how to respond and under what circumstances, when experiencing future conflicts within group activities, addressing challenges described by Colbeck *et al.* (2000). SFDC thus provided these participants opportunities to identify and develop several resources to flourish in future

group learning activities rather than remaining unsure how to respond to conflict, leading to unfavourable experiences.

SFDC also provides insight that solution-focused enactments were more effective than problem-focused enactments without stuck episodes, leading to more prosocial outcomes and expanded participants' behavioural repertoires to flourish in future group activities. Problem-focused conversations restricted participants' learning and creativity, became repetitive where players became stuck in the problem leading to less prosocial outcomes. More explicit solution-definition compared to SFBT and Life Coaching prior to enactments was crucial for SFDC's effectiveness and enhancement of participant learnings and transformation. These findings expand on studies by Dassen (2015) and Lancer & Eatough (2018), by examining the potential and benefits of integrating drama-based and positive psychology techniques within personal coaching practices within a wider context than corporate settings.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Despite this project's small-scale, it provides further preliminary insights on interpersonal difficulties in group activities within the field of higher education. SFDC uniquely combined applied theatre and positive psychology to address group dynamics within this context, beyond their use in corporate settings, expanding on studies by Dassen (2015).

In this Chapter I will first discuss the overall research findings from an educational perspective as to what contributions and implications these have for improving students' experiences of group learning in higher education. I will particularly discuss the strengths and limitations of this study and its contributions to literature on higher education, within the core aim of evaluating SFDC within this research context.

Secondly, I will explore the specific benefits and shortcomings of SFDC from these findings from a personal coaching perspective as to whether this intervention addressed shortcomings of Boalian, Moreno, Deshazer & Berg, and Leonard practices discussed in Chapter 3, as directions for drama-based and positive psychology practices. Finally, I will discuss and propose amendments to practising this intervention with suggestions for further areas of study, within and outside higher education contexts.

6.1) Implications of research findings on higher education literature

My Master's research and other studies provided evidence that conflicts within group learning in higher education may cause individual stress and lead to ineffective learning experiences of this activity with reduced student wellbeing (Borg *et al.*, 2011; Burdett, 2007; Colbeck *et al.*, 2000; Colebrook, 2014; Hassanien, 2007; Jarvenoja & Javerla, 2009; Naykki *et al.*, 2014; Payne *et al.*, 2006; Rust *et al.*, 2003). This study has several strengths: first from interview data, the study expanded on the above findings and provided evidence of a vast array of factors, contributing to problems in such activities, meeting this project's first research objective. The research was cross-disciplinary, meaning that it expands research on student group activities in higher education beyond focus groups or specific disciplines, that led to ineffective group work experiences.

Here participants reported behavioural issues that included passive, aggressive and passive-aggressive behaviours, compatible with assertive models described by Sommers-Flanagan, & Sommers- Flanagan (2012), and Tolin (2016), alongside dismissive behaviour, individuals lacking motivation, or unequal work contributions. These issues were associated with clashes

of individual life experiences, values, and group expectations, where there was evidence of personal issues outside the group activities brought into meetings, negatively affecting the dynamics.

Participants also reported cognitive issues, which were their internal dialogues that contributed to concerns about how they might be perceived if they complained about an individual's behaviour, or how they reacted to such behaviours. The consequence of these cognitions was either that they: i) Maintained the conflict, which built up to the point of no return causing emotional stress and sleep difficulties, leading to participants changing groups or ii) Amplified the conflict where participants responded in a antisocial manner to the behaviours. Behavioural issues thus influenced cognitions and participants' reactions to the conflict during these experiences, which also led to emotional issues that impacted on their wellbeing.

These findings thus advocate a holistic approach to examining group learning challenges, integrating behavioural, cognitive, and emotional issues experienced by students in group activities that impact on one another, and how issues external to the group may impact on the interpersonal dynamics. Research should thus focus on addressing interpersonal issues beyond academic task challenges to enable students to flourish and transform during their future experiences of group learning, consistent with findings by Lancer & Eatough (2018) on student challenges in higher education.

A second strength of this study is that findings provide insights on the benefits to postgraduate students to undertake coaching workshops on group learning in higher education. This would be particularly useful for students with limited group learning experiences prior to starting their course, from reports of Charlie, Petra and Alison leading to unfavourable experiences of these activities. Drawing on Fiechtner & Davis (1992), Gillies & Ashman (2003), and Hassanien (2007), I would recommend such workshops are facilitated by tutors or by student learning services, to enable better student preparation for group activities. This is important as Johnson & Johnson (1994) indicate a lack of guidance on how to cooperate effectively in groups, leading to negative experiences of group activities. Colbeck *et al.* (2000), however indicated that some students can effectively learn skills to manage interpersonal challenges in group learning activities without prior instruction, to cooperate with their peers. This means workshops should be encouraged rather than made

compulsory for students depending on their experiences, as some individuals can acquire skills for effective group learning from hands-on experiences.

From this research such workshops should incorporate prosocial tools which encourage positive interpersonal experiences within group activities beyond successful completion of academic tasks, where a range of issues are covered impacting the dynamics. From this study, it would be appropriate to implement SFDC to address non-academic issues within a coaching workshop in a collaborative, co-creative manner to enable students to flourish in future group learning activities. If students required further assistance, they should choose group SFDC conduct or on a personal level, drawing on Life Coaching and Psychodrama principles discussed in Chapter 3 to accommodate their needs under student learning service facilitation.

Alongside the above, these findings also provide grounds that students in higher education could benefit from self-evaluating their group experiences drawing on Hmelo-Silver (2004). From personal experiences, such evaluations are absent in disciplines such as psychology, leading to continued challenges in these activities. I would thus recommend students to reflect holistically on their learning from the experiences, and what they would do differently next time to enable them to thrive in future activities after each project.

When considering the complex design of SFDC, this research also identifies potential for applying headlining more frequently within qualitative research, drawing on Flick (2009), particularly for evaluating complex practices that are less structured. Here Headlining thus provided a means to accommodate for participant varied durations of Phase 2, solution choices, response to complex techniques in SFDC design, within the ethical constraints, as latter phases of SFDC were less structured than Phase 1.

Headlining thus has potential for evaluating complex interventions that are less structured which can be challenging to examine by conventional means, as reflected in difficulties of examining SFBT and Psychodrama as described by Krall (2017), Orkibi and Feniger-Schaal (2019), and Franklin (2011). This is thus important as no SFBT or Psychodrama technique, including specialist models have been previously independently evaluated beyond broad case studies due to these challenges. Examples of specialist techniques/modules include the Spiral Model from Psychodrama, and SFBT's prediction task as described in Chapter 3, where headlining has potential to evaluate the effectiveness of these techniques within the broad intervention framework.

Despite these strengths there were several limitations of this research. First this research project was small scale of 11 postgraduate student participants. Although being cross-disciplinary and more representative of group learning issues beyond a single discipline, it was still restricted to the disciplines of education, theatre studies and psychology. Several participants however reported conflicts within group learning activities in other disciplines such as medicine or law, which could have been discussed further in this study.

A second limitation of this broad research was that these findings relied on participant definitions of group learning in higher education. The consequence of this was some participants discussed issues specific to group projects (e.g Charlie and Sam), whereas others (e.g Queenie, MXI and Hermia), discussed their experiences beyond group projects, which including those in lectures and seminars. It was thus problematic if participants had limited experiences of group projects according to this criterion or perceived that group activities were absent within their PhD studies, as with MXI, but present within their previous studies. While I wished to validate participants' experiences of issues they experienced with this study to maintain their engagement, rather than invalidate their experience causing resistance, as with studies on CBT by Barnes *et al.* (2013), these participant definitions restricted the choices of scenarios to choose from during this research. If MXI had thus experienced difficulties with group activities during postgraduate workshops or CPD courses between Phases 3 and 4 of SFDC, these were unidentified during the follow-up interview of this study and it is unknown whether she applied learning from SFDC in her future experiences of group activities.

The third limitation of this research was tensions between different techniques within SFBT design, which had different intentions and compromised participants' responses to this intervention, considering their origins and applications described in Chapter 3, while other techniques within the design complemented one another during the practice. A very broad issue in this study was that more spontaneity was required throughout this research due to these tensions to redirect coaching conversations and enactments towards finding solutions to flourish in the future, which I shall discuss in more depth later in this Chapter.

6.II) Implications of research findings on drama and positive psychology-based practices

Related to implications within the higher education literature, this research also expanded on development of coaching and drama-based practices within this context by addressing shortcomings from previous research by Dassen (2015) and Lancet & Eatough (2018). Here a novel personal coaching practice comprised of applied theatre and positive psychology tools was examined within higher education, providing insights on the benefits of coaching approaches outside of a corporate setting to improve student wellbeing. This study provides preliminary potential for its use as an intervention within higher education to address student problems rather than enabling such problems to develop into more severe psychological problems requiring counselling or psychotherapy. The research thus provided in-depth data on participants' responses to coaching techniques within SFDC design, considering the increase waiting times for counselling support within higher education, as reported by Turner *et al.* (2007).

The main benefit of this research study was my design and evaluation of SFDC as a novel intervention within the context of group learning in higher education, despite its small scale. The primary positive outcome for SFDC was an expanded participant's behavioural repertoire and enhanced confidence to equip students with tools to improve their relationship dynamics in future experiences of group learning. A secondary positive outcome for SFDC was that (if possible), there was some evidence participants applied learnings from the intervention into future group learning activities to improve the relationship dynamics and manage stress to effectively thrive within this context (depending on when their subsequent group learning activities were).

I designed SFDC by integrating positive psychology and applied theatre related tools which I examined in this study within the context of group learning in higher education. The main aim of this research project was to devise and test this intervention to improve relationships, self-esteem and promote better stress management. Hermia's and Queenie's findings provided preliminary insights on its potential for managing interpersonal issues within a group learning scenario, within personal coaching contexts, that was highly individualised, despite the complexity of this intervention. Previously, research has been limited to integrating positive psychology and applied theatre tools within corporate contexts as discussed in Chapter 3 rather than wider personal coaching contexts.

From reports of Hermia, Queenie, MXI and Sam who agreed to take part further in the research, SFDC was effective for several difficult behaviours experienced during group learning, by integrating applied theatre and positive psychology tools. While evaluating the implications of SFDC as a performance-based intervention, a range of factors must be considered beyond behaviour severity, including expectations and personal development experiences.

These research findings, indicated that SFDC was effective for participants Hermia, Queenie and MXI who all met the primary positive outcome and evaluation criteria described in Chapter 2, yet these were not met by Sam. I will now discuss specific benefits and implications of SFDC as an educational resource to improve and manage personal relationships within this research context to the meet the second research objective, based on findings of these case studies.

6.II.i) Benefits of SFDC and practical implications

This study provides preliminary insights as to the reason performance-based interventions can promote prosocial relationships in group learning in higher education. These insights were achieved by combining positive psychology and applied theatre positively within these case studies during this research. From the four case studies explored in this research, there were insights that SFDC provided several benefits to addressing conflicts within this context and attempted to address shortcomings of Boalian, Moreno, Deshazer & Berg, and Leonard approaches discussed in Chapter 3. I will now discuss these benefits of addressing these shortcomings to present a case for an alternative way of addressing conflict within this research context.

The first core benefit of SFDC was findings from Hermia's and Queenie's data which provide insights that the intervention was effective to manage everyday behaviours consistent with the intentions of coaching described by Martin (2001), to improve their future experiences of group learning. These everyday behaviours were passive, passive aggressive behaviour, not attending group meetings and domineering behaviours according to Hermia's and Queenie's reports.

Queenie's experiences provided insights that SFDC was suitable for managing relationships with complex situations comprised of one or more types of behaviour within this context. As Queenie reported passive-aggressive and passive behaviour in her scenario, this intervention

enabled her to focus on behaviours occurring with the group meeting, while also considering the external circumstances of the person she experienced conflict with.

The second core benefit of SFDC was that this intervention expanded on insights gained from Psychodrama and Forum Theatre. This practice ideally aimed to resolve the conflict and expanded Psychodrama principles and address shortcomings of dynamizations in Forum Theatre, by combining these with reorganisation with analytical reflection-in action described in Chapter 3. Here the aim of resolution was positive psychology focused, which focused on gaining understanding with the other person involved in the conflict, for participants to identify resources to flourish within future experiences of group activities rather than being limited to gaining insights and acceptance of past problems as with Psychodrama.

Psychodrama lacks reflections-in-action during enactments, and thus reflections-in actions provided participants the opportunity to evaluate solutions they explored to achieve their desired outcome. The above benefit was especially evident from Hermia's reflections after the role reversing exercises, while exploring solutions to promote effective group work, rather than being limited to reflections during sharing as highlighted in Chapter 3. There was thus evidence that SFDC provided three participants with new learnings and self-discovery not only by providing them new perspectives on a situation, but by expanding this further by comparing how they performed a solution differently from the actor. These findings advocates, solution variability of performance, where there are several ways to perform a solution, from Hermia's reports when comparing the outcomes of role play exercises on the same solution with those of role reversing as discussed in the previous Chapter. Hermia thus uncovered new learnings from role reversing exercises and post-action reflections based on the data, and which provided further insights than Forum Theatre and Psychodrama. This is important according to Baim *et al.* (2013) and May (2008), as personal Psychodrama is not consistently practiced beyond a therapist-client relationship, and through my own experience as a Psychodrama client, auxiliary reflections in-action are absent.

Solution variability of performance also occurred across participant cases as Hermia, MXI and Queenie performed similar solutions differently throughout this research. By contrast this intervention expanded on participants' learning using consistent reflections in-actions of an outside third party (i.e the actor) as receivers in the dialogues. This was very evident from Hermia's, Queenie's and MXI's responses to the intervention, which enabled them to progress towards achievable solutions to flourish in the future. These findings are particularly

important and provide a benefit of developing more personal drama-interventions beyond Psychodrama to accommodate individual choices than being restricted to group practice.

Related to the above, the third core benefit of this intervention is that it challenged three participants' self-limiting beliefs by dramatic exploration of alternative behaviours rather than directly challenging their cognitions by discussion, which is an alternative means to challenging individual's self-limiting assumptions. This enabled such participants to learn new ways of responding to conflict situations by obtaining more insights from experiences of the enactments than coaching conversations. The intervention thus provides participants space to expand their behavioural repertoires and disrupt routines of avoidance to promote more effective group learning experiences. Consequently, SFDC enabled participants to learn alternatives to avoidance when reacting to conflicts within this context, considering such beliefs from the enactments of Queenie and Hermia, and uncover several resources by resolving the conflict. The outcome of SFDC thus cannot always be resolution when applied to all conflicts within group learning scenarios, yet this may also be explained due to MXI's conflict scenario reaching a point of no return when it was ongoing, whereby achieving resolution was not realistic. While considering the outcome of MXI's scenario was reduced intensity, and evidence of surprising the receiver, this outcome had some success by making the receiver consider their behaviour which was moving towards resolution. This finding suggests that facilitators should respond to such an outcome in an alternative manner to Forum Theatre, which I shall discuss later in this Chapter.

SFDC deployed an indirect approach to challenging such beliefs by exploring alternative solutions by enactments, rather than overt questioning for evidence of these beliefs, as in Life Coaching as discussed in Chapter 3. This suggests individual assumptions can also be challenged by exploring alternative possibilities by enactment rather than being restricted to coaching conversations. I will thus provide a summary of this study's findings linking findings of both research intentions (Figure 3), based on the patterns unearthed from the data.

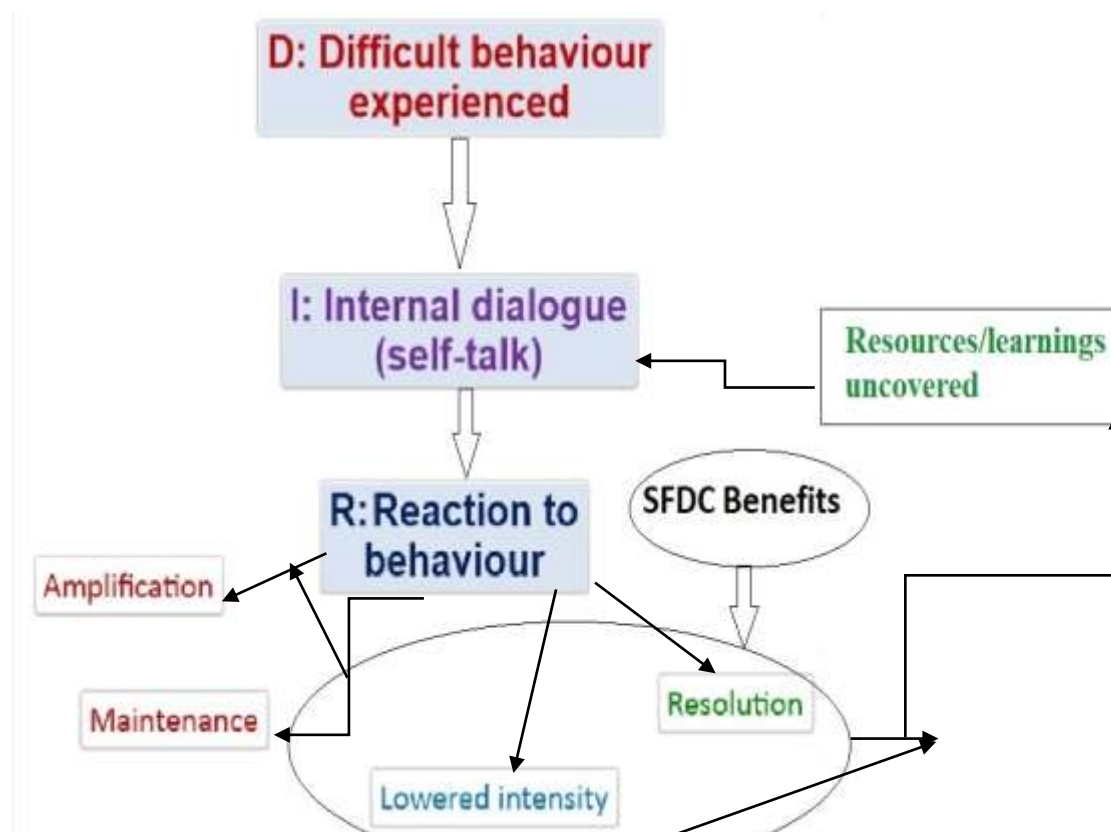
These findings make theoretical contributions to knowledge by expanding our understanding of patterns of meaning derived from participants' subjective experiences of group activities in higher education. These understandings were achieved by integrating findings of participants' interpersonal group learning challenges together within the data, to enhance reading awareness of complex issues, to enable individuals to thrive in the future, in sharp contrast to separating issues typical of mainstream therapies. These patterns are interrelated

cognitive and humanistic elements within positive psychology-based intentions of SFDC, taking a holistic approach to group learning challenges as highlighted earlier in this Chapter. The key processes are as follows: 1) An individual's choice of reaction to interpersonal issues is targeted by evaluating different levels of behavioural outcomes to improve an individual's life quality to thrive in future group learning activities. 2) While exploring different behavioural outcomes, individuals identify positive resources/learning to disrupt self-limiting internal dialogues to expand their behavioural repertoires to improve their future experiences within this context. Participant's internal dialogues are validated and accepted, addressing shortcomings of CBT highlighted by Barnes *et al.* (2013) and Schermuly-Haupt *et al.* (2018), to promote engagement, empowerment and minimise resistance by dramatic exploration of new possibilities rather than directly challenging these dialogues. These dramatic explorations enabled three participants to identify new choices of responses to challenges in this context which improved their future quality of group learning activities, without pathologizing their initial behavioural repertoires and internal dialogues. This approach thus contrasts with mainstream cognitive approaches such as CBT or REBT as highlighted in Chapter 3, which directly challenge an individual's cognitions to heal dysfunctional beliefs

From Phase 1 findings, a range of interconnected patterns of group learning issues were identified by participants, expanding on previous studies, where two core behavioural outcomes impacting on the wider group dynamics are represented in the first part of the humanistic component of these findings. While not strictly linear, the two choices of reactions (R) to interpersonal difficulties from these findings are: i) (M) Maintenance of the problem, by avoiding the situation which can lead to; ii) (A) Amplification of the conflict situation whereby the situation got worse with time, which is consistent with the consequences of problematic reactions that increase interpersonal difficulties further, drawn from Sam's reports. The cognitive components of these findings are: (D) Difficult behaviour experienced, considering (I) Internal dialogues, whereby both influenced their (R) reactions to these behaviours. Here participant self-limiting internal dialogues are unchanged by these behavioural outcomes.

The patterns from Phases 2-4 data, were that SFDC provided two alternative behavioural outcomes within these case studies, representing the second part of the humanistic component of these findings. Using this intervention, these alternative outcomes are more prosocial

Figure 3: Summary of this study's findings from both research intentions within these case studies, comprised of cognitive and humanistic components, with positive psychology-based intentions. Here individuals dramatically explore different behavioural outcomes to uncover resources, to expand their behavioural repertoires to thrive in future experiences of group learning in higher education, disrupting their self-limiting internal dialogues. SFDC thus enabled most participants to resolve or reduce the intensity of interpersonal issues within this context.



choices than A and M in response to interpersonal difficulties within group activities in higher education, which are: iii) Lowered intensity (L) of the conflict by identifying resources to reduce time with the person they experienced conflict, as with MXI, where the conflict was more severe. iv) Resolution (R) of the conflict as the ideal outcome SFDC, which enabled two participants to uncover resources by responding in alternative ways that were more positive, leading to collaboration and improved dynamics in the case of Queenie and Hermia. If this occurred, participants', learnings were enhanced further by identifying resources which disrupted their self-limiting internal dialogues to thrive during future group learning experiences. Resolution was further evident by Hermia's experience, where learnings were taken outside the rehearsals to achieve resolution during a future interpersonal challenge

within this context. This finding addresses shortcomings of Colbeck (2000) as she knew how to respond to future challenges to enhance her interpersonal experiences of group activities.

These findings therefore provide a new direction for positive psychology and drama related practices by providing preliminary evidence that learnings were used outside the rehearsal and maintained in the future, addressing shortcomings of Karatas (2014), Morelos (1999) and Prentki & Preston (2009) discussed in Chapter 3. Three participants' internal dialogues were thus challenged by dramatic explorations of alternative solutions which enabled them to unearth resources to disrupt these self-limiting dialogues and expand their behavioural repertoires to flourish in future group activities.

The fourth core benefit of SFDC was that it provides preliminary evidence that Life Coaching and Forum Theatre tools can be effectively used, from three cases in this study. Here these approaches were combined within the intervention by defining solutions and exploring these further by enactments to provide new insights and focus, using personal situations.

Participants Hermia and Queenie and to some extent MXI, achieved realistic outcomes by exploring personal scenarios during this intervention rather than leaving the scenario unresolved.

This means SFDC strengthened Forum Theatre and Life Coaching tools, where findings from two cases confirmed that these approaches complement one another within this intervention's framework. This is interesting considering Life Coaching and Forum Theatre have not previously been integrated together within broad personal coaching settings, outside corporate environments as described in Chapter 3. Morelos (1999) and Prentki & Preston (2009) describe shortcomings of audience frustration during a forum if the imagined scenario is unrelatable to them and remains unresolved without clear outcomes. This is important as desired outcomes in terms of what a successful solution would look like are defined in Life Coaching but absent in Forum Theatre.

As SFDC focused on personal scenarios rather than imagined scenarios and aimed to be more relatable to participants, there was a benefit of resolving conflict scenarios within this context consistent with Psychodrama to increase their engagement, while remaining more analytical with positive psychology-based intentions. This was achieved by both exploring and narrowing down solutions using both dynamization and reorganisation rather than limited to dynamization as in Forum Theatre, drawing on patterns of both approaches. Both Queenie and Hermia identified alternative solutions without confusion and uncovered multiple

resources, based on achievable outcomes which led to resolution with improved interpersonal dynamics. Consistent with Solution-Focused Coaching practice described by Palmer (2007), Queenie also focused on two solutions during the open dialogues beyond a single possibility at one time. This emphasises that reorganisation advocated a broad review of possibilities explored during the enactments rather than narrowing down to a single solution at this stage of the intervention, if two or more solutions be were effective after dramatic exploration.

Similarly, practitioners such as Russell (2016) and Surin (2017) describe problems of stuck episodes within Life Coaching which can occur when coachees are unable to describe, consider and evaluate solutions to effectively progress towards their goals in order to transform. There was thus a benefit to explore solutions within SFDC by both discussion and enactment to evaluate and clarify solution effectiveness, with further insights than conversations from Hermia and Queenie's findings, by combining tools of these approaches within this intervention. Here intensive participant questioning was unnecessary and appeared to address a core challenge within talking interventions, suggesting that dramatic enactments address this problem. Similarly, there was an absence of stuck episodes if solution-focused enactments occurred which were more effective than problem-focused enactments as participants identified more learnings, which enabled Hermia to take learning outside the rehearsal to improve the quality of her future group learning experiences within higher education. These findings thus expand SFBT concepts and studies by Grant & Gerrard (2019), as enactments of success behaviour enhanced Hermia's learnings further than coaching conversations and enabled her to respond in this manner when facing similar future interpersonal challenges group activities. This outcome was achieved within a short time span of a single session of Phase 2, expanding on benefits of coaching described by Antcliff (2010), for this participant who gained further insights from enactments during this study. By contrast stuck episodes still occurred with problem-focused enactments from MXI and Sam, meaning that drama-methods were unable to exclusively remove stuck episodes during SFDC.

The final benefit of SFDC was a wider scope than NVC to promote prosocial relationships, as NVC is ineffective for all situations as described in Chapter 2. From Queenie's data there were insights that SFDC could address complex behaviours in a more collaborative and open manner, than limited to addressing specific behaviours. This benefit of SFDC addresses limitations of NVC described by Altman (2010), Bitschnau (2008) and Oboth (2007) by

combining positive psychology and applied theatre practices if solution-focused enactments are encouraged. Evidence from Hermia and Queenie provides insight that using a combination of unearthed resources promoted more prosocial outcomes, rather than assuming a single tool will be effective in all situations.

Consequently, SFDC enabled Queenie and Hermia to respond spontaneously during the enactments and gain further insight and creative thinking beyond talking interventions if solution-focused enactments are encouraged. Consistent with SFBT concepts described by Deshazer & Dolon (2012), this intervention enabled these participants to bypass the problem without resistance, instead of spending excessive time to convince the receiver to take responsibility for their problematic behaviour. Dialogue patterns are thus important for SFDC to be effective and must be redirected toward solution-finding conversations to promote effective participant progress.

From these two participants' reports, SFDC promoted holistic enactments focusing on solutions defined in the briefing and spontaneous creativity of participants enabled them to expand their behavioural repertoires during the role play activities to enhance their future interpersonal experiences of group learning. A core criterion for effective facilitation of SFDC, is thus that solutions proposed by participants are more explicitly defined, than with Solution-Focused Coaching prior to enactments, to ensure focus and effective direction of conversations during the dialogues, for effective progression during this intervention. An additional criterion was that holistic conversations depended on positive goal setting which encouraged solution-focused enactments which enhanced these participants' learning for these reasons.

Another consequence of these findings is that a complex range of factors beyond behavioural severity must be considered to promote positive interpersonal dynamics in group learning. These include explicitly, tone and pace of language, and the tone, feelings and needs, behaviours of all individuals involved, positive behavioural intent and where individuals are willing to compromise.

6.II.ii) Limitations of research and implications for coaching practices

Despite its potential benefits this project uncovered several key limitations of this intervention, in that my design of SFDC integrated approaches from different disciplines,

schools of psychology (i.e behaviourist, humanistic and positive psychology primarily) and focus during such interventions.

A first major limitation was tension between problem-focused vs solution-focused techniques. I designed SFDC by integrating tools from solution-focused and problem-focused approaches, considering that Psychodrama was designed to explore past events as described by Corsini (2010). By contrast SFBT and Life Coaching were designed to focus present-future circumstances rather than accepting past events, as stated by Deshazer & Dolan (2012) and Leonard (1999), and Martin (2001).

Although SFDC enabled Hermia, Queenie, and Charlie to unearth resources during Phase 1, this was less effective for MXI, Alison, and Petra. There was thus tension and imbalance between solution-focused and problem-focused tools due to different aims and selection attentions between FBA and Solution-Focused coaching, to meet the first research objective, meaning there was tension between both research intentions in this study.

FBA focuses on problem analysis and diagnosis, whereas Solution-Focused Coaching techniques within SFDC were designed to identify participant values, strengths and positive resources without diagnosing problems, meaning there was an incompatibility of combining both techniques withing SFDC's framework. Both approaches are also from different origins, intentions, schools of thought impacting on tensions uncovered in this study, which is an important issue to consider when designing novel interventions. FBA is derived behaviourist principles drawing on Staats (1996) and Johnson (2018), where psychological formulation assessment of an individual's problems occurs. By contrast Solution-Focused Coaching is positive psychology-based, focusing on strengths and resources explorations without formulation assessments beyond broad problem definitions, drawing on Corcoran (2005), and Ives and Cox (2015). Such differences led to tension which was problematic during this intervention, which restricted SFDC effectiveness.

The second limitation of SFDC was that it was unable to sufficiently address problematic behaviour of participants causing amplifications of interpersonal challenges in group activities. Drawing on (Bowen *et al.*, 2003; Cipani & Schnock, 2010; Loman & Horner, 2014; Scott & Caron, 2015; Theodoridou & Koutsoklemis 2013), FBAs is tailored to addressing the problematic behaviour of other individuals, never those of respondents. FBA is also an expert-led approach which was out of place with this intervention as all other techniques within SFDC's design were collaborative approaches, despite a stronger evidence

base than contextual pattern intervention to provide more background information than Psychodrama. Considering SFDC's ineffectiveness with Sam's scenario where the primary positive outcome wasn't met, FBA derived tools were inappropriate for meeting this intervention's positive outcomes. It is thus important, that all problematic behaviour is acknowledged during this intervention, without encouraging behaviour that may amplify group conflict in the future, drawing on Jinks & Dexter (2012).

A potential alternative approach to FBA is using techniques derived from contextual patterns intervention, being a specialist SFBT tool, as this offers a more balanced exploration of respondent problematic behaviour, derived from semi-structured worksheets by Grantham (2016), derived from O'Hanlon & Bertolino (2013). Pattern intervention however has not been subject to independent evaluation as discussed in Chapter 3, and less evidence-based compared with FBA. Despite this shortcoming, pattern intervention is more simplistic than FBA, without complex problem assessments and appears more compatible with SFDC's intentions. This is important as it explores problems individuals are experiencing and invites them to consider alternative actions to disrupt any restricted behavioural routines within a specific context, consistent with this intervention's intentions.

These findings also mean that the protagonist-antagonist model within drama-based interventions was incompatible with SFDC's context as non-traumatic interpersonal difficulties are more dynamic, rather than static labelling of players within the scenario, as problematic behaviour of both players may occur. Within this intervention it is thus important to assume that neither player's behaviour was all positive or all negative within each scenario to enable individuals to thrive in their future experiences of group activities. This important as SFDC had a future-driven focus, consistent with positive psychology, rather than being restricted to accepting past issues as with several drama-based practices as described in Chapter 3.

The third limitation of the intervention was that there were challenges of applying the intervention to address complex situations involving two or more individuals with problematic behaviour, as highlighted in Sam's data. SFDC was too structured to address such situations, considering that personal Psychodrama techniques comprised a major part of Phase 2. From May (2008) and my own experiences, personal Psychodrama tends to focus on enactments between two individuals at one time, rather than several players, which is reflected in the limited studies on personal drama interventions, in sharp contrast to positive

psychology approaches. This finding thus sheds preliminary insights on restrictions of personal Psychodrama and provides grounds that SFDC should be practiced differently when exploring scenarios with more complex interpersonal dynamics.

Respecting both individual preferences and scenario severity, there was evidence that the group workshop in Phase 3 was more effective for Sam who was more engaged and resourceful than during the personal role plays from the previous phase of this intervention. When applying SFDC in a group setting, for more complex scenarios involving two or more antagonists, there would be the potential for enactments compromising of three or more players where auxiliary members take on roles of secondary antagonists drawing on Psychodrama. Sam's findings thus provide justification to adapt SFDC to be conducted entirely in groups, considering these challenges.

Brown & Grant (2010), recommend flexibility to accommodate individuals during coaching practices, whereby individuals may spend more time in one component of the core model than another, where more adjustments must be made to SFDC to accommodate different scenarios. The experiences of Sam thus mean that the intervention must be adjusted more for such scenarios in a less structured and more dynamic manner, where the wider group interpersonal dynamics is examined beyond two different individuals. Similarly, there was no clear-cut event during Hermia's scenario, where unnecessary time was required during the briefing, and enactments could have equally commenced from the open dialogue stage with the core coaching patterns. Although this did not significantly affect SFDC's effectiveness, this reinforces a less structured approach to accommodate different scenarios more. I had not however obtained ethical approval in this project to conduct major restructuring of this intervention to accommodate this, which was a limitation of this study.

Jinks & Dexter (2012), also raise concern that if individuals attempt to please or convince the coach, this can be problematic if inappropriate outcomes or behaviours are encouraged, consistent with an addiction. Applying models and techniques without considering if these match a coachee's needs is problematic during the practice. May (2008) describes that resistance can occur during role reversals in personal Psychodrama, especially when individuals feel challenged during the exercise, and recommends hot-seating individuals in the role of the individual they are experiencing conflict with, prior to role reversing. Here the first role reversal exercise was ineffective for Sam who engaged in self-justification of her behaviours during the reflections, resembling features of a stuck episode as described in

Chapter 3. Sam's response was thus also consistent with limitations of self-reporting described by Bachrach *et al.* (2009) and Columbus (2004).

The fourth limitation of SFDC was that participant motivation for flourishing in future group learning was insufficiently addressed within this intervention, in terms of the importance of improving participants' future quality of group learning in higher education. The major coaching framework I used when I designed SFDC was the PRACTICE model and to a lesser extent the ICANDO model. I made these choices because the structure of this Solution-Focused Coaching model was likely to provide space to be integrated with Forum Theatre and Psychodrama tools as described in Chapter 4. The PRACTICE model explores what individuals want to achieve from coaching (Palmer, 2007), yet findings from this study provide insights that this model does not sufficiently address an individual's motivation to explore the reason they want to make life improvements. By contrast the I (Investigate) component of the ICANDO model addresses why making life changes is important for individuals, to promote their engagement with coaching (Martin, 2001; Passmore, 2014). Such findings provide insights into the shortcomings of the PRACTICE model, despite a stronger evidence base than the ICANDO model as described in Chapter 3. Drawing on findings from Sam, SFDC must address why improving their future group learning experience is important for participants to promote their engagement with the intervention, which was absent in this study.

Carol *et al.* (1999) and Jinks & Dexter (2012) also state that flexibility is important in both SFBT and personal coaching rather than being too mechanistic to accommodate the needs of individuals and promote individual engagement. Jinks & Dexter provide several recommendations for coaching practitioners. Any outcome set in coaching has a purpose and is consistent with an individual's values, to ensure they are engaged and motivated. This means that the absence of exploring why improving the dynamics of the participant's scenario was important, and thus SFDC was ineffective for Sam and made her less engaged. Consequently, a major restriction of this intervention was that there was insufficient exploration of participant motivation.

The fifth limitation of SFDC was that it insufficiently addressed the eventuality of participants merely projecting their point across to convince receivers during the dialogue, without attempting to compromise, which sustained the conflict scenario. Here the dialogues became repetitive whereby players became stuck and found it challenging to respond further,

when focusing exclusively on removing the problem, which went against Veenstra's (2011) yes and, principle for effective role playing. Although some participants expressed new information on their needs as senders, the dialogues became static and unaccommodating to the intentions and feelings of receivers, which failed to resolve the conflict scenario. This finding might be explained by limitations of self-reports, where there was a focus on participants' needs and feelings, but no direct discussions on what compromises participants were willing to make to change the relationship dynamics. This is very important as several studies (Foran *et al.*, 2007; Lemay & Venglia, 2016; Neff & Geers, 2013), indicate if individuals have rigid expectations and unable to make compromises with other individuals, conflicts will be maintained leading to reduced life experiences.

Although all participants were informed in writing that this intervention was coaching practice in the information form, MXI and Sam perceived this as psychotherapy, and focused exclusively on removing the problem to gain better understanding of past issues. The consequence was that if participants exclusively engaged in problem-focused enactments, this was problematic and led to players becoming stuck in enactments, due to repetition which was challenging to respond to. This was inconsistent with Veenstra's (2011) principles of improvisation as described in Chapter 3. Such understandings reduced their learnings compared with participants that understood the intervention as a coaching practice and uncovered more resources by solution-focused enactments to improve their future experiences.

Such limitations were associated with the framing of their desired outcome for Phase 2, which was required to be framed positively for SFDC to work effectively. Negatively framed goals led to participants such as MXI exclusively focusing on removing problems and compromising her learnings, which was more challenging to reframe during her scenario. These insights suggest there was a confusion of exploring past event events rather than ongoing scenarios, although I asked participants to imagine the scenario was ongoing, typical of coaching, despite a future-focus in Phase 4. Participants who wished to take part in the project from Phase 2 onwards, should have been provided with better awareness of coaching and its differences from psychotherapy. SFDC aimed to improve their future experiences of group learning activities to enable them to thrive, by using resources acquired from the process.

Considering the above findings, MXI's data provided preliminary insights that SFDC had limited effectiveness for managing bullying and harassment behaviours. While this data suggests limitations of solution-focused approaches to address more severe behaviours, drawing on Stalker *et al.* (1999), other factors must be acknowledged such as goal settings and participant choice of solutions which contributed to this outcome. Here a more achievable outcome was to reduce problem intensity than achieve resolution, considering the severity, in the sense of limiting time with the receiver in the dialogue. When considering these findings, SFDC was ineffective in reframing MXI's miracle question response positively, which influenced the process in relation to bullying and harassment. This provides incentives for creating specialist techniques/models within this intervention or related practices for addressing more severe problems and internal dialogues within this context in relation to the findings. Jinks & Dexter (2012) suggest establishing life visions as an alternative to establishing goals, when addressing more severe issues within coaching. MXI's responses during the first hot seating exercises provide some information on alternative behaviour to the problem scenario yet was not linked to the research context when describing a positive group experience outside academia which limited her learning from SFDC.

The sixth very major limitation of the intervention was that exploring a single scenario restricted transferability of learnings. Hermia's learnings from the intervention were transferable to similar collective situations from her own, but less effective for personal situations, as in Phase 3 she was unable to transfer such resources in the other two scenarios. This is consistent with Salmon & Young (2011) whereby the same resource cannot necessarily be generalised to all other conflict situations to promote prosocial communication in group learning. The implications here are that resources uncovered by exploring a single scenario in Phase 2 of the intervention were limited to similar scenarios of conflict during group work activities.

A final limitation was the framing of language during Phase 1, which conflated academic tasks with interpersonal issues within group activities. This made several participants focus exclusively on academic tasks rather than managing difficult relationships within broader group learning activities, which was not the intention at this stage. If during Phase 1 participants exclusively explored difficulties with academic tasks, they were unable to take part in Phase 2 onwards. From these findings, more explicit language should have been

used, with a focus on interpersonal difficulties in group learning. Language of “Difficult situation” was not effective to meet this intervention’s primary intention.

6.II.iii) Challenges encountered during the research experience

This study’s emphasis was on using an interdisciplinary approach where SFDC was primarily positive psychology based. Beyond this the epistemology of the wider research was complex and challenging to define according to a specific school of thought, as concepts from different schools of psychology were used. This was reflected in tensions between humanistic and behavioural schools which occurred between FBA and SFBT techniques during Phase 1 interviews, whereas complementation occurs between Forum Theatre and Life Coaching derived techniques, as discussed previously in this Chapter.

I encountered several challenges during the research as follows: the first challenge was language deployed during the recruitment process. Some prospective participants interpreted conflict as only aggressive behaviour which comprised a narrow spectrum on issues. Participant interpretations of a difficult situation were however too broad, rather than being specific to interpersonal difficulties, as examples of only academic task difficulties were discussed in this study. This highlights the need for reasonable broad and explicit language requirements during participant recruitment to focus on interpersonal difficulties within this context to meet the aims of SFDC.

The second challenge I experienced concerned research organisation in relation to ability criteria for coaching practice, as recommended by Schliemann *et al* (2019). Emotional ground rules were in place to support participants, such as being supportive and non-judgemental to meet the University’s ethical practices. Practical ground rules (expectations from all individuals involved the project outside of ethical procedures) however could have been expanded further to strengthen their accountability and ensure effective progression during the intervention, drawn from AC’s recommendations for coaching described by Passmore (2014). Such expectations could include participant completion of agreed tasks on time, always be honest, and notifying myself if rescheduling was required, if they needed more time to complete these agreed tasks, while respecting their right to withdraw from the research at any point. This is important considering changes of director during the trial due to challenges of last-minute cancellations, and that SFDC was ineffective for Sam, where the agreed homework task was not met. The importance of this task thus needed to be

emphasised further, as a crucial foundation for practice, and running Phase 2 was more challenging if unmet by participants.

The third challenge was a broader issue of this study which concerned spontaneity. Questioning participants spontaneously was restricted in the intervention, as I only definitively gained ethical approval for this at specific points during Phase 2 and Phase 4. More spontaneity (within professional body constraints) was thus required to draw out participant learning more, redirect enactments and conversation towards solutions and positive goals, consistent with the semi-structured techniques derived from DeShazer and Berg, Leonard, and Moreno within SFDC. This was a challenge, as these findings showed that negative goal framing was associated with problem-focused enactments and restricted participant learning from SFDC, compared with solution-focused enactments. Similarly, if participants were placed in a resourceful state after the first hot seating exercise in Phase 2, consistent with Jinks & Dexter's (2012) recommendations for coaching visualisations, they were more engaged in the process. This was achieved when participants provided insights on alternative behaviours and feelings from the problem scenario. If participants were unable to meet such criteria, they were less engaged, and the intervention was consequently less effective from these findings. All these practical challenges mean that facilitators must have experience of both applied theatre and positive psychology techniques to promote the effective running of SFDC.

The fourth challenge concerned the actor's degree of assertiveness during reflections in-action. It is understandable that the actor wished to be non-judgemental throughout the process, without offending participants. If as receivers they simply repeated senders' reflections without providing new perspectives, participants' learnings were limited (e.g. Sam). Drawing on Bachrach *et al.* (2009) and Columbus (2004), there would be a possibility that limiting reflections to participants would encourage self-justification and portraying a positive self-image, even if they explored a solution that was antisocial.

The fifth challenge was that this intervention was more complex than an insider-outsider dynamic from reflexivity. Both counselling and coaching challenges can occur for practitioners if clients'/coachees' values may be different from their own, according to Corey *et al.* (2007) and Ali & Chan (2016), and Martin (2001). Practitioners must always remain impartial to ensure they are always non-judgemental and monitor clients'/coachees' progress. There was an additional dimension within SFDC, while analysing Sam's data considering

these principles. Although consistent with Dwyer & Buckle (2009), I was an outsider to the enactment rather than personally involved on the inside as a player during the exercises, and the actor was also a secondary outsider to guide the process. The dynamic was thus an insider vs primary outsider (myself) and secondary outsider (actor) dynamic during this research.

My expectations of a director in theatre were derived from my City of Glasgow college experience where a director's role is to guide actors collaboratively and discourage staff intervention to enable actors to learn how to manage conflict themselves. These dynamics were encouraged during my training at City of Glasgow College to simulate professional theatre settings to empower student actors for their future. Although such expectations were consistent with the actor's performance during Phase 3, they contrasted with Sam's expectations of director based on her reports in this study. This was evident when Sam reported frustration towards the director in her scenario as she expected him to intervene in this conflict to resolve the problem which did not occur. Whilst I acknowledge Sam's expectations of a director differs from my own and the actor's performance, I validated these during this project by reflecting back her feelings about the director in this scenario during this research. Under no account did I attempt to educate or directly challenge Sam's expectations to convince her that they were unrealistic, or unhelpful for her future to avoid participant resistance, to conform to ability and benevolence criteria for coaching practice as recommended by Schiemann *et al.* (2019). I was thus required to mediate these conflicting expectations to ensure I was as impartial as possible during this project than making judgements towards either party.

The final challenge was the possibility of bracketing (excessive emotional closeness), considering a strong emphasis on relationship dynamics in this project. This is important because bracketing was a challenge while examining MXI's and Sam's transcripts, synthesising recommendations in both Relationship Coaching and psychotherapy described by Martin (2001) and Wulffers (2017), to ensure participants avoid excess emotional closeness of issues leading to overwhelm. Li & Seale (2008) also described how bracketing can occur if researchers are too emotionally involved in the issues, and they must keep an emotional distance from the issues to maintain their self-care (alongside ensuring participants' comfort). This type of work requires practitioners to be non-judgemental and receive additional support to prevent bracketing and maintain emotional distance to ensure their self-care, alongside minimising any emotional overwhelm that might occur. This challenge

particularly considers with own personal experience being bullied and other traumatic events during my life history that led to preliminary anxiety to engage with some findings.

6.III. Amendments to SFDC for future work

Drawing on the benefits and limitations of SFDC discussed in this Chapter, I will now propose several amendments to the intervention based on the findings. These findings firstly support less structure and more spontaneity, drawing on common positive psychology and applied theatre principles, where I will use the umbrella term “Resource-Based Drama” to describe such practices.

I shall now discuss these amendments based on the challenges and limitations of SFDC described earlier in this Chapter.

6.III.i) Ethical and practical amendments

I will make the following amendments for future research on SFDC:

- 1) Create a formal contract between all individuals taking part in future studies, beyond common research ethics, derived from AC standards of practice (AC, 2012) to strengthen participant understandings of coaching, with realistic expectations from SFDC when establishing the agreement. This includes creating more participant accountability for completing any mutually agreed tasks that are crucial for their progress during this intervention. Facilitators should always explain the process and importance of these tasks to ensure participant agreement, consistent with Pichot & Dolon’s (2014) recommendations within SFBT, where solutions must be explicitly defined prior to enactments.
- 2) SFDC is practiced as a semi-structured, outcome-driven, future-focused approach with more spontaneity than this study, involving a range of specialist techniques, to redirect conversations and enactments towards solutions and evoke positive goals to improve participant future interpersonal group learning experiences.
- 3) Have a single facilitator with suitable training in this intervention prior to practice, with awareness of positive psychology and drama-based techniques.
- 4) The actors provide assertive, non-judgemental reflections as receivers during all enactments to provide participants more insights to progress through this intervention.

- 5) Make stronger links between Phases 2-4 to focus more on participants' learnings and how they might use these in the future, with a more participant-led process. Participants decide the nature of enactments beyond which scenario to examine to increase their engagement with SFDC.
- 6) Restructure Phase 1 interviews to ensure participants are placed in a resourceful state as early as possible, as described in Table 6, Appendix 1 and avoid stuck episodes: commence exploring the first aim of the interview earlier, to provide a description of positive group learning and an example of this within higher education with a strong emphasis of interpersonal experiences throughout.
- 7) Expand research criteria beyond group activities when inviting to describe a past example where they achieved resolution with improved interpersonal dynamics. This could include their wider higher education experiences, or within their broad personal lives.
- 8) Remove the exception derived from SFBT.
- 9) Replace FBA derived techniques with those derived from contextual pattern interventions drawn from Grantham (2016) exploring behavioural patterns and perspectives consistent with Somatic Coaching concepts.
- 10) During the first hot seating exercise of Phase 2, participants must always focus on broad descriptions of alternative emotions and behaviours from the problem to ensure they are placed in a resourceful state and engaged in the problem.
- 12) Drawing on May (2008), ensure participants are hot seated in the role of the other individual they experienced conflict with prior to the first role reversal, to ensure their engagement, where enactments are open to varied performances of solutions for participants to gain further insights from the intervention.
- 13) Facilitators invite actors to describe their internal dialogues during reflections-in actions consistent with group coaching discussed in Chapter 3, which focus only on solutions explored. Here they should also prompt participants further to gain more clarity on solutions they explored during enactments by spontaneous questioning on both the outcome and performances to expand their learnings within SFDC.

14) During Phase 3, explore single participant scenarios per session to ensure the interpersonal dynamics during performance are relatable to participants who can adjust the actor's performance in relation to these dynamics.

15) Conduct role reversing during Phase 3, to minimise actor distress and ensure they are comfortable throughout the process, alongside providing more participant insights should their responses in their scenarios be problematic.

16) Reduce the debriefing in Phase 3 to individual reflections on their learning experience to identify solutions, consistent with coaching than therapy-like discussions.

17) During Phase 4, in follow-up interviews the research criteria should be expanded to enable participants to discuss interpersonal experiences within the wider context of higher education, considering participant's varied perceptions of group activities.

6.III.ii) Specialist techniques for future practice

During future research on SFDC, I would also propose creating the following specialist techniques based on this study's findings:

First, I propose the "Wheel of Higher Education" tool (Figure 4), for addressing more complex scenarios holistically within higher education where an individual's whole circumstance is explored in this setting. This is a qualitative tool using personal scales derived from the wheel of life exercise described by Walsh (2017) but specialised for higher education contexts as its core areas contrast with generic wheels of life. Participants' wheels of higher education for such scenarios should be explored both during Phase 1 and compared during Phase 4 to highlight broad changes from SFDC.

Acknowledging SFDC primarily targets peer relationships within group learning, these findings demonstrate a need to explore other areas within higher education which may impact on students' experiences of group activities which were: wellbeing and self-care, career progression and learning, recreation, coursework passion and understanding, personal development and support, academic staff relationships and external relationships.

Participants would thus scale from 0-10 their satisfaction in each area using this tool, (0 is very unsatisfied and 10 is completely satisfied), drawing on the concept that challenges and improvement in one area impact on others to enable participants to flourish within higher education. This tool would be open to individual adjustments by adding other relevant areas

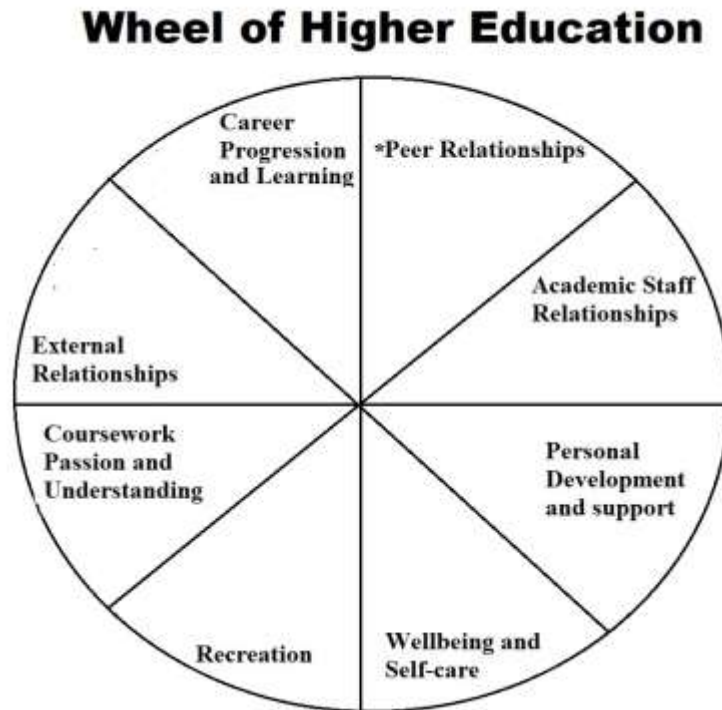
to the wheel or dividing these areas further for clarity if required, as a semi-structured exercise to explore participants' whole circumstances. For example, additional areas could include external work, finance, and participants can divide peer relationships into group projects and those in lectures, should there be satisfaction differences between these subareas. An alternative approach to this wheel would be participants describing their current satisfaction in each area without personal scales, drawing on Martin's (2001), coaching chart exercise and Strong *et al.* (2009) recommendations if scaling proves challenging for some individuals.

Second, I propose a technique named "Dramatic Shifting" for application in Phases 2 and 3 of SFDC, drawn from future projections and Forum Theatre techniques as described in earlier Chapters. This tool considers the outcomes of lowered intensity, where solutions with some success surprise and make the receiver consider their behaviour, with potential to move enactments towards resolution. Here enactments continue after this outcome, at different time points rather than recommencing at the start of the dramatic dialogue as in Forum Theatre, to consider both players' perceptions and learnings from previous enactments, where additional actions could be added to enable participant transformation.

Third, I propose a tool called the "Opposite-Actions Model" during Phase 2 of SFDC, to invite future participants to experiment further with specific actions they had taken during the open dialogue by integrating Boalian and O'Hanlon techniques, beyond general solutions defined in briefing stages. This model combines techniques from: "Doing the problem differently" worksheets by Graham (2016), within SFBT's pattern intervention, with the "opposite of oneself" technique described by Boal (1995) within the rainbow of desire, alongside drawing on laughter therapy intentions of Ko & Youn (2011) to a lesser extent. This is aimed at disrupting stuck episodes, where repetition occurred in the enactments, by prompting them to think creatively for further possibilities to improve the relationship dynamics.

Here weird actions, consistent with pattern intervention concepts, are explored in applying this model, for example, starting enactments with "goodbye" than "hello" to evoke humour, increase participant relaxation and free them up to new possibilities. Additional opposite actions may include experimenting with different character positions, words, volume or pace, consistent with Somatic Coaching concepts, described by King (2016) and Strozzi-Heckler (2014) in Chapter 3. The model thus has potential to provide participants the opportunity to

Figure 4: Proposed “Wheel of Higher Education”. Semi-structured tool to address complex scenarios within the context of higher education. Participants here would be encouraged to explore what their wheels looked like before and after SFDC under these circumstances.



experiment with verbal and non-verbal actions, leading to transformation and to break free of self-limited patterns of behaviour in response to conflicts within higher education.

These proposed specialist techniques have potential for being inclusive of one another for future SFDC practice. I shall now discuss some proposed future directions for research based on this project’s findings.

6.III.iii) Proposed future directions

From this study’s findings and suggested amendments, I would like to make the following suggestions for future research both within a higher education context and outside:

Firstly, expanding the future research context to examine SFDC within wider interpersonal difficulties in higher education than strictly group learning contexts. This is important as this study overly relied on participant definition of group learning, and participant MXI described an absence of group activity within her current PhD studies. It is thus possible she had experienced conflicts within higher education outside of these activities, during her studies outside the research criteria.

Second, examining SFDC's effectiveness to address interpersonal difficulties outside higher education contexts, such as those occurring with friends, family, work colleagues, as identified by several researchers (Burt *et al.*, 2012; Foran *et al.*, 2007; Ives & Cox, 2015; Lemay & Venaglia, 2016; Martin, 2001; McGregor *et al.*, 2012; Neff & Geers, 2013) Sam's reports in Phase 4, provides justification to examine SFDC for addressing conflicts with friends, as she suggested that she would have been more engaged in this intervention had the criteria been broadened to exploring conflicts outside of group learning activities. She particularly referred to longer-term conflicts that would be more important than this specific context, which provides ground for examining SFDC outside of higher education.

Thirdly, examining SFDC further to address ongoing interpersonal difficulties within higher education or outside, due to challenges with recalling past group learning scenarios from Sam and MXI's reports, consistent with self-reporting challenges described by Yin (2014). This has potential to thus reduce these challenges and enhance coachee engagement with this intervention, where such issues are more important than past scenarios. Here SFDC could also be adjusted for entire group coaching contexts, according to participant preferences.

Fourth, examine SFDC to address two or more different scenarios within higher education, considering Hermia was able to apply and use learning from this intervention in a similar scenario to improve her future group learning experiences, but this was more challenging for vastly different interpersonal challenges within this context.

Fifth, although this study was cross-disciplinary, future studies on student experience in higher education (specific to group activities or others) could expand this further to include disciplines such as law, business, medicine, nursing, and social work. Expanding research criteria for future studies has potential to provide a more representative analysis of interpersonal difficulties within group activities and/or those within the wider context of higher education.

Finally, examining the further use of headlining as an analytic tool for evaluating semi-structured interventions with an emphasis on examining specialist models/ techniques within these practices, which are challenging to test by conventional means.

6.III.iv) Concluding remarks

This project contributes to existing research as it was cross-disciplinary and expanded on previous studies, creating vast insights into issues experienced by students in group learning in higher education that cause frustration. Such group learning issues can be complex and should be explored holistically by making links with interconnected issues to enable students to thrive in future activities, consistent with recent studies on coaching practices within education and shortcomings of CBT.

The core contribution of this research was designing and evaluating a new intervention named Solution-Focused Drama-Based Coaching (SFDC) to enable students to thrive in future group activities, which has the potential to be implemented in group learning training workshops to address non-academic challenges students might experience. These findings provide preliminary incentives for applying integrated coaching practices within higher education as an early intervention, rather than enabling student problems to develop into severe psychological issues requiring therapeutic support. The study addressed shortcomings of previous research on coaching practices within higher education, providing information on how participants responded to techniques within SFDC's framework using coding and headlining analyses. Headlining thus has potential for evaluating less structured interventions which are complex and challenging to examine by conventional means, using a holistic analysis, linking issues and techniques within the broad epistemology. This research addressed group learning challenges experienced by students highlighted in previous studies, as three participants identified new effective ways of responding to interpersonal challenges in group learning to improve their future experiences.

From SFDC's evaluation, facilitators in future research should apply a range of tools in a more spontaneous manner, as a semi-structured intervention, including the proposed specialist tools such as Opposite-Actions-Model, Wheel of Higher Education and Dramatic Shifting within its framework. Solution-focused enactments should particularly be encouraged to enhance student learnings to respond pro-socially to future interpersonal difficulties within group activities in higher education.

Further work could first examine conflicts in group learning across a wider range of disciplines within higher education, with an emphasis on ongoing issues rather than past scenarios to avoid recall challenges. Second it could also examine conflicts within a wider scope than this research context. These findings finally provide potential to examine SFDC

outside of a higher education context to address other interpersonal difficulties to improve individual life quality to thrive in the future, derived from positive psychology concepts with Somatic elements.

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APPENDIX 1: TABLES

Table 1: Distinctions between coaching, strengths-based therapies and traditional therapies.

Coaching (e.g Life Coaching/Specialist Coaching)	Strengths-based therapies (e.g SFBT, MI)	Traditional Therapies (e.g CBT, REBT)
Attends to values of the strengths-based model.	Attends to values of the strengths-based model.	Attends to values of the deficit-model.
Designed to exclusively address non-clinical issues, where coachees are committed to the process and enter from a reasonably stable basis to achieve results. Coachees enter the process to improve their life quality further. Holistic approach to intervention addressing all important client issues and link these, within a primary area of focus.	Addresses clinical and non-clinical issues yet encourages clients to find an alternative to the problem. Can be applied for clients who are unmotivated in their daily lives. Tendency to focus on a specific issue at one time, to positively impact others.	Designed for addressing clinical issues whereby all issues are viewed as pathologies, where the progress focuses on removing those pathologies. Clients often come from experiencing trauma with significant emotional distress than being from reasonably stable basis. Tendency to focus on specific issues at one time.
Focuses on a person's present and future, to achieve their desires outcome. Brief past visits to identify learning, to flourish in the future	Attends to present and future, with only brief past visits like coaching, to flourish in the future	Typically addresses a personal past to facilitate removal of deficits or gain better understanding and acceptance of the problem to heal psychological issues.
Co-creative, equal partnership between coach and coachee. Coach encourages the coachee to find their own answers by powerful questioning, to evoke insight and self-discover. Non-directive whereby coach doesn't provide answers, and coachees set the agenda for each session.	Client-led partnership in terms of content discussed, yet therapist led in terms of process. Therapist does not provide answers. Has some coaching characteristics such as asking some powerful questions such as the miracle question, yet not as pronounced as coaching interventions. Non-directive.	Partnership is exclusively Therapist-led, typically the therapist is viewed as the expert to remove the problem. Often directive (i.e instructional)

<p>Emotions are part of everyday experiences and normalises them.</p>	<p>Avoids the use of pathological labelling and normalises emotions.</p>	<p>Assuming symptoms and emotions as signs of a pathology</p>
<p>Coach makes coachee accountable for achieving their desired goals, whereby coachees' are responsible for what happens to them between sessions for completion of mutually agreed tasks/actions to make improvements. Coach is responsible during sessions to use tools effectively based on AC guidelines.</p>	<p>Therapist is usually responsible for what happens to clients, as tasks may or may not be set between sessions to encourage change.</p>	<p>Therapist is always responsible for what happen to clients.</p>
<p>Artistic and scientific approach: there is a structured process to coaching, yet coaches are required to be flexible to accommodate individual needs and values of coachees using intuition.</p>	<p>Artistic and scientific approaches similar to coaching, and individualised, yet tendencies for more linear scientific protocols than to coaching.</p>	<p>Largely scientific practices with routine procedures rather than individual-based as in coaching and strengths-based therapies.</p>

Table 2: Research participant demographics for main study.

Participant pseudonym	Age Approx.	Gender	Anglophone (Yes/No)	Discipline	Degree title
Charlie	30s	Male	Yes	Psychology	MSc
Queenie	20s	Female	Yes	Psychology	MSc
Sam	20s	Female	Yes	Theatre Studies	M.Litt
Mags	20s	Female	No	Psychology	MSc
MXI	20s	Female	Yes	Education	PhD.
Hermia	40s	Female	Yes	Education	PhD.
Stanley	30s	Male	Yes	Theatre Studies	PhD.
Alison	20s	Female	Yes	Psychology	MSc.
Heidi	20s	Female	Yes	Psychology	MSc.
George Dillon	20s	Male	No	Psychology	PhD.
Petra	20s	Female	Yes	Psychology	MSc.

Table 3: Integrative techniques used in Phase 1 of SFDC.

Question.	Coding: (solution focused, problem focused or mixed).	Adapted from which intervention? (FBA, SFBT, Life Coaching, NVC or undefined)	Aims
How did you cope in the situation?	Solution-Focused	SFBT (coping question)	Probe participant to identify what they perceived were their personal strengths/resources, while reflecting on difficult situations as a basis for exploring situation further in phase 2.
Are there any other ways you could have dealt with it?	Solution-Focused	Solution Focused Coaching i.e (A=Alternative solutions generated) from PRACTICE model.	Promote participant to think creatively and as a template to assist homework for phase 2, in addition to any resources identified by participants.
What do you feel you have learnt from this experience?	Solution-Focused	Life Coaching	Prompt participant to consider positive learning from past group work experiences
Were there any times during the group work period where it was less of a problem?	Solution-Focused	SFBT (exception question)	Prompt participant to consider exceptions to difficult situation experiences, what they did under such circumstances to find other resources.
What obstacles did you face? What prevents this?	Problem Focused	Life Coaching related.	Explore specific obstacles in difficult group situations.
How will you know you are successfully cooperating? (optional, insightful question)	Solution-Focused (desired outcome orientated, N.B optional depending on miracle question response)	Life Coaching based on O=Outcome from the ICANDO model	Clarify further if more information on what participant's desired outcome of intervention, alongside response to miracle question.
I am now going to ask you a strange question. Suppose you went to bed tonight and during the night a miracle	Solution Focused	SFBT (miracle question)	Define each participant's desired outcome for the intervention in phase 2.

<p>happens, that the current problem that you mentioned is resolved. So when you wake up next morning, what would be different that would indicate that this miracle has occurred?</p>			
<p>Is there a more positive example you would be willing to share?</p>	<p>Solution-Focused</p>	<p>General (life coaching related)</p>	<p>Provide insights into participant's personal values for group learning from life coaching principles.</p>
<p>Array of other exploratory questions: (focusing on a specific example). i.e Would you be willing to give a specific example where you managed to achieve a successful outcome?</p> <p>Who was involved? Where did this occur? How did those who were involved respond and act/feel about these difficult behaviours? What in your opinion is the reason that the situation occurred? What obstacles did you face? What was the outcome/can you tell me what happened? What impact did this have on you? What do you believe was the motivation for these behaviours? (note adjusting according to participants individual responses).</p>	<p>Problem-Focused (very specific questions)</p>	<p>FBA (relationship coaching emphasis).</p>	<p>Use FBA questioning to gather information on primary behaviours experienced by focusing globally on the difficult scenario and analysis the whole dynamics whole.</p>

What do you need from this person?	Solution-Focused	Undefined	Further specific information on what participants required to collaborate with the other person involved in the conflict scenario, building towards establishing their desired outcome for SFDC.
With an emphasis on personal relationships, what type of difficult situation have you experienced during group learning activities?	Problem-Focused (general question)	Undefined	Provide an overview of types of difficult situations participants experienced in group learning.
Do you have any further comments you would like to make about group learning activities?	Mixed (general question), open to being problem or solution focused.	Undefined	Give information on participants overall perceptions about group learning, prior to discussing unresolved situation of their choice.
What are the overall behaviours of this person? What are their strengths and weaknesses? (Optional: Which of these are you least fond of/find difficult? What do you think the other group members feel about these difficult behaviours?)	Mixed	Undefined adapted from describing character questionnaires used in theatre.	Provide in-depth background information for the actor to assist role plays in phase 2 on what participants felt were the general/accessory behaviours of the other individual involved in their unresolved situation. Help participant complete homework task for phase 2, from these insights, and explore another perspective.

Table 4: Ground rules for the intervention and improvised role plays during Phases 2 and 3.

Ground rules of the intervention.	
1	The participants will be allowed time out, if they appear distressed, upset, or if any distress were to occur.
2	If participants appear distressed, the process will be stopped, to confirm that they are feeling comfortable and are happy to continue once they are emotionally composed.
3	The actor and the director taking part in the role play exercises will have been briefed on these core ground rules, where the director can facilitate and pause the actions for the benefit of the participants (note that participants will not be identified by name in the content shared with the actor and director).
4	All parties concerned (the researcher, director, and actor) must be encouraging, constructive and be supportive toward the participants.
5	Participants will be made clearly aware that they are not being judged as a person during the process and assured that there are no wrong or right answers to questions or actions, during interviews or role play exercises.
6	Participant pseudonymity will be respected, and they will not be identified by name during the whole process.
7	Participants were offered to make any additions to these core ground rules if they see fit.

Table 5: Integrative techniques used in Phases 2 and 3 of SFDC.

Technique(s).	Adapted from which intervention?	Aims.
Focus on specific event during briefing and allow participant to choose which event they wished to enact per session (briefing) from the scenario they agreed to enact in phase 1.	Life Coaching	Give a focus role play session as an action plan for phase 2. Break down the overall relationship into events from general-specific. Note break down scenario from general to specific.
Review homework from phase 1 that was a goal for phase 2 (briefing).	Solution-Focused Coaching (framing drawn from A component of the PRACTICE model: Alternative solutions generated), set as homework of coaching.	Provide basis to work from during the enactments and approaches to examine based on this goal from phase 1 and promote creative thinking from participants
Miracle Question (optional, depending on participant's responses in phase 1 (see table 2), after the participant described the problem situation for enactment (briefing).	Solution-Focused Coaching within the P component=Problem identification and R component=Realistic goals developed of the PRACTICE model at this point (integrating SFBT-like tools).	Confirm final goal for intervention and clarify further what this would look like for the participant. Ensure framed as positive alternative not problem removal. Provide actor and director further information on the situation.
Coaching visualisation (future focused and using an array of powerful coaching questions). Note combined with Psychodrama future projections during first hot seating exercise: future focused hot seating (action warm up)	Life Coaching primarily	Invite participants to imagine what achieving their final goal would look like and identify what would be different from the problem by imagining a positive example of group learning, from emotional and behavioural aspects. Anchor resourceful state to increase engagement and relax participants
Hot seating (action section, warm up), with core questions explained in main study section of this chapter.	Psychodrama	Individual sits on a chair imagines themselves as a person and director asks them questions to develop this character (see chapter 3). This was combined with coaching visualisations at points warm-up exercise for the actor prior to the enactments of their chosen event.
Enactment of a specific event both i) As it was	Forum Theatre	Explore the event of choice based on agreed action plan from briefing by

<p>and ii) repeated again combined with tools from PRACTICE model (i.e A and C components, below), in action section. Director shouted “freeze” to stop the enactments at various points.</p>		<p>enacting and dynamize solutions.</p>
<p>The above tools combined with those from the PRACTICE model by repeating the event again but using A component (A=Alternative solutions generated) and C=Consider consequences) to explore approaches discussed in the briefing.</p>	<p>Solution Focused Coaching within the PRACTICE model framework.</p>	<p>Same as the above but focus on specific approaches agreed during the briefing. Allow participant to explore different approaches to promote flexibility and achieve resolution. Includes encouraging participant out of their comfort zone to expand their behaviour repertoires and improve their future interpersonal experiences of group activities</p>
<p>Role reversal (during enactment of specific event and open dialogue): Participant and actor change roles and enact the chosen event and open dialogue where the participant takes on the role of the person they experienced conflict with (antagonist) and the actor takes on the role of the participant (protagonist).</p>	<p>Psychodrama</p>	<p>Allow the participant to view the situation from the perspectives of the other person involved to make them think.</p>
<p>Evaluation of participant performance prior to open dialogue (note broadly E=evaluation taking into account C=consider chosen solution & I=implementation of chosen solution based on this evaluation what was effective and</p>	<p>Solution Focused Coaching framed from PRACTICE model.</p>	<p>Reflection of performance after enactments of the specific event prior to the open dialogue and how successful each approach was. Narrow down to effective approaches explored to those based on the enactments by reorganization.</p>

T=target successful solutions in next dialogue) see models of coaching in chapter 3. Participant made the final decision, taking account actor's insights after each enactment at this point.		
Role play as open dialogue between participant and actor (as private conversation).	Psychodrama	Explore the relationship between participant and other person involved more holistically (focusing on the whole interpersonal dynamics than a specific event) to achieve resolution. Participant aims achieve their final goal at this stage.
Focused on specific approaches based on evaluation so far in the process, linked to Psychodrama tools.	Life Coaching	Focusing the enactments for participants to achieve their final goal.
Deroling (briefing stage)	Psychodrama	Actor and participant in this instance taken out of character and tell director three characteristics of themselves that are different from the other person involved
Evaluation of overall performances, where in this case was during action stage (briefing stage), in both phases 2 and 3. Combined with Psychodrama like sharing during phase 3.	Life coaching primarily.	Reflect on experience from role plays and what participant had learnt from intervention so far and what positive results had been achieved (promoting self-reflection of their performances). Determine whether further coaching sessions were necessary main study only) depending on if final goal was achieved. Used in briefing stage for any follow-on sessions.
Sharing as views of director and actor were considered alongside the above (phase 3).	Psychodrama	Offer director and actor opportunities to give participants additional information so they may gain further insights on the situation enacted as an outsider.
Summarising the session	Life Coaching primarily.	To give reminder of what they had achieved so far, to close the session.
Phase 3 only: Framed narrations to cover defining protagonist's current problem, highlight their aims,	Life Coaching (with Ethnodramatic elements)	Provide a context with suitable background information, focus and intention for scenario enactments in phase 3.

and desired outcome per scenario.		
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Table 6: Recommended amendments to Phase 1 of SFDC:

Core coaching Questions	Adapted from where?
<p>Can you briefly describe the problem?</p> <p>What behaviours do you find difficult?</p> <p>What do you believe is the intention?</p> <p>Where does the problem occur?</p> <p>How do you respond when problem starts?</p> <p>What else do you do?</p> <p>What is the outcome when you respond to the problem?</p> <p>Does the outcome change when you do the problem?</p> <p>What other behaviours have you noticed from this person(s)? (prompt further if more than one person)</p> <p>How have you managed the situation so far? (prompt what did you do to do that? depending on responses).</p> <p>What other ways could you deal with it? (Aim to obtain at least 2-3 suggestions. Prompt to define solutions as explicitly as possible according: what they would say, how would you say it, what feelings do you want to evoke?).</p> <p>I would like to place you in the shoes of the person you are experiencing the problem with. Referring to yourself in the third person, how would they describe the problem?</p> <p>Now I would like you place yourself in the shoes of an outsider, who is observing the problem. Referring to yourself in the third person, how would they describe the problem?</p> <p>What have you learnt from this?</p> <p>What you do need from this person(s)? (In the moment prompts to confirm what they</p>	<p>General coaching.</p> <p>SFBT (i.e Contextual pattern intervention).</p> <p>SFBT</p> <p>Solution-Focused Coaching</p> <p>Relationship Coaching (i.e perspective work, to preliminary identify consequences of coachee's choices and other individual(s) involved in the scenario, to combat social desirability issues).</p> <p>Life Coaching</p>

<p>would do differently based on these needs...etc if required)</p> <p>I am going to ask you a question that will seem very, very strange is that ok?.....Suppose you went to bed tonight....and during the night a miracle happens....the miracle is that the problem you are facing totally disappears.....Are you still with me?.....So you wake up next morning, what you would notice that lets you know that this miracle has taken place? (Prompt further if there is any suggestion of unrealistic miracles).</p> <p>How would you know you are successfully cooperating?</p> <p>Invite homework task for phase 2 using this script using pauses: To help with the next phase it would be useful for you to complete the following task, would that alright?" "To ensure we have some possible solutions to explore next time....what I would like you to do....is consider between two or three broad possibilities..... to achieve the outcome you identified today.....These possibilities can either focus on..... what you might say.....how you might say it.....what feelings you want to evoke to achieve resolution to this conflict.....Are you willing to do this?.....</p> <p>(Invite reflections). Do you have any preliminary ideas?</p>	<p>SFBT.</p> <p>Life Coaching (O=Outcome from ICANDO model).</p> <p>Solution-Focused Coaching</p>
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APPENDIX 2. INFORMED CONSENT FORMS



College of Social
Sciences

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM TRIAL STUDY

Title of Project:

An interdisciplinary solution orientated coaching approach with applied theatre techniques: developing learning tools for effective group work and individual well-being in higher education (trial study).

Name of Researcher: *Chris Colebrook.*

If you agree to participate in this study then please read the following statements and sign your name below to indicate your consent.

I have read the Participant Information Form and understand the procedures and have been informed about what to expect and thus agree to take part in the research study.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary, and that I can withdraw from the study, at any time and for any reason, without having to give a reason to the researcher;

I understand that I may omit any questions that I would prefer not to answer.

I understand that my participation in this project is for the purposes of research, and is in no way an evaluation of me as a person by the researcher or others involved, nor will in any way affect my academic results.

- I understand and give consent that my contribution as a participant will be audio recorded throughout the investigation and will be made and kept anonymous, and will remain confidential and dealt with honestly and respectfully*

I understand confidential may be limited only with respect to the following: the sharing of relevant information to a third party (i.e actors and assisting director); in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to yourself as a participant or to that of others where myself and/or the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies; or due to the limited size of participant sample in such case..

- I understand that all data that identifies me will be protected and will not be made publicly available and limited only to the researcher, actors and the assisting director.*
- I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project either by e-mail to receive more information and/or a summary of the anonymised results.*

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

PARTICIPANT MAIN STUDY CONSENT FORM**Title of Project:**

An interdisciplinary solution orientated coaching approach with applied theatre techniques: developing learning tools for effective group work and individual well-being in higher education.

Name of Researcher: *Chris Colebrook.*

If you agree to participate in this study then please read the following statements and sign your name below to indicate your consent.

I have read the Participant Information Form and understand the procedures and have been informed about what to expect and thus agree to take part in the research study.

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I understand and give consent that my contribution as a participant will be audio recorded throughout the investigation and will be made and kept anonymous, and will remain confidential and dealt with honestly and respectfully.

I understand that confidential may be limited only with respect to the following: the sharing of relevant information to a third party (i.e actors and assisting director); in the event disclosure of harm or danger to yourself as a participant or to that of others, where myself and/or the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies; or due to the limited size of participant sample in such case.

- I understand that all data that identifies me will be protected and will not be made publicly available and limited only to the researcher, actors and the assisting director.*
- I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project either by e-mail to receive more information and/or a summary of the anonymised results.*

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORMS



College of Social
Sciences

PARTICIPANT TRIAL STUDY INFORMATION FORM

Title of project:

“An interdisciplinary solution orientated coaching approach with applied theatre techniques: developing learning tools for effective group work and individual well-being in higher education” (trial study).

Researcher: Chris Colebrook

The project will be supervised by **Dr Bonnie Slade** (School of Education, **Email: Bonnie.Slade@glasgow.ac.uk**) and **Dr Stephen Greer** (Department of Film, Theatre & Television Studies, **Email: Stephen.Greer@glasgow.ac.uk**), at Glasgow University.

Course: PhD Education.

What is the project?

The current research project is a trial study for my PhD thesis. It is an interdisciplinary study, using a synthesis of different techniques from the fields of adult education, applied psychology and applied theatre. The research will examine individual-level interventions for specific types of difficult behaviours, through novel approaches to provide insights into effective group work management within higher education.

What will happen during the study?

The research project will be a longitudinal study that will be audio recorded throughout, lasting approximately one month, and will be divided into the following Phases: In *Phase 1*, of the project you will be interviewed on your previous experiences of group learning at university. The interview will take approximately an hour and will explore difficult relationship situations and conflicts you may have come across in group work. These include an example of a resolved situation, of your choice to be used as a preparation for *Phase 2*. You will also be asked to note your desired outcome for future group learning experiences.

Phase two will comprise the intervention. In *Phase 2*, you will be asked to improvise and conduct role play simulations in the form of a dialogue, based on data from *Phase 1*. The simulations will cover the examination of the unresolved relationship situations you have experienced, to attain a learning goal as noted to acquire new skills. In this instance, the role play exercises will be carried out with the assistance of an actor and a director's guidance.

Phase 3 will be a follow-up interview to the intervention. You will be asked about your views of the intervention, which will include the methodology used, and the benefit it had for your future group learning experiences, taking to 60 minutes to complete.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a postgraduate student at Glasgow University in disciplines where group learning is very prevalent (Theatre Studies, Education & Psychology). You have been recruited on the basis that you have previously experienced conflicts and difficult situations during group learning and willing to examine these during the research. You have also noted that you will be available for the approximate 1-month duration of the trial study. You are also interested in self-development, to improve your experiences of group learning and thus your research participation will be very valuable to me.

Participant confidentiality and safety:

All participant data will always be kept confidential. However confidentiality may be limited only with respect to the following: the sharing of relevant data for the role play exercises with a third party only (i.e actors and assistant director); in the event of harm or danger to yourself as a participant or to that of others, where myself and/or University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies; or due to the limited size of participant sample in such case.

Data will be kept at a secure place in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, and on a password protected laptop. You will not be identified by name during the trial for the research study. Your data will not be identified publicly and will be kept entirely anonymous using appropriate synonyms throughout. Yet will be limited only with respect to the awareness of the researcher, actor and assisting director.

Agreed ground rules will be put in place for your safety and support, during the improvised simulations of the intervention. All results of the study will be used as a trial for the methodology of my PhD research study, and all participant data will be subsequently destroyed after my PhD thesis is written up.

Further information:

Feel free to contact me on the following if you require any further information:

Chris Colebrook. Email: c.colebrook.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

Tel: 07584839267

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer Dr Muir Houston, email:

Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk.

If you are in any way concerned with any issues raised during the study then please contact University of Glasgow counselling & psychological services on (0141) 3304528 or email: studentcounselling@glasgow.ac.uk (website: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/counselling/>).

Alternatively contact Glasgow University's harassment volunteer network and advisors on (0141) 3301887 or email: equality@glasgow.ac.uk, (website: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/equalitydiversity/students/digityworkstudyover/>)

PARTICIPANT MAIN STUDY INFORMATION FORM

Title of project:

“An interdisciplinary solution orientated coaching approach with applied theatre techniques: developing learning tools for effective group work and individual well-being in higher education”.

Researcher: Chris Colebrook

The project will be supervised by **Dr Bonnie Slade** (School of Education, **Email: Bonnie.Slade@glasgow.ac.uk**) and **Dr Stephen Greer** (Department of Film, Theatre & Television Studies, **Email: Stephen.Greer@glasgow.ac.uk**), at Glasgow University.
Course: PhD Education.

What is the project?

The current research project is for my PhD thesis. It is an interdisciplinary study, using a synthesis of different techniques from the fields of adult education, applied psychology and applied theatre. The research will examine individual-level interventions for specific types of difficult behaviours, through novel approaches to provide insights into effective group work management within higher education.

What will happen during the study?

The research project will be a longitudinal study, which will be audio recorded throughout, lasting approximately 8 months, and will be divided into the following phases: In *Phase 1*, of the project you will be interviewed on your previous experiences of group learning at university. The interview will take approximately an hour and will explore difficult relationship situations and conflicts you may have come across in previous group work. These include an example of resolved situations of your choice to be used as a preparation for *Phase 2*, where you will be asked to note your desired outcome for future group learning experiences.

Phases 2 and 3 will comprise the intervention. In *Phase 2*, you will be asked to improvise and conduct role play simulations in the form of a dialogue, based on data from *Phase 1*. The role play simulations concern the unresolved relationship situations you have experienced to attain a learning goal as noted to acquire new skills. In this instance, the role play exercises will involve the assistance of an actor and a director’s guidance, taking place weekly for one hour, up to four sessions maximum.

Phase 3 will be a short-term follow-up to *Phase 2*, around two months later that will involve group tutorial exercises. These will involve narrations based on phase two data and role play exercises. You will be asked practice your acquired skills (from *Phase 2*), in the presence of an actor and assisting director during these exercises. These exercises will involve examining your acquired skills based on anonymous narrations from your own situations from phase two, and that of other participants followed by group reflection. These will last an hour, involving two weekly sessions, and will also involve group reflection thereafter under the guidance of an assisting director.

Phase 4 will be a longer-term follow up on the intervention (*Phases 2 and 3*), taking place approximately 4 months after *Phase 3*. You will be interviewed about your views of the intervention and what impact it has had on your group learning experiences, which will take up to 60 minutes.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a postgraduate student at Glasgow University in disciplines where group learning is very prevalent (Theatre Studies, Education & Psychology). You have been recruited on the basis that you experienced conflicts during your previous experience group learning during university, and willing to examine these during the current research. Furthermore, you have also noted that you will be available for the 8-month duration of the study as stated. Thus, your views and interest in self-development, to improve your experience of group work, would be very valuable to you by participating in the research.

Participant confidentiality and safety:

All participant data will always be kept confidential. However confidentiality may be limited only with respect to the following: the sharing of relevant data for the role play exercises with a third party only (i.e actors and assistant director); in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to yourself as a participant or to that of others, where myself and/or University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies; or due to the limited size of participant sample in such case.

This include all interviews and role play exercises in the presence of other participants. Your data will not be identified by other participants and kept entirely anonymous under appropriate synonyms throughout yet limited only with respect to awareness of the researcher, actor and assisting director.

Data will be kept at a secure place in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, and on a password protected laptop. You will not be identified by name for the write up of this study. Furthermore, agreed ground rules will be put in place for your safety and support, during the improvised simulations of the intervention. Note that you will be free to withdraw from the research without giving a reason. All results of the study will be written up as part of my PhD thesis, and all participant data will be subsequently destroyed thereafter.

Further information:

Feel free to contact me on the following if you require any further information:

Chris Colebrook. Email: c.colebrook.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

Tel: 07584839267

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email:

Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk.

If you are in any way concerned with any issues raised during the study then please contact University of Glasgow counselling & psychological services on (0141) 3304528 or email:

studentcounselling@glasgow.ac.uk (website: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/counselling/>).

Alternatively contact Glasgow University's harassment volunteer network and advisors on (0141) 3301887 or email: equality@glasgow.ac.uk, (website:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/equalitydiversity/students/digityworkstudyover/>).

APPENDIX 4. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND OBSERVATION LOG



College of Social
Sciences

Initial Interview trial study

i) Resolved situations:

General

How have you found studying at University? (Icebreaker)

How often have you done group work in seminars/tutorials?

Types of difficult situations

With respect to peer relationships and/or staff supervision when working in groups: What types of difficult situations have you experienced?

Would you be willing, (without mentioning names) to give some specific an example which was resolved?

Who was involved?

Where did this occur?

How did those who were involved respond and act?

What obstacles did you face?

What in your opinion is the reason that the situation occurred?

How did you cope in the situation?

What was the outcome?

What impact did this have on you?

Are there any other ways you could have dealt with it?

(If applicable: Were there any times during this group work period where it was less of a problem?.....If so what was different?)

What do you feel you learnt from this experience?

Do you have another example of difficult situations you have experienced working in group learning?

Other

Is there a more positive example you would be willing to share?

Do you have any further comments you would like to make about group learning activities?

ii) Unresolved relationship: (for open role play)

You will now be asked about an unresolved relationship of your choice, from your experience of group learning.....

Imagine that the described conflicts with the person concerned are occurring currently during group learning activities and are so far unresolved....

Behaviours of the person concerned

What are the overall behaviours of this person?

What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Which of these are you least fond of and find difficult?

What are the reason(s) for this?

What do you think the other group members feel about these difficult behaviours?

What do you believe is the motivation for these behaviours?

Impact on you & current coping

Please describe the nature of the conflicts with this person?

What impact do the difficult behaviours have on you?

Where do the conflicts happen?

What do you believe are the reasons that these occur?

Are there times when it is not or less of a problem?

If so what was different?

How have you currently tried to cope with this person's difficult behaviours?

What happened?

What do you believe are the reason(s) that conflicts with this person happen and are currently unresolved?

Potential Strategies and Goals

What do you need from this person?

What prevents this?

I am now going to ask a strange question: Suppose you went to bed tonight and during the night a miracle happens, that the relationship with this person is improved. So when you wake up next morning, what would be different that would indicate that this miracle has occurred?

(How will you know that you are successfully cooperating?)

To **take away** (as a **goal** prior to open role play simulations): What are the number of **possible strategies** you think you could use to assert yourself in order to deal with this person's difficult behaviours (up to 5)?

Follow up interview trial study post intervention

What are your feelings on the current methodology used (i.e interview and role play exercises) to work through a difficult relationship from your previously group learning experience?

(Ask about participant's experiences of working with an actor and director, during the intervention (i.e phases two and three) depending on the response)

Are there any key issues you would like to raise?

In your view what changes or improvements (if any) to the methodology could be made?

What did you feel that was challenging?

What do you feel you have learnt from this experience?

Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make?

Initial Interview main study**i) Resolved situations:****General**

How have you found studying at University? (Icebreaker)

How often have you done group work in seminars/tutorials?

What and when is your next expected group learning activity?

Types of difficult situations

With respect to peer relationships and/or staff supervision when working in groups: What types of difficult situations have you experienced?

Would you be willing (without mentioning names), to give some specific an example which was resolved?

Who was involved?

Where did this occur?

How did those who were involved respond and act?

What obstacles did you face?

What in your opinion is the reason that the situation occurred?

How did you cope in the situation?

What was the outcome?

What impact did this have on you?

Are there any other ways you could have dealt with it?

Were there any times during this group work period where it was less of a problem?.....If so what was different?

What do you feel you learnt from this experience?

Do you have another example of difficult situations you have experienced working in group learning?

Other

Is there a more positive example you would be willing to share?

Do you have any further comments you would like to make about group learning activities?

ii) Unresolved relationship: (for open role play)

You will now be asked about an unresolved relationship of your choice, from your experience of group learning.....

Imagine that the described conflicts with the person concerned are occurring currently during group learning activities and are so far unresolved.

Behaviours of the person concerned

What are the overall behaviours of this person?

What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Which of these are you least fond of and find difficult?

What are the reason(s) for this?

What do you think the other group members feel about these difficult behaviours?

What do you believe is the motivation for these behaviours?

Impact on you and current coping

Please describe the nature of the conflicts with this person?

What impact do the difficult behaviours have on you?

Where do the conflicts happen?

What do you believe are the reasons that these occur?

Are there times when it is not or less of a problem?

If so what was different?

How have you currently tried to cope with the person's difficult behaviours?

What happened?

What do you believe are the reason(s) that conflicts with this person happen and are currently unresolved?

Potential Strategies and Goals

What do you need from this person?

What prevents this?

I am now going to ask a strange question: Suppose you went to bed tonight and during the night a miracle happens, that the relationship with this person is improved. So when you

wake up next morning, what would be different that would indicate that this miracle has occurred?

(How will you know that you are successfully cooperating?)

To **take away** (as a **goal** prior to open role play simulations): What are the number of **possible strategies** you think you could use to assert yourself in order to deal with this person's difficult behaviours (up to 5)?

Observation Pro forma (Phase 3)

Observation type:	Overall purpose:	Who involved and how recorded?	What is noted:
<p>Personal interactions and behaviours (including verbal behaviours, look for cooperating behaviours and adaptations, emotions involved)</p> <p>* Cooperating behaviours (i.e social capital) between participant and actor, in conjunction with learnt skills from phase two and response to “miracle question” from initial interview in phase one and individual based needs, during initial interview and learning goals)</p>	<p>Test responses in a variety of different situations and to examine if learnt skills during phase two are maintained, as a follow up and if participants can adapt their responses using learnt skills showing cooperation behaviours in a variety of different & difficult situations and relationship conflicts.</p>	<p>Dialogues of participant and actor (after narrations derived from Phase 2) in presence of assisting director and researcher and other active participants (around five).</p> <p>*Audio recorded during narrations role play exercises, and reflections.</p>	<p>What behaviours occur in each scene and by whom, and the full dynamics including the emotional impact. Note emotions occurring to deal with difficult behaviours. Tactics used, skills and type of responses. Information on the relationship and how each person feels about the other. Participant views and feelings will be noted during reflections.</p>
<p>Human traffic</p>	<p>What participant changes occur during the dialogue in each situation portrayed, in conjunction with characters in each scene.</p>	<p>“ “</p>	<p>Who is present during each role play exercise (i.e which participant with the actor) and who is replaced, in relation to each relationship conflict being narrated.</p>
<p>Character situation</p>	<p>Information on characters present in a particular situation</p>	<p>“ “</p>	<p>Which characters are present in each narration: Where are we? (Narrations based on phase two report); what has happened; How the improvisations develop with respect to personal interactions and behaviour during each situation.</p>

Follow up interview main study post intervention

How did you find working through a difficult relationship from your previous experience of group learning?

What do you feel you have learnt from this experience?

What are your views about the current process involved?

(Ask further about their experiences of the initial interview and the role exercises with an actor and director during the intervention depending on response)

Are there any issues you would like to raise?

What did you feel that was challenging?

What changes to your future group work experiences have occurred since you undertook the intervention?

What impact did this have on managing your personal relationships and stress?

What improvements (if any) to your current self-esteem have occurred?

What further benefits did this give you?

Finally, are there any other comments you would like to make?

