



KATARIINA MÄKINEN

Becoming Valuable Selves

Self-Promotion, Gender and Individuality
in Late Capitalism



ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

To be presented, with the permission of
the board of the School of Social Sciences and Humanities
of the University of Tampere,
for public discussion in the Lecture Room Linna K 103,
Kalevantie 5, Tampere
on June 1st, 2012, at 12 o'clock.

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
University of Tampere
School of Social Sciences and Humanities
Finland

Copyright ©2012 Tampere University Press and the author

Distribution
Bookshop TAJU
P.O. Box 617
33014 University of Tampere
Finland

Tel. +358 40 190 9800
Fax +358 3 3551 7685
taju@uta.fi
www.uta.fi/taju
<http://granum.uta.fi>

Cover design by
Mikko Reinikka

Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 1732
ISBN 978-951-44-8810-8 (print)
ISSN-L 1455-1616
ISSN 1455-1616

Acta Electronica Universitatis Tamperensis 1203
ISBN 978-951-44-8811-5 (pdf)
ISSN 1456-954X
<http://acta.uta.fi>

Acknowledgements

Countless persons have supported me, challenged me and collaborated with me over the years. This research would not have been possible without you.

Since the beginning of my studies in Tampere in 2005, my supervisor Marja Vehviläinen has in her thoughtful and warm manner firmly guided me, always with my best interests in mind and with respect for my aims. Marja, I thank you for your valuable insight and your encouragement and for your wise advice.

My other supervisor Päivi Korvajärvi has also been a constant and reliable support both in doing research and in helping me to find my place in the academia. Among other things, Päivi urged me towards researching work and working life, and invited me to become a part of the Beela research group in which I did most of my research (and which also gave me financial security). Thank you!

The pre-reviewers, Eeva Jokinen and Lisa Adkins, did a wonderful work reading my thesis carefully and providing comments that were both critical and encouraging and that enabled me to see some aspects of my work in a new light.

In 2009, I spent three months in the Goldsmiths University of London. My visit there was extremely educating and inspiring, and for this I owe thanks especially to Celia Lury and Beverley Skeggs.

Risto Heiskala read the whole manuscript in an early stage and provided encouraging and apt comments that helped me onwards. Also Jeff Hearn commented helpfully on my work. Tuija Koivunen and Hanna-Mari Ikonen provided me with lecture notes to use as research material. Merl Storr reviewed the language of the thesis with superb accuracy and skill. Laura Tohka helped me with countless practical matters.

Jussi Ojajärvi reminded me of the politics of doing research and of the importance of communicating one's research also outside the academia.

I am also thankful for the coaches for giving me interviews. It was the interaction with you that really made me think and that challenged my previous perceptions. Thank you for giving me your time and for sharing your experiences and thoughts.

The Academy of Finland, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, the Tampere University Foundation and the Scientific Foundation of the City of Tampere made this research financially possible, which is no small matter.

I have had the privilege of being part of an intelligent, supportive and – most importantly – very delightful (and sometimes crazy) working community. I would like to thank the kind people who have shared their work and their everyday life and thoughts with me in Women's Studies, the members of the Jatke group and the Beela project, and all the lovely people in the Virta building.

I would especially like to thank Marjo Kolehmainen, Maria Vihlman and Mervi Miettinen for sharing ideas, frustrations and joys – and for friendship.

Finally, I would like to thank my family – mom, dad, Martta, Inari and Kaisa – who have never doubted me or my choices. Without your support I would never have become a researcher, but, more importantly, you have always also reminded me that my worth as a person is not dependent on academic achievements, and for that I am more than grateful.

I owe my most profound gratitude to my partner Lauri who read everything I wrote, provided superb comments and assistance, and repeatedly assured me that my work is meaningful and valuable. Thank you for the neverending discussions, thank you for sharing your brilliant ideas and insights with me, and thank you for your generosity, your care and your love.

On a bright day in April 2012,

Katariina Mäkinen

Abstract

Self-promotion refers to marketing or promoting oneself with the aim of gaining recognition, advance or opportunities. Different forms of self-promotion have, in recent years, become increasingly recognisable and part of everyday life, particularly in the context of work, working life and the labour market.

This research situates and contextualises self-promotion within two different but powerful forms of social relations, namely capitalism and gender. These social relations are understood as mutually connected and constructive, yet with a logic and modus operandi of their own. Self-promotion is one of the instances in which their effect is lived and experienced, as well as produced and challenged. The objective of the research, then, is to examine self-promotion as a specific site of the intersection of capitalism and gender.

To meet this objective, the research approaches self-promotion from two different but interconnected perspectives. First, the aim is to map the terrain that renders self-promotion possible, to understand how self-promotion becomes meaningful and intelligible. Second, the focus is on the self that is placed in the centre of processes of promotion, and specifically on what kind of self is brought into being through such processes.

The empirical location of the research is the field of work-related coaching in Finland. Coaching is closely related to the processes of self-promotion, as different forms of coaching usually share a preoccupation with the self and with becoming a “right kind of a person”. Various coaching practices aim to empower the self in such a way that one gains recognition, advances or opportunities in the labour market as well as in personal life.

Employing the notion of frame the two research perspectives are formulated into two research questions by way of which the field of coaching is approached: How is self-promotion framed in coaching? How is the self framed in processes of promotion?

The research material consists of coaches’ interviews and of different kinds of textual material related to coaching, such as newspaper articles, web sites and self-help

literature. The methods employed to analyse this material were qualitative, for instance thematic analysis of textual content and of the interviews.

The empirical part of the research begins with discussing coaching as work and examining the practices of coaching. Coaching is found to exemplify processes of the subjectification of work and to relate to new forms of the commodification of “life”. It is also noted how notions of capacity, competence and potential are central to this kind of work – and how they connect to post-feminist tendencies. The research then continues by exploring the notions of change that are hardwired to the practices of coaching, particularly as coaching focuses on self-transformation – a transformation which paradoxically posits large scale changes beyond the reach of human agency, but simultaneously demands that the individual become the author of their own life. Hence coaching is a practice implicated in the process of individualisation that frames the self in a contradictory fashion.

The process of individualisation is then examined further by asking what kind of individual is brought into being in the processes of self-promotion as they take place in the practices of coaching. Even though the individual has a history of exclusion, what is important concerning the individual in coaching is a frame of inclusion – everyone must strive to become a self-promoting, self-transforming autonomous individual, the flipside of which is that anyone can also fail to achieve this status. This shift from exclusion to inclusion alerts to a shift not only in terms of the history of the individual, but also in terms of histories of gender and class.

The final empirical consideration of the research concerns the notion of potential and leads to the observation that promissory value is central to the operations of contemporary capitalism, and more specifically central to the forms of value at issue in coaching. In the practices of coaching, the production of promissory value becomes inseparable from practices of self-development and the production of individuality.

In conclusion, several significant processes or cultural tendencies are recognised as resonating with the articulations found in the field of coaching: individualisation, the subjectification of work, commodification and postfeminist tendencies. Of particular importance is individualisation, a process in which social relations and antagonisms, conflicts and other contradictions, as well as the inequalities inherent to them, are

articulated as if they were within the individual self, problems of the free and autonomous individual. The intertwining of the other processes mentioned above with that of individualisation produces a situation where a subject who is placed in relations that increasingly commodify the self also increasingly strives to become the autonomous agent of individualism. As commodification is filtered through individuality, the value of a commodity-self has to be distinctively individual, with a coherent personal history and personal capacities and potentialities.

Self-promotion is thus the consolidation of an already commodified self, an attempt to become the agent of one's own life while heavily involved in relations of exchange which produce experiences of worthlessness, marginalisation, dispensability, fear and frustration. In other words, it is an attempt to become a valuable self under conditions where the value of the self is increasingly defined in terms of exchange value, and achieving even that is increasingly precarious. These are found to be the frames in which self-promotion comes to make sense and in which promotional selves are brought into being.

Concerning gender, the research suggests that an analytical division can be made between gender as a social relation and as an individualised difference. The empirical findings of the research thoroughly demonstrate how gender as a social relation becomes articulated as a difference between individuals, and how it is precisely as a difference between individuals that gender can become an asset, a commodity or otherwise valuable possession in late capitalism. This means that gender as an individualised difference can be capitalised on in the processes of self-promotion, but simultaneously – and in line with the logic of individualisation – the injustices related to gender as a hierarchical relation become understood as individual problems, and hence a relation of power is both silenced and cemented. The shift from exclusion to inclusion in terms of individuality invites closer critical attention to the intertwining of the process of individualisation with both commodification and post-feminist tendencies, and it also invites critical interventions in the notions of choice, autonomy, agency and free will both in understanding the relations of gender and in feminist research.

Keywords: self, gender, capitalism, individuality, post-feminism, work-related coaching

Tiivistelmä

Miten minusta tulee arvokas?

Minuuden markkinointi, sukupuoli ja yksilöllisyys myöhäisessä kapitalismissa

Minuuden markkinointi viittaa sellaisiin itsen kehittelyn ja markkinoinnin toimiin, jotka tähtäävät oman aseman parantamiseen ja tunnustuksen tai uusien mahdollisuuksien saamiseen. Erilaisista minuuden markkinoinnin muodoista on nykyisin tullut yhä selkeämmin osa arkea varsinkin työn, työelämän ja työmarkkinoiden alueella.

Tässä tutkimuksessa minuuden markkinointi ymmärretään kahden erilaisen vaikutusvaltaisen yhteiskunnallisen suhteen – kapitalismin ja sukupuolen – kontekstissa ja niihin paikantuneena. Nämä yhteiskunnalliset suhteet ovat yhteydessä toisiinsa ja konstruoivat toisiaan, joskin niillä molemmilla on oma logiikkansa ja toimintamuotonsa. Kapitalismia ja sukupuolta sekä koetaan ja eletään että tuotetaan ja haastetaan minuuden markkinoinnissa. Tutkimuksessa pyritäänkin tarkastelemaan minuuden markkinointia kapitalismin ja sukupuolen määrättyinä yhteyspisteinä tai leikkauskohtana.

Leikkauskohtaa lähestytään tarkastelemalla minuuden markkinointia kahdesta toisiaan tukevasta näkökulmasta. Ensiksi kartoitetaan sitä maastoa, mikä tekee itsen markkinoinnin mahdolliseksi, mikä tekee siitä ymmärrettävää ja järjellistä. Toiseksi tutkitaan minuutta ja kysytään, millaisia minuuksia näissä markkinoinnin prosesseissa tuotetaan.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen lähtökohta on työelämävalmennuksen kenttä Suomessa. Valmennus kytkeytyy läheisesti minuuden markkinoinnin prosesseihin, sillä sen eri muodoille on yhteistä keskittyminen itseän ja ”hyväksi tyypiksi” tulemiseen. Valmennuskäytännöt pyrkivät voimaannuttamiseen eli siihen, että itse saa tunnustusta, sen asema paranee ja sille aukenee uusia mahdollisuuksia työelämässä ja henkilökohtaisessa elämässä.

Kehyksen käsitettä käyttäen edellä mainitut näkökulmat muotoillaan kahdeksi tutkimuskysymykseksi, joiden avulla itsen markkinointia ja valmennusta lähestytään: Miten minuuden markkinointi kehystetään valmennuksessa? Miten minuus kehystetään markkinoinnin prosesseissa?

Tutkimusaineisto koostuu valmentajien haastatteluista ja erilaisista valmennukseen

liittyvistä tekstiaineistoista, esimerkiksi aikakauslehtiartikkeleista, verkkosivustoista ja ”self-help” -kirjallisuudesta. Aineistoa tutkitaan kvalitatiivisesti, esimerkiksi analysoimalla tekstejä ja haastatteluaineistoja temaattisesti.

Tutkimuksen empiirinen osuus alkaa valmennustyön ja valmennuksen käytäntöjen käsittelyllä. Valmennuksen havaitaan olevan malliesimerkki paitsi itsen markkinoinnista myös työn subjektivoitumisesta, ja valmennuksen ja uusien ”elämän” tavaramuotoistumisen muotojen välillä tunnistetaan sukulaisuussuhde. Valmennustyön kannalta keskeisiä käsitteitä ovat kyvykkyys, kompetenssi ja potentiaali; näiden käsitteiden ja postfeminististen tendenssien välillä havaitaan yhteys. Tämän jälkeen tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan muutoksen teemaa oleellisena osana valmennuksen käytäntöjä, eritoten silloin, kun valmennus pyrkii itsen muuttamiseen. On paradoksaalista, että samalla kun suurten muutosten nähdään olevan ihmisen toiminnan ulottumattomissa, ihmisiä vaaditaan tulemaan oman elämänsä toimijoiksi, ottamaan oma elämä haltuun. Valmennuksen käytännöt siis osallistuvat yksilöllistymisen prosessiin, joka kehystää minuuden ristiriitaisella tavalla.

Yksilöllistymisen prosessia tutkitaan kysymällä, millainen yksilö minuuden markkinoinnilla tehdään todeksi, ja miten tämä yksilö näyttäytyy valmennuksen käytännöissä. Vaikka yksilöllisyyden historiaan liittyy elimellisesti toisen ulossulkeminen, saa yksilö valmennuksessa inklusiivisen kehyksen. Jokainen saa ja jokaisen täytyy kamppailla tullakseen itseään markkinoivaksi ja muokkaavaksi autonomiseksi yksilöksi. Tämän kamppailun kääntöpuoli on, että kuka tahansa voi epäonnistua. Siirtymä ulossulkemisesta mukaan ottamiseen ei koske ainoastaan yksilöllisyyttä vaan merkitsee siirtymää myös sukupuolen ja luokan historioissa.

Viimeiseksi tutkimuksessa pohditaan potentiaalinen teemaa ja havaitaan lupauksen arvosta olevan keskeistä nykykapitalismin toiminnalle ja valmennukseen liittyville arvon muodoille. Valmennuksen käytännöissä tulevaisuuteen suuntautunut arvontuotanto liittyy itsen kehittelyyn ja yksilöllisyyden tuottamiseen.

Valmennuksen kentältä voidaan tunnistaa useita olennaisia prosesseja ja kulttuurisia tendenssejä: yksilöllistyminen, työn subjektivoituminen, tavaramuotoistuminen ja postfeminismi. Erityisen merkittäväksi tutkimuksessa nousee yksilöllistymisen prosessi, jossa yhteiskunnalliset suhteet ja antagonismit, konfliktit ja

ristiriidat, kuten myös niihin liittyvät epätasa-arvoisuudet, artikuloituvat yksilöllisinä eli tulevat ymmärretyiksi vapaan ja autonomisen yksilön sisäisinä ongelmina.

Yllämainittujen prosessien kytkeytyminen yksilöllistymiseen tuottaa tilanteen, jossa itseään tavaramuotoistava subjekti pyrkii samanaikaisesti tulemaan yksilölliseksi ja autonomiseksi toimijaksi. Kun tavaramuotoistuminen asettuu yksilöllisyyden kehykseen, täytyy tavaraminuuden erottautua muista omalla yksilöllisyydellään. Sillä on oltava yhtenäinen henkilöhistoria, henkilökohtaisia kykyjä ja potentiaalia. Kyse on jo valmiiksi tavaramuotoistuneen minuuden tiivistymisestä ja lujittumisesta.

Minuuden markkinoinnissa pyritään tulemaan oman elämän toimijaksi samalla kun ollaan tiiviisti kytköksissä vaihtosuhteisiin, jotka tuottavat arvottomuuden, marginaalisuuden, korvattavuuden, pelon ja turhautumisen kokemuksia. Toisin sanoen arvokkaaksi minuudeksi pyritään tulemaan olosuhteissa, joissa minuuden arvo määrittyy yhä suuremmissa määrin sen vaihtoarvon kautta, ja joissa vaihtoarvon saavuttaminenkin itselle on yhä epävarmempaa. Näissä kehyksissä minuuden markkinointi tulee ymmärrettäväksi ja markkinoidut minuudet tulevat todellisiksi.

Tutkimuksessa ehdotetaan, että on syytä analyttisesti erottaa sukupuoli sosiaalisena suhteena ja sukupuoli yksilöllisenä erona. Tutkimuksen empiiriset havainnot osoittavat, että sukupuolen yhteiskunnallinen suhde artikuloituu yksilöiden välisenä erona, ja juuri yksilöllisenä erona sukupuolesta voi tulla resurssi, tavara tai muu arvokas omistettava asia myöhäiskapitalismissa. Tämä tarkoittaa, että yksilöllisenä erona sukupuolta voidaan hyödyntää taloudellisesti osana itsen markkinointia, mutta samanaikaisesti – kuten yksilöllistymisen logiikka edellyttää – sukupuoli epäoikeudenmukaisena sortosuhteena sekä katoaa näkyvistä että voimistuu. Siirtymä ulossulkemisesta inklusiiviseen yksilöllisyyteen tarkoittaa, että on tutkittava tarkemmin, miten yksilöllistymisen prosessi kytkeytyy tavaramuotoistumiseen ja postfeminismiin. Se tarkoittaa myös, että valinnan, autonomian, toimijuuden ja vapaan tahdon käsitteisiin on syytä suhtautua kriittisesti feministisessä tutkimuksessa ja pyrkimyksissä ymmärtää sukupuolten välisiä suhteita.

Avainsanat: minuus, sukupuoli, kapitalismi, yksilöllisyys, postfeminismi, työelämävalmennus

Contents

1. Introduction	13
1.1. In search of the promotional self	13
<i>Research aims</i>	17
<i>Empirical location</i>	19
1.2. Interrogating capitalism and gender	19
<i>New economy, promotion and commodification</i>	21
<i>Theorising gender</i>	24
<i>Interconnections</i>	28
1.3. Framing the self and framing self-promotion	34
<i>Framing the self</i>	34
<i>Framing self-promotion</i>	38
<i>Discursive materialism</i>	40
<i>The self in working life</i>	41
1.4. Research questions and the structure of the book	43
<i>The structure of the book</i>	45
2. Producing knowledge: methodological reflections	48
2.1. Gathering material/entering the field	51
<i>Discovering work-related coaching</i>	51
<i>Interviewing</i>	58
<i>Introductory session and lectures</i>	64
<i>Locations and timelines</i>	65
2.2. Theoretical and methodological engagements	68
<i>Research approach</i>	71
<i>Research process</i>	78
<i>Methods of analysis</i>	82
2.3. Reflections on ethical aspects	86
3. Coaching for self-promotion	91
3.1. Individual vocation	92
<i>Becoming a coach</i>	92
<i>Training</i>	101
<i>Building promotional packages</i>	105
<i>Feminist echoes</i>	110
<i>The coach as an “entployee”</i>	115
3.2. Working with clients	118
<i>The helper</i>	123
<i>The middleman</i>	134
3.3. Conclusions	143

4. Change	146
4.1. Unavoidable change	147
4.2. Resisting and managing change	160
4.3. Personal transformations	164
<i>Goals and aims</i>	166
<i>Empowerment</i>	169
4.4. Becoming strong women	177
4.5. Conclusions	188
5. Individuality	190
5.1. Individualism	191
5.2. Expression and recognition	194
<i>Self-management</i>	200
<i>Dispensable workers</i>	205
5.3. The double self	208
<i>Reflexivity</i>	213
<i>The flipside</i>	215
5.4. Reflexivity reprise	221
<i>Individualising class</i>	224
<i>Individualising gender</i>	226
5.5. Conclusions	227
6. Potential	229
6.1. Maximising potential	231
6.2. Promises of flexibility	234
6.3. Temporalities	238
6.4. Individualised potential	241
6.5. Conclusions	254
7. Becoming valuable selves	255
7.1. Concluding remarks	256
<i>On critique</i>	265
<i>On gender</i>	270
<i>On coaching</i>	275
7.2. Future directions	280
Research material	282
References	287
Appendix I: Interview outlines in English and in Finnish	304
Appendix II: Interview extracts in Finnish	306

1. Introduction

1.1. In search of the promotional self

Personal Branding – the process that takes your skills, personality and unique characteristics and packages them into a powerful identity that lifts you above the crowd of anonymous competitors.
(Montoya 2002, 2)

This is how Peter Montoya describes the process of “personal branding” in his self-help book *The Brand Called You* (2002). Montoya’s book is an explicit guide to the art of personal branding. It teaches the reader how to transform themselves, their personality and skills, into a marketable commodity that can be successfully branded and sold to customers.

Montoya is not alone in the business of branding the self for in Western countries in the last ten years “personal branding” has become a business (cf. Lair et al., 2005) that also has followers in Finland. At the same time, the need to manage others’ perceptions of you and to market and promote your personal capacities has become an integral part of many professions and also increasingly a part of personal life (e.g. Hearn 2008, 203). This tendency has been recognised in critical research, for example as the “enterprise culture” in which workers are expected to become “entrepreneurs of the self” (du Gay 1996; Rose 1998/1996), and as the “promotional culture” in which workers become promotional subjects (Wernick 1991). In accordance with the logic stated in the self-help literature of personal branding, the general idea is repeated over and again in various websites, handbooks and seminars that shape and conduct contemporary working life:

manage and promote yourself. “Distinct or extinct” says another self-appointed branding guru on his website (Peters 2004).

The pressure towards self-marketing so clearly articulated by the American branding consultants is also concretely present in Finland. Self-marketing has, in fact, become quite ordinary. It is already so much part of our “common sense” that it might even be hard to spot unless one is paying specific attention. One example of this ordinariness is the way in which good and desirable employees are often publicly characterised as “the right kind of a person/the right kind of guy” (H9).¹ This can be seen in various job advertisements as well as in newspaper articles with headlines such as “Everybody wants the right kind of person” or “The right kind of person gets the job” (e.g. Rajalahti 2005; Lehto 1999; Kokko 2006; 2010; see also Lavikka 2000; Korvajärvi 2001). Even while I was writing this introduction, a recommendation letter arrived on an academic mailing list entitled “The right kind of person available as a research assistant.”²

In these texts, a person’s professional education appears as secondary compared to his or her reputation and personal characteristics. Being “the right kind of person” is described as crucial for seeking a job or getting ahead in one’s career, and becoming such a person is often presented as a question of reputation, social networks and conveying the right kind of image. For example, a writer in the Finnish business journal *Taloussanommat* assumes that over 80 per cent of open vacancies are filled through networks based on reputation and friendship or acquaintances (Kokko 2006).

In her best-selling self-help book *Brändikäs* (2010), the Finnish brand expert Lisa Sounio notes how Finnish engineers are not internationally desirable candidates for executive positions. Her answer to this problem is to build personal charisma:

It’s not about know-how. It’s the appearances that deal with criticism! The career adviser Sari Taukojärvi admits that Finnish engineers are unexciting. Our country’s engineer training is top-drawer, but Finnish boys [sic] don’t stand out. For example, in Nokia, Kone, ABB and Wärtsilä the top experts who have been trained for decades have no edge. Basic engineers don’t stick in the mind, and

¹ *Hyvä tyyppi*.

² The mailing list for staff in the Department of Social Research [*Sosiaalitutkimuksen sähköpostilista*]: “*Hyvä tyyppi tarjolla tutkimusavustajaksi*”, 6.10.2011.

their personas don't stand out. What to do? Charisma, or at least the ability to develop charisma, is needed when international headhunters are searching for top executives for global companies. Charisma is good not only for executives, but also for others: teachers, nurses, salespersons!
(Sounio 2010, 105-107)

In addition to describing existing tendencies in the labour market, these kinds of public texts produce and fortify the idea that promoting one's capacities *is* crucial for getting a job.

Practices such as constructing portfolios (which are promotional messages) and asking job-seekers to attach photos to their application letters are increasingly common in the labour market. The latest trend is video applications. For instance, an online recruiting service called JustRecruitMe has a web site where one can make "profile videos" – the site claims that with such services, "you can make your career profile look attractive even when your work experience and education alone would not make a big impression" (justrecruitme.com).

The importance of marketing oneself is evident also in the various courses and lectures offered to students and the unemployed. Many of these courses concentrate on how to present oneself in a job interview, how to create a positive personal image, how to build networks, and more explicitly how to brand oneself.³ The official website of the Finnish Employment and Economic Development Office advises the unemployed as follows: "Professional skills alone do not necessarily guarantee success in the labour market. You have to be capable of marketing your know-how to the employer" (www.mol.fi 19.11.2009).

The various and incommensurable practices described above all have something in common – and this something is the object of this research. To describe this common denominator I use the term "self-promotion". This term functions here as an encompassing signifier – like an umbrella – that can be used to describe practices which share certain common characteristics but which are not identical. The characteristics that promotion as a term includes are, first, aspects of marketing, of creating positive images

³ Workshops for personal branding are part of a programme aimed at university students in some Finnish universities.

or brands, and second, aspects of advancing something (one's career, for example). In the case of self-promotion these characteristics are centred on the self. To illustrate, let us briefly consider self-promotion as it is understood in the field of psychology.

In psychology, the term self-promotion appears prominently in taxonomies of impression-management strategies. Self-promotion is said to be “designed to augment one's status and attractiveness” and to include “pointing with pride to one's accomplishments, speaking directly about one's strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions for achievements” (Rudman 1998, 629; see also Jones & Pittman 1982, 241–245). Self-promotion is also defined as “a critical component of professional success that predicts perceptions of competence and thereby contributes to hiring and promotion decisions” (Moss-Racusin & Rudman 2010, 186). In other words, it is “an important tactic for any competitor” (Rudman 1998, 629). The aspects implicit in the term self-promotion thus include augmenting one's status and attractiveness, advancing one's career and taking part in competition. All these aspects can also be found in the examples given above.

Promoting the self, then, refers to processes in which different forms of marketing and branding are combined with “advancing the self” in one way or another. These processes take place across different sites and in various guises. They can be recognised, for example, in non-professional social networks such as Facebook (on networks see Wittel 2001) and in reality television (Hearn 2008; Mäkinen 2007; 2008). The labour market, however, seems to be the most obvious arena for the practices and processes of self-promotion, for these are often connected to aspects of work and working life – for example, to career development, competition and competence. Consequently, in this research, I have chosen to search for promotional selves in a field which is closely related to work, working life and the labour market as well as to questions of selfhood, namely the field of **work-related coaching**.

Coaching is a relatively new field of work that has developed in the past 20 years in the USA and Europe. In Finland, work-related coaching is a growth industry, and coaching associations have begun to professionalise the occupation, but at the moment the field consists of different actors providing various coaching services that relate to

work and working life (Virolainen 2010, 16–17).⁴ The common characteristic that different forms of coaching usually share, however, is a preoccupation with the self and with becoming the “right kind of person”. Various practices of coaching are aimed to “empower” the self in such a way that one gains recognition, advances or opportunities in the labour market as well as in personal life. In this way, coaching as a field of work is closely related to processes of self-promotion.

Research aims

My focus in this research, then, is on processes of self-promotion, and I analyse and interpret these processes in the context of work-related coaching. Furthermore, throughout the study, I seek to understand self-promotion in connection to the interconnections between capitalism and relations of gender. The overarching aim of this research, then, is to examine **the interconnections between capitalism, gender and processes of self-promotion**. This means that I will understand self-promotion *through* theories and empirical knowledge of capitalism and gender.

This objective brings two different but powerful forms of social relations to the centre of research on self-promotion. I approach these relations – capitalism and gender – as mutually connected and constructive, yet with a logic and modus operandi of their own. Different subjects experience and confront – and also maintain, produce and challenge – these social relations in different ways. Self-promotion is one of the instances in which their effect is lived and experienced,⁵ as well as produced and challenged. In self-promotion, capitalism and relations of gender come together, intersect and overlap in particular ways with particular consequences. My objective, then, is to examine self-promotion as a specific site of intersection of capitalism and gender.

To meet this objective, I approach self-promotion from two specific research perspectives. First, my aim is to begin to map the terrain that renders self-promotion possible. I will thus aspire to understand **how self-promotion becomes meaningful and**

⁴ Coaching as a profession and coaching practices will be examined more closely in chapter three.

⁵ I think of experiences not as individual but as social. As Anu Koivunen writes when describing Teresa de Lauretis’s thinking: experience is lived, it is given meaning to, it is remembered, and in this way it is subjective but also social and cultural (Koivunen 2004, 15).

intelligible for different subjects in different situations, most particularly in the field of work-related coaching. I examine how promotional practices come to occupy a self-evident position in everyday life, and how they come to “make sense” for individual selves. This means looking at how processes of self-promotion connect and relate to other processes embedded in everyday life. Throughout the research, then, I draw connections and congruencies between self-promotion and other processes and cultural tendencies, such as individualisation, subjectification of work, commodification and post-feminism.

Second, my focus is on the self that is placed in the centre of processes of promotion, and specifically on **what kind of self is brought into being** through such processes. This means looking at how, as the promotional processes and practices come to make sense, they also simultaneously assume and produce a particular kind of understanding concerning the self. When self-promotion makes sense, a certain form of self, a promotional self, also comes to make sense. This understanding of self that is implied in processes of promotion carries with it particular implications concerning individuality and agency, for instance. Thus the self that is placed at the centre of attention in promotional processes is not *any* self, and for this reason I look for the definitions and conceptions of selfhood in such processes.

My approach to the processes of self-promotion thus contains two different perspectives: one concentrating on how different selves come to regard self-promotion as relevant and meaningful and one concentrating on the kinds of selves that are brought into being in self-promotion. It is through these perspectives that I aim to understand the interconnections between self-promotion, capitalism and gender. The perspectives are, however, intertwined – they are different aspects of the same problem, approaching the self of self-promotion from two different directions. For this reason, they are not examined separately, but instead the analysis proceeds by keeping both perspectives in mind, as well as the overarching objective concerning capitalism and gender.

“Gender” and “capitalism” are of course rather broad concepts, and I will elaborate on what I mean by them in a moment. First, though, I shall now briefly describe the empirical location of the research.

Empirical location

Work-related coaching is the empirical location of this research, and the research material consists of different texts which in different ways relate to the field of coaching. The material includes, first, different published texts, such as self-help books, web pages and newspaper articles. They are both Finnish and international (in English). Most of these texts were gathered in the process of seeking contacts and preparing for the interviews which form the second part of my research material. Apart from the published textual material, the data includes 17 interviews (18 interviewees) conducted with Finnish working-life coaches. I also participated in an introductory coaching session by one of the coaches interviewed. In addition, the material contains notes from four coaching lectures. The interviews and the published texts (and notes from lectures) all have a significant function, as they provide different perspectives – from different authors and different locations – on the same phenomenon.

I am especially interested in the material that speaks of “branding the self”, since this is an explicit example of a self understood through promotional rhetoric and economic practice. Nevertheless, part of my material is much subtler, and one of my aims is to show the continuities between the more explicitly economy-driven and the less market-oriented understandings concerning the self. The material is very varied, but there is a common aspect to all the texts and interviews. They are concerned with a certain kind of self that seeks to cope with “changing conditions” and to advance and make gains in the labour market. The (however subtle) idea of self-promotion defines my research material and also links it to other aspects of contemporary Western society, such as reality TV programmes and advertising (see Hearn 2008).

1.2. Interrogating capitalism and gender

Above I described rather briefly my aim to examine the interconnections between capitalism, gender and self-promotion. In what follows I will now elaborate how I see

these interconnections and their relevance in this research, especially in relation to previous accounts with similar interests. I will first describe how I understand the contemporary form of capitalism and its relation to self-promotion, and then I shall briefly describe how I understand gender in this research. After these accounts, I will take a look at the ways in which the interconnections of capitalism and gender have already been examined, and position myself in relation to the traditions of materialist, socialist and Marxist feminism as well as to the theorisations on post-feminism.

I will thus now move from describing the phenomenon of self-promotion and the research objective on a general level into a denser account of different research traditions and theorisations concerning capitalism and gender.

To begin with, capitalism as a social and economic context cannot be ignored when discussing self-promotion, especially in the field of work-related coaching. The concept of promotion, as it is currently used, is not really comprehensible unless the world of buying and selling for profit is taken into account. The concept of working life is also tightly connected to the idea of paid labour as a form of capitalist production. This research thus proceeds from the idea that, in the contemporary Western world, our selves become comprehensible and acceptable in the context of the capitalist economy, most explicitly when interpreted and understood in relation to working life. I consider capitalism as a hegemonic economic regime in the Western world and also as a foundational organisation of social life (Mohanty 2003). Political, ideological and economic spheres of production mutually determine each other and are systemically implicated in maintaining particular social relations at various levels (Hennessy 1993a, 30).

To understand the promotional self it is thus necessary to take into account the context of the contemporary economy both in relation to the labour market and in relation to the general understanding of the self (and self-understanding) that is produced in promotional practices. This does not mean that all forms of domination can be reduced to capitalist hierarchies, or that it can be assumed that the effects of capitalism are the same in different times and locations (e.g. Mohanty 2003, 183). However, to understand how power and hegemony function in the world as we know it, especially in relation to the labour market, the analysis of capitalist relations is necessary.

New economy, promotion and commodification

Countless theoretical and empirical accounts have described a shift that has happened in the capitalist economy on global scale from the 1970s onwards (e.g. Adkins & Jokinen 2008; Adkins 2005; Bonefeld & Holloway 1991; Hardt & Negri 2000; Harvey 1989; 2005; Julkunen 2008; Peltokoski 2006; Sennet 2006; Vähämäki 2009). The present mode of capitalism has been dubbed a new regime of accumulation (e.g. Harvey 1982; 1989), the post-Fordist new economy (e.g. Adkins 2005), the knowledge or informational economy (e.g. Hardt 1999), or advanced or late capitalism (e.g. Wernick 1991; Jameson 1991). There is an ongoing discussion of the scope and significance of the shift. Some theorists have emphasised radical economic and cultural change (e.g. Hardt 1999; Hardt & Negri 2000; Beck 2008/1986; Lash 1994; Giddens 1991), while others have foregrounded the continuities (e.g. McDowell 2009). There are also theoretical incentives to bring together both perspectives: for example David Harvey (1989) emphasises that there are both changes and continuities in the new capitalist economy.

The changes that are usually connected with the new regime of accumulation include the accentuated status of knowledge as a commodity, the rise of the service industry, the feminisation of labour and cultural feminisation of the economy, and the increasing precariousness of working life (and the life of the worker in general) (e.g. Adkins 2001; Beck et al. 1994; Hardt 1999; Veijola & Jokinen 2008; Vähämäki 2009). As for the continuing, stable aspects of capitalism, Harvey (1982; 1989, 179–180) notes that capitalism is a system that contains fundamental contradictions and defines three basic features of any capitalist mode of production: the orientation towards growth, a class relation between capital and labour, and technological and organisational dynamism. Linda McDowell (2009), for her part, emphasises that despite the changes in the economy, labour is still tied to material bodies, and also divided according to gender.

To position my research in the vast context of theoretical debates about and accounts of the present economy, I will examine the processes of self-promotion in connection with both the new aspects of current capitalism and also the continuities that

can be seen in Western capitalism and the stable features of the capitalist regime. In the title of this research I have identified capitalism as “late” capitalism. My use of this term draws – rather freely – on Fredric Jameson’s (1991) account. Jameson combines an analysis of contemporary capitalism⁶ with insights on postmodernism. He states that the features of late capitalism include the new international division of labour, the emergence of new forms of multinational business organisations, a new dynamic in financial exchange, and a crisis of traditional labour. (Jameson 1991, xviii–xix). For the purposes of this research, I have decided to use this term because it simultaneously marks continuity with the preceding forms of capitalism and makes a distinction, and in this way it allows us to think both the continuities and the changes. Jameson (*ibid.*, x) also emphasises the importance and extent of commodity production in late capitalism (he uses the expression “commodity rush”).

According to Karl Marx, in the form of the commodity the social character of a person’s labour appears as “objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio natural properties of these things” (Marx 1976/1867, 164–165). The commodity form “also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers. [---] It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.” (*Ibid.*) Commodity fetishism then masks the existing material relations between individual persons and transforms them into relations between commodities. In Marxist theorisations the extent of commodity production is conceived through the concept of commodification (the word commoditisation is also used). Commodification describes the expansion of market exchange to spheres of life that were previously not considered in economic terms.

When analysing the research material I pay attention to discussions of cultural feminisation, the importance of the service industry and the role of affective, emotional and aesthetic labour, and also to other aspects which are considered markers of the new economy. At the same time I take into account that capitalism also has some unchanging

⁶ I use the term “contemporary” to refer to capitalism after the changes that are usually located in the 1970s – it is thus not contemporary in the sense that it was made yesterday, but rather in the sense that the new aspects emerging in the 1960s and 1970s define what we understand as capitalism today.

features: for example, the class relation between capital and labour as explained by Harvey (1989; 2005) and other Marxist theorists, and commodification, which has to be taken into account when considering the construction of promotional selves.

In addition to the discussions of changes and continuities in the contemporary capitalism, I also consider Andrew Wernick's theory of promotional culture, which partly touches the same issues as Jameson's account of postmodernism and late capitalism. In *Promotional Culture* (1991) Wernick states that there is a functional or expanded sense of advertising that can be called *promotion*. He uses promotion as a term to refer to cases where "something, though not necessarily for money, is being promoted for sale – while recognising that the metaphorical diffusion of the word reflects a real historical tendency for all such discourse to acquire advertising character" (ibid., 182). A promotional message at once represents, advocates and anticipates the circulating entity or entities to which it refers. Wernick describes current Western culture as a "produced symbolic world" that has been saturated with promotion. He also describes promotional practices that become significant at the level of individuals, and states that these practices are partly an outgrowth of the commodification of labour power and more particularly of the way in which differentially qualified labour power commands a differential price. Here Wernick mentions especially the professional and quasi-professional sectors of the labour market. However, it can be said that in the current economic situation even the "unprofessional" sectors of labour market are included in this differentiation of labour power – self-promotion is not strictly limited to so-called professional work, as all kinds of employers increasingly seek not so much a skilled labourer as the "right kind of person" to work for them. As the self-declared brand expert Lisa Sounio (2010, 107) claims: "Charisma is good not only for executives but also for others: teachers, nurses, salespersons!"

Wernick (1991, 185) concludes that the rise of promotion marks not only a shift to a new mode of producing and circulating signs, but an alteration in the very relation between culture and economy. He states that in advanced capitalism the globalisation and intensification of commodity production have led to an economic modification in which the moments of distribution, circulation and exchange have become as strategic for profitability and growth as technical improvements in production, and that through

commodity imaging the circulation and production processes have come to overlap. Jameson, I think, refers to the same phenomenon when he notes that “culture” “cleaves almost too close to the skin of the economic to be stripped off and inspected in its own right” (Jameson 1991, xv). Wernick concludes that in this context the domain of expressive communication (superstructure) has been absorbed into the integral workings of the commodified economic “base”. This account is problematic, as Wernick seems to take for granted the division between base and superstructure, as if the material “proper” economy and the sphere of cultural production have ever been fundamentally divided. The attention given to the relation between culture and economy, however, is significant. In this research, this relation is approached through the hypothesis that the processes of self-promotion are an example of a set of mechanics that very concretely *rearticulate* the intertwining of “culture” and “economy” and locate this rearticulation within the subject.

The promotional self that I seek in this research project is similar to that described by Wernick in the sense that it is a self that is promoted for “sale” in the labour market. The idea of the overlapping between cultural and economic production, circulation and consumption is also significant in the construction of the promotional self. This overlapping has also been theorised in accounts of the new economy in relation to selfhood and gender (Adkins 2005; Lury 2004). In addition, taking into consideration the commodification of labour power which is an outcome of capitalism theorised by Marx (1976/1867) and Marxist scholars, the promotional self can be understood as a commodified self. I thus tentatively consider promotion (and branding as an aspect of promotion) as the mode that defines the processes of commodification in the new economy.

Theorising gender

In a culture that is *in fact* constructed by gender duality [...] one cannot be simply “human.” This is no more possible than it is possible that we can “just be people” in a racist culture. [...] Our language, intellectual history, and social forms are gendered; there is no escape from this fact and from its consequences on our lives. Some of those consequences may be unintended, may even be fiercely resisted; our deepest desire may be to transcend gender dualities, to have our behavior judged on its merits, not categorized as male or female. But, like it or not, in our

present culture our activities *are* coded as male or female and will function as such under the prevailing system of gender-power relations.
(Bordo 1990, 241-242, italics in the original)

It is easy to state that gender is important, but theorising gender, and particularly gender in connection with capitalism, is difficult. Whereas in the 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s a great part of feminist theory was concerned with thinking in terms of totalities and discussing both capitalism and gender using concepts such as patriarchy and exploitation (e.g. Sargent 1981), currently the most visible theoretical orientations within different strands of feminism have other objectives. This is significant, because the linguistic turn which has affected feminist theory since the 1980s has meant a tremendous leap for the ways in which gender and sexual difference are understood and theorised. Among other things, the linguistic turn has provided insights for approaching gender in a way that addresses the significance of discursive constructions as fundamentally tied to the production and maintenance of social relations (see Hennessy 1993a). Influenced by poststructuralism and postmodernism, theories of gender have gained depth and also variation during the 1990s and 2000s. These new insights on gender, however, have not been theoretically concerned with a critique of capitalism – apart from some notable exceptions (e.g. Mohanty 2003). Consequently, as important as the contributions of, for instance, Foucauldian approaches (see Bordo 1990; 1993; Fraser 1999; McNay 1992) and queer theory (see Ahmed 2006; Halberstam 1998) are, they do not seem to offer any easy possibilities for a specific theory of gender that could be employed in this research. Although many of these approaches contain an articulated critique of power relations, the focus is often on the subjectification of the individual within certain cultural norms, and on the possibilities of resistance to these gendered norms. Questions concerning the economy, and in particular the relations of labour and capital, are not self-evidently included in these theories of gender or sexual difference. Rather, developing a perspective on capitalism and gender from these theories would be a subject of research in itself.

Although many feminist theorists have paid attention to discussing the connection between the material and the cultural (e.g. Butler 1993; Hennessy 1993a), the linguistic turn has nevertheless been characterised by a kind of primacy of the cultural, which makes theorising gender in connection with capitalism difficult. However, there are also

emerging tendencies in feminist theory that develop the legacies of poststructuralism and postmodernism by bringing matter back to the centre of the theory (see Alaimo & Hekman 2009). These theories discuss questions of posthumanity and new understandings of nature and science, for instance. My approach, which I will later on describe as discursive materialism, is similarly committed to taking the material seriously, although the emphasis is on capitalism as a “matter of matter” and the perspective cannot be characterised as posthumanist.

In recent feminist theory, interconnections between social relations or different social structures have quite prominently been examined as intersections of differences, most often those of gender with race or ethnicity and class (see Dhamoon 2011; Mohanty 2003; Ringrose 2007; also Skeggs 1997; 2004). Within the framework of intersectionality, gender is theorised together with “multiple, co-constituted differences” (Dhamoon 2011, 232). This means that gender is seen as a difference or as a part of processes of differentiation. This framework has been valuable in highlighting the problems that follow if gender is placed as the singular focus of attention. However, intersectionality as a research perspective does not necessarily contain theoretical or methodological tools for understanding the differences between differences, so to speak (see Lahikainen & Mäkinen 2012), or for opening up the specificity of the relations of gender compared to the relations of class, for example (Acker 2011, 68). In explicitly intersectional analyses, the focus is predominantly on processes of differentiation between individuals, and thus the perspective on gender often also remains individualised (Collins 1998, cited in Ringrose 2007, 265, 267).⁷

Examining the specificity of particular social relations and their interconnections requires that the perspective be extended beyond the processes of differentiation. Theory needs to address gender as something that not only differentiates individuals according to particular categories, but also connects to relations of power and hegemony in a complex manner. Intersectionality as a theoretical perspective does not foreclose discussing relations of power, but it directs attention towards intertwining differences. In the framework of intersectionality, the connection between capitalism and gender tends to be

⁷ Though this individualised focus is not implied by the intersectional perspective, Dhamoon (2011, 234) claims that most intersectional research is concerned with processes of differentiation and categories of difference.

discussed in terms of the intertwining of class (as a category or an attribute) with gender (as a category). In this research, I am not interested in the intertwining of categories or identities but rather in the interconnections between different yet overlapping and systematic social relations. This means that I do not consider gender merely as a difference among other differences, but primarily as a social relation that is structured in a specific way and has significance beyond particular individuals and particular situations.⁸ Gender is both a thought construct that helps us make sense of particular social worlds and histories and a social relation that enters into and partially constitutes all other social relations and activities (cf. Flax 1990, 45-46).⁹

To put it simply, in this research I think of gender as a socially structured condition that positions subjects according to the gender duality (either as men or women), and both constrains subjects and rewards them for conformity. The gender duality is, at its base, hierarchical, positioning women and femininity as less valuable than men and masculinity. This hierarchical relation is not intrinsic to the duality: it is not a logical necessity and there is no evidence that gender duality would have to be hierarchical by definition.¹⁰ Currently and also historically, however, the social relation of gender relies on the hierarchy described above (Flax 1990, 45). Individual subjects are embedded within this condition as they experience, maintain and produce as well as challenge it.

Gender as an attribute of the self and as a social relation is shaped and moulded over and again in a complex dynamic that Lois McNay (2000) describes as a dynamic between the material and the symbolic. The significance of gender thus changes, might change even radically, and there are contradictions and fractures in relations of gender (e.g. Rantalaiho 1994, 10). Nevertheless, such changes are not easily made by individuals or by groups of individuals, and no one can position themselves completely outside the gendered expectations and interpretations even if they wanted to.

The difficulties in combining the current feminist theorisations of gender with accounts of capitalism have led me to choose a rather open theoretical standpoint when it

⁸ In this way, my approach comes close to that of Chandra Mohanty (2003) and Beverley Skeggs (1997; 2004), for instance.

⁹ Throughout the research, I occasionally use the plural expression “relations of gender” to underline that although gender can be theorised on a rather abstract level as one social relation, as it is lived and experienced it is versatile and manifold.

¹⁰ Although many feminist theorists do maintain the contrary view that gender duality is hierarchical by definition and would thus disagree with me here (e.g. Wittig 1992).

comes to gender. I see gender as a social relation based on the gender duality which divides subjects into two complementary genders that are thought to differ from and desire each other (cf. Butler 1990), but I am not committed to thinking this relation through any particular theoretically informed concept – such as performativity (Butler 1990) or technologies of gender (de Lauretis 1987) – that would imply a precise conception of the ways in which gender is organised, experienced and maintained, nor do I aim to develop such a concept. Rather, I want to stay open to the forms that gender as a social relation might take in the specific instance of self-promotion. To a certain extent, my approach is thus defined by a genuine curiosity to discover what gender might come to mean within the limits of this research project. There are, of course, theoretical and empirical accounts concerning gender that I draw on, and these will be discussed next.

Interconnections

While designing the research approach, I was inspired by researchers like Frigga Haug (1992), Silvia Federici (2004; 2009), and also by the work of Precarias a la Deriva (2009/2004), a feminist collective based in Madrid. What connects these different writers is that they discuss capitalism with a Marxist perspective and, in different ways, provide a feminist critique of that perspective. Their interests also well describe the general issues that have been raised in feminist critiques of different Marxist accounts of capitalism, as they discuss questions of reproduction, the division of labour and women's bodies and sexuality.

Of these writers, Frigga Haug (1992) is the earliest (the articles that made an impression on me were published from 1980 to 1990). Engaged both with Marxism and feminism, she aims to convert Marxist theory into a theory of emancipation for women, and she experiences intense frustration that “almost all the features of Marxism which are crucial to the theory and practice of women's liberation have been forgotten and repressed in the established tradition of Marxism-Leninism” (ibid., x). For Haug, a feminist perspective is very much congruent with the emancipation or liberation of women, and thus her work is centred explicitly on working with and for women. Though my approach differs from hers in this respect, there are several features in her work that I

find very valuable for examining the intertwining of capitalism and gender. Haug proceeds from the idea that gender as a social relation is tied “to the laws of capital” (ibid., 15) and emphasises the importance of studying how people, particularly women, “experience the structures described in the critique of political economy in their daily lives” (ibid., 15). Examining the laws of capital is thus not enough, for it is also relevant to understand how different persons subjectively experience, appropriate and also transform them, and how relations of gender are interwoven in these subjective responses.

Silvia Federici (2004) is concerned with rethinking Marxist accounts of the development of capitalism from a feminist viewpoint while avoiding what she describes as the limits of “women’s history”. Compiling a historical account of the capitalisation of social reproduction, Federici states that the historical transition to capitalism marked a redefinition of productive and reproductive tasks and male-female relations, hence leaving “no doubt concerning the constructed character of sexual roles in capitalist society” (ibid., 14). Sexual identity in capitalism became the carrier of specific work functions, and gender therefore is not only a cultural reality but also, according to Federici, should be treated as a specification of class relations (ibid., 14).

My understanding of gender differs from Federici’s, for I think that gender cannot be reduced solely to a class relation. The social relation(s) implied in the concept of class are not the same as those implied in the concept of gender, as the two concepts are attached to very different social systems and historical legacies. However, I do agree with Federici’s claim that gender functions as an integral part of the capitalist economy: it has a significant role now, and it has also had a significant role throughout the history of capitalism.

Both Haug and Federici also bring a feminist politics of the body to their analysis of capitalism and their critique of Marxism. Haug is concerned particularly with the sexualisation of women (Haug 1999/1983) and Federici with violence towards women (2004). The significance of embodied experience is also at the centre of the work of *Precarias a la Deriva* (2009/2004). This collective of women living in Madrid develop new methodologies for researching what they call the precarious condition of women in contemporary capitalism. Using the method of “strolling”, they examine different kinds

of care and knowledge work done by particular women in particular situations. Rethinking the discussions of reproduction raised by feminists in the 1970s, Precarias a la Deriva continue to analyse the structuring of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and colonialism, considering the body as a site and expression of power and exploitation (2009/2004, 21).

In Precarias a la Deriva's work I find inspiring their critique and development of discussions concerning the "new economy".¹¹ They understand and interpret the precarious conditions of women against the background of the Italian autonomist Marxist theorisation of knowledge capitalism, but they enrich this theorisation from a feminist perspective. Federici (2004) has also provided a feminist critique of the concepts of precarious work and immaterial labour as they are employed by autonomist Marxists such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), bringing to attention the importance of recognising women's unpaid reproductive labour as a key source of capitalist accumulation.

The different but overlapping approaches of Federici, Haug and Precarias a la Deriva all belong to the research traditions of materialist, socialist and Marxist feminism. Although the interconnections of capitalism and gender have been examined across different sites, these research traditions have most markedly and explicitly concentrated and expanded on this question, focusing especially on reproduction, the division of labour and women's bodies and sexuality (see e.g. Leonard & Adkins 1996; Sargent 1981).

For the development of my approach I am thus greatly indebted to ongoing as well as historical debates within materialist and socialist/Marxist feminism. They have enabled the insight that gender and capitalism are mutually dependent social relations, and that examining the connections between these social relations is necessary if one aims to understand either one of them. These traditions have also shown both the value of Marxist thinking in understanding capitalism *and* the need for a feminist critique and development of Marxist theories and research. Furthermore, they have shown how important it is to examine capitalism not only as an abstract system but also as lived and experienced by different subjects.

¹¹ In Finnish research, similar critique of theorisations of the new economy and precarity have been presented, albeit from very different starting points, by Eeva Jokinen and Soile Veijola (2008) and Anu Suoranta (2009).

The attempt to theorise capitalism and gender together entails serious problems, one of which is that it is very easy to end up with a rather thin account of one or the other – usually of gender. Consequently, materialist and especially socialist/Marxist accounts of capitalism and gender have often been criticised for their supposedly reductionist or economist conceptions of gender, and also for leaving the economic intact, so to speak. However, as early as the 1970s the radical materialist feminists in France, for instance, were theorising the economic as a social and political product which includes, or is intrinsically organised by, gender (Adkins & Leonard 1996, 14). Also, the approach of *Precarias a la Deriva* (2009/2004), for example, is far from reductionist in terms of gender. Rather than moulding conceptions of gender according to economic laws, they challenge the theorists of new capitalism to take gender into account not as an added perspective but as an indispensable insight. Socialist, Marxist or materialist theorisations are thus not always or necessarily reductionist. The accusation of economic reductionism probably is accurate in some cases, but it does not describe the whole field of socialist/Marxist or materialist feminist thinking. Rather, I think that this kind of critique is best interpreted as an encouragement to think capitalism and gender not as two sides of the same social relation, but as genuinely complex forms of social relations with logics of their own.

I have thus grown familiar with the problematic of researching gender and capitalism through reading different accounts and contributions of materialist, socialist and Marxist feminism, and I have been inspired by thinkers like Haug, Federici and *Precarias a la Deriva*. This rich field of theory and practice has allowed me to develop my own research approach, which nevertheless takes a slightly different perspective on both gender and capitalism. I maintain a commitment to what Rosemary Hennessy (1993a, 16; also Bordo 1993, 29–32) calls systemic analysis, that is, to a perspective that addresses social systems and structures of power and posits connections between and among them. The questions that occupy me, however, are slightly different from those that have been central to the materialist and especially the socialist/Marxist tradition. As described above, the division of labour and the undervaluation of reproductive labour – as well as the exclusion of women from particular spheres of life – have been and still are important issues for the socialist/Marxist perspective (Hennessy 1993a, 16; see also Fraser 2009).

My research confronts a different set of problems, as my focus is on questions of selfhood and the implications of a certain kind of production of subjectivity in contemporary capitalism. Following researchers like Federici, Haug and Precarias a la Deriva, I discuss contemporary accounts of capitalism from a critical perspective and pay attention to how different persons subjectively experience, appropriate and transform the social relations in which they are embedded. What occupies me, however, is theorising and researching gender and capitalism at a time when *both* are alleged to have been reshaped and made “new” in oh so many ways – and when feminism allegedly has a “disturbing convergence” with the demands of current capitalism (Fraser 2009).

Above I discussed changes in terms of the economy. Now I want to briefly account for changes in regard to relations of gender. The focus of the above-mentioned theorists as well as of many other feminists interested in the interconnections of capitalism and gender (e.g. Veijola & Jokinen 2008; McDowell 2009) has been on forms of embodied feminised work, especially care and service work. Feminists have discussed the changes that have occurred in the organisation of care and services and the consequences that these changes have had in terms of relations of gender. In this research, these discussions are present to a certain extent. However, while analysing and interpreting the research material I found that they do not sufficiently cover the significance of gender in the particular instance of self-promotion and work-related coaching. For this reason, my approach to the problematic of gender and capitalism also draws from a slightly different set of contemporary feminist theorisations, namely the theories and analysis concerning post-feminism.

The discussions about post-feminism that I refer to have taken place particularly in British sociology and feminist cultural research during the past few decades. Post-feminism is a contested term, but it generally points to a shift in gender relations (or a cultural shift) characterised by an assumption of already achieved gender equality that supposedly renders feminism outdated and outmoded (see Gill 2007a). In post-feminist accounts, feminism is simultaneously taken into account and declared a thing of the past, as Angela McRobbie (2007a) notes. Rosalind Gill suggests that discussions about post-feminism are about the transformations in feminism and in media culture, and about their mutual relationship (Gill 2007a, 147). Other researchers on post-feminism have

concentrated on analysing what might be called “post-feminist media culture” (e.g. Tasker & Negra 2007). However, post-feminism as a cultural sensibility (Gill 2007a) or social and cultural landscape (McRobbie 2009) is not limited to media culture, but can be recognised across different sites such as work places, institutions or state agencies. By employing instrumentalised feminism, McRobbie (*ibid.*, 2) claims, Western governments offer young women a notional form of equality, concretised in education and employment and through participation in consumer culture and civil society, in place of anything a reinvented feminist politics might have to offer.

The analysis of post-feminism focuses in large part on the notions of choice and autonomy which are repeatedly presented in different post-feminist (media) texts. Researchers have noted how accounts of choice and autonomy in post-feminist texts are most often located within consumer culture: thus the freedom to make choices is transformed into a freedom to make consumer choices (e.g. Roberts 2007, 228–229; Tasker & Negra 2007, 7). Critiques of this kind of consumer-oriented account of choice feed into discussions about contemporary capitalism, even though capitalism as a word might be left out of the analysis and replaced with “consumer culture”. However, the connection between post-feminism and capitalism is made explicit for instance in McRobbie’s (2009, 3) account, as she rhetorically questions whether the pleasures of consumer culture and its supposedly subversive potential empty out the critique of capitalism that has been a defining feature of socialist-feminist scholarship, as described above. Several researchers have also noted the congruence between neoliberal politics and the accounts of choice and autonomy – located in the field of consumption – in post-feminism. For example, Rosalind Gill notes the “striking degree of fit between the autonomous post-feminist subject and the psychological subject demanded by neoliberalism” (Gill 2007a).¹²

¹² While most theorists discussing post-feminism refer to neoliberal politics or neoliberal ideology, the cultural analysis often tends to concentrate on culture or media culture as a separate sphere, and thus any more precise discussion of the economy is cast aside. For example, the definitions of neoliberalism are left rather vague – neoliberalism is rarely connected with accounts of the economy, but merely to the ideological emphasis on choice and autonomy and contemporary political rhetoric (cf. McRobbie 2009). In the analysis of post-feminism, neoliberalism is often considered a mode of governmentality rather than an economic rationality, and thus neoliberalism’s connections to a particular economic rationality of the same name remain sparse. There are exceptions, of course, and for instance Nancy Fraser (2009), albeit without using the term post-feminism, writes rather thoroughly about second-wave feminism and its unintended congruence with the emerging new post-Fordist and transnational form of capitalism. She states that “in a

In addition to the ongoing discussion of capitalism and reproduction, and in addition to the feminist accounts of precarity, there is thus also a field of enquiry suggesting not only a change in relations of gender but also a change in terms of feminism which makes the relationship between the critique of capitalism and feminist politics rather complex. This is the background against which I begin to examine what the interconnections between capitalism and gender might mean in terms of self-promotion. It also prompts me to ask whether processes of self-promotion carry any implications in terms of doing feminist critique – for if feminist politics are congruent with neoliberalism or with the contemporary form of capitalism, then this must affect feminist research.

1.3. Framing the self and framing self-promotion

Above I noted that I examine the intertwining of capitalism and gender from two specific research perspectives, which approach the self of self-promotion from different directions. The first perspective concerns understanding how self-promotion becomes meaningful and intelligible for different subjects in different situations and most particularly in the field of work-related coaching, and the second perspective concerns the self that is brought into being in self-promotion. To explore more accurately these perspectives, I begin now with the one which most explicitly concerns the self – the kind of self that is brought into being in self-promotion – in order to introduce the central concepts and theoretical standpoints of the research.

Framing the self

The concept of the self is fraught with difficulty, as Catherine Casey (1995, 2) remarks. The idea of a fixed or essential self, which has been understood to be a modern or

fine instance of the cunning of history, utopian desires [of second-wave feminism] found a second life as feeling currents that legitimated the transition to a new form of capitalism: post-Fordist, transnational, neoliberal” (Fraser 2009).

humanist conception, has been contested in various theoretical approaches. A number of theorists prefer to emphasise the processes of identity formation (e.g. Althusser 1971; Hall 1996; Giddens 1991), whereas some postmodernists reject the notion of self completely (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari 1987). The linguistic turn in the 1980s marked a turn away from biology on the one hand and the economy on the other, as language, signs and discourse were taken as the site through which subjects are formed (Blackman & al. 2008, 3). Another influence was Lacanian psychoanalysis, which also moved away from pre-existing singular subjects to the semiotic, psychical and ideological processes that created the subject. This move was taken further when Foucauldian theorisation replaced the analysis of ideology with that of power/knowledge and the theory of the subject with an understanding of subjectification/subjection. (Ibid., 3-5).

Michel Foucault's influential theory of subjectification exemplifies the poststructuralist challenge to the modern or humanist notion of the self. Foucault understands becoming a subject as both an active and passive process connected to power and knowledge through discourse. Thus subjectification is becoming subject *of* as well as *to* something. (Fraser 1999, 8). Instead of supposing a coherent subject as the standpoint for the theory, Foucault's approach examines how (and why) that subject is brought into being. The concept of the subject that Foucault employs, however, can also be considered problematic for its lack of ontology. As Blackman & al. (2008, 8) note, in Foucauldian theory there is a merger of the subject with a general ontology of discourse, power and historical events such that there is no longer anything self-defining or distinctive about this subject itself.¹³

¹³ In case of self-promotion and coaching, a Foucauldian approach would undeniably offer a possible theoretical and methodological ground. For instance Nikolas Rose (1998/1996; 1989) employs a Foucauldian perspective to account for quite similar phenomena within a theoretical frame of governmentality. Also in Finnish research self-help literature has been approached from the perspective of governmentality (Salmenniemi & Vorona 2012). In the context of this research, a Foucauldian perspective would probably have meant considering practices of coaching as techniques or practices of the self (Foucault 1986/1984; McNay 1992, 66–70) and conceptualising self-promotion in the framework of the “entrepreneurial self” and neoliberalism (Foucault 2008/1978–1979; see also Read 2009). I chose a different approach, however, and decided not to employ what seemed to me the most readily available conceptualisations (techniques of the self, modes of subjection, governmentality). Instead, I approached practices of coaching without predefining these practices as techniques of the self in the Foucauldian sense. My decision not to employ the Foucauldian approach was affected by the problematic lack of ontology of the subject that Blackman et al. (2008, 8) mention – the Foucauldian ontology does not seem to have space for the subject. Also Lois McNay (1992, 153–154) and Abdul Janmohamed (1995, 54–55) note that Foucault's theory of power does not allow for the kind of subject implied in his framework of practices or

Foucault, then, as Mariam Fraser (1999) notes, presents the self as the site of a historical problem, where even the question “What kind of human beings have we become?” represents a historically and culturally specific project. Foucauldian theory asks how the self is constructed and brought into being through discursive technologies of self, such as narrative or confession. It is thus posited against humanism, but it does not reject the analysis of identity and selfhood, as it argues that discourse is constitutive not only of statements but also of the subject itself. Instead of dissolving the material into the theoretical, discourse can be seen as the bridge between the material and the theoretical. (Fraser 1999, 6; Braidotti 1991).

It can also be noted, however, that the modern or humanist concept of self was not solely fixed or essentialist. Casey comments that there has been a theme in the modern tradition in which the self is understood as historically specific and socially and culturally patterned. For Marx and Freud, for instance, the self is a social construction shaped by institutional processes. (Casey 1995, 3). Honoré de Balzac, who is considered one of the founders of realism in European literature, was one of the first writers to describe the individual as a part of a contemporary world that is shaped in a historical process. Balzac was interested in the new modern society, and asked what it demanded of the individual, what kinds of “new human being” it produced. (Steinby 2008, 25–26). Thus the question of the self as a historical problem is already present in 19th century philosophy and literature – even if the question was not posed at a meta-level as a historical problem in itself. The break from modern tradition to Foucault or to the discursive formation of the self, then, is not as dramatic or total as it might seem. The distinction between Foucault and Balzac can be perceived to lie in the conceptual starting point, which for Balzac is the individual and for Foucault is the processes by which we are individuated. However, the fundamentally historical perspective and the demand for a contemporary diagnosis of specific conditions of the self in a specific time and place are recognisable in both approaches.

techniques of the self. Employing this framework would therefore seem to require a serious consideration of the ontological commitments implicit in Foucault’s theory, in particular in terms of subjects or subjectivity in relation to conceptions of power, and within this research I chose to leave this consideration aside and hence to look for other ways of approaching self-promotion.

The problem that I pose in this research can be seen as a part of this continuum, in both a modern and a post-structuralist vein. The research on the promotional self continues the discussion of “What kind of human beings have we become?” in this historically and culturally specific time and place. However, the focus of the research has also slightly shifted, as approach to the problem of the contemporary self consists of looking at the frames through and in which this self becomes understood, and of asking how these frames relate to social relations. Thus the object of the research is not a self that is assumed to be “out there”, waiting to be found, but rather the framing through which each particular self has to negotiate its existence – the framing within which we become subjects and the social is shaped and produced. Thus, this theoretical approach also allows the subject to be considered something that cannot necessarily be reduced to the mere “outcome of a complex constellation of textual, material, institutional or historical factors” (cf. Blackman & al. 2008, 8), even though these factors are deemed significant and worthy of analysis.

The concept of the frame is central to this research. It is employed to admit and account for the fact that this research will not focus on a particular self that is constructed at a particular place and time, or on definite processes of subjection that necessarily produce the “promotional self”. Instead, what can be analysed through the concept of the frame are the conditions and possibilities for a self to be formed in relation to wider social and economic reality.

In this research, as stated above, capitalism is considered a key factor in the social reality that is more or less shared by contemporary Western selves, and the labour market is considered a key context in which selves are produced and negotiated. In this sense, the economy is “brought back” as a crucial factor in becoming a subject. Simultaneously, relations of gender are taken into account, and are seen not as separate from or included in capitalism, but as interconnected with it in different ways. Thus what is examined when I ask what kind of self is brought into being is one particular framing within which we become human beings and can understand ourselves in contemporary Western capitalism and contemporary relations of gender.

Framing self-promotion

A self is thus framed, and this framing does not take place in a vacuum, but in processes of self-promotion. As I described above, my other specific aim in this research concerns these processes – how they become meaningful for the self or for different selves – and this aim too is approached with the concept or metaphor of framing.

I am inspired in this by Callon's (2007) and Adkins's (2005) interpretations of Goffman's notion of frame¹⁴. This notion includes the idea that interaction takes place within framed settings, like a theatre performance that is only made possible by the agreement of everyone involved on this particular framing of the event. In framed settings, a boundary is established between an event and the outside world. This notion of framing thus has two aspects. The first is framing in the sense of drawing or establishing boundaries. Through the drawing of boundaries, subjects are defined and separated, and in this way a self is brought into being¹⁵, as stated above.

The second aspect of framing, however, is staging. Staging means constructing a context, a background against which action becomes intelligible and meaningful. Framing in this sense means setting the scene, staging the actors as being part of a certain picture (cf. Goffman 1990/1959). All action then becomes possible and understandable as staged in a certain way or as situated within a certain frame. In addition to framing the self, one can thus also speak of framing self-promotion in the sense of making self-promotion intelligible and meaningful – “setting the scene” in which self-promotion seems relevant, understandable and even rewarding. There is thus a self that is brought into being and a scene that is set for that self, and both of these aspects can be approached through the concept of framing.

¹⁴ Anssi Peräkylä (1990, 155–159) describes Goffman's "frames" as ensembles of established activities, in other words practices. Frame for Goffman is thus a concept with which to approach everyday practices, and to ask how these practices define situations. In Goffman's analytical framework the main emphasis is on examining how different frames relate to each other in different situations (ibid.). Instead of concentrating on dynamic between certain frames, this research concerns a particular framing that stages action and connects to practices but also brings subjects or selves into being.

¹⁵ Thinking of framing as a way of bringing a self into being I have also been inspired by Mariam Fraser's study on Simone de Beauvoir and bisexuality (1999), even though Fraser uses the concept of framing in a slightly different sense emphasising for instance the visual allusions of the metaphor of frame.

I find the concept of framing intriguing because it does not render processes or selves fixed or immovable. As Lisa Adkins, following Michel Callon, notes: “Framing thus both enables and stabilizes action (at least temporarily) since mechanics of framing produce an implicit agreement on the character and rules pertaining to action” (Adkins 2005, 113). Callon’s (2007) theory of framing the economic action involves the frame as that which generates and shapes action, and this theory also takes into account that there is always overflow. It is the elements stabilizing a contract that are simultaneously also sources of overflow. Frames are thus not entirely closed off or sealed (Adkins 2005, 115). Understanding framing in a rather similar sense, I employ the concept as a way to conceptualise processes that both enable and stabilise but at the same time allow for overflow and the production of the new.

I thus look at how self-promotion is framed, how it becomes staged, so to speak, and at the framing of the self in self-promotion, how a self is brought into being through the drawing of boundaries, and I see both of these framings as stabilising but also as enabling. Processes of promotion are thus framed in a certain way, but they are not closed or sealed, and in these processes a particular kind of self is framed but not “frozen”.

Framing is then the concept through which I conceive the different aspects of self-promotion and the specific perspectives of this research. As a metaphor with two interconnected meanings it depicts well the characteristics of the processes that I examine. However, as I use it here, framing is still a rather inaccurate concept, more a descriptive expression than a comprehensive theory. To give my approach a more solid theoretical and methodological anchoring, I also employ the concept of articulation.

Articulation here refers to a process in which elements from various contesting discourses are drawn into a coherent frame of intelligibility (Hennessy 1993a, 76). Framing self-promotion, then, means that different discursive elements are articulated into a coherent frame which renders self-promotion intelligible. Similarly, framing the promotional self refers to processes in which different discursive elements are articulated into a coherent frame that has the capacity to define and in this way to bring into being the promotional self. I will further elaborate my approach to the concept of articulation in the next chapter. Here, however, I want to briefly clarify how the concepts of frame and articulation relate to the wider theoretical framework of the research.

Discursive materialism

The concepts of frame and articulation are employed in this research as part of an approach that can be characterised as discursive materialism. This approach derives mainly from Rosemary Hennessy's (1993a) post-Althusserian theorisation. In Hennessy's theory, the unitary subject is replaced with the discursive subject, but the commitment to a notion of a structured social whole and to the materiality of discourse is maintained. Similarly, the aim of this research is to account for a discursively articulated framing of subjectivity, but at the same time to retain the insights of a materialist account of the social. The starting point for the analysis is that language is material and has effects, sustaining identifications and social relations within structures of power. Frames are discursively articulated, but the effects and significance of these articulations as well as their conditions are not only discursive but also material. Different frames can sustain and reinforce existing power relations, but they can also allow resistance and agency. The discursive-materialist approach can thus be recognised as postmodern in terms of analysing discursively articulated subject production and recognising language as a social practice, but the analysis also relies on the categories of social totality, class exploitation and ideology (see also Zakin 1998).

Ideology is a contested concept, but I employ it in this research to account for the materiality of language, and for the idea that reality is always social and the effect of discursive struggles.¹⁶ As Rosemary Hennessy (1993a, 75; see also Žižek 1994a) notes, reality is an ideological construct, the parameters of which are unevenly and contradictorily shaped in specific historical moments. Hennessy's discursive-materialist account of ideology rejects the empiricism according to which materiality is based in an objective reality outside discourse. Rather, the social is produced out of the materiality that includes discourse. Ideology is the medium of social action and the mechanism through which subjects are constructed, but its power is not simply exercised from the top down, but is instead contested and negotiated in processes of articulation. (Hennessy

¹⁶ My account of ideology and my reasons for using this concept are further discussed in the next chapter.

1993a, 75–76). Individual lives “can never be separated from the various and contesting ways of making sense of them; but at the same time, these lives are not exclusively ideological” (Hennessy 1993b, 22).

The notion of ideology is therefore evoked here not as the object of the research, but rather as a theoretical notion that informs and motivates the discursive-materialist approach of the research. This means that I understand the process of framing self-promotion as an ideological process in the sense that it articulates different discursive elements into a coherent frame and makes them intelligible, makes them to “make sense”. Similarly, I consider framing the promotional self as an ideological process in the sense that in this process a particular kind of self comes to make sense. In addition, these processes are ideological as they are embedded in relations of power: what comes to make sense in the context of late capitalism is an effect of struggle, not a given.

The self in working life

Looking for the framing of self-promotion and that of the promotional self in work-related coaching brings out the connections between the labour market or working life and the self. Catherine Casey (1995, 4) remarks that theories of the self have for the most part been concerned with the cultural analysis of the dynamics of self-formation or technologies of the self. According to Casey, the “institutional processes of work” have not received as much attention in relation to the questions of self, subjectivity and identity. Thus Casey states that the social and economic changes related to production and their effect on the processes of self-formation need further investigation and interpretation. Rosalind Gill and Andy Pratt (2009) also point out that attempts to make sense of the broad changes in contemporary capitalism have left the relationship between the transformations of working life and workers’ subjectivities relatively under-explored.

Nevertheless, the autonomous Marxist (or what Gill & Pratt (2009) call the “Italian laboratory”) theorisation of the new economy and precarity has been intrinsically linked to the analysis of subjectivities. For example, in the theories of immaterial labour proposed by Hardt and Negri, the new forms of labour in post-Fordist production are

taken to signify nothing less than “a new way of becoming a human” (Hardt & Negri 2000, 289) and subjectivity is paradoxically seen as potentially autonomous of capital and yet shaped by immaterial production (cf. Aufheben 2006). Theorisation concerning the new economy has thus also involved the consideration of new forms of subjectivity. This research participates in the same discussion, but from a slightly different point of view, as the forms of subjectivity in the new economy are not considered as radically new but as in line with, and intelligible in relation to, the inherent, continuous tendencies of capitalism.

The distinction that Casey (1995) draws between cultural and institutional analyses of the formation of the self is not a very fruitful premise for this research, as my purpose here is to pay attention both to “cultural” processes and to practices and conditions of work as they are described and experienced by different subjects, and to consider these as fundamentally interrelated. The notion of frame and the discursive-materialist approach are employed in the hope that they allow such a perspective, which combines the cultural with the social and economic.¹⁷

Another perspective on questions of self or identity and the processes of work has been provided by Paul du Gay (1996). His viewpoint (following Laclau) emphasises that identities are produced through distinctions and are always dislocated – they depend upon an outside which simultaneously denies and affirms them. Du Gay’s approach examines the construction of identities in connection with the discourses of organisational change and “enterprise”. He states that work as an activity in contemporary society is reimagined through the language of consumer culture, and consequently workers are encouraged to view work as consumers. Work then becomes the arena in which people produce a sense of personal identity, exhibit an “enterprising” or “consuming” relation to self, and make a project of themselves, the aim of which is to maximise the worth of their existence to themselves (Du Gay 1996, 78).

The questions of maximising a self’s worth to itself and making a self into a continuous project are strongly connected with the practices of self-promotion. However,

¹⁷ Also, as noted before, the division between the cultural and the economic is problematic, as they are mutually constitutive and often inseparable.

my approach differs from du Gay's in that I do not consider consumer culture such an overwhelming or determining factor in relation to work and workers' selves as it tends to be depicted in du Gay's research. Rather, I seek to widen the scope from considering consumer culture to also considering the "laws" of the labour market and the tendencies inherent in capitalism.

1.4. Research questions and the structure of the book

Above I claimed that this research has two particular perspectives and one overarching aim. The aim is to examine the interconnections between self-promotion, capitalism and gender, and the perspectives are two different ways of examining the self in processes of promotion, one concentrating on how self-promotion comes to be viewed as relevant and meaningful, and the other concentrating on the selves that are brought into being in self-promotion. Now, using the concept of framing introduced above and taking into account the empirical focus of the research, these perspectives can be rephrased as research questions:

- **How is self-promotion framed in coaching?**
- **How is the self framed in processes of promotion?**

I proceed from the recognition that self-promotion is an ideological process that becomes intelligible through articulations. These articulations frame self-promotion in the sense that they "set the scene" in which self-promotion comes to seem relevant, rewarding, understandable and even empowering. As my empirical focus is on work-related coaching, I will thus examine different texts related to coaching to find out what kind of articulations are used in these texts to frame self-promotion as meaningful and intelligible for different selves. In other words, I examine the kinds of discursive constructions that are drawn together through articulations in coaching to make self-promotion make sense. Furthermore, as my overall objective concerns the interconnections between self-

promotion, capitalism and gender, it is specifically in connection with capitalism and gender that I examine these framings.

In seeking articulations that set the scene for self-promotion, my focus is on particular conceptual nodal points which I have chosen because they emerge repeatedly, in different forms, throughout the various texts in the research material. These nodal points are *change*, *individuality* and *potential*. Examining the articulations that cross at these points, I trace processes that converse and overlap with self-promotion so that it becomes framed in a particular way. These processes include the subjectification of work, commodification and individualisation. I thus have nodal points from which I begin my examination, and processes which are identified by examining the articulations that cross the nodal points.

Of the processes that converge or overlap with self-promotion, individualisation plays the most significant role. By individualisation, I refer to a process in which social relations and antagonisms, conflicts and other contradictions appear as if they were solely individual – they become understood as if they were within the individual self, problems of the free and autonomous individual. The dynamics of individualisation are entangled with processes of self-promotion which in many ways place the individual self at the centre of attention. Mapping the terrain for self-promotion, looking at how self-promotion is framed in coaching, thus means looking more closely at how self-promotion and individualisation are articulated together in such a way that self-promotion becomes meaningful.

In a similar way, I will also examine the articulations in which self-promotion comes together with other processes or cultural tendencies, such as commodification or post-feminism. For instance, concentrating on the nodal point of *potential* allows me to examine how self-promotion intersects with value production and commodification, while concentrating on accounts of personal change allows me to examine how self-promotion converges with post-feminist conceptions.

As the processes of promotion are framed through connections to other processes, different kinds of conceptions of the self are also inscribed in these processes. In looking for the articulations that frame self-promotion, I will thus also be looking at how those articulations frame the self in a particular way. For example, the process of

individualisation implies a particular conception of the self as an individual, and as this process converges with self-promotion, this particular conception comes to frame the promotional self as well. Similarly, the process of commodification implies a commodified self, and this implication also has relevance in terms of the promotional self.

Both of the research questions will thus be answered through the same process, which begins by focusing on conceptual nodal points and continues by tracing the articulations that both frame self-promotion and frame the self in self-promotion. As the research proceeds, the research questions will be put into interaction with the research material and transformed into more precise tasks. They will thus be expanded on and specified as the research unfolds.

The structure of the book

The structure of this book might be best described as “layered”. This means that each chapter builds upon the previous chapters and revisits the same themes (and sometimes the same text extracts) from a slightly different direction and with a different emphasis, both expanding on and specifying the previous observations. I thus constantly deepen and focus my analysis, chapter by chapter, as if gradually peeling off layers.

The next chapter will proceed with a methodological reflection in which I present my account of how knowledge is used and produced in this research. First, I describe the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting the research material. The purpose of this account is to give the reader an understanding of how the empirical location of the research was chosen and approached, and also to tentatively describe the field of coaching. Second, I elaborate my theoretical and methodological starting points, concentrating especially on the concepts of articulation and ideology and their implications in terms of knowledge production and the politics of research.

The third chapter concentrates on coaching as a line of work that both demands promotional practices and facilitates and advocates self-promotion for clients. In this chapter, I discuss how new forms of work are connected to self-promotion, and examine

the relevance of accounts of immaterial and feminised labour for understanding coaching as work. The chapter approaches the framing of self-promotion from two angles. First I chart the institutional practices and conditions of coaching, and second I tentatively begin to trace the ideologically inclined processes and cultural tendencies, such as the subjectification of work and post-feminism, that intersect with self-promotion. Together both of these aspects participate in the framing of self-promotion, and also in the framing of the promotional self.

In the fourth chapter I focus on the nodal point of change, tracing the different accounts of change in the field of coaching. Here my attention shifts from working practices to the ideologically inclined processes that frame self-promotion. I note that the connecting element of these processes is that they rearticulate social relations in such a way that they become located within the individual self. I thus begin to examine the framing of self-promotion particularly in connection to this process of displacement, which I identify as individualisation. Examining articulations concerning change, I also pay attention to how the self becomes framed through accounts of transformation and empowerment, and contemplate the implications of this framing, particularly in terms of agency.

In the fifth chapter I take up the theme of individualisation by focusing with more precision on the forms of individuality that are produced in processes of promotion. In this chapter the emphasis is thus on examining the self that is brought into being in self-promotion. Beginning from the nodal point of individuality, I note that the framing of the self in terms of individuality not only produces the autonomous individual but also renders individuality fundamentally unstable and precarious. The chapter ends with a reconsideration of questions of individuality and individualisation from the perspective of class and gender.

The sixth chapter approaches the framing of promotion and of the promotional self through the nodal point of potential. Examining articulations crossing at the notion of potential, I revisit the themes raised in previous chapters from the perspective of value production, and suggest that the promotional self is made valuable through an articulated promise of undefined capacities. I also consider forms of commodification and accounts of temporality in relation to the connections between self-promotion and value

production. The chapter ends with an account of how individualised narratives of “strong women” can be used to add value to the promotional self.

In the final chapter, I bring together the various threads of the research in order to revisit my research aims and answer the research questions. I also reflect on the contributions of my research to discussions concerning ideology critique and gender, and suggest some ways to develop practices of coaching in light of the critique I have presented. Finally I contemplate some future directions for research.

2. Producing knowledge: methodological reflections

This chapter concerns the methodological choices of this research. Methodology is itself a theory, as Beverley Skeggs (1997, 17) among others has noted. It is a theory of methods that informs a range of issues and decisions that locate any knowledge product within disciplinary practices and enable and constrain engagement with other theoretical and political debates. Elaborating methodology thus makes visible the locations and engagements of a research project (Skeggs 1997, 17; Silverman 2005, 109, 122). The aim in this chapter is to give a conception of *the particular ways in which knowledge is used and produced in this research*. To this end, I will discuss choices I have made during the research process. These choices concern the object and focus of my study, the theoretical approaches that are employed, the process of gathering and examining empirical material and the methods that function as analytical and interpretative tools.

In formulating my aim in terms of knowledge production, I draw on feminist theorisation concerning situated knowledge. This approach begins from the acknowledgment that the grounds for knowledge are fully saturated with history and social life rather than abstracted from it (Harding 1993, 57). I am thus committed to the idea that knowledge and ways of knowing are tied to time, location and particular subjectivities. Knowledge is material and contextual, and is also rooted in certain epistemological conceptions (Liljeström 2004, 11). This is why it is important to pay attention to the ways in which knowledge and power are entangled and interact (ibid., 21) in research. This is equally relevant concerning the knowledge that is produced in this research and the knowledge that this research builds upon. The former will be specifically examined in this chapter, while the latter is taken into account throughout the study.

My approach to questions of knowledge is guided by the ideal of strong objectivity developed by the feminist philosopher Sandra Harding (1990; 1993). As an epistemological position, strong objectivity differs both from objectivism (the belief in value-free, point-of-viewless enquiry procedures) and from interpretationism (which denies any claims for the evaluation of scientific knowledge). The ideal of strong objectivity, as I employ it in this research, proceeds from the recognition that one is always *somewhere* and limited (Bordo 1990, 143). Acknowledging the locatedness of knowledge is an approach that feminist epistemologies share with other constructionist standpoints (see Ikonen 2008, 77; Ojala 2010). Locating oneself as a researcher and making visible the particular perspective of the research are ways in which the traditional claim for so called neutral scientific objectivity can be challenged and a more reliable standpoint for knowledge production achieved (Haraway 1991; Ojala 2010, 90–91). It is also a way to take into account the material and epistemological *limits* of any perspective, as a move towards ethically and epistemologically sustainable knowledge production. The claim for strong objectivity thus challenges the *view from nowhere* of objectivism as well as the *view from everywhere* of the deconstructionist stance (see Bordo 1990, 142). Reaching for strong objectivity is in this research interpreted as an imperative to reflect on the different aspects of the research process and the role of the researcher, and to offer the reader a chance to participate in this reflection in order to evaluate the specific conditions of knowledge production as it takes place in this research.

In what follows I will describe the research process, from “entering the field” to making interpretations and conclusions, and I will also describe what I understand to be the theoretical-methodological background of the research. The purpose of these descriptions is to elaborate how the research is situated both in terms of time and location and in terms of theoretical, epistemological and political engagements, and how these aspects of the research process affect the outcome.

I will begin by describing the process of gathering research material and at the same time discovering and defining the field of my research. From empirical description I move on to examine how and why I came to the particular phrasings of the questions that this research seeks to answer. I will do this by examining the focal methodological concepts that inform the research, mainly the concepts of ideology and articulation. Here

I am inspired by the idea presented by Mieke Bal (2002, 11) that the methodological foundation of any research project is the concepts through which its interests are focused and the phenomena are organised and analysed. Discussing the central concepts of this research thus allows me to clarify the epistemological and theoretical engagements of this specific knowledge production.

From concepts I will move on to the actual process of hands-on analysis and interpretation, and will describe the combination of methodological tools that I use in the research. These methods bear some resemblance to discourse analysis and contain elements from narrative approaches. They provide different approaches to textual material, but have in common a strong connection to theoretical conceptualisations. To conclude, I will consider some ethical questions and reflect on the whole research process from this point of view.

This chapter falls into two parts, in which my own role as a researcher is conceived in two different ways. In the first part, I tell a narrative in which I as a researcher am the main protagonist. This narrative concerns my actions and reactions as I try to define my objectives and encounter the empirical field of the research, and it provides the reader with a chance to evaluate my decisions and actions as an agent making choices. In the second part, the research process is approached from a slightly different angle: the researcher is no longer the protagonist or sole agent of knowledge production. Rather, in this part, the research process is a subject in itself, a process that moves in sudden and unforeseeable directions and proceeds as a dialogue between the researcher, the theory employed and the empirical material. I describe a process in which the researcher participates, but in which she is no longer an autonomous agent.

This rhetorical division into two different approaches reflects my conception of research as a complex hermeneutic process in which the researcher makes choices and remains responsible, but which nevertheless cannot be solely reduced to the actions of one individual.

2.1. Gathering material/entering the field

Discovering work-related coaching

I began my work in 2007 with the idea that I would examine processes through which the self is produced as a commodity or more specifically as a brand, only later defining the phenomenon as self-promotion.¹⁸ Having started to develop this approach in my Master's thesis on reality television (Mäkinen 2007), I wanted to shift to looking at “branding the self” in working life. It was quite evident from the beginning that the processes that I was interested in were not continuous and coherent but fractured and overlapping, and consequently it was not quite clear exactly where and how they could be found. I had an idea of what I wanted to find, but I did not yet know how to discover who I might need to interview and what kind of texts I might need to examine (see DeVault & McCoy 2006, 20). As I gathered my research material I was looking for an “entry” into the particular historical and located social relations (cf. Campbell 2006, 92) which this research aims to understand.

The beginning of the research process therefore consisted of wondering through different themes and areas as I searched for ways to piece together and enter the social relations that I subsequently identified as frames for self-promotion and for the promotional self. I flipped through daily newspapers and any magazines that came my way for hints of promotional processes or references to marketing or branding the self in working life. I searched the libraries for any related publications. In this way I began to stumble across some interesting self-help publications, such as William Bridges's *Creating You & Co* (1997), which quite explicitly concern the process of turning oneself into a marketable product. Consequently I decided that self-help books would be a relevant part of the research material, for several reasons.

First, it seemed that some of these books contained explicit advice and motivation concerning the processes of self-promotion. Second, self-help books are an increasingly influential landscape of privatised expert knowledge (Schindler Zimmermann et al.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Professor Celia Lury who suggested the concept of self-promotion.

2001), and can be seen as emblematic of the individualising tendencies (see e.g. Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994) that I regard as central to the problematic of self-promotion.

Although it cannot be assumed that the reader of any particular self-help book will take it seriously or act on its advice, the self-help industry reflects, sustains and produces socially accepted “common knowledge”. Indeed, Eva Illouz (2007, 10) suggests that the impact of advice literature on the vocabulary of the self and the negotiation of social relations is insufficiently acknowledged. According to Illouz, a vast field of contemporary cultural material – such as advice, admonition, and how-to recipes – is likely to play an important role in how the self understands itself, and the self-help books that I have included in my research material are definitely part of this cultural material. These books concerning the self and work thus participate in producing a certain kind of commonly approved perception of the self, and provide vocabularies through which we understand and position ourselves. Tracing promotional self in self-help literature thus allows us to examine the assumed self that these books rely on and bring into being, and to trace the connections between self-help literature and other cultural texts and social practices. Having decided to use advice literature as part of the empirical material, I therefore continued to look for self-help publications and also for other kinds of opportunities for empirical research.¹⁹

In terms of promotional processes, the Internet proved a fruitful arena for my searches. Using search engines (mostly Google), I traced phrases such as “personal branding”, “personal promotion” and “marketing the self”, both in Finnish and in English. “Personal branding” produced 4,510,000 hits on English-language web pages,

¹⁹In spring 2008 I also conducted a systematic review of a three-month sample of Finland’s biggest and most influential daily newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*. This gave me some general perceptions of how working life tends to figure in Finnish mainstream publicity, but apart from a few articles on appearance I found no explicit connection to the processes I was searching for. The prevalent themes in the 58 articles were problems in work communities, working conditions and occupational health, and migrant workers and immigrants both in Finland and abroad as well as unemployment and employment policies. A number of the articles emphasised change, risk and insecurity, which relates to the general view expressed by Raija Julkunen (2008, 9) that since the recession of the 1990s the public image of Finnish working life has been negative. This negative publicity is certainly partly due to the ways in which the media function, since positive developments and continuities are not necessarily reported as eagerly as change or alarming tendencies and incidents. However, repeated articles about, for example, unemployment, difficulties in finding work and the uncertainty of current working life certainly resonate with the experienced reality of Finnish working life, even if they also participate in increasing the said uncertainty.

whereas “brand yourself” in Finnish²⁰ yielded only 30 hits in Finland (some of them led to my own writing on the subject, which was not exactly helpful). Different searches brought me to the web sites of several personal branding consultants and coaches, and also to some articles, through which I found the first interviewees. However, because the results of the first searches were relatively narrow I widened the scale, which had thus far been focused on personal branding, to consider all kinds of work-related coaching. Gradually I discovered that “personal image” in both English and Finnish functioned better as a search term than “branding”. Following different search results I ventured onto the web pages of various coaching companies and examined the education and coaching that they claimed to offer. I found web pages from Finland as well as from Britain and the USA.

At the same time, in my search for self-help publications, I found books such as Mary Spillane’s *Branding Yourself* and Peter Montoya’s *The Brand Called You*. These turned out to be good introductions both to “personal branding” and to work-related coaching, although I did recognise that these kinds of publication only occupy a narrow strand of the evolving occupational field of work-related coaching. Different newspaper or magazine articles published on the web and sometimes linked to the coaches’ home pages also provided useful material.

In this way, my adventures on the Internet as well as in other media led me to focus my research on work-related coaching. However, as soon became evident from the various web pages and from the first interviews, work-related coaching is not a coherent professional field. In Finland coaching is only just emerging as a profession, and the field is very varied and not systematically organised. There is a clear tendency to develop definitions and boundaries in the form of standardised professional education and organising, mainly around two associations: the Finnish Coaching Association and ICF Finland. The inclination towards professionalisation mostly relies on internationally developed standards and international associations such as the International Coach Federation (ICF, coachfederation.org/). The ICF has a Finnish branch, ICF Finland, which organises certified professional education for coaches. ICF Finland has a web page (<http://www.icffinland.fi/>) with research information and ethical guidelines for coaching.

²⁰ “Brändää itsesi”.

The web page for the Finnish Coaching Association (<http://www.coaching-yhdistys.com/>) also contains ethical guidelines and information on coaching, as well as courses and seminars for coaches. The Coaching Association page also has an index of coaches who belong to the Association. In 2008 there were 122 names in the index and in 2010 the number had increased to 266, which indicates both that coaching is quickly becoming a more popular field of work and also that it has become more organised.

So far, nevertheless, there are no restrictions around the title “working-life coach”, and it is also defined in slightly different ways by different agents. The Finnish Coaching Association requires two years’ experience, either in coaching or in another staff development field. It also requires an academic degree or “similar knowledge” of anyone applying for membership. Outside the Association, however, anyone can call themselves a working-life coach and have a coaching company. It depends on the person’s background what kind of work their coaching will be – for example, it can be psychotherapeutic work, social work, advancing business opportunities or promoting healthy lifestyles. There is also very little statistical information available concerning Finnish work-related coaches, their clients or employees, since it is evident that not all coaches belong to the Association and thus cannot be found in the index. It has therefore been impossible to form a comprehensive picture of the field of work-related coaching as a coherent whole or a separate professional field. An essential part of this research has been to piece together or outline the various aspects or branches of work-related coaching in order to have even a tentative understanding of the phenomena I wanted to study empirically.

While examining work-related coaching, I have focused my attention according to my research interests. This means that I have gathered material in the form of published texts and interviews according to their potential relevance to the questions that are central to this research, namely questions concerning framing the self in the processes of promotion. Work-related coaching as such has not been my main focus of interest, and it is also not my intention to claim that all forms of coaching rely on practices of self-promotion. However, I have also done a lot of work to understand the occupational field that I am examining, and it is perhaps more accurate to say that my research interests and the theoretical accounts that I have relied on have influenced the way that I have entered

the field and how I have chosen the material, but that the process of gathering the material and moving around the research field has also had considerable influence on the purpose and problematic of the research.

The fact that the field through which I have approached the problematic of self-promotion is so heterogeneous affects the research in multiple ways, but this is not a drawback. On the contrary, since the processes that I have traced are heterogeneous and fractured in themselves, it has been only appropriate that the research should have involved moving through a highly varied field of texts and practices. One of the important aspects of the research process has been the acknowledgment that different processes of self-promotion continuously circulate through the field of work-related coaching as well as other fields, appearing with varying intensity across different sites, at times disappearing from view, only to emerge again in another form. It has thus been fascinating to trace the scale of the circulation and the different forms the processes of promotion take whether in a particular interview or in a national employment policy.

One way to describe how I have acquired and chosen much of the research material is by comparison with the gathering of sources in historical research. In his account of historians' source criticism, Jorma Kalela (2000, 92–93) emphasises the relationship between the “task” and the content of a source. According to Kalela, a source's task is to answer the researcher's question, and thus it is the research question that defines how sources are used and chosen in a particular research. Once this task (answering a particular question) for a source is known, one can estimate whether the information contained in the source supports the researcher's assumption, whether it forces the researcher to correct his/her assumption, or whether the assumption must be abandoned altogether. In this way every source has a task and the content of the source is ultimately defined by its task. The focus of source criticism thus is not on whether the source is reliable, but to find out whether it is capable of answering (or challenging) the questions that are put to it.

The approach applied in this research is built on a similar understanding of the production of scientific knowledge. Instead of concentrating on the general reliability or truthfulness of the research material, my way of gathering, examining and evaluating the material has been defined by the questions for which I am seeking answers. I am not so

interested in a particular text as a representative of a certain predefined whole or as offering an objective truth on self-promotion. Rather, I have approached every text by asking questions and paying attention to the kind of answers a particular text can provide, how different answers resonate with other texts, and whether and how they are relevant to the overall research objectives. As stated above, the questions I have asked have also been redefined, reshaped and given new meanings by the different textual sources – accounts of coaching and theoretical accounts – that I have encountered.

Most of the material gathered for this research can be described as naturally occurring data (Silverman 2005, 120), which means that I have not participated in the production of the material. Newspaper articles, self-help books and web pages were already “there” for me to find, and I had no part in how they came into being. In this sense, the interviews were different since they are material that has been produced specifically for this research and their content has been influenced by the interviewer. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that even though material other than interviews existed before my intervention, a process of choosing produced both the textual material and the interview material, and in this way neither of them is “untouched” by the researcher (cf. Silverman 2005, 120). There is also a strong connection between interviews and “naturally occurring data”: after gaining some preliminary ideas about the field of work-related coaching, I began to contact interviewees based on what I had learned from various web pages, newspaper articles and self-help books as well as on how I thought their work would relate to my research purposes.

I conducted interviews in both the public and in private sectors, and the occupational titles of the interviewees varied from “coach” to “personal tutor”.²¹ Some of the interviewees worked directly for a big company or for a public sector organisation, some had their own small company with individual customers, and some were self-employed and sold their services to different organisations (cf. Virolainen 2010, 16). There was thus a lot of variety. However, I structured the interviews so that they would specifically consider work-related coaching (as opposed to coaching that concentrates mainly on physical well-being, for example) and I also excluded mentoring, which is

²¹ Some Finnish coaches use the English title “coach”, whereas some preferred the Finnish word for coach, “*valmentaja*”. Some of the interviewees also confusingly differentiated between “coach” and “*valmentaja*”, saying that they were both but in separate contexts.

generally not perceived as an occupation and is clearly a different field altogether (although one of the interviewees also worked as a mentor and did not make such strict distinction). Coaches, like consultants, usually work for a fixed term, whereas mentoring is more of a peer-support system that can last for years. In a similar way, work-related counselling differs from coaching since its function is to offer long-term support in person's everyday work rather than short-term interventions.²²

The process of searching for interviewees and preparing for interviews thus involved going through different written textual material. The interviewees themselves also gave me various documents, such as project plans and books to read for my research. It is thus clear that written and published textual material in all its variety was tightly connected to the interviews. Similarly, the analysis and interpretation of written texts relied on the perceptions that I gained from the interviews, and vice versa. My understanding of the function of texts in the processes of promotion is akin to Marjorie DeVault's and Liza McCoy's (2006, 33) in their work on institutional ethnography (2006, 33), where they describe the textual processes in institutional relations as a central nervous system running through and coordinating different sites. It should be noted that "institution" here does not refer to a particular organisation but rather is meant to inform a project of empirical enquiry, directing attention to coordinated and intersecting processes taking place in multiple sites (*ibid.*, 17). In my research the interviews and published texts are intrinsically connected, as the published texts participate in the production of institutional practices that the interviewees then reflect upon and produce further. Different self-help books, articles and web pages frame issues, establish terms and concepts and serve as resources that the people that I interviewed draw into their everyday work processes (*cf.* DeVault & McCoy 2006, 34). There are no official documents that every coach would need to use, and thus the "central nervous system" of textual processes is not a particular pile of documents but a fragmented and interconnected web of texts that circulate in and about the practices of work-related coaching. I consider the interviews as part of this web of texts, and hence use the word

²² A list of distinctions between coaching and other similar professions can be found at <http://www.coachfederation.org/about-icf/overview/>. Similar distinctions have also been listed in regards executive coaching and other close practices (Virolainen 2010, 166). It should be noted, however, that not all the coaches I interviewed shared these strict definitions.

text to refer to both interviews and the published textual material, even though these different kinds of text are not in every way commensurable.

Texts and practices are thus intrinsically connected. Keeping this in mind, I approach the research material with two purposes. First, I intend to read texts as accounts of practices: through the research material, I have access (though of course limited) to the coaching practices as they are experienced and interpreted by coaches themselves. The interviews in particular are important here, because I participated as an interviewer in them and could thus direct the topic of discussion towards accounts of practices. Becoming familiar with practices of coaching then helps to see how processes of promotion are facilitated and advocated in everyday work, how they come to make sense for the coaches and for their clients. Second, my purpose is to read texts so that practices of coaching can be contextualized and connected to discursive struggles. Paying attention to how practices are discussed and given meaning to helps to understand how processes of promotion connect to other ideological processes, how particular practices come to make sense through discursive constructions.

Interviewing

Once I had found contact information for a possible interviewee, I would usually contact the person by phone. In most cases I would phone first, and if the response was positive I would arrange to send the interview questions (see appendix I) and some more specific information about the research and myself by email. Sometimes I managed to arrange the interview during the first phone call, but frequently it took several calls and emails. Most of the potential interviewees were busy, and some also cancelled or forgot meetings we had arranged. Some of the people I contacted refused the interview, saying that they were too busy or that they did not feel they were the right people for this research. Some simply did not answer my emails or calls. All in all I gathered 17 interviews during 2008 and 2009. Two of these were conducted by Päivi Korvajärvi and the rest by me; in one interview (the first) we were both present as interviewers. Most of the interviewees agreed to meet me or Päivi Korvajärvi at their office or working space. Some meetings,

however, took place in a café or at my office, and once an interviewee invited me to her home. The interviewees were located in different cities (mostly medium-sized or large cities by Finnish standards), and I travelled to meet them. A few interviewees were located in different countries, and these interviews were done by phone or email. All the interviews were conducted in Finnish.

The process of contacting potential interviewees, especially those operating in the private sector, was rather demanding. Most difficulties were caused by what might be described as the lack of shared context with potential interviewees (Ojala 2010, 121–123). This means that my knowledge, experience and the practices that I was familiar with were significantly different from those of the interviewees. The differences between me and the people I contacted for the interviews produced gaps, mistakes, awkward situations, prejudices... These differences and their effect on the interviewing process and the research as a whole are worth reflecting on here.

At the beginning of the research process, I was not familiar with the conventional etiquette of contacting people and arranging meetings in a business context. For example, only after discussing my interview process with a friend who was more familiar with business culture did I realise that after a phone call and an email it is necessary to call again and ask if the person has had time to read the email and decide whether they would like to arrange a meeting. Previously I had thought that they would simply reply to emails, and that calling again would be considered rude or intrusive. When I received no response I assumed that the people were not willing to be interviewed. Once I started making calls it became evident that my friend was right, and it was just customary to remind people of an email. Ironically, I ended up following marketing strategies in order to find out about promotional processes, contacting a “client” with an “offer” and following the lead to close the deal – even though the deal in this case was an arranged research interview. In this way, gathering interviews successfully required that I sharpen my conduct and skills in contacting others and presenting myself and my research.

In addition to the practical problem of not getting responses, my queasiness about contacting potential interviewees relates to a wider gap that I experienced between myself and some of the interviewees, again mainly those working in large commercial organisations. I have no work experience in the so-called business world, and thus

corporate culture seemed like an unknown world to me. I felt insecure trying to function in this environment, which I was not fully equipped to understand. For my interviewees this culture was their conventional habitat, one in which they felt at home. So meeting the interviewees sometimes felt almost like going to another country, trying to pick up the local habits and dialect as quickly as possible, and trying not to appear too different, laughable or critical. However, in retrospect, I think that the gulf I assumed between my working environment in the university and the interviewees' working environment was not as great as I felt it to be. Melissa Gregg, writing on affective labour, states that academic researchers should stop seeing our own working lives as exceptional. She urges attention to experiences and motivations shared between academics and other white-collar workers (Gregg 2009). This is an important notion, and even though I felt I had no shared context with the interviewees, the topics we discussed (for example, insecurity and self-management) and the work they described had relevance to my own work as a researcher. The university as an institution and working community is not a separate sphere of life but is increasingly entangled in the commercial exchange of knowledge production (see e.g. Mohanty 2003, 173), and my work environment was not necessarily so radically dissimilar to that of my interviewees after all.²³ The differences that I experienced were thus perhaps partly produced by me. However, that did not make their effect on the interview process any less real. Overall, my relation to the interviewees was ambivalent, in that I simultaneously recognised shared experiences and thoughts *and* felt radically different from them.

The interviews consisted of one-to-one interactions apart from one interview with two persons who worked as a pair, and the interview that project leader Päivi Korvajärvi and I conducted together. The atmosphere²⁴ was mainly straightforward, so that the situations felt like personal encounters. However, the interviewees were present as experts and professionals, and the atmosphere thus also slid between professional/matter-of-fact and confidential/personal, according to whom I was interviewing and what the topic was. Nonetheless, it was clear in every case, that my personality mattered in the

²³ Also, a considerable change took place in Finnish universities at the time that I was doing my research. This change was mainly brought about by a new law which distinguished universities from the state and made them more open to cooperation with the business sector. The university in which I finished my thesis is thus not quite the same as that in which I began my work.

²⁴ My account of the interviews here concerns the 15 in which I was present as the interviewer.

sense that it affected how the interviewees would discuss their work with me. I wanted the interviews to succeed, so I paid attention to how I carried myself, how I perhaps appeared to them and how I communicated with them. In other words, I wanted to promote myself as a serious and trustworthy researcher in order to gain recognition, acceptance and trust. I acknowledged that almost all of the interviewees were older than me, and many were dressed in a sophisticated or business-like way, whereas I was usually quite casual. Many had a confident manner, and sometimes I felt more like an apprentice than a researcher. All in all the interview situations were quite exhausting and intense. They engaged me personally more than I was prepared to engage. Interviewing, I discovered, was emotional labour, as it required me to respond to interviewees' emotions and to control my own in order to keep the situation pleasurable and "profitable".²⁵

Reflecting on the research process, I realise that while preparing for the interviews I assumed (and hoped) that I would be present mainly as an impersonal questioner. This assumption was probably mostly due to the fact that the interviews concerned the interviewees' profession and field of expertise, and not directly their personal life, experiences or opinions. However, most of the interviewees approached the situation not as a traditional interview but as a challenging discussion, a session of mutual sharing of ideas and influences. I then had to adjust my attitude and be present as a whole person instead of someone who just asks questions, which took effort and meant that I also felt more vulnerable in the interview situation: if I was challenged, attacked or criticised, it was not only as an interviewer but as a person.

And indeed I *was* challenged, and sometimes also subtly attacked and criticised or confronted. The interviewees were experts in communication, and "sparring" is a method they employ regularly in their everyday work. Often they would reverse the interview situation and ask *me* questions – for example, what I thought coaching was and whether the interview had changed my views on coaching. In this way, they would deliberately engage me in the discussion, challenge my presumptions and question my expertise as a researcher. At the same time, however, these interviewees also subjected themselves to my questioning, took the interview seriously, gave me their time and shared their

²⁵ Here again the language of profit emerges as a "natural" description of a situation in which self-promotion was necessary in order to "gain" something that I wanted, i.e. successful interviews.

personal histories and thoughts. Sometimes the interviewees showed me textual or visual²⁶ material in the middle of the interview, or gave me texts to take away and read later. Some also made the effort to contact me afterwards and send me more information by email. I would therefore say that despite the hardship I experienced in the interviews, the mutual engagement was what made the interviews valuable as research material after all. It also truly widened my perspectives: for example, some people's enthusiasm in describing their work pushed me to think of the empowering, attractive and rewarding sides of coaching: why so many people and organisations want to invest in coaching, and why it is an attractive and personally fulfilling option for those seeking a new profession. These became important questions in relation to the whole research project.

Most of the interviews lasted approximately an hour, and they more or less followed an outline of questions which was sent to the interviewees in advance (see appendix I). This meant that the interviews began with questions which aimed for a general conception of the education or background and job description of the interviewee. I also asked about working practices to get a picture of the kinds of thing the person did in his or her everyday work. Then came several questions about branding, which in the early interviews in particular was an important focus of interest for me. This was followed by more questions concerning practical aspects of coaching as well as the premises and aims of coaching. After this, I asked the interviewee to describe his or her clients. The interviews usually ended with a discussion of the future of coaching as an industry.

Even though the interviews relied on preformulated questions, I always told the interviewees that this form was only a guideline and that they could freely discuss whatever they found relevant or important. The interviews were thus also quite open and conversational. As stated above, almost all of the interviewees were quite talkative, ready to share their ideas and thoughts and also clearly experienced in discussing their occupation. As I answered their questions and reacted to their "sparring", I also sometimes offered my own ideas and suggested connections based on my thoughts on and interpretations of what they had said. In this way, the interviews at times became

²⁶ E.g. conceptual maps or diagrams.

discussions, even though the positions of interviewee and interviewer remained in place and the focus remained on the interviewees' points of view, not on my own thoughts.

However, my participation in the interviews was not very spontaneous, and was rather hidden. The critical perspective of my research (I had an analytical and reflective approach to the practices of coaching and the discursive constructions that my interviewees employed) clearly affected my encounters with the interviewees. For example, I had a hard time trying to describe my ongoing research, partly because my own understanding of what I was doing kept changing, and partly because I did not want to discourage the interviewees and was afraid of giving them the false impression that my aim was to criticise them personally.²⁷ Often I felt that they sensed my guardedness or criticism and wanted to convince me of the usefulness and positive impact of their work. This was one of the things that made the interviews so intense.

It seemed likely that some coaches had agreed to do the interview because they thought that it would bring much-needed publicity for their field of work. Many of them were very aware of the importance of promotional practices (this will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3). At the same time it was clear that most coaches protect both their time and their image. All in all, it seemed that many of the interviewees took the research interview as an opportunity to gain positive publicity, and many were interested in the standpoints and results of my research. Some would also directly ask what kind of method I was going to use for my analysis and would suggest what they considered might be useful. A particularly difficult situation arose when one interviewee assumed that I would of course let her see what I had written after the interview, and matter-of-factly stated this to me at the end of our conversation.²⁸ I felt that she was saying that I would have to ask her approval for my interpretation. That was a hard expectation to fulfil, because my research does not discuss any particular interview as a whole, and I do not discuss any particular individual's vision. The focus of the research is not on individuals

²⁷ Even though I was sometimes coy about describing my research, I often sent the interviewee beforehand a link to my University of Tampere home page, which has a concise description of my research and interests. This was also easily available for anyone who might use a search engine to find information about me and my research.

²⁸ This request was a one-off. Most of the interviewees agreed that their anonymous interviews could be stored in the social science archive where they can be also used by other researchers. This also meant that they gave up any control over how the anonymous interview material might be used in research other than mine.

but on questions of gender and capitalism, examined through individual's accounts. This is what allows me to maintain my critical approach – the critique is not directed towards individuals but towards discursive constructions produced across different sites. However, this was not something that I could successfully communicate to this person in the interview situation. It would also have been difficult, and against good research ethics, to go against the interviewee's wishes. In order to be fair to the interviewee, who participated and helped me in my research, I have therefore avoided direct quotations from this particular interview, and it functions only as an anonymous part of the web of texts on framing the promotional self.

The experiences of finding it hard to contact interviewees and the intensity of the encounters also affected my decision to conduct a rather small number of interviews. After 15 interviews, plus two interview transcripts from Päivi Korvajärvi, I felt that doing more would not benefit my research to a great extent, but would demand disproportionate amounts of time and energy. As my approach to research material is not based on representativeness – the interviews are not intended to be a perfect cross-section of the field of coaching in Finland – the small number of interviews did not pose a problem for analysis.

Introductory session and lectures

In addition to interviewing, I did an introductory coaching session with one coach online on Skype. The session lasted about 25 minutes, and was meant to provide a sample of how coaching is actually practised. It was initiated by the coach, whom I also interviewed, because she thought that the best way for me to understand what coaching was about would be to experience it myself. I am grateful for the time she gave me and for the effort she made to induct me into coaching. It was of course only a brief and rather artificial session compared to the actual practices of coaching, but it nevertheless gave me some inspiration and clues concerning what goes on in a coaching session.

In the session I had to come up with a problem, and then the coach demonstrated how such a problem would be dealt with in a coaching session. My chosen topic

concerned a rather mundane task (managing invoices), which of course affected the introductory session so that the discussion that we had was not very “deep” in a psychological sense but concentrated more on the practical action that I could take to solve my problem. However, the coach also told me that coaching quite often begins with a relatively small and insignificant problem which then gradually leads to more general and encompassing questions. I discuss the introductory session in more detail in chapter four.

I also took part in two coaching lectures. Both lectures took place in the university and were aimed at university staff. The leader of our project, Päivi Korvajärvi, and two fellow researchers, Hanna-Mari Ikonen and Tuija Koivunen, provided me with notes from two other lectures which were organised by Speakersforum, a Finnish company specialising in the supply of “speakers, presenters and coaches” (www.speakersforum.fi). I refer to these lecture notes a few times in this research, but mainly I used them to get an overview of the kinds of topic that such lectures cover. Even though the lectures in question were aimed at different audiences in different situations, they nevertheless had some common characteristics. For example, all of them contained stories of the lecturer’s own life and concentrated on questions of attitude. These characteristics, among others, connected the lectures to the themes discussed in interviews and self-help books.

Locations and timelines

The research material that I have gathered is located in very different places, in terms of both time and geography.²⁹ First, in terms of time, most of the published textual material is from the first decade of 21st century. The oldest text is a self-help book from 1997, and the most recent texts are articles and a branding book published in 2010. There are thus 13 years between these texts. One of the reasons for this relatively long period is that coaching and personal branding were discussed in the American business world at the turn of the century, whereas in Finland it seems that they have only recently reached the public discussion. As I looked for personal branding and self-promotion in 2007 and

²⁹See references for research material after chapter seven.

2008, the texts I stumbled upon had been published in the USA seven or ten years earlier. Also, when gathering material, I did not pay much attention to questions of time, because I was more focused on finding *something* to work on. It is thus rather telling that the first text that I found (the book by William Bridges) was also the oldest. Gradually, as I began to find more texts and also potential interviewees, I found texts that had been published more recently. During the most intense research period (2009–2011) I also kept my eyes open for any articles or publications that might be relevant, and for this reason the research material contains a lot of single newspaper or web articles from this period. During this period I was also conducting interviews; both these and the notes from coaching lectures were mainly gathered during 2008 and 2009. The last interview took place in February 2010.

The issue of time is made more complicated by material that is published on the Internet. This material is often difficult to locate temporally, as web pages have no date of publication and are constantly changing, and web articles also sometimes lack a date of publication. In these cases, I have only been able to make a note of the time of retrieval. However, placing too much importance on the time of publication is also problematic, as books or articles published ten years ago might still be in active use and employed regularly to develop practices of coaching. Suffice it to say that in terms of time this research is an enquiry into the first decade of the 21st century, with an emphasis on the last years of that particular decade.

Geographically, I have gathered my research material and interviewed the coaches in Finland, apart from a three-month period when I stayed in London (I did not do any interviews in London). Finland has thus been the location from which I speak and which has shaped my understanding of the phenomena that I write about. When I am describing the occupational field of coaching, I am mostly referring to the Finnish field with which I grew familiar through the interviews. And when I am describing, for example, the official web pages of the employment office, it is the Finnish employment office. However, there are also complications in terms of geography, similar to those that occur in relation to time.

The coaches that I interviewed all speak Finnish, as already noted, but they were not all in Finland. A few of the interviews took place over the phone or by email which

meant that the interviewee was speaking from a different location than the researcher. Also, a great number of the published texts that I examine were published elsewhere than in Finland, and many of them were written in English. An American self-help book was given to me by a Finnish coach who thought it would help me to understand what she does in her work – should I pay attention to the geographical difference between the interview text and the text published in America almost ten years ago? What would this difference mean in terms of analysis?

Of course, the Internet also makes it hard to locate texts, not only in terms of time but also in terms of geographical location. The essence of the Internet is that it crosses the borders of different countries, and yet there are also borders on the web – for example, although I am located in Tampere, Finland, I have instant access to texts produced all over the world, but I have not used web pages from France or Uruguay because my language skills are not sufficient. On the one hand, then, the Internet makes it less easy to consider the differences between texts written in different countries, for example, because they are not really published in any particular country, but are instantly available to readers across the globe. On the other hand, even though I have used the Internet I have still stayed very closely within the Anglo-American cultural circle, which reveals that there are still particular locations and limits even within the World Wide Web.

Locating the research, then, is not an easy task in any way. My approach to geographical location takes into account that there are multiple connections *but* the focus is on Finland, and it is mainly from a Finnish perspective that I read and interpret material that originates elsewhere. I have not found it relevant to make comparisons, for instance, between the American texts and Finnish interviews, because first I do not see them as fundamentally distinct, and second these kinds of comparison would also have required different research interests and emphases. My interest is in drawing connections between different texts and searching for common patterns concerning self-promotion, not in examining how coaching or processes of self-promotion differ in different countries. I will thus pay attention to different locations where it is possible and relevant to do so, but they are not central to my research.

2.2. Theoretical and methodological engagements

To grasp the processes of self-promotion, this research moves through several overlapping disciplinary fields. I employ perspectives from, for example, working-life studies, feminist research, sociology and cultural studies. The methods that are used are also not particular to any one discipline, but rather are a bricolage of various approaches from various disciplines (cf. Alasuutari 1995). Since the focus of the study is mainly on work and working life, some important perspectives and theorisations come from working-life studies (e.g. Du Gay 1996; Julkunen 2008; Korvajärvi 1998; Sennett 1998). Working-life studies, however, is not a coherent discipline but a vast field of different approaches and disciplinary traditions (similarly to feminist research and cultural studies). The perspectives on working life that I have found most useful in my study are inclined towards economic sociology (e.g. Callon 2007; Gill & Pratt 2009; Hardt 1999), Marxist theory (e.g. Bonefeld & Holloway 1991; Harvey 1982; 1989) and feminist theory (e.g. Adkins 2005; 2001; 2000; McDowell 2009). For me, the strength of these perspectives is their combining of the “cultural” and the “economic” to understand work and its conditions and consequences as well as both material and ideological relations of power.

The problematic of this research developed initially from the perspective of women’s studies and feminist theory. After completing an MA in comparative literature, the Department of Women’s Studies and later the discipline of gender studies have been my material and intellectual location. Both the academic community in which I have done my research and the working community in which I have lived my everyday life have been – more or less – feminist communities. By “feminist community” I do not refer to a specific fixed community with fixed beliefs, but rather to a changing group of persons and ideas inclined towards feminist thinking, sometimes with passion and sometimes with reserve. Knowledge is always produced together with other people, and the particular people with whom I have been doing research have made the feminist perspective something with which I am constantly interacting: negotiating my own positions or trying different positions, taking a distance or coming closer. The feminist perspective has thus constantly been a space where I am, a mirror which reflects my

thoughts back to me in a slightly different form, a partner with whom I discuss my findings and whose opinions sometimes help me to see more clearly and sometimes disappoint me. Of course, I have also formed these kinds of relationships with other intellectual and theoretical traditions and communities³⁰ (and sometimes these intersect with the feminist one), but the feminist perspective as it is shaped and negotiated in women's studies has been the strongest and most important during my research. This feminist community has also included a smaller group gathered around a project called *Beela*³¹ which has been specifically concerned with issues related to work, the new economy and gender. It has thus been especially within the *Beela* project that I have grown familiar with feminist accounts of working life and the new economy.

In terms of theoretical engagements, in the introduction I mentioned the importance of the legacy of materialist, socialist and Marxist feminism for my understanding of the intertwining of gender and capitalism. I also noted the relevance of feminist theorisations concerning post-feminism and the construction of gendered subjectivities in the context of neoliberalism (e.g. Gill 2007a; 2007b; McRobbie 2007a; 2007b; 2009). In addition, theoretical contributions on questions of individuality from a feminist perspective (e.g. Pateman 1988; Skeggs 2004; Lury 1998) have been significant. And, as stated above, my conceptions of knowledge production, research practice, objectivity and the politics of research have been to a great extent influenced by feminist theorisation.

Feminist research has been a fruitful “research partner” for me partly because of the interdisciplinary approach that is at the heart of feminist enquiry (Liinasson & Holm 2006). As Marianne Liljeström (2004, 15–16) notes, it is characteristic for feminist research to deny strict boundaries between traditional disciplinary fields; instead of unifying and categorising knowledge, feminist research aims to break the myth of epistemological and methodological purity. Breaking this myth of purity has been a prerequisite for my research to take the form it has taken; following feminist theorisation

³⁰ Another very loosely structured, intellectually oriented community has consisted of groups around various Finnish leftist-Marxist web publications and blogs, the most relevant of which has been *Megafoni* (Megafoni.org).

³¹ “Gender inequalities, emotional and aesthetic labour and well-being in work”, funded by the Academy of Finland and led by Professor Päivi Korvajärvi. Marja Vehviläinen, Hanna-Mari Ikonen, Tuija Koivunen, Sanna Rikala, Riikka Homanen, Minna Nikunen and Elina Kiviranta also participated as researchers in this project.

and practice has also allowed me to formulate my research objectives and methods so that they are not restricted within certain disciplinary boundaries.

This has been important because, first, the processes of self-promotion that I want to examine cannot be situated in any one particular field if we understand these processes as depicted above, fractured and circulating through different spheres of life. The object of interest in this research thus is not restricted to a particular discipline in the way that literature or media or working life might be understood to define a particular field of enquiry. Second, my understanding of research and knowledge can be traced back to feminist theorisations, but the various conceptions that are employed in this research cannot be located in any particular discipline; rather they are the outcome of the researcher's adventures in and across various disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields. Interdisciplinarity – the crossing of disciplinary boundaries³² – has thus been a pragmatic and strategic solution arising both from the research interests and from the academic background of the researcher.

The standpoint and ideal of interdisciplinarity, however, is not without consequences in terms of knowledge production. Stepping outside disciplinary boundaries quickly leads to different kinds of struggles and tensions. As one straddles disciplines one also confronts interpretational contradictions and methodological confusions, as there is no longer any widely shared common ground from which knowledge can straightforwardly be understood, organised and valued. I believe that the tensions that follow are inevitably part of the processes through which different forms of knowledge production are gradually structured, and hence they should not be seen as overwhelmingly problematic or threatening. It is important, however, to take seriously the challenges that interdisciplinarity poses for research in terms of methodological choices and validity. In relation to interdisciplinarity and methodology, I follow Mieke Bal (2002) in emphasising conceptual approaches rather than singular methods.

Any research builds upon certain concepts that have both specific histories and specific functions. They are sites of debate, agreement and awareness of difference: interaction takes place through conceptual definitions and engagements. Particularly

³² Here I follow Mia Liinasson's and Ulla M. Holm's (2006, 118) definition of interdisciplinarity as referring to "theoretical and methodological cross-fertilization and crossing of disciplinary borders in a way that suggests that none of the disciplines involved is a satisfactory theoretical edifice in itself".

when a research project is not located in any one particular discipline or within particular methodological boundaries, it is important to clarify and explain what is meant by different conceptualisations because this allows us to situate the research in multiple ways – in relation to other texts, different disciplines and different academic debates. This is why I want to begin to tackle my theoretical-methodological choices by elaborating some key concepts that structure my methodological approach. These are *ideology* and *articulation*. Of course other conceptual engagements are also employed throughout the research in different ways, and they all affect the outcome of knowledge production. Some concepts, particularly that of frame, have already been elaborated in the introduction, and others will be clarified as the research proceeds. The main objective in emphasising particular conceptual structures here is to elucidate how concepts function methodologically: how they define theoretical and practical engagements throughout the research process. The emphasis on methodology also explains my choice to introduce the concept of frame in the previous chapter, as it is not as significant for the methodological approach as the concepts of articulation and ideology. Discussing ideology and articulation here will also, I hope, clarify the consequences of such engagements in terms of this particular research process.

Research approach

The aim of the methodological approach in this research is to recognise discursively maintained and constituted articulations which (among other things that they do) frame the self in promotional processes. The reason for my interest in these processes is that they have an ideological function: they participate in defining what gets to count as “reality” – what makes sense to us (Hennessy 1993b; Žižek 1994a). The concept of articulation is the methodological key to this research, because it helps to connect the empirical analysis with questions concerning discursive struggles and relations of power. I will now elaborate this approach by explaining my understanding of discursively maintained and constructed articulations and how they relate to the notion of ideology. In

connection with this, I will also expand on the theoretical frame of discursive materialism.

Throughout the research process, different texts are employed as points of access to the social and to the processes that I want to examine. Although the sources for my research are not merely textual – for example, they also contain my personal experiences as a job-seeker – the core material is a web of texts that I have acquired during the research process described above. As already stated, I consider the interviews as texts in a sense that even though they differ from published material, they take part in the web of texts and in the discursive struggles that I am interested in.

Texts related to working-life coaching open up two interconnected directions, as already stated. To begin with, they are considered as interpretative accounts of practices. Here I rely particularly on the interviews, in which I could direct the discussion so that practices were discussed, but also other kinds of text can tell about coaching practices (for instance, some coaches use self-help books in developing their working practices). Through texts, then, it becomes possible to examine the practices that the coaches employ to facilitate and advocate both their own and their client's self-promotion. The research so to say enters the particular social relations that I want to examine through accounts of lived and interpreted practices. From examining practices, however, the research then moves towards another direction, towards considering textual accounts from the perspective of discursive struggles. Textual accounts are thus significant, not only because they open up practices of coaching, but because they contain discursive articulations that connect to the struggles in which “reality” is made intelligible. In terms of research approach, there is thus a movement from examining practices towards understanding processes, and an acknowledgement that practices of coaching and processes of self-promotion are not separate entities but interconnected.

Texts - both written and published and produced in interviews – are thus an “entry” into social relations. Above I have referred to the research material as a “web of texts”. This means that texts connect to each other both intertextually and through the cultural meanings that they share. Intertextuality here means that each text is full of influences from and references to other texts. The texts are not born in a vacuum, but are part of a historical and cultural context in which they interact. Texts participate in the social world,

and they participate in producing other texts. Acknowledging intertextuality thus means examining texts as communication not only between the author and the audience, but also with other texts and the conventions that they form (Vuori 2001, 91). Texts are not separate entities; there are discursive connections formed within and between them. From this perspective, there are no “pure” texts available to the researcher. Every text carries echoes from other texts, and every reader or listener brings his/her interpretation to the text. This means that texts are – despite their differences – bound to shared cultural meanings and understandings (see also Ojala 2010, 139), both while they are being produced and while they are being interpreted and understood.

Texts are thus connected on a textual level to other texts, but they are also connected on a discursive level. By this I mean that texts are connected to each other through shared understandings and discursive constructions, and these understandings and constructions respond and connect to subjective experiences and material realities, and also participate in the production of those experiences and realities. Articulation, as understood in this research, is a conceptual effort to grasp these multiple connections, to find patterns and shared meanings, and to connect these to ideological processes. In looking for connections, patterns and shared meanings, my aim is thus not to discover what any particular individual or author says about self-promotion or coaching. Rather, my intention is to go beyond individual meaning-making and instead concentrate on the articulations that differently situated individuals employ, negotiate with or reproduce while making sense of themselves and their (our) world.

Addressing discursively constructed articulations implies an understanding of language and reality as one, in the sense that meaning is a consequence of discursive construction (Jokinen 2004, 191). Language is thus perceived as constitutive: it is the site where meanings are created and changed (Taylor, 2001, 6). In this way, the research at hand is tied to a theoretical tradition that takes seriously the semiotic mediation of social life and places it in the spotlight (e.g. Alasuutari 1995; Fairclough 2001, 234). Discursive constructions (discourses) affect how we perceive a phenomenon (Alasuutari 1995): what is taken for given, which aspects are confrontational, which aspects are silenced or bypassed?

Examining discursive constructions in this research is motivated by an understanding that they are tied to the maintenance of social relations. In this sense, discursive processes are not merely semiotic but also material. As Rosemary Hennessy notes, ways of making sense of the world make sense; a discourse affects what gets to count as “reality” through the assumptions it valorises and the subjects it produces (Hennessy 1993a, xiii). However, hegemonic discourses will always be contested, and an order of discourse or a discursive process is never a closed or rigid system but an open system that is put at risk by what happens in actual interactions (Fairclough 2001, 235). “Reality” is thus the outcome of continuous discursive struggles (Jokinen 2004, 195) that have material conditions and consequences.³³ Recognising the materiality of discourse necessarily leads to an acknowledgement of discursive constructions as politically significant.

The political significance of discursive struggles is tackled here through the concept of ideology, and the mode of reading employed in this research can be understood as a form of ideology critique. Referring to ideology, ideology critique or ideological processes, I do not mean to imply that there would be some prior determining material realm against which the “falseness” of ideological beliefs could then be proved, and I do not wish to imply that people who think in a certain way would be possessed by “false consciousness” – all in all, I do not wish to posit myself as somehow seeing the “reality” behind false or distortive representations. These kind of problematic assumptions are undeniably a burden on the usefulness of the concept of ideology (e.g. McNay 1992, 24-25). Nevertheless, I want to hold on to *ideology* for several reasons.

Above I highlighted the importance of considering both changes and continuities in capitalism. Similarly here, with theory and methodology, I want to recognise and make visible not only change but also continuities. Whether or not I would explicitly claim the notion of ideology as part of my theoretical framework, this research in any case falls into the long tradition of ideology critique (see Rehmann 2007). Like many other researchers before me, I look for ways in which relations of capitalism and gender affect how we

³³ Lawrence Grossberg refers to a similar perspective when writing of the theory of articulation in the context of cultural studies. He notes that this theory “transforms cultural criticism and politics from questions of texts and audiences, to explorations of events and alliances, effects and contexts, and an account of the ways certain practices and apparatuses articulate contexts – as organisations of power – as the lived milieux of everyday life” (Grossberg 1997, 18).

come to see the world, how it comes to make sense to us. In other words, I look for the conditions and also for the consequences of “making sense” in late capitalism.³⁴ Employing the notion of ideology in a methodological-theoretical approach therefore means acknowledging that reality is brought to us and made intelligible through discursive struggle – that it is implicated in relations of power and constantly under negotiation. This brings us to my other reason for employing the notion of ideology, namely, that it clearly implies that “reality” and intelligibility are not only instances of power but also sites of *political* struggle. There are conflicting interests at stake in discursive constructions of the social.

Furthermore, the acknowledgment of the “politics of discourse” in terms of ideology also contains the idea that social theories, as they take their place among the texts of culture, are ideological in the sense that they circulate within the mediated field of discursive struggles over social meanings and resources. Theories themselves can also be considered the effects of struggles over which meanings are allowed and endorsed as truth at any given time (Hennessy 1993a, 7). Any theory thus has to account for historicity, and moreover any theory can function as a crucial component of political practice (ibid, 8). The concept of ideology then leads to a conception of research as political practice, not outside the realm of social relations. This perception is fairly congruent with the feminist perspective, which has been defined by the objective of social change (cf. Ahmed et al. 2000). Feminist research has been fundamentally (though not unproblematically) tied to different social movements and political struggles, and has thus from the beginning questioned the idea of science as a “pure” form of objective knowledge. Instead, Elisabeth Gross describes feminist theory as a strategy with certain political aims of affecting the orders of power (Gross 1987, 196–197; see also Mohanty 2003, 3–6). Inspired by feminist theory and recognising the consequences of the politics

³⁴ As already noted, this kind of understanding of ideology does not imply differentiating between the “ideological” and the material, but rather recognising that they cannot be separated. The other option would have been to use only the concept of discourse without reference to ideology. After all, the concept of discourse was developed by Michel Foucault precisely to account for the linking of material and non-material and to overcome the problems in ideology theory. However, it is not clear whether Foucault’s attempt is completely successful. Some researchers have claimed that the notion of discourse simply defers the problems of the notion of ideology as well as problems concerning the linking of material and non-material instead of solving them (see Hennessy 1993a, 41–43; McNay 1992, 27–28).

of discourse, this research is necessarily political from the outset: it deliberately intervenes in what comes to count as the real (cf. Hennessy 1993a).

To examine discursive struggles, in other words to understand how “reality” as an ideological construct is negotiated and contested, I employ the concept of articulation. Articulation is a process in which elements from various contesting discourses are drawn into a coherent frame of intelligibility (Hennessy 1993a, 76). To articulate is not solely to form connections that construct phenomena, but also to produce meaning (Leppänen & Rojola 2004, 79–80). Reconfiguring ideological constructions is a process of contesting the articulating principle within a hegemonic formation,³⁵ and of disarticulating discourses from one frame of intelligibility in order to rearticulate them in another (Hennessy 1993a, 76; Mouffe 2008).

Articulation in this sense is thus both a theory and a method (cf. Leppänen & Rojola 2004, 83). Consequently, the concept of articulation has a manifold function in my research. First, articulation as a theory of the social shapes the formulation of my research objectives, locating the research in a particular theoretical frame, which is that of discursive struggle and critique of power relations. This theoretical frame defines my task as I examine how social relations are articulated in a particular instance, that of self-promotional processes. Second, articulation theory functions as a methodological approach: through the theory of articulation, it becomes possible to follow how cultural texts and their meanings are related to contexts, and how both of these are related to cultural practices (see Lehtonen 1996, 216).

Context is a practical way of understanding the more theoretically informed concept of the “frame of intelligibility” that was used above. We give meanings within a specific frame of intelligibility – in other words, in specific contexts. This means that we experience, interpret and relate to the things and phenomena that we confront in a particular time, place and situation, directed by contingent social and cultural conditions, norms and practices (Uotinen 2005, 48; Lehtonen 1996) which are shaped and

³⁵ Here I follow Hennessy’s (1993a, 76) reading of Gramsci, who understands hegemony as the process whereby a ruling group comes to dominate by establishing cultural common sense. Gramsci states that the coherent discourse which hegemonic arrangements create is forged out of struggle. The objective of this struggle is to refigure ideological formations in order to maintain the interests of a ruling group. The cultural power of any hegemonic bloc then stems from an articulating principle which is always shaped by and at the same time helps to shape the contradictory social arrangements it serves to maintain.

conditioned by relations of power. Contexts affect our interpretations and processes of meaning-making, and conversely are also affected by our practices of signification. Every text we encounter has its contexts, which surround and penetrate it in time and place and connect it to other texts as well as to other practices of meaning-making (Lehtonen 1996, 158) – and also to material practices. Earlier in this chapter, textual connections to other texts were conceptualised as intertextuality; context as a concept includes intertextuality, but it also includes other kinds of connection, not only among texts but also between texts and other forms of meaning-making that have material conditions and consequences. Following Mikko Lehtonen (*ibid.*), it can be stated that contexts are all the factors that writers and readers (or listeners) bring to the process of meaning-making, and thus particularly include their discursive frames of evaluation. In this sense, texts and contexts are ultimately inseparable.

From this perspective, processes of articulation can be defined as processes of the recontextualisation of texts. They involve loosening former contextualisations and bringing in new elements, new contexts. Articulations are the ways in which these elements and contexts are connected. Examining articulations thus means tracing the connections by constructing contexts for meanings. (Lehtonen 1996, 216–217). A research process is a practice of examining articulations in this way, but it is also in itself a process of disarticulation and rearticulation. In terms of this research, this means first that I examine the articulations concerning the promotional self in the research material in order to understand existing connections to different contexts. I shall do this in order to get to the roots of how “common sense” concerning self-promotion is produced and maintained, to draw out the frames that bring the promotional self into being and make processes of promotion meaningful. Second, while doing this I will articulate new contexts, bringing new elements to the meaning-making that takes place through the research material. This research process of examining articulations while simultaneously reforming them ultimately aims not only to understand but also to challenge the processes that make self-promotion a common-sense or matter-of-fact phenomenon. “Understanding” and “explaining” can thus also become practices of dis- and rearticulation. This is why research is a political practice; it not only examines, but at the same time also participates in the discursive struggles of articulation.

I mentioned the notion of hegemony above, and hence it might be noted that an essential feature of the concept is that it contains a notion of continuous discursive struggle. Even though there might be a dominating discourse, a hegemonic articulation, it is never without contradictions, and it cannot exhaust all social experience. The hegemonic discourse is not wholly coherent, but is vulnerable, full of slips and cracks and thus contains the potential for subversion and counter-hegemonic struggle. (Hennessy 1993a, 76–77; Mouffe 2008). It is thus essential to acknowledge that ideology is not a fixed, immovable entity, but rather an articulated ensemble of contesting discourses that produce what comes to count as “the way it is” (Hennessy 1993b, 23). The process of disarticulation should start with this notion.

Research process

I think of my research as critical literature that promotes new and fresh but well reasoned perspectives on social phenomena (Alasuutari 1995). The objective is thus to open up discussion of social reality, and especially of phenomena that are deemed a matter of course or self-explanatory in everyday life. The research thus does not aim to *reveal* or *testify* that self-promotion is an existing social fact. Instead, while recognising that a particular phenomenon has increasingly become a routine practice, I wish to understand why and how this might be, and also what consequences it might have. This research is about understanding, not about making generalisations or producing objective facts. In addition, recognising the politics of discourse in relation to my own research, my commitment to emancipatory social change motivates and shapes this research. Ultimately, the objective is to understand the social in order to change it (Gross 1987, 196–197).

The idea that what is experienced as “reality” is affected by discourse motivates my usage of various texts as research material. If “reality” is at least partially produced in discursive struggles that have material consequences, then looking at the construction of meaning in different texts is a relevant and necessary method for studying the existing social world. The perspective on research described above also allows us to understand

research material in a relatively broad sense: the material has been gathered with the idea that it will help me to *understand* a particular phenomenon in all of its variety, and also that it will help me to see connections between different aspects of the same phenomenon – even though it will not be possible to encompass everything related to self-promotion, or even to acknowledge all relevant aspects. Different texts allow us to form a more comprehensive picture of phenomenon in question (Alasuutari 1995). Understanding the research process in this way has also led me to consider different theoretical texts in a way that is rather similar to my approach to the actual research material – as well as functioning as a fundamental theoretical background, the different theoretical contributions also offer different kinds of clues through which the bigger picture might finally emerge.

The practical methods that I have employed throughout this research are ways of working with different texts that allow me to recognise and further disarticulate and rearticulate hegemonic discursive constructions. In other words, the methods employed here are such that they enable the examination of the processes of meaning-making across different texts and the analysis of these processes in relevant theoretical and empirical contexts.

If research is a process of examining articulations and creating new ones, writing is the practice through which this is done. After I have read different texts, it is the act of writing that allows me to grasp their meanings, create connections to other texts, unravel the established meanings and place them in new contexts. Furthermore, it is often through *simultaneous* reading and writing that these processes take place. Even as I was gathering research material, I was already also reading and writing about promotional selves, making interpretations and creating connections to other texts. This is by no means unusual in qualitative research. Methodology in social sciences, however, is often discussed in terms of differentiations between data collection, analysis, interpretation, reading and writing.³⁶ This easily creates an impression of temporally separate practices. Such a distinction is not, I would say, characteristic of my research, at least not in terms of temporality. However, I will now present a tentative grouping of “analysis and

³⁶ These differentiations, and also the problematic of differentiating, are finely elaborated by Hanna Ojala in her doctoral thesis (2010). Ojala’s take on methodology has been inspirational and enlightening in developing my own research perspectives.

interpretation” and “reading” which might help the reader to piece together the different methodological aspects of the research process. At the same time, I want to highlight that these are not really separate processes but rather are simultaneous, entangled and in interaction, connected through the act of writing. For this reason, in the following chapters these groupings are not always differentiated or named, even though all these aspects of research are part of my work.

Analysis and *interpretation* are practices that focus firmly on the research material. In other words, this part of the research process proceeds at the level of the research material, and is also very much conditioned by the material. Analysis and interpretation in this research include looking at what is said in the texts (content analysis), how these things are said (narrative and rhetorical analysis), and the meanings constructed in these sayings (discursive analysis). This means looking at the content of the texts, looking at paradoxes, gaps and silences within the texts, and grasping discursive constructions that are used and produced across the material. The practice of contextualising on this level thus means taking into account the contexts – where, why and how – in which the texts were produced and the contexts that are explicitly present within them.

Reading, then, is the process which brings the theoretical frame to the textual material. In this process, the material is forced to answer questions that it does not itself encourage or enable (Ojala 2010, 152). Reading is a practice that elevates the research process slightly above the research material, as it can also be done *against* the meanings constructed in the texts (Rojola 2004, 38). In analysis and interpretation, acknowledging the immediate context of the research material is crucial. During the reading, however, the concrete empirical context is not the object of attention, and instead the focus is on the wider theoretical discussion which is used to contextualise the research material so that its implicit connections are shown, and also so that it becomes possible to create new contexts which challenge the explicit ones. In this research, reading is done when theoretical insights on individuality, capitalism, gender, working life and so forth are brought into dialogue with the researcher’s interpretations of the research material, and the discussion is thus lifted from the immediate empirical context towards wider social and political questions.

In this process of gathering data, analysing, interpreting and reading it, I as a researcher and interpreter bring my own thoughts and ideas, presuppositions, fears and past experiences – in other words, my intellectual and emotional “weight” – to bear on the research material. Doing research thus necessarily means entering into dialogue with the research material and doing so as a whole person, not just as an objective researcher. The discursive constructions that are the focus of my analysis are not something that would only exist for others – they are real for the researcher as well. Recognising different articulations in the material is thus a process in which my frame of interpretation and the cultural meanings that I share with others encounter other frames of intelligibility, other shared meanings. What becomes visible in this process is a difference: the meanings or discursive constructions that I am able to recognise in the research material are most likely those that I do not share or am not so familiar with. However, relying on theoretical insights also helps me to see those discursive constructions that were invisible to me until an encounter with another text enabled me to see the difference. When examining research material I bring with me my own understandings, which then give new meanings and new articulations to the research material – and which are, at the same time, shaped (and shaken!) in turn *by* the research material, and by other material that I simultaneously confront. The process of analysis and interpretation, and ultimately the process of rearticulation as I understand it, thus consists of an ongoing dialogue or discussion between the researcher, her theoretical and other perspectives and the research material. It is a process of posing questions, getting answers which reshape the questions, looking elsewhere for other kinds of answers and coming back with more questions...

Understanding research as a dialogue means that the research material is not available for me to make a total or exhaustive analysis – it will not be emptied out by my research. In this sense, to view the methodological process as a dialogue or discussion is to recognise the independence of the research material (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, 10). There is no pure analytical practice separate from the theoretical and epistemological perspectives of the research or from the researcher’s perspectives and insights. Different practices of reading are always already present when I approach, categorise or analyse the material. During the research process, I have constantly been at the interface between the research material and the theoretical and personal load that I carry as a researcher.

Methods of analysis

Lastly now I want to focus on the specific techniques that I use in this research to disarticulate and rearticulate discursive constructions across different texts. These are mainly techniques in the sense that they function as ways to focus on particular features of textual material. Through these features, new perspectives are opened up. The methodological choices concerning practical methods are thus deeply embedded in the conceptual questions, and vice versa.

First of all, I approached the research material by looking for discursive patterns. This meant looking for repetition. Particularly in the interviews, I picked up repeated themes (such as change or references to emotions) and made lists of where and how often they appear. This was done quite systematically. Then I continued the analysis by examining more closely *how* these repetitions made sense in relation to the whole web of texts that comprised the research material. How and why might certain themes be repeated? What kinds of meanings were given to certain words? Was any connection made between different texts through the repetition of particular thematic ensembles? In addition to thematic references, I also took notice of repeated patterns in the use of words and phrases that occurred across different textual sites (such as “core self” or “inner voice”). This way I could establish connections between texts and also search for relevant sources outside the already collected material. Observing repetition thus functioned as a way to approach the intertextual relations in and beyond the research material.

Examining thematic and linguistic patterns in the research material required paying attention to the language of texts in several different ways. These included looking at the texts at the level of whole-text language organisation, as well as at the level of individual words (see Fairclough 2001, 242–242). With whole-text organisation, I took notice of the structure of texts in narrative and argumentative terms. At the level of words, I observed the choices of vocabulary, semantic relations between words and denotative and connotative meanings. These kinds of observation were made as a continuous practice of analysis while I looked for discursive patterns in the research material. For this reason I

do not particularly highlight these linguistic aspects per se in the following chapters. Rather they should be acknowledged as a “natural” part of semiotic analysis even though the outcome of this analysis necessarily moves quite far from the connotations of single words and the like.

The web of texts that I examine is continuously on the move, and the connections between texts, audiences and authors are multiple and overlapping. The idea of repetition is therefore central. An occasional reference or echo is not necessarily significant, but repeated textual references are part of how any text functions and thus have significance and consequences (Vuori 2004, 116). This is why I have focused on the repeated, similar aspects of different texts, trying at the same time to take into account that there are also notable differences between the texts. Following Julia Kristeva, Jaana Vuori notes that intertextuality is not just the communication between existing concrete texts, but that every text participates in the production of other, hidden texts (Vuori 2001, 92). This kind of communication, where the web of texts is at the same time intrinsically connected *and* subtly produces new texts, has been my starting point for understanding how my research material participates in framing processes of promotion and the promotional self.³⁷

Thinking of how a self is brought into being, I follow Paul Ricoeur (1980: 1991) in understanding narrative as one of the main vehicles through which the self is figured or figures. The function of narratives in relation to framing the self, as I understand it, is twofold. First, the frames that bring the self into being are constructed through narratives, and they become understandable and intelligible partly *as* narratives. Second, these frames are part of the narrative mediation through which the self interprets and constructs itself. Different, intersecting narratives can thus be seen as an integral part of the processes in which the self becomes framed in a certain way.

In terms of methodological practice it has thus been crucial to pay attention to narrativity, both as a textual form and as a way to report, understand and structure lived experience (cf. Hyvärinen 2007, 137). By textual narrativity here I mean that texts in the

³⁷ It should be noted, however, that I am not committed to a strictly post-structuralist concept of intertextuality that would neglect reality outside texts. Taking intertextuality into account makes any text's relation to reality more complex and deeper (Saariluoma 1992, 24), but subjects are not wholly captured by language and discursive conventions.

research material tell about an event or a series of events that gain significance through temporality. Some of the texts are narratives, whereas other texts “possess narrativity” in the sense that they are capable of inspiring a narrative response (see Hyvärinen 2007, 137).

Understanding and interpreting narrativity, I rely on Ricoeur’s (1980, 169) characterisation of narrativity and temporality as closely related. Ricoeur takes temporality to be “that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity” and narrativity to be “the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent”. In relation to narrativity, a distinction between plot, event and story is relevant. Ricoeur defines plot as the intelligible whole that governs a succession of events in any story. Plot thus “*makes* events *into* a story” (ibid., 171). According to Ricoeur, every narrative combines two dimensions in various proportions, one chronological and the other non-chronological. The first is an episodic dimension which characterises the story as made of events. The second is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. (Ibid., 178). To get hold of the significance of these two dimensions in any text, it is necessary to examine the text in terms of events, plots and stories. These definitions have been my starting point for approaching the whole-text organisation of any text with elements of narrativity. It is nevertheless not an end in itself to recognise or define particular plots, events and stories. On the contrary, making these distinctions is relevant only if they are viewed in terms of meaning-making on the level of discursive structures. The point of interest is how narrative temporality figures in the framing of the self that is achieved through narratives.

Looking at narrativity in different texts also allows us to ask questions concerning the subjects that are implicated in a text, whether as narrators, characters in the story or assumed readers. If one investigates who is telling a story, who is the implied listener or reader of the story, and whose viewpoint is given a central position in the narrative, it is possible to grasp some aspects of the production of subjects through discourse. In other words, one can examine what kinds of subject become possible in the frame formed through particular texts. Especially relevant here is the concept of the implied reader as a hypothetical figure whom the text is designed to address. The implied reader is the mechanism through which a text offers subject positions to a recipient. It is thus

essentially a construction within the text, but its significance nonetheless reaches outside the text to the actual recipient. In this way, the frames produced in a text become part of the narrative mediation through which a self interprets and constructs itself.

While looking for repetition and patterns, I was interested above all in the moments when the patterns seemed to crack, dissolve or contradict themselves and the narrative coherence fractured. Here I followed the practice of symptomatic reading (Hennessy 1993a, xvii, 91–94). This is a practice that aims to make sense of the gaps, cracks or silences in textual or narrative coherence as signs or symptoms of dis-ease. Symptomatic reading has mainly been used within a psychoanalytic framework, but Hennessy (*ibid.*) proposes a historicised version of symptomatic reading as a strategy of ideology critique. Here attention is paid to the ways in which hegemonic discursive constructions bear the signs of an inner contradiction that makes them vulnerable.

On the level of texts this means looking for silences and contradictions within the inner logic of the text. The texts I examine both produce and attempt to solve multiple contradictions, which are sometimes evident and sometimes silenced within them. I have approached these contradictions or fissures in the texts not as slippages of signification, but as displacements of much wider contradictions that structure the social. Finding a gap or contradiction in the text thus does not mean that the text itself is inconsistent or illogical. Rather, the inconsistency should be interpreted in relation to the social relations that are reflected, maintained and produced by such texts. In a similar way, a silence in a text is significant because what cannot be expressed within a particular discursive construction tells as much about the social imaginary as that which is pointedly articulated. Symptomatic reading is thus used as a way to unpack and disarticulate the ideological constructions that are produced in the texts.

The practice of symptomatic reading, as Hennessy (1993a, 92) notes, does not aim to heal the crises it exposes. On the contrary, it tries to demonstrate that internal contradictions in a text are the product of and in turn help to promote crises in the larger social formation, contradictions which cannot be resolved by the system as it is at present. In this way, the practice of reading employed here is a form of ideology critique as “crisis diagnosis” that enables future change. It is thus a way to bring the theory of the politics of discourse into practice.

2.3. Reflections on ethical aspects

I have done my best above to give an accurate description of how I as a researcher am positioned in certain methodological, theoretical and empirical locations. However, even though we are positioned in certain locations, we are not determined by them (see Skeggs 1997, 18). The methodological background should thus not be interpreted as a deterministic standpoint for research, even if it is significant in evaluating the knowledge produced. Certain options are shut down by certain methodological choices, but plenty of options remain open and this, I think, is what makes research interesting; any methodological standpoint also allows for surprising discoveries and unexpected changes of direction. Sometimes these discoveries have forced me to rethink my research design, to stretch the limits of my chosen methodology or occasionally step aside from my previously chosen path.

I do not wish to imply that I am fully aware or in control of all the choices I have made during the research process. Although I am not always aware of them, however, I am still responsible for them, particularly for the ethical decisions that I have made. To conclude these methodological reflections, I shall now briefly consider these decisions.

The clearest ethical choice in this research concerned the anonymity of the participants. In interviews I always asked whether the interviewee wished to be made anonymous. Some of the interviewees saw no problem in being written about under their own names, but since most of them wished for anonymity I decided that it should apply to everyone. I thus refer to the interviews by using the letter H³⁸ followed by a number (such as H10). I chose not to invent pseudonyms, because I wanted to emphasise the textual nature of the research material. Not using names is a way to direct attention towards the connections between different texts and repeated textual patterns, rather than towards the views of specific individuals. For this reason I use numbers rather than

³⁸ H stands for the Finnish word for interview, “*haastattelu*”, and I have used it because the letter I (for “interview”) is harder to distinguish from numbers and might cause confusion.

invented names. I have also left out or changed some parts of the extracts which might have made the interviewees recognisable.³⁹

While the interviews are anonymous, the published textual material is located through references. This material is publicly available, and I have found no reason not to reveal the origins of extracts from published texts. Indeed, I consider that it increases the reliability of my research if part of the research material is also available for others to discuss and interpret. The same applies to lectures. These are referred to by the letter L and a number similarly to the interviews, but in the reference list I give the dates as well as the names of the lecturers, as these were public events in which anyone could have taken part. At one of the lectures I asked whether I could record it, but was not given permission (the lecturer vaguely referred to trade secrets), and thus the references to lectures are to lecture notes taken by myself and others. However, I do consider lectures to be public in the sense that people are subsequently allowed to discuss and describe their content, and thus I see no problem in using these descriptions as research material.

Although I have paid attention to the anonymity of the interviewees, the coaches in question are not particularly “vulnerable subjects” in the sense that participating in the research might threaten or damage their personal safety or profession, for instance. Even though the interviews were emotionally challenging and rather informal, they nevertheless remained quite controlled and professional, and there was no danger of the interviewees having confessed to me things that they did not realise would be used in the research, for example (cf. Alasuutari 2005, 19). Questions concerning the protection of interviewees, apart from protecting their anonymity, are thus not at issue here.

In terms of coaching as an occupation, my research will probably have no impact on the level of demand for coaching in Finland, and it is very unlikely that the research will affect any particular service provider’s livelihood. I present critiques of practices of coaching, but in the concluding remarks I also present suggestions for developing coaching, which I think is also an ethical response, a way of bearing responsibility for my critical approach.

³⁹ The anonymous interviews will be archived in the Finnish Social Science Data Archive, and I asked every interviewee’s permission for this, explaining what this kind of archiving means. One interviewee refused, and so one interview will not be archived.

The ethical problem that has occupied my mind the most concerns the slippery issue of relating to the interviewees and defining their status in relation to the whole research. I stated above that I do not discuss any particular individual's vision and do not even refer to the individuals by name or pseudonym, because my approach considers the web of texts that forms the research material. I claimed that this is what allows me to maintain my critical approach – it is not directed towards individuals, but towards ideological constructions produced across different sites. However, making such a distinction between a web of texts and individual speakers, or between discursive constructions and personal visions is not always possible, or at least is rather hard. Employing a certain approach and writing in a certain manner does not erase the fact that the people with whom I communicated in the research process are living and breathing individuals with their own histories and locations. These people have willingly participated in the research, giving me their time and resources and helping me on.

Reflecting on the place of individual interviewees and their “voice” in my research, I have found useful the methodologically oriented discussions concerning individual agency and autonomy in relation to critical approaches in feminist research. These discussions have concerned the problem of well-meaning critical research eradicating the agency and autonomy of its participants, for example in the case of young women and sexuality (see Duits & van Zoonen 2007; 2006; Gill 2007b). These questions are complex, because the emphasis on autonomous choices and agency resonates with post-feminist and neoliberal tendencies. The problem is thus not only how to account for the interviewees' experiences, but often also how to account for the fact that the way they tell these experiences is congruent with post-feminist, neoliberal narratives of choice and empowerment (Gill 2007b).

In this respect, I have found Rosalind Gill's (2007b, 78) notion of critical respect to be enlightening. Gill describes critical respect as an orientation that involves attentive, respectful listening, but does not abdicate the right to question or interrogate. She notes that respecting individuals' accounts of their experiences does not have to mean that those accounts should be treated as if they were the only stories that could be told:

Respectful listening is the beginning, not the end, of the process and our job is surely to contextualize these stories, to situate them, to look at their patterns and variability, to examine their silences and exclusions, and above all, to locate them in a wider context.
(Gill 2007b, 77)

In this quote, Gill accurately describes the approach for which I have aimed throughout the research process. The critical examination that I have directed to the research material is a practice of contextualisation, and it does not mean that I consider the statements given by my interviewees as false, wrong or morally inferior. Encountering the interviewees, with all the affective consequences described above, has enabled me to appreciate their positions and to learn to listen to their perspectives, which again has helped me with the contextualising work. However, respect does not require complete agreement, and besides respect I trust that also the coaches themselves have the capacity to see that their practices are not above criticism. This means that these practices may have consequences and implications which are not visible to the individual making his/her living. My work, then, is to try to understand these consequences and implications without losing sight of different individuals' motivations and experiences, and without being disrespectful to those who enabled me to examine these things. As Gill (2007b, 77) notes, situating an individual's account is not being disrespectful to it – indeed, sometimes not doing this would itself be irresponsible and disrespectful.

Also, I am aware that the discursive constructions I examine are in no way beneath me; on the contrary, I am as enmeshed in them as anyone else. The reason for beginning this research was exactly my intuitive recognition of the pervasiveness of the processes of self-promotion in my own life, and I wanted to examine this phenomenon precisely because it seemed to be something that affected everyone and offered very few possibilities for critical resistance. As Gill (2007b, 76) writes, power works in and through subjects, not in terms of crude manipulation, but by structuring our sense of self. To examine these workings of power, it is necessary to recognise that the framings given to a particular kind of self are not external to us but – to paraphrase Gill – “deeply our own”, and in this sense any critical approach is bound to find it hard to balance between critical analysis and accounting for individual experiences. Whether I have been successful in achieving this balance is, finally, for the reader to decide, but suffice it to

say that I have been aware, as a consequence of my own experiences, of how pervasive but also how rewarding the processes of self-promotion are.

3. Coaching for self-promotion

This chapter concentrates on coaching as a form of work. In focusing on practices of coaching, I have two aims. The first aim is to provide an overview of coaching as a particular form of work, and of the particular practices employed by different coaches. The purpose is to make the empirical field of this research – coaching – familiar, so that the following chapters concerning change, individuality and potential can be read against the empirical background provided here. The second aim is to begin to chart the empirical field in relation to my research questions. This means that I will look at how coaching as a form of work makes self-promotion relevant and intelligible and I will pay attention to how practices of coaching concretely facilitate and advocate self-promotion. I thus examine practices of coaching here as a “standpoint” from which to approach the framing of self-promotion and finally also the interconnections between self-promotion, capitalism and gender.

I shall start by examining how coaching as field of work is described in the research material, looking at the processes of becoming a coach, different accounts of competence, the promotional practices that the coaches employ, and the echoes of feminism that emerge in these descriptions. This first part ends with an account of coaching as an “individual vocation” (Pongratz & Voß 2003). In the second part I consider the practices of coaching in the light of theories concerning interactive service work, emotional and immaterial labour, looking for important thematic “knots” from which to begin to unravel the connections between practices of coaching and processes of self-promotion. Throughout the chapter, I will pay particular attention to the interviews, but will occasionally also refer to other texts such as websites or articles.

3.1. Individual vocation

Becoming a coach

Almost all of the coaches interviewed for this research had begun their adult life in another field of work before becoming a coach. Among the interviewees were, for example, a midwife who had studied pedagogy, a salesman with a degree from a university of technology, a nurse who had gained a psychotherapy qualification, and a mentor with 20 years' experience in marketing. These people had all taken different routes to coaching. Their narratives about becoming a coach, however, also had some common characteristics.

When becoming a coach was discussed in the interviews, it was often presented as a result of personal reflection and conscious choice. In some accounts it was defined in opposition to other options described as traditional, normative or unreflective, and instead characterised as something slightly unusual that had taken courage and will to realise:

I would have become the manager of a kind of psychiatric ward and so I calculated the options, shall I take the job or shall I gamble on nothing basically and become an entrepreneur, and I chose entrepreneurship after all at that moment, and the original idea was that I could employ myself and a couple of others, [...] that I would work more as a consultant and sell myself forward from there, but I have this attitude a bit like James Bond, nothing is enough, so here I am now (laughs).⁴⁰
(H9)

When a person grows up then at some point you begin to wonder, who is the real me, what do I want to do at work? So for me the personnel thing was more crucial than technology, and I found this natural psychologist in myself, even though I hadn't yet learned psychology, but it was so obvious that if I retrained it would be in psychology.
(H16)

⁴⁰ See appendix II for the original interview extracts in Finnish.

My background is such that [...] I've been with sales for the past 11 years, and for the first four years it was a tough school for selling, I sold time shares, it's quite a good sales school, and with these interpersonal skills I realised you can sell practically any product and service, and so I've tried all sorts of things and have come to the conclusion that for you to keep your own attitude and motivation in place the product or service you're selling has to have real significance, the work has to be meaningful. Before, I've sold coaching and training services and I've always liked it and so I had so much of it on my CV, so developing [a branch of the company] has been my job, but all of our, all of my colleagues are competent at selling coaching services, so maybe I'm a kind of offer-generator who can convert the offer into what the customer wants – I think at the moment it seems like I'll be here until retirement, this is such a great thing, every workday is different, every case is different so you won't get bored.

(H7)

These interview extracts contain many different aspects; in particular, H7 was a person who sold and developed coaching services but did not himself work as a coach, and thus the emphasis is very much on his sales experience. However, what is common to all of the extracts is the way in which the narrator's personal characteristics function as an explanation for his/her choice of work or, to phrase differently, the way choosing a particular form of work is described as if it were determined by personal characteristics unique to the individual. Being "James Bond" or a "natural psychologist" and, implicitly though importantly, becoming aware of these characteristics is thus described as crucial for both finding and making sense of one's place in the labour market. Articulating work in terms of self – or in other words, articulating self in terms of work – relates to the way in which the coaching industry in general centres on the self and in this way renders different aspects of life and work understandable and intelligible *through* the self.

It must be acknowledged, though, that the majority of interviewees (ten out of 17) either did not talk about how they came to work as coaches or else answered questions about their previous work experience with short accounts of degrees or previous jobs. Those who dwelt on the subject were those whose way of talking in the interview was rich and personal in other respects too. For me as the interviewer, these interviews were the most memorable, as they seemed to bring out something that the interviewees themselves had given a lot of thought to and were happy to share.

In some of the interviews, becoming a coach was presented as a way out from a life that had proven inconsistent with the person's values or expectations. Realising this inconsistency demanded that the person be (or become) aware of their "true" self and its values and expectations. In these narratives, the inconsistent way of life, which was then left behind, was defined by a previous occupation or field of work. One of the interviewees, for example, described her previous work environment as "corporate hell", and claimed that once it had become clear that "no money or car could make up for the missing part," it was time for her to leave her secure position in the management group and become a coaching entrepreneur (H10). Another interviewee described how as a young man he had wanted to be a "boss" and had a lot of ambition, but once he reached the top he realised that "I must be at the top now, no need to go further up, so there followed, how do you say... a deeper level," which led him to retrain as a psychotherapist (H15). In these narratives, the person has achieved something he/she had always striven for, only to discover that it did not quite meet their expectations. Coaching then has come to mean something unexpected, something discovered a little later in life and therefore cherished, something that is in accord with who one "really" is.

Narratives of this kind resonate with the (popular) psychological understanding that reaching a certain age entails a "crisis" as the person is forced to re-evaluate their life and achievements. This conception originates in Erik Erikson's theory of developmental stages that are typical to a person's lifespan. Each stage contains a development task requiring the person to successfully resolve a particular conflict. The lifespan theory very strongly advocates the idea that a person's development continues (has to continue) throughout his or her life (e.g. Baltes et al. 1999), and it is very much in accord with practices such as coaching, that employ ideas of human development or lifelong learning. Consequently, it is no wonder that some of the interviewees both mention lifespan theory as one of their working tools and apply it in reflecting on their own lives.⁴¹

Besides the interviewees who had made considerable, carefully weighed changes in their entire lives when becoming a coach, there were also many who were doing coaching as a sideline to their work for themselves or an employer. These people had already been

⁴¹ Coaching as well as other similar practices might even be seen as instances of the commercialisation of popular psychology, in the sense that they offer solutions for problems that are identified and thus brought into existence through theories such as lifespan theory.

doing work that was more or less similar to coaching – such as consulting or personnel management – and had simply added coaching to their repertoire as another aspect of what they already did at work, rather than as a whole new occupation:

I graduated in 1992 [...] with a Masters in Economic Sciences and worked for others... until 2007, as a financial manager in different enterprises most of the time. Then from 2007 I worked as an entrepreneur, doing consulting for different businesses and in relation to financial management and data systems, but also doing this kind of outsourced financial management service. And [...] now recently I've included training and coaching here, or tried to orient towards these new things.

(H13)

So there are actually two things, being a boss and being responsible for a process of change and then there's training, and then I call myself a trainer more than an instructor/educator because instructor for me is a person who talks... from the front and then teaches others, who has more knowledge than the participants and does not very much involve them. But a trainer is a person who proceeds from the idea that the participants, they actually have the knowledge, and the task for the trainer is to offer tools for their work. [...] So the trainer is a sort of facilitator. And then a fourth field in addition to managing, change and training is working as a coach. And... I mostly coach individuals. And they are usually bosses or management...

(H14)

Some of the interviewees who worked for organisations did coaching as part of their role in the organisation, whereas some had coaching clients as a form of freelancing in addition to their other paid work. The relations between different forms of coaching, and between personal enterprise and working for organisations, were often quite blurred:

Q: When you're coaching individuals, do they come as private persons or ...?

A: ...Yes...

Q: They don't come via business organisations?

A: Now, they come, in a way, from there too, from the processes that I've done in organisations, they know I do these kinds of things. So they come when they have changed job or when they are in the middle of changing jobs. They cross. So they might have been in my research and development project and then they come to me saying "Hey, you, could you help, I've been thinking about applying for this job?" and other things, so. The way things are, people mainly come to individual

coaching through the grapevine, some individual's recommendation or whatever. I do not market myself because I do so much business coaching.
(H16)

None of the coaches I interviewed mentioned any inclination to quit coaching and move into another field of work; on the contrary, many of them seemed quite content with their current work and felt that in coaching they could also apply the skills they had acquired in previous jobs. They claimed that coaching had proved to be what they had expected or hoped for when they were choosing to become a coach. It should be noted, however, that this mainly positive outlook on coaching is consistent with the overall pointedly positive tone that characterised the interviews. The interviewees were quite careful when describing and characterising their occupation, and usually highlighted the positive aspects. In general they would not speak of coaching in negative terms, and – as mentioned before – some of them were also quite keen to convince me that coaching was a serious, important and valuable profession.

The inclination towards positive descriptions has been recognised as typical of interviews in general; interviewees often try to avoid presenting conflicts or problems in the interview situation, building a “wall of happiness” between themselves and the interviewer (Kortteinen 1982; Pietilä 2010). However, although I am not interested here in whether the interviewees were being truthful in their accounts, it is worth noting some possible reasons why the “wall of happiness” was so strong when coaching as a form of work was being discussed in the interviews. I suggest that this relates to questions of competence. Might the reason for a need to explain and to justify – to keep up the wall of happiness – have been that the interviewees did not trust my ability to recognise and accept either the importance of their work or their capabilities as coaches? Clearly, there was a lack of shared context to draw on, and the interviewees had to negotiate their positions against what they thought I valued or recognised and what they thought my preconceptions were concerning occupational competence.

Why this lack of shared context and trust? First, the relatively new status of coaching as a form of work explains why the interviewees did not trust that I as an interviewer would appreciate or even recognise coaching as a proper occupation. Second, the prominence of different kinds of “life coaches” in the media makes it hard to

distinguish work-related coaching from coaching in other spheres of life. In addition to work-related coaching, there is an even more varied field of what might be called life coaches, from personal trainers to “love coaches” (cf. Storgård 2010). Coaches working for business organisations might want to differentiate their work from coaching that centres on “soft” or “unprofessional” issues such as love, or that advocates “unscientific” practices such as feng shui or meditation.

As for the newness of coaching, one of the interviewees challenged this conception:

Q: [...] I gather that this is a relatively new occupation.

A: In relation to what?

Q: Say, the occupation of teacher.

A: Well teaching is an old occupation, that’s true. Work-related coaching we’ve had for decades, big international agents such as [company] that I’ve worked with [...].

(H5)

Partly because the tone of the interviewee’s voice sounded a little aggressive to me, I interpreted this exchange as the expression of a need to establish work-related coaching as a serious and solid profession distinct from what might be called recent cheapjack versions of coaching. The interviewee seemed to interpret my question as a hint that coaching might not be as established a profession as other forms of work – and he was probably partly right, for to my mind coaching was not (and is not) a steadily established occupation in the same way as, say, teaching or building houses, and it is this newness of coaching that makes it a particularly interesting object for research. The interviewee, however, seems to connect the notion of “old” with “prestigious” or “serious”, as he answers my question with the claim that coaching has been around for a long time (*for decades*) and that there are important and serious companies (*big, international agents*) working in the field.

The credibility of coaching was also explicitly taken up in another interview (again by the interviewer). The interviewee’s answers were in line with the general tendency to credit coaching as a serious and “normal” form of work:

Q: Do you think that there are, in the field, I don’t mean the members of your association but otherwise, do you think that there are scams?

A: Well I think one should say that when we are talking about things and methods that are so simple, that can be understood with a simple motto like “talking helps” I don’t think it can be a scam and, in general, there are no mantras or ceremonies or such involved in coaching, then in those cases we are clearly talking about some other stuff, Scientology or whatever.

Q: Right.

A: But then I used the word [romp] in the sense that we can’t give like psychology or economics or whatever such clear research results in terms of how this works. [...]

(H4)

As long as there are no official qualifications for becoming a coach, making and maintaining distinctions will probably be difficult. This is especially so because some of the interviewees, despite having a profile in work-related coaching, also offered more general “life management” services, such as weight control or sports coaching. Also, even though the interviewee quoted above wants to distinguish it clearly from “Scientology or whatever”, coaching actually has many similarities to what might be called spiritual holistic practices (these connections, as well as those to the New Age, will be further examined later).

It is thus not possible to draw strict boundaries between differently oriented coaching practices, any more than it is possible to give a universal definition of how one becomes a coach. Coaching as a field of work is, at least at the moment, inevitably fuzzy in terms of competence, and this affects how the interviewees talk about their work, and also how they understand their own and their clients’ positions. Yet the question concerning competence is, I think, more complex than simply not (yet) having an established occupation. On the one hand, it can be hard to establish credibility, but on the other hand, there are no restrictions on widening one’s field of work, and no restrictions concerning previous education. This means that the achievement of competence depends not on one’s previous achievements, but rather on what one is capable of at the moment and, as will be seen, what one can say about oneself and one’s own past in order to present oneself as a competent coach.

What this means, among other things, is that even though coaches are particular about their work’s worth and prestige, becoming a coach also emerges in the interviews as a viable option for almost *anyone*: “I claim that everyone can become a coach, if you

have a desire to change and understand that this occupation is not one for a messiah. I mean that we support people, we do not fix them” (H10). It is understandable that, due to the great variety in coaches’ backgrounds, the interviewees are reluctant to estimate what might be the necessary minimum requirement for anyone to become a coach – because competence cannot actually be measured in terms of education. Also, in this particular interview extract, the coach in question does not mention any practical skills (such as listening or interpersonal skills), but instead claims that what one needs is a “desire to change”. Everything else might be achieved through training, but one needs to have a personal, considered inclination towards the transformation of the self – and, I suggest, an ability to communicate this inclination to others.

The emphasis on personal transformation that emerges in some of the interviews is of course connected to the fact that most coaches have decades of working life behind them and are consciously looking for change. It is notable, however, that the change they are looking for is obviously tied to the self – it is not, for example, a change that would transform their working environment or their previous professional field. Rather, the emphasis is on first getting in touch with who one “really” is, and then finding one’s place in working life or the labour market.

Emphasising individual ability over skills, and claiming that change or transformation is at the centre of one’s being, is one of the most repeated discursive patterns in texts concerning coaching, and, as will be seen, it is significant from the perspective of self-promotion. Here I want to note that, considering the above interview extract and other personal narratives in the interviews, a willingness to draw on the idea that one has undiscovered or unused potential and an ability to change oneself from within might be one of the preconditions for becoming a coach, for choosing coaching as a profession.

Coaching, as it generally emerges in the interviews, can be seen as a paradigmatic example of what have been characterised as “new kind of careers”, in which one does not cling to one profession or one set of skills for a whole lifetime, but instead is committed to the ideals of lifelong learning and constantly open to new occupational opportunities. The coaches here represent workers who have to be ready at every turn to reassess the market situation and accommodate to changing circumstances by retraining and

reorienting themselves. They are thus already (successfully) responding to a tendency that Richard Sennett (2006, 115), among others, has identified as the need for a new version of talent, which is not content-specific or content-determined but is rather a form of “potential” consisting of the person’s flexibility in terms of labour market competition.

However, in the interviews that contained accounts of career changes there were only a few mentions of external pressures affecting the choices of the interviewee. Rather, careers and employment were assessed in ways that situated the self or the individual as the touchstone and generating agent of change. This tendency to individualise questions of career can be perceived, for example, in the following interview extract:

I began these individual coaching sessions when, for example, this mobile business company changed owners, and there was a threat that my work there would end, then I began this other one. And I had a prohibition on competition at that time, a hard one, I couldn’t work for competing companies, so I had to kind of tack against the wind, and so I developed this concept in case there is a change. The starting point was to manage one’s own risks. And then there was this more diverse – and I liked diversity in fact, because you kind of promote, kind of do these teams, do these lectures, do these processes and then you do this personal [coaching] – and that way they just have been formed according to the client and the situation. That’s how it is. And about marketing, I think anyway, I’m a developer and I’m dynamic, I’m gathering a bigger group again, because I see – you’ve got a question coming on this too – I see that the market is growing.
(H16)

The extract begins by making clear that external pressure (even a *threat*) was the interviewee’s reason to get involved in individual coaching. There was a prohibition on competition, a *hard* one, and that’s why she could not act freely, but had to *tack against the wind*. However, although it begins by acknowledging external pressures and the hardness of the situation, the discursive tone then quickly – almost breathtakingly – changes, as the narrator becomes an active agent who *develops* and *manages risks*. Suddenly this is a case of a dynamic developer who *likes diversity, in fact* and is sure that the *market is growing*. In this way, the discursive tone moves towards articulations centred on a capable self, and the discussion is pushed towards a hopeful note about the future.

Training

For many coaches, supporting others in building terrific lives is the most fulfilling work they have ever done. Others find meaning and fulfilment in co-creating a coaching culture in an organisational setting. If you are interested in offering life, career, business or corporate coaching services, you will be pleased with our programs.

(www.coachinc.com)

However, the transformations that are needed, either for flexibility and re-adjustment or for personal reasons, do not come without effort. Even if coaching as a form of work is “suitable for everyone”, the coaches I interviewed had usually taken part in some form of professional training. In addition to their previous education and work experience, they had gained competence by taking part in different courses both in Finland and abroad. The interviewees had also studied the field independently, for example reading self-help books such as Peter Montoya’s *The Brand Called You* (2002), which was actually lent to me for research purposes by one interviewee.

In 2010, after the interviews had all been done, the first Finnish guidebook concerning not just branding but also personal branding was published (Sounio 2010). There are of course plenty of self-help books in Finnish with an implicit message concerning promoting the self, but Lisa Sounio’s book was to my knowledge the first to explicitly take on the rhetoric of branding and marketing the self. The book (*Brändikäs*) immediately gained some publicity, and it will probably be used by various coaches looking for occupational advice, as well as by other persons interested in self-management and marketing. It is also probable that there will be other similar publications to follow, since it seems that the Finnish coaching industry is only just gaining ground.

As a researcher, I have found it confusing to note that my research also subtly qualifies me for coaching, and it seems that if I made the effort I could present myself as an expert in branding the self in working life, even though my lack of experience in the business world would be a considerable drawback. So far I have been contacted once and

asked for advice in relation to questions of personal branding. The person, who had found me through internet browsing, told me that he was currently building a personal brand and wanted to meet me to gain more knowledge of the subject. I refused, explaining that my work was more concerned with social studies than with branding consultancy, but he remained interested in my research. I consider this one example of how the field of coaching provides opportunities for people coming from quite varied backgrounds.

The courses on offer for those wishing to start a coaching career are mostly organised by the two coaching associations that currently exist in Finland, the Finnish Coaching Association and the International Coaching Federation. In autumn 2010, for example, the FCA was offering a four-day course (with homework assignments) called the Coaching Diploma Training, which cost €800. The ICF Finland, for its part, offered courses which were said to guarantee “accreditation in ICF-certified coaching”, meaning that the courses had credibility within an internationally established system of coaching training. The courses listed on the ICF website are organised through different providers, such as Results Coaching Systems and the Business Coaching Centre. The course provided by Results, for example, lasted 60 hours and cost €3850 in autumn 2010 (<http://www.resultscoaches.fi/>).

Besides these “official” and relatively costly courses, the coaches that I interviewed had studied, for example, mentoring and organisation consulting. Some had also participated in international courses provided by either the ICF or other actors. Quite a few of the interviewees mentioned that they had participated in “several courses” in various areas but did not explain more precisely.

However, for those who worked in what can be characterised as the public sector, competence was clearly not related to the courses offered by coaching associations. When asked about their education and working history, these interviewees would first tell me their academic degree and then give a short account of their previous working experience and any additional education. One interviewee, for example, who worked as an “individual coach” (or “coach for individuals”) for an association that provided rehabilitation services for a municipality, described her background as follows:

Q: So you were educated as a psychologist?

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of work history do you have otherwise, how did you end up working here? No need to tell very personal details.

A: I was in child welfare, worked in child welfare and quit when I had had enough, and then, in a twist of fate, I came here.

(H2)

Here, in contrast to the previously cited interview extracts, the account of the working history was very brief and impersonal. Instead of emphasising personal characteristics, the interviewee focused on practical issues and was rather vague about how she had actually come to work for the association. It should also be noted, though, that I as interviewer rather encouraged this kind of description, adding that it was not necessary to get very personal. This was because I felt in this interview situation that *asking* a question of personal background, which in many other interviews seemed to be an expected and appreciated question, was here bordering on intrusiveness. A similar brevity and impersonality also characterised two other interviews with people who worked in what might be called social services, i.e. doing social work in connection with a municipality:

Q: What kind of educational backgrounds do you have?

A1: Well we graduated one after the other from [the university's] Faculty of Pedagogics with a Masters in Education. And so I have in addition social pedagogy, vocational education. And then something more incoherent, special education, for example.

A2: Yes and me as well, in connection to that, I mean to this, current, student counselling education.

(H3)

A: [...] I was educated as a social psychologist, and then last year I did a kind of additional training, as a neuropsychiatric coach, which lasted for a year in [the university]. So it gave me more tools to coach these kinds of special clients, ones that have for example ADHD or Asperger's [syndrome] or these kinds of problems.

Q: Ok. Was it, that neuropsychiatric, was it related just to those who really have psychiatric problems or...

A: Yes, to that, we studied the neurochemical aspects too, but mainly how to operate with these persons, how to coach. They've got different troubles in everyday life than ordinary folks, interaction can be quite different from... yes.

Q: Ok. You are a social psychologist and then you have... But were you anyway, in a way, before this separate coaching training, did you already work here or...?

A: Yes, I've been here for three and a half years. In for different assignments, and now in this current one, a bit more than a year and a half.

Q: Right. Did you before this, before [your current job] work in similar jobs or...?

A: No, nowhere. Only I did a training period, two months in prison. But otherwise, when I came here I hadn't yet graduated, so I did my graduation thesis while working here.

(H12)

In comparison to the interviews cited earlier, these accounts of career choices and personal history seem abruptly short and somehow unsatisfying. It almost feels as if the interviewer has been cheated of knowledge concerning the *personal* motivations and choices of the respondents. In contrast with articulations that focus on personal history and “finding the true self”, the discursive constructions in these extracts are clearly not centred on the self but rather operate at the relatively abstract level of degrees and work practices. Telling one's working history is thus related here to an idea of occupational competence that is *not* attached to one's person but rather to one's education and formal working experience.

These interview extracts demonstrate that understanding one's work and career in terms of the individual self is not the only possible option – there are different ones available, and when the focus is shifted from business organisations to municipal associations there is an especially clear change in the way personal motivations figure. What connects these interview extracts with other interviews, however, is the variety of education or schooling that precedes the interviewee's current job. Even though those working in the so-called public services seem to emphasise formal education, they have also done short courses and other kinds of additional training in order to become more competent as coaches.

All in all, then, what was typical for the interviewees in general was not any specific education or training but rather the tailoring of different available options into a personal combination to form the necessary knowledge and skills for different kinds of coaching. In some cases this had clearly demanded a specific, financially secure position which enabled the interviewee to leave his or her previous employment, acquire training in coaching and “start anew”. In other cases coaching was a “natural” outcome of a variety of previous work assignments. In light of this tailored or patchwork-like

competence, coaching seems to resemble what Hans J. Pongratz and G. Günter Voß (2003, 10) have described as “individual vocation”. This means that the relatively rigid forms of qualification demanded for standardised vocations or professions are transformed into a personalised model of specific competence and experience, integrated in a rationalised, though individual, way of life. What seems to follow this conception of tailored competence is an increasing inclination towards processes of self-promotion. I will next look a little more closely into how coaching as an individual vocation functions as a context for different practices of promoting the self.

Building promotional packages

The traditional concept of a person’s occupation is perhaps inadequate to describe the interviewees and their labour as coaches. Coaching did not necessarily constitute a specific work identity or a particular way of life for them. It did not entail any specific kind of educational background or working environment. In addition, coaching did not entail any particular practices of work (and hence any particular organisation of work), but could be used in different ways and in different situations. In this sense, coaching itself emerged from the interviews not as a fixed entity but as flexible, adaptable and readily adjusting to different situations and agents. In reality, of course, it is the living persons who are doing the adjusting, flexing and adapting – both in the sense that they are adapting the idea of coaching and in the sense that they themselves adapt in different ways.

Another “adaptation” can be perceived in relation to business and public services. Even though I referred above to a distinction between the “business world” and social work/public services, this division is actually not very clear in terms of coaching (cf. Virolainen 2010, 16). There are coaches who work for business organisations and at the same time sell coaching services to the job centres, for example. Job centres offer courses for the unemployed, and these courses are bought from various actors such as coaches, who then end up working as entrepreneurs in the public sector as well as the business sector. Another emblematic example is one interviewee who worked in an organisation

that aimed to connect the local university campus with the local enterprise sector. This organisation had a project offering entrepreneurship services and education for university students, and within this project the interviewee led workshops on personal branding for the students. He was thus working for the university (a public organisation) and at the same time also working for the business network organisation, and this double bind characterised the content of his work: facilitating the students' access to (and enforcing their orientation towards) both entrepreneurship or self-employment and self-promotion. In this way, the division between the private and public sectors and between entrepreneurship and employment was fairly blurred in many cases of coaching.

In connection with this, coaching as a form of labour emerged from the interviews as an individual enterprise in more than one sense. A number of the interviewees were private entrepreneurs (quite a few also emphasised their *identity* as entrepreneurs), and even those who were not often worked as self-employed, selling their services as individual agents.⁴² Even those who were “properly” employed by an organisation depicted their work as independent. This meant that they did not refer to a specific work community that was an everyday source of support and companionship. They did describe professional networks (especially those built through coaching associations) and business partnering, but they did not for example mention joint lectures, shared clients or regular cooperation with other coaches on practical work matters.⁴³ For many of them, coaching was based on the specific combination of work experience and education that only they had, and this “individual vocation” was also individual in terms of practical working conditions.

It is in this context, then, that many of the coaches promote themselves as individual entrepreneurs, building their brands on personal characteristics and personal histories. In this sense, the coaches are not only in an occupation that includes the advocacy or facilitation of self-promotion, but they also embrace explicit practices of self-promotion themselves. This was illustrated in several interviews when a general

⁴² While reviewing 60 coaching companies based in Finland (in 2007), Ilkka Virolainen noted that approximately half of these were single person companies and 23 % employed 2–9 persons. There were very few companies that employed over a 100 persons. (Virolainen 2010, 21–22).

⁴³ Except two people who worked as a team in the municipal youth services, and who were also interviewed as a team.

question about personal branding was interpreted as directly related to the coach's own person:

Q: [...] About personal branding, is that familiar to you?

A: Yes... Yes, I mean... With a background in Economic Sciences, branding is very familiar.

Q: Ok, have you... or do you think that it relates to your work in any way?

A: Of course it relates, when you work alone as an entrepreneur, it's that exactly, that gradually you should be able to build a brand which... brings customers, then. Or at least create this kind of credibility, that once you get new contacts, ...are interested in, as one possible option.

Q: Right. So how does it, what does it mean in practice, building a brand, what kind of resources do you need?

A: Well... In brief it could be said that it's crystallising your own message, what I'm doing and... what are my objectives. That you don't try to do everything in the whole world and to be a solution to all the problems that all the clients have... but to concentrate on some specific areas and in that way to strengthen your own know-how, and on the other hand to consolidate the image that the possible target group has of you.

Q: Right... Have you thought that you could, as a coach, also do personal branding? Could it go that way?

A: I don't quite understand...

Q: I mean... because there is also coaching in which you help people build that personal brand, so have you thought that you might...

A: Ah, no, no, I'm not that kind of coach, that's more for the people in marketing, yes.

(H13)

Q: Is branding or brands something that's related to your work?

A: I'm conscious of the fact that my brand is me and that I'm the best presenter and advert for my product, so a coach must "practice what they preach". Be a role model.

(H17)

In another interview, in which the interviewee does not speak of himself in terms of personal branding (in fact he thinks that self-branding is a little narcissistic), the process of realising what kind of personalised competence and experience one has (managing one's "individual vocation") is nevertheless described and interpreted as one way of forming a functional and personalised promotional package of oneself. The choice of

words here (package, crystallisation) echoes marketing language in a way similar to personal branding:

[...] It's great, squeezing all of it [work and personal history] into a compact package, what it really is, how you squeeze something out of it that looks like me. So many months have passed and now I'm beginning to realise, a kind of crystallisation, what is my... how do I crystallise my know-how. It's a first draft, but it's beginning to take form, at least.
(H15)

In the publicity material that I gathered (newspaper articles, websites, advertisements and so forth) the coaches mainly feature in the form of personal brands, some more explicitly than others. Apart from a few big company websites where there are no names mentioned, coaching services are usually personified so that the individual coach represents his or her occupation with a personal account of their experiences, skills and insights. To examine the web publicity for and promotion of coaching a little more closely, I will now step out of the Finnish scene for a while to take a look at a British website for a company called Mowbray by Design. It is a good example of a coaching company that is both the achievement of one individual and also based on the personal presentation (or brand) of this individual.

According to the company website, Mowbray by Design (www.mowbraybydesign.com) is led by Louise Mowbray, who is also the only person on the website and thus presumably the only coach working in the company. Mowbray by Design offers many services: for example, the web page mentions one-to-one coaching, corporate programmes, career change and transition, public speaker training and image consulting. All of these are conducted by Louise Mowbray. As for the presentation of personal skills and characteristics, the web page features several photo portraits of her, a blog by her, a (chargeable) e-book on personal branding by her, and many recommendations for the company extolling her capacities and virtues as a coach. Mowbray also presents herself as very eager to appear in person at all kinds of public events:

Louise Mowbray is an experienced and regular performer in the media. She is available, at short notice and where possible, to comment on a wide range of issues relating to Impact, Leadership Brand, Personal Brands and Image in the context of the latest news, general & current affairs, people in the public eye, job markets and career development.
(<http://www.mowbraybydesign.com/press>)

The way Mowbray depicts her competence here is emblematic of the kind of personal brand/individual vocation that she represents as a coach: her competence is wide and she is willing to present herself confidently as an expert on various themes and matters, which are not even very clearly defined. Thus the product that Mowbray by Design is selling is ultimately Louise Mowbray herself: not a specific service or expertise, but rather a person capable of offering whatever is needed from her.

A similar, explicitly personalised company brand is Minna Eklom, who is based in Geneva but says – in a glossy Finnish magazine – that she has “clients all over Europe” (Pere 2010). Her web page Life and Career Coaching (www.minnaekblom.com) features a smiling portrait of Eklom and information about her “life and mission statement”. Like Mowbray by Design, this page also contains not only links to press coverage but also testimonials concerning Minna Eklom’s capacities and personality:

I worked with Minna, on several objectives that had always been impossible to achieve before. Thanks to her wonderful guidance, expertise and skills, I was able to reach these goals, and they literally changed my life. Her coaching technique is excellent and very effective, and her lovely character and personality made each session an absolute pleasure.
(<http://www.minnaekblom.com/testimonials.htm>, retrieved 4.7.2011)

It is typical that coaches (especially those with a company of their own) should seek publicity, both for themselves and for coaching as a profession. Whereas Louise Mowbray in Britain has press coverage in *The Times* and *Financial Times*, in Finland it seems that working-life coaches are more likely to receive publicity in “softer” media such as glossy magazines. Even though financial newspapers (*Taloussanomati*) relatively often feature topics concerning “the new demands of working life” and other general phenomena, interviews with coaches or articles concerning coaching have so far been less frequent. Coaches thus feature in media that concentrate on “human interest” stories and

publish portraits of individuals rather than business reviews or articles on working conditions and so forth. In glossy magazines, coaches are presented as “interesting personalities”, or alternatively as interesting because they have done something exceptional (a career change). This would seem to specifically concern women, who appear as ideal subjects or role models in women’s magazines.

In the women’s glossy *Gloria*, for example, the female coach Minna Ekblom is pictured in a confident posture (hands on her hips and smiling – the same photo can be found on her company’s webpage), and the headline for the story is “Break the boundaries!” (Pere 2010). In these kinds of stories, ideas of empowerment (with feminist echoes) are promoted as a part of the coach’s brand. Even though gender does not always appear explicitly in these articles, the connotations of feminist or women’s empowerment and *Just Do It* culture (see Cronin 2000) are still present and become part of the promotional strategies of women coaches.

Feminist echoes

In connection with occupational reflections, the idea of women’s empowerment surfaced rather clearly in three interviews, all with women coaches. In these interviews, the women reflected on questions of equality and gender against the background of their own personal histories in working life and otherwise. Two of these interviewees began by describing how they had had to struggle in order to be able to function in a working environment dominated by men:

The final years, in the corporate hell, I sat in an executive group in which I was the only woman and the only one with background in economics, all the others being men and graduate engineers. At that time I really felt genuine pain that there had been no women who could have prepared the way, I saw then that I had to do a hell of a lot more work to be heard. Really I had to curse loudly and say hey I’ve got a brain too and please be kind and listen for a while. The feminine resort then would’ve been to walk to the high-command office and say the boys won’t listen to me, but I decided to fight for my space there. And then in the end when I left the place one of these men in the group called me and said he’s sorry he didn’t defend me even though he had seen me floundering like crazy in the executive group, and he saw what the treatment was like when it came to women – if I were

a man I would have had different power there. But I did contribute to the things that I wanted to, but I really had to work.

(H10)

Being a young woman manager I quite strongly have the idea that you don't need men for every task really, a woman can do many things too, and maybe in the beginning I had to be very convincing, I started my company when I was 26 so I had to dress quite firmly in that jacket suit and wear my hair in a bun and wear glasses that made me look older, in order to be in some way more acceptable when talking to men in their 50s, but now when we are here and I've got a fairly big company and so on and I don't have to think about that any more. Though when you're over 30 you are not a young woman any more in that sense [...] and everyone who comes to work with us, in some way they have to accept that the boss is a woman and often also younger than the people who work with us. But it has also maybe partially been a marketing asset that we've had very determined women whose main principle has been that they want to work in a company where there is a young female manager in charge, because often maybe some sets of values can be a bit different.

(H9)

In these accounts the women recognise inequality and realise that in order to cope they need to try harder than other people (men). Their narratives that it is harder for women to succeed in male-dominated areas seem to rely on a presumed shared context with the interviewer, namely that of feminist-oriented discussions concerning women at work. In the first interview extract it is instantly clear from the first announcement "I was the only woman" that what follows should be understood from the perspective of the interviewee being alone among men, and the narrative contains an assumption that the narrator will have the listener's understanding of and sympathy for such a situation. In the second extract, the referral to "that" jacket suit seems to assume a similar though unannounced perspective on what it is like to be a young woman among older men. The (correct) assumption of shared context with the implied listener can here be explained through the interviewer's status as a women's studies researcher. What is significant, however, is that a particular understanding of gender-related troubles is something that these interviewees employ almost routinely – they are fairly certain that what they are telling is echoed in other stories, and therefore is not open to doubt but is intelligible and acceptable.

Angela McRobbie (2009, 14), discussing the contemporary instrumentalisation of feminism, states that feminism is now primarily acknowledged in the context of high-

profile achievements of girls and women; in other words, feminism is employed to celebrate and advocate female success. In the Finnish context, this tendency is visible for example in the recent public debate over whether listed companies should have quotas for women in their executive boards⁴⁴ (see Hart et al. 2009; Korvajärvi, forthcoming). Such issues seem to gain rather a lot of attention in proportion to the rather small number of women who would actually benefit from them. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (2007) also note that the valorisation of female achievement within traditionally male working environments fits neatly within the narrow limits of gender equality enacted in contemporary popular media culture. “Employable” feminism is liberal, equal-opportunities feminism focused on female success, whereas a more negative stance is taken towards feminism that is concerned with social criticism (McRobbie 2009, 14). In this sense the interviews quoted above resonate with what has been theorised as post-feminism or a post-feminist sensibility: a selectively defined feminism that is “taken into account” and concentrates on individual female success (Tasker & Negra 2007, 1; Gill 2007a; McRobbie 2009). In the interviews feminism, or rather the legacy of feminism, is acknowledged in connection with female achievements as a shared understanding or context with the implied listener, but as will be seen below, it is understood rather selectively in terms of narratives of individual choice or empowerment. The limits of an acceptable stance on gender equality are demonstrated in the second quoted interview, when the interviewee – after describing her struggle for equal respect – states that she does highlight the fact that she is a woman manager and that it is important to her, “but not in such a way that it would be very strongly inclined to feminism” (H9).

The above extracts are narratives of gender-based inequality, but they are also accounts of personal working history: they are histories upon which the interviewees have built their individual vocations, and which can thus also be used for the purposes of self-promotion. The patchwork that forms one’s vocation is thus in these interviews depicted as – at least partially – gendered. As stated above, conscious reflection on gender inequality is most certainly a consequence of the spread of popular versions of

⁴⁴ For example, at the time of writing (autumn 2011), the recently appointed equality minister Paavo Arhinmäki (from the Left) has just made his first public statement concerning equality, the main topic of which was to promote gender quotas on listed companies’ boards (<http://www.paavoarhinmaki.fi/blogi/2011/sukupuolikiintioiden-porssiyhtioiden-hallitukseen/>).

feminism across different sites, and of the consequent familiarity of a particular and rather narrow discourse of inequality that is “employable” by women working in business organisations. What is significant here is the way that *coping* with inequality becomes part of one’s *competence*.

Both of these extracts are narratives in the sense that they tell about a series of events that gain significance through temporality. The temporality here functions in such a way that these are ultimately narratives of survival and empowerment: as the plot develops, the narrators achieve what they wanted, despite the odds. In addition, the accounts focus on the individual and her personal growth. In the first extract, the interviewee is, significantly, *alone*, and she emphasises that contrary to what would have been – according to her – a *feminine* way to manage the situation, she chose not to seek help but to survive on her own. There is a silence in this account concerning other people apart from the board members; whether the narrator had support from any significant others is not related and is hence deemed irrelevant for the story of survival. There is also a distinction that is made between femininity and autonomy – the interviewee, although a woman, wants to distinguish herself from behaviour which she thinks typical of women. She does this, I think, in order to highlight her individual abilities to survive without any help, simultaneously reiterating the age-old conceptions of women as weaker and more dependent than men. This extract is thus an account of a highly personal struggle, told with manly overtones, at the end of which the interviewee leaves the battleground (the board) but – according to her – has managed to achieve what she wanted. The second extract as a whole also calls attention *not* to the fact that a young woman has had a hard time or to the significance of other persons, but to her growth as an individual. The emphasis is on how she, growing older, becomes successful and gains more courage to “be herself”.

A third interviewee commenting on equality also does so in terms of her personal capacities and characteristics:

Q: [In relation to your clients] are there any differences related to age or gender, which would be present in the problems or situations that are solved [in the coaching]?

A: [...] my idea of humans is such that I do not differentiate according to gender myself. So they say about me, even though I'm a small, energetic woman, they say often in these projects that "she is a good guy", like. So my own personality is such that I've got more power and strength than shows on the outside. So my attitude, I've got many brothers myself and lots of siblings, so my attitude to both genders is equal. So in coaching it doesn't matter to me, gender. [...] What is more crucial is the situation with a person's goal and phase of life, not gender. [...] I think it is because I've learned equality reasoning so clearly.
(H16)

The empowerment that the interviewed women claim is individualised: it is not a question of social change, but of individual stamina – what it takes is “guts” but not, for example, organised resistance or cooperation. In the last extract there is also an embedded account of temporality, as the interviewee refers to her brothers and siblings as the reason why she has learned “equality reasoning”. Her attitude is thus presented both as an innate characteristic (“more strength than shows on the outside”) and the outcome of a personal history (growing up with brothers).⁴⁵

The question of individualising gendered experiences and narratives is central to the problematic of post-feminism (McRobbie 2009), and I will examine the accounts of individualised feminism and strong women more closely in the following chapters. Here I want to call attention to how struggling against inequality can be subtly presented as a sign of the competence needed in an “individual vocation”. I suggest that the narratives quoted above are told as proof of individual capacities and personal characteristics. The purpose of telling these stories about gender is not only to share experiences, but to signify that the person in question is capable of coping in difficult situations on her own. Apart from being an admirable person she is thus also a good coach, and her experiences involving gendered hierarchies or discrimination function as proof of these capacities.

⁴⁵ Describing oneself as “one of the boys” or a “good guy” has been recognised as one of the common responses to being a token woman amongst men. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977, 228), for instance, in her research on a large corporation, noted how the dominants (men) pressure the tokens (women) to identify with the dominant group and to turn against the members of their own category. For token women, Moss Kanter states, the price of being “one of the boys” is a willingness to occasionally turn against “the girls” (ibid.).

The coach as an “entreplooyee”

The picture that I have formed of coaches as “individual (quasi-)entrepreneurs” involved in practices of self-promotion and branding is partially based on their own depictions in the interviews, but partially also an effect of the kind of publicity that the coaches tend to use for marketing purposes. It might thus be perceived as arising both from the conditions under which the coaches seek clients and practice coaching, and from the articulations that are produced in coaching concerning, for example, conceptions of labour and the labour market and individual capacities. These articulations are of course tightly connected to conditions and practices; but, as depicted above, they are also connected to cultural tendencies, such as the post-feminist sensibility concerning selectively understood feminism, female success and individual empowerment.

The figure of an individual, self-sufficient, personally branded and enterprising coach bears many similarities with a kind of labour power that has been theorised as self-entrepreneurial. One approach to self-entrepreneurialism is formulated by Hans J. Pongratz and G. Günter Voß (2003), who have suggested a theoretical model of the “entreplooyee” as a way to clarify the ongoing formations of labour power.

Pongratz and Voß (2003, 6) describe being an entreplooyee as a new form of employment that requires “the same entrepreneurial development and commercialisation (of personal and professional capacities) as does any product of business enterprise”. Being an entreplooyee is thus the outcome of a process in which the previously passive employee becomes a more active subject, continuously redefining his or her capacities and potentials within the company by organising the work process in a self-determining, entrepreneurial manner, but also becoming a more active subject in the larger labour market. If coaching might be characterised as an individualised or personified vocation in the sense described above, then the forms of competence by this kind of vocation include the active production and commercialisation of one’s own labour capacity and the willingness to adjust and organise one’s own requirements and private life to the requirements of the employing company (ibid., 10). As clarified previously, however, not all coaches work for companies. It thus may be more accurate to suggest that in addition to the ability to commercialise one’s labour capacity, one has to be able to adjust not only

to the requirements of the employing company but also to those of the labour market in general and the “coaching market” in particular. As the labour capacity of the coaches is highly individualised – built on personal characteristics and personal history – commercialising this labour capacity also seems to require a commercialisation of the self. In other words, if it is hard to separate the individual self from capacities claimed by that self, then processes of commercialisation and promotion extend to the self as well.

The coaches interviewed very rarely mention any higher authority that controls their practices. Instead, organisations and companies as well as clients are described in terms of mutual interaction and cooperation. It is thus the coach’s responsibility to act so that both the hiring organisation and the individual clients are satisfied. This also causes tensions, as the interests of the hiring organisation are not always congruent with those of the individual client or employee in the organisation, as will be explained in the next section.

The notion of the worker’s authority concerning practices of work bears similarities to Pongratz and Voß’s thesis that workers are increasingly being given responsibility for managing their own work. External control by the employer is diminished and transferred so that the capacity for self-management becomes an integral part of one’s labour power (*ibid.*, 6–7). This characterisation of internalised control is familiar from various theorisations of “new forms of work”. It has been referred to as an important part of the “subjectification of work”, and has become one of the reference points for various theories on power, the new economy and working life (see Julkunen 2008; Vähämäki 2009).

The subjectification of work points to a process in which work, and therefore also value production, become increasingly dependent on the workers’ subjectivity (see Marazzi 2008/2002; Julkunen 2008, 120, Vähämäki 2009, 142–143). This means that there is both an opportunity and a necessity to express and mobilise one’s subjectivity, and to invest in one’s subjectivity in work. In a simple form, one could suggest that whereas Taylorist work organisation aimed to objectify and standardise work as much as possible, the post-Fordist work organisation relies on the workers’s subjectivity – on their capacity to reflect, think, react, make decisions and express themselves (Julkunen 2008, 120). I will return later to the question of the extent of change in terms of the economy

and working life, but here I wish to point out that the subjectification of work is a process that also existed before the advent of the post-Fordist economy (not all “old” work was objectified factory work). In a more general frame, it could even be claimed that capital has always been the result of the decisions, desires and thoughts of individual subjectivities (Aufheben 2006). However, in relation to the conditions of work, particularly in the West, it might be more accurate to state that subjectification as a process has *intensified* as the structure of production has changed.

Discussing work processes, Raija Julkunen (2008, 121) states that subjectification is a tendency produced by “many structural and cultural developments” but at the same time the “long arm of Taylorism and the strong rationality of objectifying”, are still alive and function against the tendency of subjectification. Julkunen thus concludes that subjectification is, in the end, an empirical question. It is thus in the empirical context of coaching as a relatively new occupation – and one that seems to be rather paradigmatic in terms of “new forms of work” – that I will approach and discuss the subjectification of work.

Pongratz and Voß (2003) describe the entreplovee as an ideal type representing a high density of characteristics that prevail in various and changing combinations in the empirical world. It is not meant as a description of reality, but as a step towards an analytical model that would shed light on the new orientations in working life and capitalism. The diagnosis by Pongratz and Voß bears many similarities with various other accounts of the subjectification of work and the post-Fordist economy. However, what to my mind is significant in their description of entreplovee is that they see this figure or “ideal type” as an indicator that a new stage in the commercialisation of individual labour power has been reached (2003, 14). The subjectified or entrepreneurial forms of labour are thus indicative of the ways in which (surplus) value is produced in current capitalism. Seen in the context of this research, this suggestion is also one possible approach to the connections between self-promotion and value production. Promotional processes might be described as instances of the commercialisation of one’s labour power, and they are connected to particular forms of work (such as coaching) that both employ *and* facilitate or advocate self-promotion. In addition, one might think of the interview extracts concerning gender given above as examples of how a particular form of (post-)feminism

or a particular account of gender can be employed in the construction of the ideal employee or, more generally, in the commercialisation⁴⁶ of individual labour power. This might be one instance of how gender is related to value production in the processes of self-promotion. These questions will be examined more closely in the chapter on potential.

3.2. Working with clients

Having looked at coaching as a particular kind of vocation, I will now focus on the various forms of interaction that coaches might have with their clients. Due to the nature of the research material, however, I have no direct access to actual interactive practices, only to the accounts that the interviewees have given me, which are of course filtered by their perspectives, thoughts and visions. Therefore my analysis will concentrate on how the coaches themselves understand and describe their work and simultaneously construct and negotiate the significance of these practices. In addition to concentrating on the interviews I will also occasionally refer to other texts concerning coaching as work, mainly the guidelines and articles found on International Coaching Association's website.

To provide a point of departure for this examination, I will begin by defining coaching as interactive service work. As Linda McDowell (2003, 29; see also Erickson & Pierce 2005) explains, service-sector work typically involves the exchange of intangibles, such as knowledge and information, rather than material objects or material commodities, and is crucially dependent upon a social relationship between the producer and consumer of a service. Interactive service work, then, means that in addition to the aspects mentioned above, the work mainly involves direct face-to-face or voice-to-voice contact with customers or clients (Leidner 1993; McDowell 2003, 29). Coaching generally fits these descriptions. Even though coaches do make profits by selling commodities such as

⁴⁶ "Commercialisation" is, I think, a rather imprecise expression, for it seems to refer simultaneously both to commodification and to marketing or promoting. When I return to these questions I will use the term "commodification" to describe how individual selves are brought into the sphere of value production.

books that they have written,⁴⁷ and many also seem to use publicity as a source of profit, their main form of work consists of interaction with clients. The products that coaches sell are thus particular forms of interaction. Coaches refer to these forms of interaction as, for example, sparring, helping or management. As was seen above, these “products” are also highly personalised in such a way that the offered interaction becomes inseparable from the individuality of the coach.

What might be considered key sectors in service work, such as health, retail, catering, education and so forth, have historically been, and still are, areas where the majority of workers are women (McDowell 2003, 29). Although there are male-dominated service-sector occupations as well (*doormen*, for example), service-sector work as a whole is often associated with women, and the skills needed for such work are consequently often associated with traditional femininity (McDowell 2003, 29). Such “traditionally feminine” skills connected to “women’s work” include, for example, a willingness to be of service, a capacity for empathy, support and understanding, responsibility and patience (Kinnunen 2001; Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996, 12). There is thus a strong connection between work in the service-sector and women, and McDowell suggests that men (especially working-class men) are therefore disadvantaged when seeking service work in certain arenas (McDowell 2003). It has to be noted here, though, that men’s or women’s actions do not in real life necessarily follow the scripts of femininity or masculinity; rather, gendered distinctions made in connection to work are used to justify current divisions of labour (Erickson & Pierce 2005, 285; Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996, 13). Also, as Lisa Adkins (2001, 672) notes, processes of gendering in the field of working life or in the labour market are by no means fixed, but are continuously made, remade and contested. One thus cannot take for granted that the increase of employment in the service-sector or the growing appreciation of “feminine” skills will directly benefit women.

Previously I described how coaching as an individual vocation makes use of personal histories and individual capacities, and how selfhood is presented as an integral

⁴⁷ In addition, the books that coaches publish also often function as ways to build interactions with possible clients. In a do-it-yourself book, the author aims to establish a social relationship with the implied reader. This relationship can then later be actualised in the form of lectures for an audience consisting of readers, for example.

part of how one becomes a coach and markets one's services. This kind of subjectification – meaning here the processes through which work becomes inextricable from selfhood and personality, i.e. dependent on subjectivity (e.g. Julkunen 2008, 120) – has been recognised as characteristic of the interactive service sector. Service work often demands, for example, a particular kind of appearance or embodiment, and often consists of producing and/or managing emotions and affects (e.g. Adkins 2000, 206; Hochschild 1983; Korvajärvi 2001; McDowell 2003, 29; Mäkinen 2010; Warhurst & Nickson 2009; Wellington & Bryson 2001). The overall subjectification of work has consequently been connected to the growth of the service sector in Western countries (e.g. Korvajärvi 2001), and this growth has been seen as an indication of the cultural feminisation of work (see Adkins 2001).

The term feminisation has been used to refer to the increasing labour-force participation of women, and to relevant political and economic processes. In addition to the already mentioned growth in the service-sector, these are deindustrialisation, the expansion in the number of precarious, temporary, deskilled and low-paid jobs, and changes in household and family forms (see Adkins 2001, 671; Erickson & Pierce 2005; Veijola & Jokinen 2008). Second, feminisation has come to mean a new sovereignty of appearance, image and style at work (Adkins 2001, 674) and the increasing importance of not only aesthetics but also emotions and interaction skills (e.g. Veijola & Jokinen 2008). Cultural feminisation is thus not necessarily connected to women, but rather to characteristics traditionally associated with femininity. In this sense, cultural feminisation can also be understood as the moment when femininity is detached from women and made valuable as a mobile object (Adkins 2001).

There are also instances of feminisation in which both of the above-mentioned sites (cultural and political economy) come together, especially in relation to interactive service occupations that are rather similar to the field of coaching. Ann Gray (2003, 491) describes one such instance as she documents the expansion of the role of persons engaged in work as “cultural intermediaries” who offer symbolic and material services in areas like the presentation (promotion) of the self, care of the body/mind or aesthetics and design. Other researchers have recognised the emergence of a new kind of “consultant” or “personal concierge” whose work falls within what has been traditionally characterised

as “women’s work”, such as home management, personal errands or grocery shopping or, to put it in more general terms, taste work (Sherman 2010, 87; 2011).

Coaching as an occupation clearly bears these kinds of characteristics, as coaches work in fields that can be characterised as the presentation of the self or care of the mind. Considering coaches as cultural intermediaries also helps us to see their role as intermediaries not only in the symbolic or cultural sense (conveying certain tastes, for example) but also in an ideological sense (intermediating and producing not only taste but also ideological tendencies, cf. Gray 2003, 499). However, whereas the skills used in concierge or taste work are quite clearly “feminine” in the sense that they are connected to “women’s spheres of life” such as shopping or decoration, the skills used in coaching are harder to define in terms of femininity, as will be seen below.

The work that Gray and Rachel Sherman describe in connection with cultural intermediaries or “consultants” is clearly women’s work not only because it demands skills traditionally associated with women but also in the practical sense that these occupations are mainly practiced by women (Bourdieu 1989, cited in Gray 2003, 491; Sherman 2011, 202). Coaching as an occupational field, however, cannot be defined as women’s work in such a straightforward way. Coaching is done by both men and women. In the interviews there were slight suggestions that women might be more into coaching as a kind of “therapeutic work”, and that maybe men would be the majority in executive coaching (H10), but these were presented as impressions rather than definite opinions.

To gain some background knowledge of coaching and gendered divisions, I also tentatively looked for statistical information. The only statistics concerning coaching in Finland that I had access to were the registers of coaches belonging to the two official associations. These lists suggest that the majority of coaches are women. On the Finnish Coaching Association’s web page, roughly two thirds of the approximately 300 listed coaches are women, whereas the list on ICF Finland’s web page contains 97 women and 24 men (28.6.2011). However, these lists alone do not provide much information concerning the whole field of coaching, because only members of the associations in question appear on the lists. It may be, for example, that there are more women on the lists than men because more women are working as self-employed entrepreneurs, while the men are working in organisations and thus have no need for such publicity or

organisational support. It is also noteworthy that the executive group of ICF Finland has equal numbers of men and women, and the Coaching Association's executive group has four men and six women; the gender bias is thus not necessarily reflected on the higher levels of these organisations. In light of these observations, questions related to feminisation in coaching appear complex and "cultural" in the sense that, since coaching is not straightforwardly a "women's occupation", these questions concern both men and women. It should also be noted that the significance of aesthetics, and thus the direct connection to performances of femininity, is rather small in coaching compared to the occupations examined by Gray or Sherman. Thus the characterisations used to describe the gendered aspects of cultural intermediating or taste working – for example, the connections between femininity and practices of consumption (Gray 2003; Sherman 2010) – cannot be directly applied to coaching.

What might be described as prominent research interests in relation to interactive service-sector work,⁴⁸ especially in the field of gender studies or feminist enquiry, are then attached to, first, forms of emotional or aesthetic labour and bodily investments, and second, questions related to gender and sexuality, especially to different forms of the feminisation of work. These perspectives – which are obviously also strongly interconnected – will thus be my focus here. The intention is to examine feminisation of work and forms of emotional or affective labour as they appear in the particular instance of work-related coaching, and also to see whether examining coaching as a form of work offers new perspectives on both the accuracy and the limits of these theorisations.

It has been noted above that coaching as an occupation moves between different sites, for example in terms of divisions between the private and public sector or entrepreneurship and paid work. As one examines the descriptions of coaching as interactive service work, it soon becomes clear that the already existing divisions become blurred here too. In the interviewees' descriptions of their everyday practices, there are

⁴⁸ While I examine practices of coaching here in terms of the service sector, it is also worth recognising that "service sector" as a concept is problematic in the sense that very different forms of work are often "lumped together" under generalisations, without further consideration of their differences or the ways in which "service" becomes defined (Camfield 2007). This problem particularly concerns the theorisations of immaterial labour that form a crucial part of discussions of the new economy (Camfield 2007). Instead of repeating theoretical generalisations on service work and its significance in the new economy, David Camfield suggests that research ought to recognise the different social forms and levels of abstraction of labour and the different forms of production involved in different kinds of labouring (2007, 31).

similarities with different fields such as social work, management, healthcare, business consulting and therapy, and these different aspects form the unique combinations based on personal history, education and orientation described above. Coaching thus emerges from the research material as a diverse field in more than one sense, and comprehensive coverage of all the diversity concerning “work” within coaching practices is out of my practical reach as a researcher. Therefore, in what follows, I will concentrate on two “case studies”: two interviews that I find illustrative both of the diversity of coaching and of the most prominent themes in relation to coaching as work that emerged from the interview process as a whole. These two interviews are used in an indicative way, to highlight some of the central themes and questions that characterise the research material. I chose these interviews for closer examination because for me they were particularly instructive and illuminating in relation to the whole field of coaching, and illustrative of the practices and of the connections with the theoretical questions mentioned above.

The first interview was with a woman who did coaching with individuals, both for organisations and for self-paying clients. This interview contains descriptions of coaching practices that were also repeated by many other coaches, and will thus allow me to form a general picture of what the coaches do with their clients and how they do it. As I examine this interview I will also refer to other sources, because my interest concerns mainly the typical or general characteristics of coaching. The second interview was with a man working as a work community coach, that is working with communities and organisations rather than focusing on individuals. Examining this interview allows me to examine specifically the emotional and affective aspects of coaching, and also to look a little more closely at the relationships coaches have with their client organisations; in this case my analysis will be more closely focused just on the interview.

The helper

Interviewee 10 is a woman who runs a company that offers business coaching for organisations. These coaching sessions are either with individuals, or with groups such as with executive group. In addition she has her own, smaller business, through which she

coaches individuals without an organisational background, and she does personal branding as part of individual coaching. She has been involved in coaching for over five years, and has actively taken part in the establishment of professional associations, training and qualifications for coaching in Finland.

The interviewee explains that she became interested in individual coaching while doing organisational coaching related to change, because she “got worried”: “I began to get anxious about who would help then these individuals who were in this cooperation jumble,⁴⁹ and where would they get the strength to survive when they were just shunted here and there as resources” (H10). She wanted to take a different approach, and became interested in how “a person could be helped to become motivated towards the things that’ll take him or her forwards to where he or she wants to go” (H10). For her, coaching is valuable and meaningful because it is a helping vocation, in which people can be and are treated as individuals and not as resources for an organisation. Placing individuals at the centre of her work, the interviewee thus emphasises the interactive nature of coaching. Also, what she is selling and producing as a coach is here defined in terms of “help”; what she offers is a promise to help someone “to become motivated”.

The interviewee also emphasises the significance of “getting worried” in explaining her motivation to do coaching, giving an impression that there is a sense of *mission* in choosing to become a coach: coaching for her is thus an individual vocation in that sense too. The idea of coaching as a calling or vocation is strengthened later in the interview when the interviewee explains that when she does individual coaching outside organisations she does not charge the full fee (that she would charge a business organisation) because “that price would be something that the person who really needs and wants this thing could not pay from his/her own wallet.” Here it must be noted that the interviewee also works for organisations, so she is not doing all her coaching work on this generous basis. There is thus a division between “business” and “helping”, both of which are nevertheless called coaching, and which are also interwoven in the interview in the sense that the coaching the interviewee does for organisations is also characterised in

⁴⁹ This refers to a process in which workers are laid off or otherwise change positions due to organisational change.

terms of helping to some extent. The interviewee herself points out this double-bind when she explains the origins of coaching and the differences between countries or continents:

Actually there's two origins. One comes from the States yes, and in the States it's been adopted even more in the business world, but then the other origin comes from England where coaching was used – well it comes of course from the world of students in which there is a kind of coach who is maybe like a tutor a little bit, but then there's also, they helped people who are marginalised in society to find their own strengths and to set themselves goals [...]. So there's a social background [for coaching] but of course also a business background. For the last 20 years this has been a growing industry around the world, and really American coaching and central European coaching differ slightly, in the States it's like there's a bit more this kind of New Age thing in the background which is I think not a bad thing at all as long as you know what your are doing. So it's all good because the New Age has really beautiful values and so on, but really it's more like the life-coaching world, the States, whereas in Germany this is a significant tool for developing business.

(H10)

The distinction between different standpoints for coaching was also brought out in another interview in relation to coaches' backgrounds:

Diverse is what I would say if I had to express it in one word. I mean, there are many kinds, and maybe the extremes could be categorised so that at one end there are the people who have some kind of psychology education, like therapy, humanist work or emotional work education, and at the other end there are people who have, you know, any education whatsoever and then they've got experience from the environment where the clients come from.

(H4)

In the above extract, the message is that coaches who have a “humanist” education differ from those (such as the interviewee himself), who rely on their experience, which here implicitly refers to experience in the business world. The aspects of New Age/humanism/therapy are thus here seen to differ from aspects of business/management, but if we look at the research material it becomes clear that these aspects are not mutually exclusive. Rather, as in the case of interviewee 10, they are simultaneously, though sometimes antagonistically, present in all kinds of coaching. This is understandable if one

takes into account the extent to which different forms of therapeutic practice are included in contemporary ideals concerning management.

The intertwining of therapy and management began as early as a 100 years ago, when in the United States the psychoanalytic imaginary was introduced into the workplace by the human relations movement. Since the 1920s new ideas of management have placed emotional transactions at the centre of attention, and therapeutic practices have strongly influenced the ways in which workplaces are managed and employees are assessed (Illouz 2007, 12). Eva Illouz characterises this change towards a new kind of management as “a new emotional style” and suggests that it was precisely the psychological discourse of therapy that instilled the idea that one’s personality could be the key to social and managerial success (Illouz 2007, 17). There is thus a connection between practices of self-promotion and the tendency which intertwines theories of management with psychological and therapeutic ideas, and practices of coaching can be characterised as tapping directly into this connection. The double bind of management and therapy is thus not a coincidence, but actually at the heart of how coaching as an occupational practice is located and organised.

Interviewee 10 is very keen on creating ethical guidelines and qualifications for coaches, because she thinks that as “helpers” operating with individuals, incompetent coaches can do damage as well as good. In this way, despite the emphasis on calling, there is also a strong emphasis on professionalising and legitimating coaching as a valuable and precious occupation in terms of official standards, as was described in the previous section. Here, however, it is expressed by referring to the coach’s responsibility for and care of the clients:

When I had gone through the training in some way I learned to understand specifically that this [coaching] is an extremely powerful tool and in the wrong hands, or in the hands of someone who doesn’t understand, it will bring considerably more trouble than benefit for people, and I got this slight tendency for moralising in that sense that I didn’t want this business to turn into that.
(H10)

In relation to competence, the interviewee makes a distinction in terms of the things that are within coaches’ capabilities: “we support people, but we do not fix them.” This view

includes the claim that coaches are not looking for faults in the client, but rather that the aim is for the client to develop a “clearer insight into him-/herself and his/her strengths” with the support of the coach. Coaching is thus not a cure or a fix, but a form of helping in which those helped become aware of themselves through practices of reflexivity and learn to carry “final” responsibility for their lives and choices.

The emphasis on both self-reflexivity and responsibility is evident in the following interview extract. The coach cannot make decisions for the client and neither can the coach know what is best for the client:

The only expert in coaching is the client, who is the expert on his or her own life. And if I, as a coach, begin to give advise to people, like what kind of goals you need to set for yourself or what you should do to get a better personal brand, then I have already crossed the line of what is ethical in coaching. Because I can't know about your life and what's best for your life, but you yourself know it best.

(H10)

The idea that the client bears the final responsibility also emerges as central to coaching in other interviews, and in the research material as a whole. The ethical responsibility emphasised by interviewee 10 means that the coach will not take responsibility for the client's thoughts, decisions or choices, but will keep his or her distance. Unethical interaction, then, would be interfering with the client's autonomy and taking responsibility for what should be other person's autonomous actions. Of course, these ideas are loaded with ideological implications, which will be examined further in the following chapters. Here I want to draw attention to the consequences of this standpoint of “leaving the responsibility with the client” for coaching as a vocation, and for the interactive practices of coaching.

In terms of coaching as work, this standpoint means that, as interviewee 10 also notes, coaches are not “experts in any field” (because the client is the expert). This is of course not true because, according to the interviewee herself, coaches should actually be experts in coaching, but it is true in the sense that coaching does not require any specific skills or expertise, as was explained above. It might also be said that as an “individual vocation”, coaching as a practice by definition cannot really depend on any particular

expertise, because that would make it less individual, and less flexible in terms of both practitioners and usefulness or usability.

As for actual interaction, leaving responsibility with the client means that coaching as a practice consists of what many of the interviewees refer to as “sparring”. This means that the coach asks questions instead of advising the client, as interviewee 10 describes:

What we do, my role is mainly to pose questions. And I usually say [to the client] that I ask stupid questions. So my role is to ask the kind of questions that no one has necessarily asked before, and my task is also to marvel. Like oh really, oh why did you, tell me more of why you chose that kind of path, and not like I would question [the choices] but like my task is to be curious.
(H10)

The method of questioning is described meticulously in several articles found in the archive in the web archives of International Coaching Federation (coachfederation.org). For example, Marilee C. Goldberg writes in “Expert Question Asking”:

Virtually every function that occurs in a coaching session is grounded in asking questions. Questions are fundamental in gathering information, building and maintaining relationships; learning; thinking clearly; creatively and critically; making requests; and initiating action. Asking questions is also fundamental for resolving conflicts and breakdowns, making decisions, solving problems, instigating “out-of-the-box” thinking, listening fully, and managing individual and organisational change.
(Goldberg, year not known, retrieved from coachfederation.org 23.5.2011).

The coach’s aim, as described in interview 10 and in other interviews, is thus to produce interaction which facilitates the client’s own thinking and self-reflection, and this is done through a method based on questioning. This approach is somewhat similar to various forms of therapeutic practices in which the therapist is the one who listens and acts as a catalyst for the patient, instead of directly diagnosing or analysing the client’s situation. But whereas in some therapeutic practices the therapist first listens silently and in the end gives his or her opinion or advise,⁵⁰ in coaching the coach – according to the interviewees’ descriptions – is not supposed to voice his or her thoughts at all. The idea

⁵⁰ There are of course exceptions, for example voluntary mental health support persons do not give diagnosis or voice their opinions.

of not providing ready solutions can also be used to differentiate coaching from other, rather similar practices, such as consulting:

While consulting approaches vary widely, there is often an assumption that the consultant diagnoses problems and prescribes and sometimes implements solutions. In general, the assumption with coaching is that individuals or teams are capable of generating their own solutions, with the coach supplying supportive, discovery-based approaches and frameworks.
(coachfederation.org)

Interviewee 10 also connects the method of questioning with an approach that questions, or rather helps the client to challenge, the existing norms or assumptions of society:

Because very often we make choices that we assume society demands, parents demand or someone else requires, and my task is in a way to be kind of stupid, that I don't understand these norms, I only pose questions, oh really, what does that mean. And that adds to the client's insight, like that's true, really. Why do I have to work 12 hours a day to be a good employee, who says so? And that's my role.
(H10)

The client's autonomy in regard to his or her choices is thus emphasised, in relation to both the coach and other people or society at large. The aims of coaching are articulated in relation to autonomy and self-reflection by interviewee 10 as well as many other interviewees:

Well, I have this really unscientific measure. I see it in my client's eyes. So in every coaching session, at the moment that I see a light in my client's eyes, whatever it is, it may be strength or energy or joy or something like, damn, I'm a cool guy.
(H10)

The aims of coaching were quite often described in similar terms to those in this interview, in which what is sought is not a specific piece of knowledge or achievement, but rather an insight and an emotion. In several interviews this insight/emotion was called empowerment. Further descriptions and implications of "empowerment" as the main goal or aim of coaching will be examined in the next chapter, but in terms of coaching as work

it is notable here because the emphasis on empowerment as a feeling that can be observed in the client resonates with the understanding of coaching as emotional labour, or alternatively as immaterial labour, in which the products of labour are not necessarily measurable objects but might be understood in terms of individual experience.

The absence of measurable goals also brought out tensions in the interviewees' accounts – if there are no exact measures, then how can a coach appear competent and efficient? Some of the interviewees had solved this problem by employing “scientific measurements” which could be used to prove that the organisation had benefited from coaching. The measurement of changes in the working atmosphere, for example, was used to provide proof of the efficiency of coaching. None of the interviews, however, talked directly about increasing the profitability of organisations, for instance. In this sense, then, even when there were measurements, the object of those measurements was subject to interpretation (like experiences of changes in the working atmosphere) and could not be “cashed in”.

The emphasis on empowerment as a goal in coaching resonates with what has been described as practices of alternative care. The realm of what Eeva Sointu and Linda Woodhead (2008) call “holistic spiritualities” in particular has resemblances to practices of coaching. Both the field of coaching and that of holistic spiritualities have become more visible during recent decades, and both kinds of practice – coaching and alternative care – place a lot of emphasis on empowerment as well as on individuality, selfhood, agency, responsibility and control. The holistic approach is also prevalent in coaching in the sense that many of the coaches claimed in the interviews that they treat individuals as ensembles or entities, meaning that they also take into account things other than work-related issues and understand that one's “other life” affects one's work capacities.

However, there are also differences between coaching and holistic spiritualities or other alternative care practices. The goals of holistic spiritualities are defined in terms of the wholeness and well-being of “body, mind and spirit”, whereas coaching is not concerned with spirituality and does not particularly focus on the body. My research material suggests that coaching in general is clearly orientated primarily towards the mind; embodiment and aesthetics were mentioned in the interviews only when I specifically asked about them. Interviewee 10 commented on appearance as follows:

It counts. It does count. I don't think it's the most important thing but it has significance. I mean we people, as we are people, we do, our brains function in a very stereotypical way and we put a stamp on people, even if we don't want to. In the sense that it is based on what we see about the person. So if you want to kind of make this kind of enhancement to your own brand. So of course if I express being a strategist and my goal is to be an executive professional one day, it's not necessarily wise to turn up in my usual clothing, which would be jeans and pullover, to a place in which I will try to make an impression on people who believe or don't believe that I might be useful to the executive group. In that way it counts but – I don't, business is maybe a kind of borderline case. Anyway I believe more that if a person dresses so that they themselves feel confident or comfortable, well, what is projected outside of that person's inspiration, it makes up for the clothing if it's not completely conservative or appropriate to that world exactly.
(H10)

Other interviewees were similarly reluctant to place a lot of value on appearance, even though they conceded that appearance “does count”. None of my interviewees described practices of styling the client or otherwise focusing on appearance, and this would of course also be contrary to the principle that coaches do not advise clients. If one looks at the wider field of coaching-related texts, there are of course exceptions: for example, one of the self-help books I examined (Spillane 2000) is very concerned with the appropriate look for one's successful self-brand, and focuses for a great part on aesthetics. Different forms of coaching, such as “life coaching” for instance, might also be more concerned with embodiment and aesthetics than work-related coaching practices, which are the empirical focus of this research. Nevertheless, in my research material, the overall significance of embodiment and aesthetics seemed relatively small, especially in terms of work practices. This lack of attention towards the body and aesthetics was actually something of a surprise for me, since at the beginning of the research I thought practices of self-promotion would be strongly concerned with appearance. If one proceeds from the idea that embodiment is present in all human interaction, in regards coaching this presence is rather silent, more often bypassed than articulated.

If explicit attention *is* paid to the body, it is in terms of management rather than care. Some coaches offer weight or appearance management for example, but none of the interviewees explicitly mentioned practices of “taking care of the body” or helping

people with illnesses as their goals when working with a client. There are no references to practices of healing (no fixing, as interviewee 10 stated). Thus even though coaching has a background in the “New Age thing”, which explains their similarities in understanding selfhood as active, responsible and empowered, the actual practices of work-related coaching have characteristics that are quite different to holistic spiritualities or other forms of alternative care.

Differences from practices of caring can also be seen in the use of various personality tests and other such practices of self-assessment which are rather typical of coaching. A number of the coaches I interviewed said that they used either personality tests or other kinds of test to help the client to “know him- or herself” better. The tests are thus used as tools of self-reflection and self-management. Interviewee 10 described using such tests:

For example, in addition to creating a story we can do different personality tests which tell something, but not in a sense that after the personality test you are in this box and you are like this, but more like we question and challenge the person to think, ok, do you think you are like this? What’s there that you think is clearly what’s characteristic to you? And I’ve become – previously I thought that personality tests don’t tell anything about a person. But if you know how to take them right and find what’s really characteristic for me, now I’ve become a proud bearer of certain characteristics.

(H10)

The overall attitude towards tests was similar to the practice of questioning described above, in the sense that responsibility (and agency) were seen to belong to the client. The tests were not used by the coaches to understand the client; it was the client who could use them to better understand him/herself. In general, any kind of personality or other test or “homework” (written assignments) that the clients might do while in coaching were described in the interviews as somewhat secondary to the processes of interaction (questioning) and empowerment.

When I asked whether coaches worked with or according to any written materials, it was usually emphasised that the coaching process proceeds in interaction with the client, and that everything else depends on the personality and goals of that particular

client. Of course, those who gave lectures had ready materials, but they also described altering their lectures according to the needs of a particular audience.

Interviewee 10 was working with both organisations and individual clients, and in the interview she pondered the differences between working with individuals and working within organisations, seeing that whereas within individual or “life coaching” the goals are defined as individual goals, the situation is different when the coach is working for a business organisation:

[In individual life coaching] you talk all the time about the goals of this individual. When again in business coaching it's kind of three-dimensional. You talk about the organisation's goals and about the individual's goals, and the coach's job is to take care that both of these are equally represented in the discussion.

(H10)

Here the principle of leaving responsibility and freedom of choice to the client is suddenly seen from a very different angle, since the client is no longer merely the individual and the organisation (which is called the “sponsor”, according to the ICF) also has its say on the matter. This might give rise to tensions for the coach who is trying to respect both the client and the sponsor, as interviewee 10 explains:

Who in the end is my client, if these goals are very contradictory or if I notice that one or the other's values are being violated? So my client – and this is my personal choice, I know coaches who've made a different choice – even though the money comes from the organisation, I see that the only person who is in a sense my concern in that moment is the person who I coach. And I justify it by saying that it is more advantageous for the organisation if a person who is in the wrong kind of job, or doing tasks that break this person or exhaust them or anyhow if his strengths are not being put to use, so it is also in the organisation's interests that the person him/herself figures out that hey I might look for another path. But it's not, I think it differs according to the coach.

(H10)

The length of the explanation given by the interviewee here demonstrates that she has had to think about this issue of conflicting interests, and that she recognises that it is not an easy one. It is also evident that the idea of responsibility and choice belonging to the client does not carry “all the way through” and that the coach him/herself also has to

make decisions with consequences in the processes of coaching. The same contradictions were also brought up in discussion with interviewee 15, who works mainly in organisations.

The middleman

Interviewee 15 is a middle-aged man with an education in psychotherapy. According to his own description, he works primarily as a psychotherapist and secondarily as a work community coach, and sometimes also as a physiotherapist giving advise on ergonomics, relaxation and so forth. His usual assignments as a work community coach are related to organisational change; his role as a coach is most often to work with employees and help them adjust to changing organisational circumstances. This means that the work he does is quite similar to that done by interviewee 10 before she moved towards individual coaching. His main forms of working are lectures and workshops, and sometimes also face-to-face discussions.

This interviewee, like interviewee 10, positions himself in terms of “helping” and has a nurturing approach to his work as a coach. In answer to my question whether there are differences between psychotherapy and coaching, he describes therapy as focused on individuals and coaching as oriented towards communities, but he nevertheless concludes that his work is therapeutic in organisations too. As a work community coach he often interviews different individuals and sometimes he has private conversations with employees, which means that even though the goals of his work are related to the work community, the methods might also be individual.

This interviewee’s main concern is with how employees might be emotionally or otherwise affected by organisational change:

[...] Especially in the public sector it seems that there’s a storm, the employees really do not know what’s happening, “they don’t tell us anything, we read it in the papers,” so... the mind is anxious and occupied with this issue, what will happen tomorrow... and so we try to go through the process of change, is it us or

is it other people? We concentrate on the things that are in our own hands, not in the hands of a higher power.
(H15)

In this extract the interviewee describes the situation of an imaginary organisation from the viewpoint of the employee. It seems that he very strongly identifies with the workers, and specifically with the anxiety connected to organisational change. His sympathy with the employees can also be detected elsewhere in the interview, for example in the way he describes the typical management of the organisations. He states that he would like to work with the management (he uses the expression *catch* management⁵¹) but there seem to be very few opportunities for access:

Management is above everything, or they think they are, and “this doesn’t concern us, take care of them...” So it is almost as if you read between the lines in an assignment, it’s saying things will be fine but we have workers who do not get this, could you explain it to them so they understand.
(H15)

There is clearly ambivalence in the interviewee’s attitude to what he calls “management”. The management staff are his clients, because they are the ones who seek his help and pay the fee for his services, and so he is obliged to work in their favour. However, he is very critical of what he considers typical management expectations, namely that a coach is someone who can “fix” the workers so that the organisational change can then be carried through smoothly and efficiently. Inevitably, this is what he is usually attempting to achieve when working in an organisation. He acknowledges this paradox and calls himself a “middleman”,⁵² referring to his position between employees’ and management’s expectations:

[...] You see clearly, that they [employees] haven’t been listened to or respected, and I can’t join the choir and go on bashing the employer, the client, so sometimes you get this feeling, I find myself in the middle, explaining the employer’s motives. And I don’t, it’s not a good role either, if it goes to that too much they will notice: oh, you’re working as a henchman for the employer, you’ve been told to turn black into white. That’s very close sometimes, that kind of thing. Because

⁵¹ “*Iskeä kiinni johtoon*”.

⁵² “*Välivänkäri*”.

I can't see things, really, as black as that group in a worst case scenario sees them... that everything sucks... I try to look for positive rays of light – is it really, are there some exceptions? When did you have it good, what happened at that time? What should happen too make things be better? And the paranoid listener or participant might spot or sniff out this paradox, that... it's kind of... kind of being a middleman. A situation of change, it's like, the management might think “explain this to them” and the employees expect that I will “explain to them” [to the management].

(H15)

As a work community coach, the interviewee attempts to care for the employees who are anxious and insecure and to offer them something to make them “feel better” about the organisational change. It is also his job to receive all the negative emotions that the employees have and thus to function as a surrogate for the management, which is the actual target of these emotions:

[...] It is cruel feedback that they [employees] give, even though they are often in this situation they are inside an affect, you know there is no one representing the employer or the manager, so let that consultant bastard hear everything and let's dramatise a bit as well [...].

(H15)

One of the interviewee's tasks is hence to receive emotional responses to things for which he himself bears no responsibility. His attitude is nevertheless not bitter; instead he emphasises his role in helping people to cope in difficult situations, and takes pride in doing this therapeutic labour as well as possible: “[...] I always go deep, to the level of persons, to the level of individuals, I listen to everybody [...]” (H15).

The first relevant context in which to examine the emotional aspects described above obviously concerns theories of emotional labour. The concept of emotional labour originates from Arlie Hochschild's *The Managed Heart* (1983), in which she studied the work of flight attendants, which involves the management of both one's own emotions and those of others. Keeping the customers feeling good is an integral part of a flight attendant's work, as is not letting any stress, anger or tiredness show to the customers. Emotional labour for Hochschild is a concept through which to grasp both the emotional aspects of certain forms of labour and the consequences of such demands concerning the emotions for the workers and their everyday practices. Emotional labour as a concept also

entails an acknowledgment of the commodification of emotions or feelings in the contemporary capitalism. As Hochschild (1983, 186) notes, “it does not take capitalism to turn feeling into a commodity or to turn our capacity for managing feeling into an instrument. But capitalism has found a use for emotion management, and so it has organized it more efficiently and pushed it further”.

Emotional labour is mostly conceptualised as connected to skills and domains that are thought of as feminine or typical to women, although of course this connection has not been taken for granted in the research. Hochschild (1983) herself also examined the emotional labour performed by debt collectors. Collecting is typically men’s work and involves managing and producing negative feelings such as fear, anger or anxiety. Other traditionally male-dominated occupations have also been examined in terms of managing and producing negative emotions, and in connection to violence. Linda McDowell (2009, 145–147), for example, discusses doormen’s and bouncers’ work mainly in terms of “licensed violence” and the “control of undisciplined crowds of people”. However, I have not come across many theoretical or empirical accounts of emotional labour typical of men or associated with masculinity that discuss more positive aspects, such as producing and maintaining feelings of security and delight, or taking care of customers.⁵³ Usually, it seems, emotional labour, when associated with men, is defined in terms of negative emotions and violence.⁵⁴

The labour described by interviewee 15 can thus be thought of as part of the continuum that Hochschild (1983) examined: managing employees’ negative emotions such as frustration and anger, and producing positively valued emotions of trust and hopefulness. It also includes skills traditionally associated with femininity – patience, support, compassion, understanding and sense of responsibility (Kinnunen 1997, 41; 2001; Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996, 12) – which make it possible to consider coaching as a field of work in terms of cultural feminisation: using skills traditionally considered

⁵³ These are integral aspects of emotional and aesthetic labour for example in doormen’s work (see Mäkinen 2010).

⁵⁴ Tuija Koivunen (2011, 252) similarly observes that “men’s emotions and emotional labour have not gained as much attention in research as they perhaps should have gained” and calls for examinations of male employees’ emotional labour in jobs where customer service is the core content of the work.

feminine, coaches' work is interactive service work and produces commodities defined in terms of interaction and emotion.

When interviewee 15 is asked whether gender has any significance in his work, he says that most of the coaching he does has been “on the soft side”, meaning workplaces in which the majority of workers are women. He reckons that what is typical of these workplaces (in the care or social sector) is “that ungodly way of talking, that flowery kind of talking, that emotion-talk” which he associates with the working culture of female-dominated workplaces. He then says that this “emotion-talk” is very different from how men talk in workshops, saying that the gendered ways of talking are “from different worlds”. Then, interestingly, he says that he is fine with the “emotion-talk”: “It suits me well, coaching communities of care, I understand that way of talking, I understand humans' emotional life and its affects on behaviour, it doesn't surprise me at all, because sometimes they can be a bit violent...” (H15). In this way then, he simultaneously claims that he has feminine skills – not being scared of emotional ways of talking – and distinguishes himself from women, claiming that “they” can be violent or rough in their speech.

The short account that the interviewee gives of the significance of gender seems to fit well with Adkins's (2001) suggestion that cultural feminisation doesn't necessarily mean the detraditionalisation of gender, but rather that traditional divisions might be being fortified at the same time as “femininity” is becoming an increasingly mobile asset in work. To put it in a more general way, one might note that the reconfiguration of relations of production in late capitalism has not eroded systems of domination so much at it has rescripted them (Hennessy 1993a, 90). What is important to see here is that while femininity is depicted as available to the male interviewee, at the same time it is still perceived as firmly attached to women and to workplaces dominated by women. Hence Adkins's notion that women's performances of femininity become naturalised, and that women occupy immanent positions in relation to gender while men are granted the privilege of flexibility (Adkins 2001, 629), seems rather accurate in light of this particular empirical example.

If one changes perspective, however, it is also possible to recognise in the middleman's work several aspects traditionally associated with men or masculinity:

efficiency, mobility, problem-solving and management (Kinnunen 1997, 41; 2001; Kinnunen & Korvajärvi 1996, 12). After all, this interviewee, like many others, emphasises that his method focuses on finding solutions: “I deal with these things focusing on solutions, we leave the past, we can’t do anything about that. We look forward, you know these principles.” Besides nurturing and emotion management, then, coaching is also about being practical and focusing on problem-solving without too much reflection on “the past”. In addition, the interviewee’s work involves not only understanding but also controlling or managing employees, which means that the coach is positioned alongside the organisation’s management, participating in the managerial strategy of the organisation. He acknowledges this with some awkwardness, as noted above.

However, it is useful here to remember that, as was briefly stated above, the connections between management and emotions are actually key in contemporary corporate culture. In line with the detraditionalisation thesis, Eva Illouz proposes that the “new emotional style” of corporate culture blurs gender divisions by orienting the traditionally masculine manager’s self towards the model of traditional female selfhood (Illouz 2007, 23). Even though Illouz seems to take for granted that mobility in terms of gender applies to women as well as to men – which is not necessarily the case here as was noted above – her take on feminisation makes clear that in terms of management, this is not a particularly new phenomenon but is something that began 100 years ago, so that the way in which management is now primarily understood and theorised is very much influenced by communication and other traditionally “feminine” skills (Illouz 2007, 16). Defining emotional or communicative aspects as feminine and managerial aspects as masculine is thus not necessarily a fruitful starting point for the examination of practices such as coaching, which build precisely on the intertwining of therapeutic aspects with corporate management.

However, in addition to his positioning alongside organisation’s management, one can also perceive another form of management or control in the interviewee’s work: working with and for the employees was described by the coach as helping them to learn to “manage themselves”. This aspect of encouraging self-management is evident in the final phrase in the extract quoted above: “We concentrate on the things that are in our

own hands, not in the hands of a higher power.” Self-management here is also integrally connected to empowerment, as the interviewee emphasises the workers’ attitudes and actions central to how they will survive the organisational change, and he wants to encourage the employees so that “empowerment happens” in them and they want to participate in the process – or alternatively to leave the organisation. He highlights that the employees need to distinguish the things over which they have power, and concentrate on those things.

What is discussed here in terms of self-management is a similar tendency to that which I described in terms of responsibility in the case of interviewee 10: a focus on the (assumed) autonomy of the coached client, a reluctance to consider things that are not straightforwardly “in their own hands”, and an emphasis on control as a particular form of autonomy. In this sense, the emphasis on responsibility and self-management in the interviews is connected to Pongratz and Voß’s (2003, 6–7) characterisation of self-management as an increasingly significant part of labour in a workplace in which autonomy is expected, it is the coach who “teaches autonomy” (not a process without contradictions, as will be seen in chapter five). Nurturing, empathy and emotional support are thus intertwined with the advocacy of both external and internal control, and with being positioned alongside management.

It is also worth noting that even though the interviewee clearly sympathises with the employees, he characterises them in terms that are historically associated with femininity. While the management appears as stubborn and ignorant, the employees are like emotionally demanding, temperamental children who need to be gently but firmly guided in the right direction. This impression is also repeated in other interviews and lectures in relation to the assumed audience of employees. In the case of this particular interview, the interviewee’s self-definition as a therapist might explain this gendered positioning. If one considers therapy as a profession, it does not bear straightforwardly feminine associations; the legacy of Freudian psychoanalysis, which (despite its possible irrelevance) more or less shadows any account of therapeutic work, leaves the impression that the *patient* is feminine whereas the *doctor* is masculine. From the interviewee’s description of his work, he might indeed be characterised as a work community *doctor*, and the emotional distress that he *manages* might acquire some feminine attributes.

All in all, if one thinks in terms of feminisation, it is quite hard to say whether this kind of coaching should be described as “feminised” work, or which aspects might be “feminine”. Are there, for example, resemblances with domestic work in the way in which the interviewee balances between different members of the organisation? If the employees are defined in childish and feminine terms as emotionally unstable and in need of care and control, is the coach a doctor – or a nanny? Coaching as work thus appears as a rather ambivalent combination that bears similarities with many other kinds of work, from childcare to selling to business management, but which cannot be reduced to any of them. Analysing these kind of working practices from the perspective of gender can open up different viewpoints and different instructive comparisons, but definite divisions in terms of femininity/masculinity do not seem accurate. Gender, then, does not submit to easy categorisations or generalisations, but it is not insignificant either. In relation to coaching, the question of the simultaneous mobility and fixity in terms of gender seems more relevant than characterising forms of work or occupational fields as feminine or masculine.

Another possible perspective from which to approach the middleman’s work would be to examine it in terms of affective production, as theorised by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (Hardt 1999; Hardt & Negri 2000; 2004). Affective labour, for Hardt and Negri, is connected to a wider theory of the knowledge economy and immaterial labour, the products of which are not material goods but services, knowledge or communication. Immaterial labour is defined primarily by its products, and in this sense the characteristics of interactive service work mentioned earlier seem to fit well into the frame of immaterial labour, especially since Hardt acknowledges that although the products are immaterial, the work itself is embodied (Hardt 1999). Hardt and Negri divide immaterial labour into two different forms, affective and symbolic-analytical production, and they consider the production of affects – human contact and interaction, as Hardt formulates it – as the most important or “binding” aspect of immaterial labour (Hardt 1999, 95).

Following Hardt and Negri, it would be quite easy to argue that interviewee 15 is involved in immaterial labour. His work is essentially about human contact and interaction, and it consists of producing and manipulating affects as well as producing and managing information and communication. But if one takes a closer look and tries to

determine what exactly are the intangible products the “middleman” produces, the picture becomes more complex. First, what he aims to produce are certain kinds of affect, emotion and knowledge in the employees – he aims to produce something the employees experience on both an affective and an intellectual level. Second, if one considers the clients, i.e. the management, what they are buying is not simply experiences for the employees but rather the consent of the employees – what they want the coach to offer them as his product is a “fix” to make the employees compliant and effective – and this demands the control and manipulation of affects, as explained above. At the same time as the coach himself struggles to be true to his vision of a therapeutic, empowering approach, he nevertheless participates in affective processes which are used to silence antagonisms related to organisational and class relations and to increase productivity.

What is both interesting and troubling in Hardt’s (1999) account of affective labour is that because, according to Hardt and Negri, affective labour produces collective subjectivities, sociality and the social through embodied encounters, it therefore also contains subversive potential. Their discussion of affective labour thus considers, on the one hand, how the production and reproduction of life is thoroughly capitalised, and on the other hand how this capitalisation of “life itself” also contains potential for subversion.

In relation to the case of the middleman, Hardt’s idea of affective labour as the production of collective subjectivities rings true, and indeed it is explicitly articulated by the interviewee himself:

[Answering a question about how one knows when coaching has succeeded:] The biggest job, the biggest... credit goes to those people that work in that community, in management as well as on the shop floor, that their way of thinking has changed and they want something in common, that they have a more congruent idea of what they are aiming for, even if they’ve taken different paths... but I mean like a more congruent, shared vision of the future, and that understanding will have increased on both sides, about the common reality which faces us or then about the goal which is further away...

(H15)

In light of this extract, it seems that the product the coach is selling is a process in which collective subjectivity is created or strengthened. Here the production of collective

subjectivity in terms of goals and visions is not necessarily a process that produces life power, however, but rather one in which the potentially dangerous, disruptive or antagonistic elements of workers' subjectivity – the already existing life power, one might say – are shaped into a form of subjectivity that enhances unity and functions in terms of capitalist production. While Hardt and Negri (2004) suggest that immaterial labour is increasingly outside the control of capital, here it appears on the contrary to function as a way to produce consent and eradicate potential disruption to capitalist production. However, as has been seen above, the process that is used to produce consent also carries within it aspects of both increasing reflexivity and voicing frustration and anger. It is also my impression that this interviewee's motivation for managing these kinds of affective process ultimately stems not from a need to be of service to the management, but rather from the need to help the employees make their work more meaningful. In this sense, then, one can recognise a potential for subversion, even though the actualisation of this potential on a large scale is not to be expected.

3.3. Conclusions

As well as being an introduction to the empirical field of the research, this chapter has been a tentative charting of this field in relation to self-promotion. Discussing coaching as a field of work and examining practices of coaching, I observed several characteristics that make coaching a rather favourable context for self-promotional processes.

Coaching is a relatively new form of work, with entrepreneurial aspects. I described these aspects by using the terms “individual vocation” and “entreplooyee”, both of which relate to the subjectification of work – work becoming increasingly dependent on the worker's subjectivity – and to the commercialisation of labour power in the contemporary economy. In light of these theoretical definitions, I examined how an individual vocation – especially a rather new one like coaching – demands promotional practices centred on the self. I also observed how the accounts that coaches gave of themselves and their own motivations were entangled with how they described their clients. Coaching as an

individual vocation is thus a context in which self-promotion can “slide” from being a marketing practice for coaches themselves to also being an aspect of coaching practices.

In addition to demanding promotional practices from the coaches, coaching as an occupational field emerged in my examination as a context in which articulations that centre on individual capacities, competence and potential are repeatedly circulated and employed. Furthermore, I observed how, in practices of coaching and in the narratives told by different coaches, the notions of capacity, competence and potential were articulated in connection with notions of change, autonomy and self-management. All of these articulations, like the practices of coaching themselves, posit the self as the centre of attention.

Examining how self-promotion is framed in coaching can now be further defined as an examination of particular articulations of capacity, change, autonomy and potential that connect to the process of the subjectification of work, to value production and also, as I noted while examining women coaches’ accounts, to post-feminist tendencies. Through these articulations, the promotional self is framed as capable, competent and in possession of potential.

Tracing these articulations, I also noted their implications and consequences in terms of social relations. For instance, articulations of individual capacity might transform experiences of inequality into occupational competence for women. The notions of competence, capacity, potential and autonomy are thus not gender-neutral, and so far it seems that it is particularly in connection to women that they come to have a gendered meaning. In the interviews there are accounts of women and femininity, but not many mentions of masculinity, for example. Looking at practices of coaching through the theoretical accounts of feminisation, however, I also noticed that accounts of femininity contain rather complex connections to both women and men. Femininity might be articulated as a fixed characteristic that “sticks” to women, as an attitude that can be refused (“a feminine way to act would have been...”), or as an asset at work that is also available to men.

In addition, in discussing the emotional and affective aspects of coaching I observed that coaching might contain processes in which subjectivities are produced in a

way that silences antagonisms and disruptions in capitalist production. This observation will be elaborated further in the forthcoming chapters.

In what follows, I will continue to explore the articulations concerning capacity, change, autonomy and potential, and the ways in which they frame self-promotion as well as the promotional self. I will also continue to examine the implications of these articulations in terms of the social relations of capitalism and gender, especially in connection to questions of displacement and silencing. In the next chapter, these issues will be approached through the nodal point of change.

4. Change

In the previous chapter, I noted that accounts of becoming a coach often contain a narrative of personal transformation. I also noted that the work of the work community coach (the “middleman”) often meant managing employees and their emotions while their organisation was going through changes. These observations are telling of the extent to which change figures as a prominent theme in the different texts on work-related coaching. It could almost be said that *every text* related to coaching in some way alludes to change. Generally, in these texts, change is not considered merely as a potential (or potentially avoidable) feature; on the contrary, the main message that comes across is that the only constant is change.

Beginning from this empirical observation, in this chapter I will trace processes of self-promotion through the different articulations of change and transformation produced and employed in coaching. My aim is to continue the analysis I began in the previous chapter: to examine articulations concerning change in coaching in order to discover how they frame – make intelligible – processes self-promotion. I will do this through contextualisation, looking at how processes of self-promotion become intertwined with other processes, and at how the articulations produced in coaching resonate with other articulations produced across different sites. Methodologically, this means looking at how texts (interviews as well as published texts) resonate with other texts. I will also pay attention to the framing of the self that takes place through these articulations, and to the implications of this framing, especially in terms of agency.

This chapter consists of four parts. The first part examines “big change”, looking at articulations concerning the characteristics and consequences of social and economic

change. The second part focuses on change on the organisational level, and the third part traces articulations concerning personal change and empowerment. To open up the implications and interconnections concerning these different articulations, I conclude the chapter by examining them in relation to gender, particularly in relation to post-feminist claims and the figure of the strong woman. I also introduce the notion of the sense of agency as a possible conceptual approach to questions of empowerment and strength.

4.1. Unavoidable change

“Big” change that happens above and out of reach of individuals is recognised as a significant context and explanation for practices of self-promotion, as well as for practices of coaching in general, both in the written texts and in the interviews. In what follows, I will argue that articulations concerning big change have a twofold function in relation to self-promotion. First, these articulations frame self-promotion as a necessary response to social and economic change. Second, they frame the promotional self in such a way that the social and political agency of the self is narrowed. *Because* the self lacks social and political agency, it is incapable of affecting social and economic change, and has to transform itself in order to adjust to and accommodate the changing circumstances. In this way the need for change is turned inwards and the self becomes the main object of its own agency. This kind of logic permeates diverse practices of self-promotion.

The idea of “big” change is featured most often in newspaper or magazine articles and self-help books, mainly because in these texts there is a clear need to provide a background and motivation for the practices that are proposed. I will therefore concentrate especially on published (online or otherwise) textual material, while bearing in mind that similar ideas are repeated but also silenced or bypassed in the interviews. However, as coaching practices are essentially connected to the various books, websites and other texts produced by different authors, the analysis of these texts also sheds light on those practices. This is the case also in relation to articulations of change. In this section, I will first give an outline of my own perspective on the understanding of change

in terms of society and the economy. Then I will look at the ways in which “big” change is depicted in the research material, and consider connections between the research material and theoretical accounts of social and economical change.

As already mentioned, there is a vast theoretical debate concerning the scope and the significance of the change that has happened in Western economies and societies since the beginning of the second half of 20th century. My interest here is particularly in the accounts of economic change and changes in working life, and the position from which I will examine the articulations of change takes into consideration the new aspects of current capitalism, the continuities that can be seen in global capitalism, and the inherent, unchanging features of the capitalist regime.

As for the new aspects of the economy, as described in the previous chapter, there is a significant change to be considered in terms of (cultural) feminisation, the importance of the service industry, and the role of immaterial, affective, emotional and aesthetic labour (e.g. Adkins 2001; Gray 2003; Veijola & Jokinen 2008). However, as Linda McDowell (2009) remarks, the rise of the service sector, which is seen as a central sign of labour market’s drastic transformation, does not appear so dramatic if the historical continuity of women’s unpaid labour is taken into account. According to McDowell (2009, 8, 25–26), if the caring labour that has been performed unpaid at home were included in the definition of work, the degree of change would seem less radical. Women’s entry into the social relations of waged labour, but doing the same types of work that they previously undertook at home, can then be seen as paradoxically representing both change and continuity (*ibid.*).

Andrew Kliman (2009) makes a similar point, commenting on the thesis of the immaterialisation of labour that is central to theories of the new economy (e.g. Marazzi 2008/2002). Kliman remarks that the proportion of the world’s population that works directly for capital is larger than ever before, and since the overwhelming majority of these people are manual workers, any description of the immaterialisation of labour is problematic (Kliman 2009). Silvia Federici (2009) refers to the same problem, highlighting that the tremendous technological leap that made the emergence of the knowledge economy possible also increased exploitation at the other end of the process,

particularly in third-world sweatshops: “there is a continuum between the computer worker and the worker in the Congo who digs coltan with his hands” (ibid., 5).

Another strand in the discussions of change, one that has also had political visibility, emphasises the increasing precariousness of working life, and of the life of the worker in general. In the introduction I mentioned the Precarias a la Deriva collective, who base their research and social critique on charting the precarised lives of women in Madrid. During first decade of the millennium, this kind of political research/activism has also gained ground in Finland. Activists have demanded that trade unions, for example, recognise that their conceptions of paid work and workers’ rights are old fashioned and inefficient in helping the young people who are living increasingly precarious lives outside the conventional world of paid work (e.g. Korhonen et al. 2009).⁵⁵ The claim of increasing precarity is based on the theory of a transition from Fordist to post-Fordist capitalism. The idea, in very simple form, is that whereas in Fordism the life of the worker was fairly stable and routine, in post-Fordism there are no stable jobs and no security in paid work; hence the precariousness, which is both a threat and a harm, but also an opportunity to seek a different kind of life.

The analysis of the precariousness and insecurity of the contemporary labour market has been criticised for not acknowledging that uncertainty or precarity has always been the basic characteristic of work in capitalist economy. It is only Fordism and Keynesianism that were the exception – the precarity of work in western Europe is thus only *temporally and spatially* new, and resonates with the fading of welfare state models (Gill & Pratt 2009, 10). This has also been noted in Finnish research. Anu Suoranta (2009), examining the working conditions of female textile workers in the 1920s and 1930s, notes that they were “regularly irregular”, and that the history of the labour market contains much less regulation than is usually assumed. The conceptualisations that describe working life under the welfare state thus do not describe the earlier conditions of work anymore than they describe the present conditions. Suoranta accurately states that “before, at the present and progress are not in unambiguously parallel movement” and suggests that in Finland today there is a re-emergence of employment practices that existed before the wars (ibid., 12).

⁵⁵ At the moment one of the most important claims of this political movement concerns basic income.

The accounts of change, then, can be contested, and the relevance of accounts of immaterialisation and precarity or the rise of the service sector to current social reality is clearly a question of spatial, temporal and subjective positioning. It is therefore important to emphasise both the differences and the hierarchies between different subjects and positions, rather than relying on one totalising account of drastic change. Also, as I noted in the introductory chapter, it is important to pay attention to the stable aspects, and to the inherent contradictory tendencies of capitalism (see Harvey 1982; 1989, 179–180). Any theory of change has to acknowledge that there are inherent features (such as orientation towards growth) and contradictions inscribed in capitalism. Only by taking these into account it is possible to understand the wider conditions and consequences of different transformations.

I also do not consider change an overdetermined force. Different agents, such as states, enterprises and financial networks, have effects on social and economic reality. The theoretical standpoint of discursive materialism adds to this the notion that reality is constructed through discursive struggles, which are fought on all levels of society, not simply on the institutional level. One of these struggles, both material and discursive, is the antagonist relationship between labour and capital. Change is thus both an ambivalent notion and the result of struggle, and it is from this conception that I will approach the research material.

The understanding of change across the written texts in my research material is fairly coherent. In general, “big” change is depicted as originating from an unknown source, or a source that is out of the reach of the individual. This kind of change is described as being like a force of nature (cf. Sennett 1998) that swipes over individuals. There is nothing to do but accommodate and adjust to the changing circumstances, as one would in the face of an earthquake or tidal wave. The changes that are understood to function like this are often social or economic, and they are presented as being on the macro level, in contrast to the micro level of the everyday practices of individuals. Different accounts of coaching in the research material refer, for example, to changes due to the economic crisis⁵⁶ or changes in the labour market. The significance of coaching is

⁵⁶ Most of the published material that I examined, however, was written before the crisis of 2009, which took place during my research process.

said to be that it helps individuals to survive the consequences of these changes in relation to their own lives.

Changes in the labour market, for example, are highlighted on the web pages of Finland's Employment and Economic Development Office (www.mol.fi, retrieved 15.9.2009). The article entitled "How to Look for Work"⁵⁷ begins with a section called "The Changing Labour Market".⁵⁸ The first thing that the assumed (unemployed) reader learns is that "The labour market has changed considerably during the past decade."⁵⁹ It is implied that this is the reason why the unemployed person has to be capable of "marketing his/her know-how" to employers, which I interpret as being capable of promoting him/herself in the labour market.

Another similar example can be found in William Bridges's self-help book *Creating You & Co* (1997), in which the author advises readers on how to survive in the changing labour market. He calls the labour market "de-jobbed", by which he means that the so-called traditional jobs are disappearing. Bridges emphasises that this is a process that cannot be halted, and hence adapting to the disappearance of traditional jobs becomes a question of survival. Bridges's answer to the de-jobbed labour market is "creating you & co". This means transforming yourself into a marketable product which – according to Bridges – will then help you to survive the jobless labour market.

In both of these examples, change is presented as a process that cannot be affected by individuals. The origins or the scope of change are not discussed, and neither is the possibility that individuals might effect change – or that it might be the result of collective or individual action. The only choice presented as sensible is understanding the altered situation and acting accordingly. This approach can also be perceived in relation to the economic crisis, which is interpreted as a reason or incentive for self-promotion. Job losses are the concrete outcome of the crisis, as the image consultant Louise Mowbray (see chapter 3) states in her blog in February 2009:

This all begs a key question – what criteria will those who decide the fate of this soon to be unemployed workforce use to make their decisions? The obvious –

⁵⁷ "Miten etsiä työtä."

⁵⁸ "Muuttuvat työmarkkinat."

⁵⁹ "Työmarkkinat muuttuivat merkittävästi viime vuosikymmenellä."

closure of unprofitable business units will see unnecessary, un-transferable skills and expertise go first. The fat will be cut and under performing individuals will be next on the list. [...] And then the difficult bit. The bit that is based on how people are perceived vs. any of the above.
(Leadershipbrands.blogspot.com)

Mowbray's opinion is that because of the economic crisis, "There could not be a more urgent need for all of us to take a good look at the impressions we are creating in the minds of those who can and may affect our success in the future" (ibid.).

Peter Montoya uses rhetoric of the same kind in his self-help book *The Brand Called You* (2002) – in connection not with an economic crisis, but with a more general change in the labour market: "You know it's a different world – one in which 40-year job security is a distant memory. These days, there's no loyalty in corporations; you're as apt to be laid off at the first economic hiccup as you are to be promoted. [...] How do you create your own security?" (ibid, 11).

The problem for the subjects of self-promotion is how to "create one's own security" despite the drastic changes, most recently the economic crisis. The most important thing is to realise that "it's a different world" and not to expect things to be as they used to be – for example, not to expect that loyalty to your employer will save you from being laid off, or that being skilled will be enough, which is the message that Mowbray conveys on her blog. Another statement of the same kind can be found in a web article describing the business of personal branding: "Those who can simply do the job will not receive nearly as many opportunities as those who carve out a unique niche for themselves" (Leonardi 2007).

Security, then, cannot be found outside the self, because the labour market has changed and continues to change and is fundamentally insecure. Mary Spillane in *Branding Yourself* (2000) describes a similar vision:

You've been through seismic changes from the cut and thrust of the entrepreneurial 80s to the downsizing in the 90s. You live in a world of flexible, short-term contracts – in other words, sort out your own pension and health benefits. As organisations flatten and shed bureaucracy, job security is gone. [...] Our careers, the rewards, the satisfaction and, most importantly, their viability, are down to us.
(Spillane 2000, 23)

The social and economic changes mentioned in the research material can be contextualised by the theories and political movements that assume and describe a radical change from the Fordist to the post-Fordist economy, or on a social level from modernity to reflexive modernity (e.g. Gill & Pratt 2009; Hardt & Negri 2000; Hardt 1999; Beck 2008/1986; Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994). In the web pages and self-help books cited above, change is defined in terms of the insecurity and precariousness of the labour market, and this is then presented as the reason for the promotion of self (see also Lury 2004, 35–36). In a similar way Finnish coaches, as well as English and American coaching companies, identify the “project society” (Lampinen 2007) or “accelerating social changes and information overload” as reasons for the popularity of coaching:

Coaches find reasons for the popularity of coaching in the change in society: in the middle of accelerating social changes and information overload, people want to pause and think, what do I want in all this?
(Porttinen 2005)⁶⁰

Those who identify their personal assets, know how to use who they are to affect how they earn and have the ability to clearly communicate their unique value proposition, will thrive in the new knowledge economy where reputation is the only accepted currency.
(Leonardi 2007)

One key to growing your power is to recognise the simple fact that we now live in a project world. Almost all work today is organized into bite-sized packets called projects. A project-based world is ideal for growing your brand: projects exist around deliverables, they create measurables, and they leave you with braggables. If you're not spending at least 70% of your time working on projects, creating projects, or organizing your (apparently mundane) tasks into projects, you are sadly *living in the past*.
(Peters 2007)

These accounts resonate with the various and multiple accounts of change in social theory, especially with those concerning the knowledge economy, the new economy and

⁶⁰ ”Valmentajat näkevät syytä valmennuksen suosioon myös yhteiskunnan muuttumisessa: nopeutuvien muutosten ja informaatiotulvan keskellä ihmiset haluavat pysähtyä miettimään, mitä minä tästä kaikesta haluan.”

individualisation. Let us consider, for instance, Ulrich Beck's theorisation of risk society and autonomist Marxists' accounts of political struggle and new forms of living. There is a strange convergence, in that the notions that autonomist Marxists see as both oppressive and offering the potential for new subjectivities (Gill & Pratt 2009, 3), such as precariousness, and the notions that Beck considers fundamental to contemporary societies, such as insecurity, are used in the research material as indisputable descriptions of reality which justify and explain the need for coaching and self-promotion.

For example, the "risk society" that Beck describes is fairly similar to that which William Bridges takes for granted in *Creating You & Co*. According to Beck (2008/1986), the labour market has become the motor of individualisation, which means that people have to rely on themselves and their own individual labour-market fate, with all its attendant risks, opportunities, and contradictions. According to Bridges (1997, 15), "the inner aspect of the new work situation is that each of us has some unique combination of motivation, capability, style, and incidental advantages that represent the work that fits us, the work we were made for, our lifework." Before, work used to be a performance according to a script that was already written, whereas now "we're working without scripts". And as for security, it "resides in our ability to add value to what some organisation does or, more specifically, to add value to what the organisation's customer gets for his/her buck". (Bridges 1997, 15, 28–29).

The "new" working life described by Tom Peters, one of the so-called gurus of personal branding, is also remarkably close to accounts of individualisation, which Beck (2008/1986) describes as the reshaping of the inner social structures of industrial society. Beck suggests that as the old social forms shatter, individuals are *set free* from social structures like class, gender or marriage. Even though Peters writes with a hint of exaggeration and hyperbole, the similarities are visible:

The real action is at the other end: the main chance is becoming a free agent in an economy of free agents, looking to have the best season you can imagine in your field, looking to do your best work and chalk up a remarkable track record, and looking to establish your own micro equivalent of the Nike swoosh. Because if you do, you'll not only reach out toward every opportunity within arm's (or laptop's) length, you'll not only make a noteworthy contribution to your team's

success – you’ll also put yourself in a great bargaining position for next season’s free-agency market.
(Peters 2007)

The above quotations also resonate with (and also contradict) autonomist Marxist notions of precariousness and new forms of labour. In the research material, the insecurity that is described as fundamental to the “new” work is simultaneously seen as creating new possibilities – a worker has become someone who is “working without scripts” instead of being slave to the Fordist assembly line, and “everyone has a chance to learn, improve, and build up their skills” (Peters 2007).

Thus it can be argued that practices of coaching, and processes of self-promotion, are connected to the changes related to the new economy, such as the emphasised significance of information, the increased susceptibility to risk, and the overall precariousness of labour and living (e.g. Gill & Pratt 2009, 2–3), as well as to the processes of individualisation described by theorists of reflexive modernisation.

However, the connection between theoretical accounts of social and economic change and the understanding of the essence and consequences of change in my research material might be more complex than just a simple causal relation. Keeping in mind the standpoint of discursive materialism, it has to be noted that no theory is outside the discourses of culture, for theory is one of many cultural narratives. All theories are ways of making sense – they are ideological – and as such they have materiality, in that they help to shape the formation of social subjects as well as what comes to count as “real” or the “truth”. Taking their place among the texts of culture, theoretical narratives circulate within the highly mediated field of discursive struggles over social meaning and resources. (Hennessy 1993a, 7).

The social and economic change that is said to have happened in recent decades can also be viewed in a contradictory light, as consisting of both continuity and change. It is therefore important to assess the significance of the comprehensive, solid account of “big” change found in the research material. Of course it could fairly be stated that changes in the economy cause changes in the labour market as well as cultural changes, and that these then affect individual practices related to self-promotion, such as coaching. Nevertheless, it is also worth considering whether the theories that emphasise significant

changes in the economy and the labour market might also have a different function in relation to the processes of self-promotion.

Different accounts of social and material change have created a common understanding of contemporary working life that is evident in numerous narratives in newspaper articles, self-help books and web pages and repeated in academic research. It becomes clear in my research material that this understanding is in some instances used to frame self-promotion. Self-promotional practices, for their part, intensify the characteristics that are said to mark the change, such as precariousness and insecurity of the labour market. In this way the theories might become at least partly self-fulfilling (e.g. Merton 1948). In addition to describing adequately social reality and the reality of many individuals, they might also, through repetition and citation, bring into being that which they name (cf. Butler 1990).

It is helpful to consider Judith Butler's (1990) account of performativity in relation to the convergence between my empirical material and the above-mentioned theories. Butler is concerned with gender, and questions the idea of gender as natural. Instead, she describes gender as a construction that regularly conceals its origins. Gender for Butler is a reified form, a sedimentation of norms that produces the phenomenon it names through repetition. The attributes of gendered subjects effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. (Ibid., 140–141). It is precisely through various repetitive processes that the “common sense” considering social and economic change is achieved, and that which is said to express and reveal the change can also be seen to constitute or reinforce it. As the different theories are cited and re-cited, specific accounts of change are rendered normative and natural so that they become the invisible, unquestionable frame for understanding the self and its position in connection to society and the economy. The origins of change are concealed in a process of reification the outcome of which is the conception of change as an independent force.⁶¹

Beck (2008/1986) himself provides a similar perspective when he remarks that contemporary risks are open to social negotiation and construction. In the circulation of

⁶¹ On the concept of reification see e.g. Lukács (1971/1923), Chari (2010) and Jameson (1991, 314-315).

cultural narratives, the theories that describe social insecurities certainly take some part in this negotiation and construction. It has already been noted, for example, that the optimistic side of Beck's theorisation of reflexivity "nicely parallels the focus on individual effort in the neoliberal economic and welfare policies" of contemporary Britain, as well as business rhetoric about the need for flexible workers (McDowell 2009, 68). It is notable then that the rhetoric of unavoidable change can be found not only in self-help books by individual authors, but also on the web pages of Finland's Employment Office, as this means that it is to some extent also integrated into national labour policy.

Despite the strong emphasis on change in the research material – and especially the focus on changes related to labour market – neither feminisation nor cultural feminisation are mentioned. Although these have been theorised as a significant aspect of the shift to the new economy (as discussed in the previous chapter), they do not surface in the repeated arguments about economic and social change. Could it be that feminisation is not described as having the same powerful effect as the other changes precisely because it is *feminisation*, because it is interpreted as specifically attached to femininity and thus to women? As change is likened to a natural power, it is also understood as an equal force – it has to strike everyone alike, otherwise the idea of adjustment would need much more nuance, and there might also be more questions concerning the fairness of the demands if they did not appear to relate to everyone alike. To highlight feminisation would not suit the overall frame within which social and economic change is presented, unless feminisation could be described as equally gainful and equally pressing for both men and women.

Thus feminisation is bypassed and marginalised from the general discussion of the individual subject's position in relation to change. At the same time it is implicitly clear that the subjects in question are not markedly gendered – in relation to change, they are all assumed to be neutral and equal. There is a tendency in coaching to muffle possible differences and antagonisms. In the previous chapter, this tendency emerged in connection with the affective labour of a work community coach who produced –albeit reluctantly – consent in the employees. In relation to change, this tendency can be perceived in the way that all social hierarchies and differences are obscured from

descriptions of change and its consequences. The invisibility of feminisation in the material also illustrates how the question of self-fulfilling theories is not about the automatic effects of such theories but rather about the power relations between different social forces – such as academia, political structures and the production of publicity – that render certain theories common knowledge (cf. Skeggs 2004, 45–46).

In relation to the silencing potential antagonisms, a relevant critique is also proposed by Werner Bonefeld (1991, 35) who suggests that the analysis of post-Fordism is part of the imposition of post-Fordism itself. Bonefeld discusses the theories of the regulation approach and mentions authors such as Esser, Hirsch, Jessop and Roth, stating that their accounts of Fordism and post-Fordism replace the proposed analysis of the development of capitalism with a theoretically informed description of contemporary capitalism. The main problem, according to Bonefeld, is the disarticulation of structure and struggle, which invalidates any attempt to analyse the development of capitalism through class struggle. For Bonefeld, Fordism and post-Fordism are inevitably full of cracks, fissures and contradictions, and are never just a synchronisation of functionally required regulative forms. He emphasises the importance of struggle in the development of capitalism, and states that to construe Fordism and post-Fordism as models of capitalist socialisation, and to construe capitalist development from one to the other as a linear “process without a subject”, is to impose arbitrary theoretical constructs and downplay the struggle in which that development consists. (Ibid., 35, 49, 61, 63).

Following Bonefeld, accounts that produce a deterministic view of social and economic change can be said to contribute to the muting of class struggle. A similar critique of the regulation approach is presented by Ferruciano Gambino (1996), who remarks that what is at stake in these theorisations is not just the inevitability of the capitalist system but also the possibility of any initiative or resistance on the part of subjects. In other words, the emphasis on change as an overdetermined “process without a subject” strips the subjects of power and thus contributes to the process it names.

The way in which articulations concerning change function in the research material resembles the description of this “process without a subject”. Although capitalism as an overdetermining system is not explicitly mentioned in the texts, the current economic situation is often presented as the outcome of inevitable change. It seems that change is

often seen as an inevitable force precisely because it is connected to the economy – the labour market is transformed not because of those who labour or those who guide the workers, nor even because of those who make political decisions, but because of changes in the forms of production or in the functioning of the global financial markets. From the standpoint of discursive materialism it might be said that there is an ongoing discursive struggle in which different articulations concerning change effect different conceptions of what is possible, either for an individual self or for a collective of individuals.

Bonefeld's and Gambino's critique is relevant to the continuum that seems to exist between theories of social and economic change and the practices of self-promotion produced across different sites of work-related coaching. The articulations employed in the research material are far from ascribing agency to the self, if one understands agency as Bonefeld does in connection to the class struggle, or as Gambino does in connection to resistance (there are of course other forms or understandings of agency which will be considered later). Instead, agency as the capacity to interact with the world and affect the world and other people is articulated as if it belonged to change itself. In this way, change is ultimately produced as the only powerful subject (Sennett 1998, 114–115). At the same time, forces behind social change become invisible, and are presented as if they were beyond all authority. This inevitably means that these forces easily become more powerful and harder to resist in reality.

The way in which change is articulated thus renders the individual subject somewhat incapable of affecting social circumstances. The agency that is nevertheless prescribed for the self is turned inwards, making the self the object of its own agency – the actions of a self are directed inwards instead of being directed towards the world. This turn from the outer world towards the self can be considered both a precondition and an implication of self-promotion, and it implies that the self is constructed both as an object which can be transformed and altered in response to inevitable change, and simultaneously as the subject of this inner transformation. Andrew Wernick (1991, 193) refers to this double position of the subject/object of self-promotion, stating that the outcome of promotional processes is not only the “socially adapted self of mainstream social psychology, a panoply of self-identified roles attuned to the requirements of the social position(s) which a person has come to occupy”. For Wernick, the promotional self

is “a self which continually produces itself for competitive circulation” (ibid.). The self-appointed branding guru Tom Peters expresses a similar idea on his web-site, albeit in a slightly different way: “we survive by staring change in the eye – and adapting” (Peters 2004).

4.2. Resisting and managing change

Another way in which change becomes understood in the research material concerns changes in organisations. These are often described in a similar manner to social and economic changes. Like tides, organisational transformations come and go, and the role of the individual worker is to adjust or take advantage. A typical example was given by a working life coach lecturing to the staff of my university at a time of major organisational changes. He pointed out that these changes were being enacted by law; hence, he said, the only thing that the employees could affect was their own attitude (L1). In this lecture, the effect that employees might have through trade union or other social activities did not come up as relevant. Instead, any possible objections to the changes were depicted as useless and a waste of energy. It became clear that efforts need to be directed not towards the organisation or the reform of legislation, but towards the self in the form of changing one’s attitude. In the previous chapter I noted that the affective labour of “the middleman” functioned in a similar way to produce consent in employees, and that attention was turned from organisational change towards the self: “We concentrate on the things that are in our own hands, not in the hands of a higher power” (H15). These kinds of articulation are fairly common in coaching when organisational change and resistance to change are discussed.

The portrayal of resistance to change as a sign of personal failure is evident in the research material, in relation both to social and economic change and organisational change. This way of depicting resistance to change resonates with Andrew Wittel’s analysis of flexibility and the erosion of enduring relationships. Following Richard Sennett, Wittel describes how in a short-term economy change becomes a value in itself,

and resistance towards change is taken as a sign of failure (Wittel 2001, 63). This kind of perspective is evident, for example, in lectures aimed directly at employees who are expected to resist organisational change. In a way similar to the above-mentioned example, a lecturing coach might identify laziness, habit and fear as reasons for resistance to change (L2). Hence those who show resistance to change are not recognised as active agents; on the contrary, they are lazy and fearful, and hence passive, as if paralysed. These articulations, in which laziness and resistance are brought together, were contradicted in only one interview, when the interviewee (“the middleman” whose situation was described in the previous chapter) stated that as a psychotherapist he considered resistance to change as an important component of a person’s security system. He remarked that “change resistance [...] is nothing but asking for reasons, questioning, why this change, but it is considered insulting, how come you ask, it’s decided already, just adapt. Any healthy person would resist” (H15).

The negative tone in which resistance to change is usually described in the research material is significant, because it permeates not only the ways of talking about organisational change but also the discussion concerning social and economic change on a national level. The idea of resistance to change as an individual attitude problem can be found, for example, in a report by McKinsey & Company (2007) on the economy of Finland.⁶² The report has political significance, as it was published before parliamentary elections as a “pro bono initiative”, and three years later McKinsey & Company were hired by the Prime Minister’s Office to help to design the next government programme (www.yle.fi 19.2.2010). In the report it is stated that social change demands that every individual change his or her habits and attitude. Attitudes towards flexibility in particular need to be changed, according to the report. The need for flexibility is explained in terms of the rapidity of social and economic change: “Changes can not be accurately foreseen, and a nation the size of Finland cannot significantly affect them” (McKinsey 2007, 50).⁶³

These references to the need for flexibility again resonate with theories of economic change in which flexibility is seen as one a key feature marking the contemporary

⁶² An interesting detail is that Mary Spillane also refers to McKinsey when she discusses change in her self-help book on personal branding (Spillane 2000, 26).

⁶³ “*Muutoksia ei pystytä ennakoimaan tarkasti, eikä Suomen kokoinen maa pysty niihin merkittävästi vaikuttamaan.*”

economy as new (see Julkunen 2008). Sennett among others has pointed out that practices of flexibility tend to concentrate on the “forces that flex humans” (Sennett 1998; Julkunen 2008, 108). Similarly, in the McKinsey report flexibility does not mean that the conditions of work, for example, will adapt to personal needs, but that the individuals themselves need to “flex”. Thus the attitude of citizens is important in the sense that they need to be ready to let go of old structures and “adapt to changes rapidly and with intellect” (ibid., 50). In the McKinsey report, the individual’s inability to affect changes is elevated to the national level, as Finland as a nation is described as incapable of affecting global changes – hence its citizens can have fewer expectations to be able to exert agency in relation to the social or the economy. Through such articulations, individual agency is once again directed towards the self, this time in the name of flexibility. It is also significant that questions of resistance to change penetrate multiple social relations, as they can be observed in relation to workers and management, citizens and the state, the state and the global economy, and the individual and society.

Despite the overwhelming emphasis on adjusting to change, there is also another aspect that comes up in the research material in relation to organisational changes, namely, that change can be managed or controlled. This is a view often associated with managers, leaders, consultants or coaches. It is not generally the employee who is taken as managing the organisational change. Instead, a consultant or a coach can be hired to help the managers with change management, which is recognised as a professional field of expertise (H11; H14; H10; H8; Spillane 2000, 25; cf. Zink et. al 2008). In the research material, change management is often described in relation to the employee’s assumed resistance to change. Managing the change, as it is presented in the material, seems to concentrate on managing the employee’s response to organisational changes, as was seen in the previous chapter. Change management, then, is not necessarily about the change itself, but rather about the employees’ attitudes. Hence the lecturers quoted above were actually managing change, as they tried to affect the employees’ attitudes and decrease resistance to change.

Change management is understood not only as a field of expertise, but as a form of labour that has to be done if the organisation is to go through the inevitable change with minimum costs and losses. It is a “core competency” (Spillane 2000, 25). It is not

possible to consider the vast field of change management expertise at length here, so I will limit my analysis to a couple of notions. First, coaches and consultants are a professional group that is recognised as capable of this labour, and therefore it is also in their interests to emphasise the importance of both change and the management of change:

People today, they don't yet realise that all management is, all action is, action related to change, management of change, how society has changed, how fast it has become, the external changes in the operational environment, it takes people by surprise.
(H11)

Second, it is interesting that the resistance to change that is managed can be experienced as a natural force, rather like the “big” change analysed above. For example, one of the interviewees describes how her client (a manager) might experience “[employees’] resistance to change pouring like a tsunami on his shoulders” (H14). Thus similar metaphors circulate around the different understandings and conceptualisations of change, which means that articulations across different sites are connected and might even reinforce each other. Such articulations also confirm the observation made in the previous chapter that coaches’ work involves managing emotions and affects, and in particular that in the case of organisational coaching, it is the employees’ affects that are considered problematic.

In relation to the organisation and to the change that concerns employees’ attitudes, the subjects are thus not presented as powerless, as they are in relation to social and economic change: managing change is not seen as waste of energy. There is nevertheless a considerable difference in this regard between the interviews and the other material. In most of the self-help books, web pages and articles, the idea of the organisation is not very relevant, since the operational environment is not a specific organisation but the labour market and business environment (these tend to become merged in the rhetoric) in general. It is not the organisation that should be invested in, but the self. In the interviews, however, the organisational environment emerges as significant. This is understandable since many of the interviewees work in organisations, and their most important clients are organisations, not individuals.

In some of the interviews the coaches were asked whether they thought that coaching just one person could have an effect on the organisation as a whole. Most of the answers stated that the single person who is coached might have the power to change the organisational order in a way that also affects others. This makes sense in relation to the coaches' professional field, since the motivation for organisations to pay for individual coaching rests on the idea that it is for everyone's benefit. Usually the idea is that the client is a manager or in a leadership position, so that through him or her it is possible to affect the whole unit or even the whole organisation. However, the changes that might happen in the organisation are always seen as originating in one person first investing in him- or herself and then, as a consequence, also transforming his or her circumstances. Thus, changes are not the outcome of collective action, but an extension of one person's individual transformation.

4.3. Personal transformations

In the processes of self-promotion, the self is framed as able to adapt and "flex" in response to social, economic or organisational change. The capacities of adaptation and flexibility are connected to the articulations of change which frame self-promotion, as well as to the conditions and possibilities for understanding the promotional self. This self thus needs to be transformed – or to be more precise, it is a self that needs to transform itself.

It is therefore no surprise that all practices of coaching are based on the assumption that a person needs to change something in relation to him- or herself. Personal change is the foundational aim of coaching, and it is concretised in the form of goals and aims, which are mentioned by almost every interviewee and in every text I have examined. In addition to change achieved through coaching, personal change also figures in the research material as a motivation for coaching and as a part of the narratives that the coaches interviewed and the authors of the published texts tell about themselves, as described in the previous chapter.

As a motivation for coaching, change can mean the wider change that was described above, but it can also be a personal change that has already happened and is now seen as the reason for the desire to be coached. Mary Spillane (2000, 9) states at the beginning of her book that “people generally seek out an image consultant or performance coach when they are going through changes.” She suspects that the reader was “probably attracted to the title *Branding Yourself* because [he or she was] perhaps feeling threatened or vulnerable or uncertain about the future.” Thus the changes that are framed as motivating individuals into coaching are often “big” changes, but are experienced and understood on a personal level as insecurity or other new situations in either working or personal life.

“Going through changes” can mean that a person is coming to a turning point in his or her career or life in general. It can mean unemployment or frustration with one’s current work. It is also often depicted as age-related. One coach describes the typical kind of client as a middle-aged man who has persistently built a career for 20 years and then at the age of 40 finds himself asking: “Is this what I really want?” (H10). These turning points also emerge in the interviewees’ own accounts of their occupational choices, as was seen in the previous chapter.

Coaching then cannot be done without aiming to change, accounting for and responding to change, and reflecting on and perceiving ongoing or achieved changes. However, it is quite hard to pinpoint any definite description of the changes that are aimed for and achieved in coaching, or to describe accurately the different processes of transformation as they are told by the interviewees, or self-help books or web pages. Whereas the descriptions of what has been called “big change” are strikingly similar in the research material, the questions of personal change differ. For example, the understanding of personal change in the processes of organisational coaching for managers is different from the processes that aim to find work for unemployed young adults. In addition, the suggestions and ideal goals described in the self-help books or web pages differ from the actual changes that are achieved on different occasions. It is thus not reasonable to try to examine all possible transformations, or to try to account for every single idea or aspect of personal change.

In what follows, I will therefore consider some examples that I consider typical or otherwise significant in the material. These are aspects of transformation that repeatedly surface in various accounts of coaching and thus have relevance to the way coaching as an occupation is practiced and defined. The analysis relies on a condensation of the material that undoubtedly leaves out fractures and differences, but also brings out the most manifest tendencies that can be observed in the processes of self-promotion. It is mainly in light of these tendencies that I will then consider the self that is transformed and the implications of personal transformation for the framing of the promotional self.

Goals and aims

The idea of coaching as a goal-orientated fixed-term process is repeated in almost all of the interviews. The emphasis on personal change is also described as what differentiates coaching from other similar practices, such as therapy or the supervision of work (<http://www.coachfederation.org/>). While supervision of work, for example, is an ongoing process intended to provide constant support for the worker, coaching is usually described as a strictly goal-orientated process with a beginning and an end. The emphasis on change became also evident in the introductory coaching session I conducted with one of the interviewees. Once the session had been agreed, I was given a list of questions to think about beforehand. The first question on the list was “What kind of change would you like to realise in your life? Or in your lifestyle?”⁶⁴ The other questions on the list were also based on the assumption of a need for change. The goal of personal change was a prerequisite for coaching, and it could not be bypassed.

Usually the process of coaching begins with discussing and deciding on a goal for the client. The goals are as varied as the clients, and the purposes of coaching also vary. The coaches were usually rather vague when describing the goals:

It begins from, a coaching process always begins from defining a goal, but the content and character [of the goal] comes from the client’s aims, if the challenge is to do just one curriculum vitae, well that won’t take long, but usually there is

⁶⁴ ”*Minkä muutoksen haluat tehdä elämässäsi? Tai elämäntyylyssäsi?*”

the whole process of change intertwined, how you use it and what is the starting point for the client and how then, thinking at different stages, if one dares or has enough courage to make those changes, well again motives are in the background, whether the change is at this stage or another stage appropriate for him or her. (H16)

The goals mentioned in the interviews and in published material range from specific career changes to all kinds of lifestyle changes. Once the goal is set, the process is understood as reaching for the goal, which becomes the direction of all action – although it can of course also be redefined during the process. One coach describes the model of coaching as a GROW -model (“goal, reality, opportunities and wrap up”, H14) meaning that first the goal is set, then the current situation and opportunities are evaluated, then the change is achieved, and in the end the result is compared with the original goal.

It is significant that the goals defined in the processes of coaching solely concern the person being coached, who has to be able to reach them by him- or herself: “You can’t change others, but you can do something about yourself. [...] If you don’t have the courage to recognise your inability to change your surroundings [...], it is hard to achieve change of your own” (Porttinen 2005).⁶⁵ Or as another coach remarked, coaching is about “putting yourself on your own to-do list” (H17). This is important, since although the need for some kind of change is self-evidently a part of the coaching process, it cannot be taken for granted that what needs to be changed will be purely personal, or that individual’s problems will concern themselves alone.

In the introductory coaching session, I decided that my goal would be to become better with bills.⁶⁶ I told the coach that I had a tendency to ignore bills for an unnecessarily long time, which results in late-payment fees. During the short coaching session by phone, the coach asked me whether I thought that it would save me energy and money to achieve this change, and thereby created or reinforced my motivation. Then she coached me into developing a plan to help me manage the bills, which included buying a stand for the bills and deciding on a day every month when I would pay all the bills on the stand.

⁶⁵ “*Muita ei voi muuttaa, mutta itselleen voi sentään jotain. [...] Jos ei uskalla tunnistaa omaa kyvyttömyyttään ympäristön [...] muuttamiseen, omaa muutosta on vaikea saada aikaiseksi.*”

⁶⁶ With the benefit of hindsight, I wish I had chosen a less banal problem to solve. However, my choice to talk about bills was a way to protect myself from interventions which I feared might be too personal.

The introductory session, although brief and rather superficial, was instructive in the sense that it illustrated how the practices of coaching handle and transform different problems into matters of personal transformation and personal gain. The problem that I posed in the coaching session was quite individual (as was somewhat preconditioned by the questions), and so were the solutions that were sought with the help of the coach. For example, it was not discussed whether I lived alone, or whether a family or a community was in any way involved in managing the bills. It would have been a different kind of approach if the coach had coached me to manage the bills in cooperation with my cohabiting partner. Also, she could have pointed out that the result of my not paying bills on time was not only that I lost money, but that my household lost money, and that it caused troubles for those who were sending me the bills. However, instead of pointing out the damage I was doing to other people, the coach concentrated on my personal well-being. This, I would say, is fairly typical of the practices of coaching, and is in accordance with the notion that coaching is about not social transformations but personal achievements.

The emphasis on personal achievements and the tendency to individualise problems requires a firm belief in the individual's capacity to act and achieve transformations in their own behaviour. This can be perceived in one of the interviewees' description of coaching:

At the core is a person's attitude. [...] I myself make the decisions concerning my life management, my eating habits, my exercise habits, my way of life. And again it's the attitude, whether I want to make a healthier life for myself or not. So it's useless for the employer to think if the individual will not make the decision then no health regime or exercise tests will help, if the person himself will not affect his own health behaviour. So each time the word behaviour appears, behind it is always one's own will and attitude to action that is what we base our work on, and I claim that in Finnish working life there is a growing need, if we talk about Finnish society, the challenges that we have, there is a growing need to operate in this area, because it is the only area where permanent changes can be made.
(H11)

What is interesting in this extract is first the emphasis on the capacity to make decisions concerning oneself. One's health, which is referred to here as an example, is quite strongly presented as first and foremost a matter of individual decisions, a matter of

attitude. If we pause to consider the conditions necessary for the individual to be able to decide on his/her way of life, it becomes clear that for most of us it might not be simply a matter of attitude. For example, there might be other people needing attention and care, and this might affect the extent to which the individual is free to make decisions concerning her exercise habits or way of life. In other words, statements of this kind offer a problematic understanding of the individual that does not necessarily apply to everyone.

Second, the interviewee here claims that what is needed in Finland at the moment (i.e. in 2009) is a form of coaching that concentrates on individual decisions and attitudes. In this extract the process by which problems become articulated as personal and individual is transferred to the national level: the challenges that society faces are articulated as matters of “one’s own will and attitude”. The interviewee even goes so far as to claim that individual decisions are the *only* area where permanent changes can be made. Here he is probably referring to the ongoing public discussion of Finns’ health problems (mainly being overweight, even though being overweight in itself is not a condition) which area is often associated with life styles and eating habits. In this sense one can see that the tendency to view and seek solutions to problems on the individual level – so that the solution begins and ends within the individual self – can be found in many instances, of which coaching is only one.

Empowerment

The change that is achieved in the coaching process is often described in terms of well-being and empowerment, as already mentioned in the previous chapter. When interviewees were asked how they could tell that the coaching process had been successful, their answers were very heavily focused on the empowering experiences and insights that the customer would have gained. One interviewee, for example, stated that “another measure for success is that the customer has experienced empowerment, so that their own insights have surfaced” (H16). Another interviewee states that in the optimal situation “the customer achieves the desired goal and has learned to manage their life so that they can continue forwards and upwards with self-confidence, from a solid

foundation” (H17). Yet another says that she can tell when the customer “grows more conscious of their own strengths and resources” (H14). The idea of coaching, then, is “to recognise one’s own goals, desires and resources, both at work and at home” (Porttinen 2005).

For many of the coaches I interviewed, helping clients to achieve empowerment was clearly a great motivation in their work, something which made them feel their work was valuable. Most often in the interviews and other texts, empowerment was articulated in connection with joy and energy. It brings resources and gives new possibilities:

[...] And always aiming towards the client’s own insight and from there towards empowerment, that’s where enthusiasm and energy are born. [...] You can see it in a person, in a comprehensive way, when they find that clue, like “hey, that’s where the problem is,” that kind of, something.
(H16)

Empowerment as it appears in the research material is generally understood in terms of gaining strength that is already *inside* oneself, recognising something that is inherently part of the self. The empowerment process means discovering something that exists already and is merely waiting to be brought out. Even if new skills are learned, the process is still primarily about personal growth, and the new skills are essentially tied to one’s person (cf. Spillane 2000, 30): “Everything is inside the person” (H11).

Each one of us, we have an enormous reserve within ourselves already, there is a monstrous capacity to learn, develop, grow, whatever. If we can mobilise it. So I want to develop people’s perceptions of their selves, their identity, so that they realise that every one of us has truly enormous potential. It is there, and it is up to me whether I mobilise it or not, if I want to get to know this side of myself, what I really could do if I only wanted to, if I open the door to learning.
(H11)

The practices of coaching thus contain an interesting paradox. They are fundamentally about personal change and the transformation of the self, but this change or transformation is often articulated as not really being a change at all, but a revelation, a process of becoming what one already is. To approach this apparent paradox, I begin by looking at accounts of transformation as narratives that gain significance through

temporality: events follow each other, and in the course of these events the self is transformed.

In relation to narrative temporality, it is helpful to start with Paul Ricoeur's notion (1980; 1991; developed by Fraser 1999) that narratives demand "reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end". By this Ricoeur means that the conclusion of a story gives sense to the whole narrative: the effect of narrative repetition is such that the protagonist is seen to be the same in the present as he or she was in the past – as the plot develops, the individual potential of the protagonist is actualised. Thus the self that is the conclusion or outcome of a narrative is also already present in the beginning and throughout the whole story (cf. Fraser 1999). There has to be continuity between the present and the past, the actual and the potential.

The processes of self-promotion are articulated through a narrative that follows this non-linear, repetitive construction of narrative time. "The plot" of empowerment is such that what one becomes, i.e. the promotional self, is seen as always already present in the beginning, and the outcome of the empowering process gives meaning to the whole narrative of transformation. By the end of the narrative the protagonist (the self) is perceived as possessed of a story of which he/she may take charge and which he/she may consider to be constitutive of her personal identity (cf. Fraser 1999).

The idea of coaching, then, is that there is an authentic or natural (H16) or core (H8) self which is considered as the centre of the process, so that the transformation is not forced or alien to this core self, but on the contrary is in accordance with the personal individuality that is both the beginning and the outcome of the process. Change is inevitable, but it is change only in terms of discovery, as the narrative temporality through which the transformations are articulated is such that breaks or gaps in terms of authentic selfhood are not possible.

The tension between a push towards change and a quest for individual authenticity can be perceived in the research material in the form of affirmations, for instance. Many of the published texts and interviews emphasise that the transformed – and consequently promotional – self is not false or inauthentic. "Your brand must be built on the truth of who you are" (Montoya 2002, 12). Thus even though there is a need for personal change,

it is constantly emphasised that the change is not in any way fake, shallow or pretentious, but is in accordance with the well-being of the individual.

These affirmations are answers to or comments on an implicit problem with authenticity which is made explicit by Andrew Wernick (1991, 193) in his account of self-promotion: “If social survival, let alone competitive success, depends on continual, audience-oriented, self-staging, what are we behind the mask?” The answer provided in coaching is that there is no mask, for the mask is actually the real you and not false in any way. Or, as Lisa Sounio (2010, 24) writes of branding, there is a “face” (mask) and a “soul”, and your brand is made of these two parts: “Firstly face which means externals, like package or appearance. Secondly soul which means the personality of the person or the product, their background, history, behaviour. It is easy to create a face for a brand with visual means and marketing. It is harder to reach the soul, that demands courage to reveal also the weaker side.”⁶⁷ A successful brand needs not only a face but also a soul, however this might be interpreted.

If one further considers the accounts of empowerment articulated in work-related coaching, it becomes evident that there are deep roots to these accounts – they can be traced back to ancient philosophy, as well as to the various therapeutic practices that emerged in the 20th century. To give some contextualisation, I will now briefly visit some philosophical ideas and therapeutic practices which employ or contain similar ideas concerning empowerment, from Socrates to spiritualities to psychoanalysis. These are thus some of the “filters” or routes through which ideas of empowerment have travelled before their emergence in the contemporary field of coaching.

The idea of turning one’s gaze inwards and discovering something that exists already and is merely waiting to be brought out, clearly recalls Socrates and what has come to be known as the Socratic method.⁶⁸ Socrates believed that a person should search within himself for the truth, and for the knowledge and wisdom concerning both the self and the world. Everything was inside the self, if one only knew how to look. The Socratic method, then, to put it very simply, is a way of looking inside oneself and finding the

⁶⁷ What Sounio means by “weaker side” is not very clear. She gives an example of how one should tell consumers if one starts using materials of lower quality in production. What this means in the case of personal brands, I am not sure.

⁶⁸ Ilkka Virolainen (2010, 19), examining executive coaching in Finland, refers to Socrates as an example of how practices which resemble coaching have “been around for millenniums”.

truth with the help of continuous questions posed by another person (e.g. Seeskin 1987). One can see connections between the practices of questioning and sparring in coaching and the idea that, through the right questions, a person can reach all the knowledge there is to reach without looking any further than him- or herself. The Socratic method is nowadays only distantly related to the ancient philosophy, and is used in various areas for various purposes, stretching from law schools and business practices to the teaching of taxation in college (Nellen & Efrat 2008). It is also used in psychotherapy.

As a therapeutic method, the Socratic method means using systematic questioning and inductive reasoning to help clients relate to problems in their lives. Like coaches, the therapist “gently guides the dialogue but does not offer solutions to the client’s problems” (Overholster 1999, 137). Writing on the content of therapeutic practices that follow the Socratic method, James Overholster (1999) states that through this dialectic process, clients can clarify their understanding of virtue and evaluate their own behaviour in terms of virtue and vice. The distinction between coaching and the use of the Socratic method might be made in terms of morality and virtue: whereas virtues and ethical evaluations have an important place in Socratic thought, in coaching the ethical aspects are articulated differently. For the most part they are downplayed in coaching, and there is a strong denial that coaches make any ethical or moral judgments concerning the client’s choices, for example. If ethical considerations or evaluations are voiced at all, they concern either the coach’s responsibility to respect client’s autonomy or the client’s ability to find the authentic self and achieve autonomy. The ethics of empowerment are such that autonomy is always better than dependency, and authenticity is always better than falsehood. The negative connotations of dependency and falsehood are mostly taken for granted.

Another therapeutically oriented perspective on empowerment, well-being and authenticity is articulated in the various spiritual and holistic practices centered on the self that were mentioned in the previous chapter. In addition to their similarities with coaching on a practical and methodological level, holistic spiritualities also share common themes and presumptions concerning the self. These include, for example, discovering the authentic core self, emphasising individual responsibility and empowerment, and control and agency. In both kinds of practices the self is framed as

active, responsible, self-aware, and empowered to make changes in life. (Sointu & Woodhead 2008, 263). In terms of articulating empowerment, however, holistic practices entail an account of a spiritual dimension that connects the individual to others. The notion of empowerment is consequently also understood in connection to a spiritual dimension which animates the self but also has the potential to take the self out of itself (Sointu & Woodhead 2008, 267). In comparison, this transpersonal potentiality is unfamiliar in coaching, as coaching in general is fairly devoid of any notion of spirituality. The potential to take the self out of itself is not articulated, which means that it is not an option – it is outside the frames of self-promotion in coaching. This means that empowerment in coaching is restricted within the individual self in this way too: it does not allow the self to achieve a connection to others or overcome its atomism.

For yet another perspective on empowerment, the psychoanalytic tradition offers various accounts of looking inside oneself, becoming conscious of something that already exists (as a means of overcoming neurosis), and achieving a greater authenticity for the self. For example, the social psychologist and psychoanalyst Erich Fromm (1989) places great emphasis on practices which help the person to become more conscious of him- or herself, to find solutions to inner conflicts and achieve an authentic relation to the self and the world. Fromm draws on Buddhist notions of becoming conscious (here he comes close to holistic spiritualities) and claims that everyone should, through self-reflection and meditation, aim at “awakening” and becoming “fully conscious”. This for Fromm is an empowering practice in the sense that it allows the self to use its previously hidden resources, to become more powerful and more authentic. Again, then, the notion of empowerment in terms of finding hidden resources and authenticity resonates with the articulations described above.

Fromm belonged to the Frankfurt School of critical theory, and it is thus not surprising that in his account the self is not detached from the social and political context of capitalism. On the contrary, Fromm emphasises that the alienation of the self is the result of the alienating forms that the social has taken. For example, he states that the ability to concentrate on a particular goal, to dedicate oneself to a single purpose, is necessary for the self to be able to use its resources, but that in industrial society the

opportunities for such devotion are highly restricted (Fromm 1989, 50-51).⁶⁹ In a more general vein, for Fromm becoming conscious does not refer solely to becoming conscious of oneself, but also to becoming conscious of conflicts and antagonisms in social life. He writes about becoming conscious that harmony in the social world is an illusion, and states that only by achieving an adequate sense of reality can a person “stand on his own feet” (Fromm 1989, 61–63).

In the case of work-related coaching, the contextualisation of empowerment is rather different. Instead of employing Marxist concepts of alienation or spiritual concepts of transpersonal potentiality, the coaches describe empowerment as a very atomistic endeavour which is nonetheless connected to the “big change” described at the beginning of this chapter. Change is articulated as the context for transformation, but unlike in Fromm (or indeed Marx), in coaching the connections between big change and individual transformation are seen as straightforward, uncomplicated and mutually productive, and the development of the individual is articulated in terms of adaptation and assimilation. While Fromm thinks empowerment is unachievable for many because of the contemporary form of the social, and Marx and Engels (1996/1848, 20) think that “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” in coaching the social is taken as the unquestioned starting point of an individual empowerment that is available and necessary for all.

Fromm (1989, 120–121) refers to “adaptation psychology” as a form of popular manipulative psychology that he thinks has become an important part of contemporary society. He considers such pseudo-psychological practices harmful and alienating insofar as they are congruent with the current economy and ideology.⁷⁰ I am fairly certain that Fromm would see the practices of coaching as a prime example of such adaptation psychology, which in his view has nothing in common (except the notion of psychology) with the psychotherapeutic practices that he himself advocates (*ibid.*). However, I think that making distinctions is not so easy. It is clear that part of the attraction of coaching arises from its use of notions from the practices described above, with implicit connotations from long traditions of intellectual and spiritual growth. It is partly because

⁶⁹ Fromm lived from 1900 to 1980, and thus the context for his writing was largely industrial capitalism.

⁷⁰ Fromm’s conception of ideology differs from the conception that is employed in this research.

the notions of self-consciousness and empowerment have a long history that the articulations employed in coaching are intelligible and alluring. To situate myself in terms of Fromm, I do not see coaching, or other popular practices which use popular versions of psychology, as simply harmful in such a straightforward way, and specifically not in terms of the particular individual using those practices to achieve experiences of empowerment. At the same time, though, I do not consider the practices of psychotherapy to be as innocent as Fromm does, for these practices share similar tendencies those one can see in coaching, and this requires critical attention. It is important to account for both the similarities and the differences between different practices or traditions in order to see continuities as well as ruptures or distortions.

Above, I directed attention to the apparent paradox of simultaneously achieving authenticity and transforming the self. In light of the theoretical and therapeutic perspectives discussed above, this is not necessarily such a paradox after all, for there is a long tradition in which transformations are understood in terms of self-revelation. However, the paradoxical or antagonistic perspective is relevant to the very specific context in which work-related coaching operates, namely the labour market. To illustrate, let us look at the web page of the International Coach Federation (coachfederation.org). On the front page coaching is defined as “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential”. Personal and professional potential here refer to the processes of empowerment described above, and what is significant is that both personal and professional development are thus articulated as intrinsically linked and achievable through the same process. Whether they really are connected, and whether maximising one’s professional potential is necessarily the same as personal empowerment, are questions that are rarely posed and never really answered in work-related coaching.

I suggest that it is precisely the context of the labour market which in work-related coaching transforms the quest for self-development in such a way that it also becomes a quest to achieve a promotional self. Coaches employ notions concerning human development and empowerment that derive from such traditions as Socratic philosophy, therapy and psychoanalysis, for instance, rearticulating these notions in a new context –

that of the labour market – and facilitating an understanding of working life as the unquestionable condition for self-development.

On one hand, then, frames for self-promotion contain the idea of a self that is authentic and empowered, in the sense that it discovers its own resources on its own terms and becomes autonomous. On the other hand, this personal change has to be made in accordance with the demands of the changing labour market. Processes of self-promotion thus become entangled with processes in which individuals strive to cope with different kinds of troubles related to working life (such as discrimination or unemployment), and with processes in which individuals aim to make sense of their own existence. As notions of empowerment are rearticulated in such intertwining processes, the articulations inevitably contain contradictory elements. These articulations then frame the self in a particular way, a way which conceals contradictions and places individual subjects in an ambivalent position – they need to discover an inner self that is somehow suited to the demands of the employer or the logic of the labour market, and they need to feel that discovering such a self increases or intensifies their well-being. In other words, they/we need to become empowered and find a coherent narrative of self, but we also need to find a job or become better workers, and in the given frame these aspects cannot be considered as contradictory or even separate.

To conclude, the articulations concerning change frame self-promotion and the promotional self in a way that is contradictory from the outset. Different social circumstances and forces are rearticulated through a particular kind of self and separated from the social and political context – in other words, individualised. As a consequence, the search for coherence and meaning within these frames becomes a quest for the individual.

4.4. Becoming strong women

To end this chapter, and to discuss further the consequences and implications of the articulations described above, I will in this last part focus on transformations,

empowerment and questions of agency from the perspective of gender. The purpose of this is first to continue the discussion of gender and post-feminism begun in the previous chapter, and second to show that the articulations I have described on a very general level have important consequences when employed in the specific context of gender equality in working life.

In this chapter and those that follow, I will return to the interview extracts examined in the previous chapter. There are several reasons for my repeated use of these extracts. First, as stated previously, texts are not emptied out by a single interpretation: returning to an extract from a slightly different perspective actually enriches the previous interpretations and thus furthers the research process. Second, there are rather few instances in the research material when gender is clearly mentioned or reflected on; I have therefore concentrated on the few examples there are. Examining these accounts of gender might also shed light on why there is not more talk about gender or gendered issues.

Above I emphasised that an accurate account of social and economic change must focus on the importance of both change and continuity, which implies a consideration of differences, hierarchies and antagonisms between different social subjects and their positions in relation to change. The self-promotional processes that I examine do not allow for such positional perspectives but on the contrary often tend to present all subjects as equal from the outset – otherwise the emphasis on individual inner transformation would not be possible. This framing of the self does not allow any recognition of social tensions or power relations and thus it silences possible hierarchies or antagonisms. Above I suggested that this silencing can be perceived in the way that accounts of what is assumed to be radical social and economic change in the research material do not mention feminisation in any form. This can be interpreted as part of the need to equalise the presumed promotional subject, and also as an example of a tendency to push questions of gender aside.

The idea that everyone is equal from the outset resonates with the post-feminist sensibility that was briefly discussed in the previous chapter. One of the characteristics seen as typical of post-feminism is the assumption of already achieved gender equality, which is supposed to render feminism both old fashioned and irrelevant. In this sense the

post-feminist sensibility is rather ambivalent: feminism is simultaneously taken into account and deemed irrelevant on the basis of the belief that equality has already been achieved (e.g. Tasker & Negra 2007).

In relation to the post-feminist sensibility, Angela McRobbie writes about female individualisation, drawing attention to the ways in which Ulrich Beck's and Anthony Giddens's individualisation theories "appear to speak directly to the post-feminist generation" (McRobbie 2007a, 35). McRobbie notes that the arguments of Beck and Giddens – regarding the need to choose the life one wants to live – appear to fit very directly with the kinds of scenarios and dilemmas facing the young female characters in the narratives of contemporary popular culture. One of these narratives is that of individual transformation. As Tasker and Negra (2007, 10) point out, the makeover is a recurrent trope in post-feminist media, and the promise of well-being achieved through individual transformations is especially pervasive in reality television programmes (such as *How to Look Good Naked*, see Kolehmainen & Mäkinen 2009). In these programmes, as in the practices of work-related coaching, the transformations are articulated in terms of individual empowerment.

Post-feminism, then, is one of the contexts in which claims of achieved equality and of the possibility of individual empowerment are made intelligible and familiar, which allows them to be employed in different practices, such as work-related coaching. By employing and strengthening particular articulations, these practices participate in the maintenance and production of the post-feminist sensibility. The relationship between coaching and post-feminism is thus one of mutual confirmation.

To examine this resonance between coaching and the post-feminist sensibility a little more closely, let us now return to two interview extracts encountered in the previous chapter:

Being a young woman manager I quite strongly have the idea that you don't need men for every task really, a woman can do many things too, and maybe in the beginning I had to be very convincing, I started my company when I was 26 so I had to dress quite firmly in that jacket suit and wear my hair in a bun and wear glasses that made me look older, in order to be in some way more acceptable when talking to men in their 50s, but now when we are here and I've got a fairly big company and so on and I don't have to think about that any more. Though

when you're over 30 you are not a young woman anymore in that sense [...] and everyone who comes to work with us in some way they have to accept that the boss is a woman and often also younger than the people who work with us. But it has also maybe partially been a marketing asset that we've had very determined women whose main principle has been that they want to work in a company in where there is a young female manager in charge, because often maybe some sets of values can be a bit different.

(H9)

Q: [In relation to your clients,] are there any differences related to age or gender, which would be present in the problems or situations that are solved [in coaching]?

A: [...] My idea of humans is such that I do not differentiate according to gender myself. So they say about me, even though I'm a small, energetic woman, they say often in these projects that "she is a good guy", like. So my own personality is such that I've got more power and strength than shows on the outside. So my attitude, I've got many brothers myself and lots of siblings, so my attitude to both genders is equal. So in coaching it doesn't matter to me, gender. [...] What is more crucial is the situation with a person's goal and phase of life, not gender. [...] I think it is because I've learned equality reasoning so clearly. [...]

(H16, female)

Above I analysed these accounts as individualising narratives in which struggling against inequality is articulated as a sign of competence. However, this does not mean that the accounts are devoid of contradictions. As the second interviewee continues, an interesting shift occurs in terms of the meaning of gender:

For women the connections between one's role at work and in the family are stronger than for men, and that makes a difference. So you have to support and coach women more so that they can hold their ground. Why I am a good career coach for women, through me there's been progress, at least in such issues that women can demand equal pay.

(H16)

The emphasis on the irrelevance of gender is surprisingly followed by an acknowledgement that there are specifically gendered problems such as the pay gap and work/life balance. There is thus a fracture in the logic of the text. I read this as indicative of shifting positions in relation to questions of gender: the articulations employed in coaching can shift and change, which means that the ways in which it is easy and possible to articulate gendered issues produce contradictory statements. In the case of the

individual who is in effect answering the interview question, this fracture might mean that the existing articulations are in some way insufficient to enable her to account for her experiences or insights. This leads her to try different approaches, changing positions mid-speech.

If we shift from a focus on the individual's reactions to one on social relations, then the fracture in the logic of the text could simply be interpreted as a sign of a fracture in relations of gender. Are the relations of gender currently such that gender "should not matter"? Is this the general "equality reasoning" in Finland? In the public discussions of gender equality, it is usually highlighted that Finland is one of the countries in which women's position is very good⁷¹ (from time to time there are also claims that equality has "gone too far"). However, as the interviewee notes, there are problems – such as the work/life "balance" – that are clearly gendered, and thus the idea that gender is unimportant does not hold in everyday life (cf. Jokinen 2005; Vehviläinen 2005, 161). There are thus contradictory elements in the social, as has been indicated in theorisations on post-feminism. The ambivalence concerning gender in the interview extract can thus be seen as a symptom of the ambivalent position of both feminist politics and the significance of gender in the social.

However, although the text contains a fracture, this does not necessarily mean that there is simply a gap in the inner logic of the text. Personal transformations are also central in the latter part of the interview extract, as coaching is presented as a means to empower women so that they can demand better pay or have more strength in negotiations. The individualising tendencies thus remain, even when the relevance of gender is articulated differently.

Also, both the extracts contain characterisations of a particular kind of woman. In the first extract, the interviewee describes herself as someone who has courage, and she also says that her being the manager has attracted energetic, strong women to work in the company. In the second extract we have a small yet energetic and strong woman who claims to succeed in being a "good guy", which in this context seems to mean that she is

⁷¹ "Finland is the third most equal country" reported the daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* in November 2011. This was the result of the World Economic Forum's research concerning equality between women and men in the world. (<http://www.hs.fi/ulkomaat/Tutkimus+Suomi+kolmanneksi+tasa-arvoisin+maa/a1305548508161>).

accepted as one of the men she works with. In addition, she is devoted to teaching also women to “hold their ground”, as already stated. Strength and attitude are thus repeated attributes used in an indisputably positive way.

Asking questions about gender and equality thus triggers accounts of strong, courageous women who do not necessarily regard gender as important or significant. These personalised accounts of having the courage to be oneself or having the guts to cope in a man’s world are clearly congruent with the post-feminist idea of individual empowerment, which is usually discussed in connection with the stamina that has helped individual women to achieve. This is linked to what Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer (2006, 259) call a liberal identity, which both draws from and resists a mainstream feminist agenda, performing liberal narratives about women’s rights, individual achievement, self-determination and voluntarism.

The figure of the strong woman also has a particular history in Finland. The traditional claim, often heard in public discussions about gender equality, is that Finnish women are strong, and that they have always worked hard (as hard as men) (Markkola 2002). This claim is rooted in a particular understanding of Finland’s agrarian past, and the figure of the strong woman implicitly refers to an agrarian wife and mother who keeps the family together, feeds and clothes the children and manages the house like a proper matriarch. Another aspect of women’s strength that is often referred to is that women in Finland were given the vote early (in 1906) compared to other European countries. In Finland the figure of the strong woman has thus been a combination of agrarian strength and assumed political influence (Markkola 2002; Veijola & Jokinen 2001). Both of these aspects – working hard and being equal to men – can also be perceived in the interview extracts above. In a strange convergence, the “old” conception of Finnish women as strong –which is probably familiar to the interviewees – seems to merge perfectly with recent post-feminist articulations.

Against this background, becoming a strong woman can be understood as a form of self-promotion that bridges the gap between developing as a person and accommodating the demands of working life. Strong women are appreciated and needed, as can be deduced from the first interview extract: “I think it has partly been a market asset for us that we’ve got very energetic and strong women who have as their principle that they are

interested in working in a company with a young female leader” (H9). In this way, “a strong woman” is an ideal self to be promoted, as having strength somehow – seemingly, at least – transforms female gender into an asset in working life.

However, to better understand the attractiveness of both self-promotion and the post-feminist sensibility, it is worth further examining these articulations, to find out why they emerge so readily in the interviews and are repeated across different sites concerning both coaching and gender in working life. For this, I return to the concept of agency, which was briefly raised in relation to “big change” in the first section of this chapter.

Previously I mentioned “political agency”, by which I mean agency as something that is directed outwards, towards the social and the world outside the self, the world that is shared with others. This notion of political agency implies that the subject is in an interactive relationship with the surrounding world and other people. Also, political agency is often collective; it is realised together with others, and its effects are communal. In these very simplistic terms, political agency is precisely what gets narrowed down in accounts of work-related coaching, as the possibilities for agency are restricted to the individual alone.

To draw a contrast with political agency, one might tentatively consider the notion of the *sense of agency*⁷² (Gordon 2005, 119; Ojala 2010, 42). The sense of agency refers to the experience of agency: to a person’s sense, conception or feeling that they are the subject of their own life. The sense of agency means experiencing oneself as an active, choice-making subject, as a capable self. As a concept, the sense of agency thus takes into account embodied, experienced subjectivity. It makes possible to examine not only the actions that a self is capable of, but also how a self maintains a coherent notion of selfhood (see McNay 1999) through experiencing agency.

From this perspective, it is worth asking whether the accounts of “being a strong woman” described above might be being employed as means to achieve or maintain a sense of agency in situations where it is not very easy to do. In other words, might the allure of this kind of articulation lie in its capacity to provide the subject with an experience or a feeling of being in charge of one’s own life? In the above extracts, experienced and perceived inequalities such as the pay gap or a lack of credibility are

⁷² *Toimijuuden tunto* in Finnish.

articulated – through narratives – in a way that allows the subject to maintain a certain framing of the self, one in which it is not necessary to abandon a belief in the possibilities and capacities of that self. These kinds of articulation could be characterised as comforting, for they provide comfort in the sense that despite the well-known obstacles, anything is possible if one is endowed with the right attitude.⁷³ From this perspective, it is easy to see the attraction of practices such as coaching, as these practices make it possible to maintain that one can control one’s life and act freely despite one’s awareness of structural discrimination and unequal social relations.

At a more general level of coaching and self-promotion, experiencing agency is at the core of articulations of transformation as empowerment. Achieving personal empowerment means that the person can maintain and even fortify a sense of being the subject of their own life and of making choices – even at times when interactions with the surrounding world, and especially one’s abilities to affect those surroundings, are not great. This becomes possible when the self is seen as the natural object of one’s own actions – in other words when the self becomes both the subject and the object of agency as stated above.

As empowerment is articulated in terms of becoming the “real me”, it can also come to mean *achieving* a sense of agency, becoming able to feel as the subject of one’s own life even if the frames for such an empowerment are deeply contradictory. Consequently, in coaching, achieving a sense of agency can be understood as a solution in relation to a process in which social problems (such as unemployment) become individual failures:

If a person has been unemployed for, say, 15 years, and has been kind of institutionalised into that life, then to change that, to change that way of thinking, it happens quite slowly, and it happens precisely by giving hope, not by making the person feel guilty for not doing anything, because you can’t change what you did yesterday or earlier, but you can change what you do today or tomorrow and that does count, so very greatly and in a forward-looking way. Of course we

⁷³ Salmenniemi & Vorova (2012), examining the arrival and effects of self-help literature in post-Soviet Russia, similarly suggest that an individualised conception of social change produced in self-help literature can provide a sense of agency – a way of conjuring hope in the face of increasing powerlessness to influence the structural conditions of everyday existence in Russian society.

acknowledge that history, but we do not wallow in those problems, but we take them into account and then we move forward.

(H9)

In this extract, one can read a narrative of a person who in the past was not a subject of his (or her) own life, was not capable of making the right choices, because he/she was not “doing anything”. Now, in coaching, instead of being made feel guilty about his/her failures (which are nonetheless considered individual failures), this person has the possibility to become that subject, by “moving forward” and taking action in relation to him- or herself. In this way, again, both the problem and the solution are individualised. This of course does not mean that the process of achieving a sense of agency will not be good and rewarding for the person in question. Indeed, it is necessary if one is to maintain a sense of coherent selfhood. Rather, the question is to what extent becoming the subject of one’s own life will solve the problems that led to the unemployment in the first place.

Angela McRobbie (2007a, 35) suggests that although Beck’s and Giddens’s work on detraditionalisation seems to speak directly to the post-feminist generation, they do not pay enough attention to the power struggles or enduring inequalities that still mark relations between men and women. Indeed, the claim in Beck’s and Giddens’ work is that as the overwhelming force of structure fades, the capacity for agency increases. Following McRobbie’s diagnosis, I argue that in the practices of work-related coaching, the capacity for political agency is actually narrowed (as stated above) while the need to sense agency increases. Or, to put more accurately, the practices which claim to increase a sense of agency are becoming increasingly popular at the same time as the conception of political agency is being narrowed. This is not necessarily a sign of individualisation (in Beck’s or Giddens’s sense) or of the strengthening capacities of individuals; rather, I read it as a sign that might as well indicate an increasing sense of powerlessness in the face of the world.

Some signs of what this powerlessness might mean in terms of gender can be perceived in other two interview extracts, as male coaches reflect on issues of inequality. In the first extract, the claim about strong women is repeated:

Q: Do you ever have clients whose problems are related to gender inequality in the workplace?

A: [...] When we talk about people in leading positions, especially women, there is something that I think – this is only my guess, but that these women have decided that whatever happens they are there to cope and they will not moan that they are being treated unequally.

(H4, male)

This short extract illustrates the other against which these strong women are defined – apparently there are women who are not strong and who therefore “moan” about unequal treatment.⁷⁴ These women, it seems, are not fit to work in leading positions since such positions demand that the subject “cope” instead of moaning. Individualising the struggle for equality thus affects conceptions of what is considered “strong” and courageous. In the case of this interviewee, voicing experiences of discrimination is not understood as courageous; on the contrary, this kind of behaviour is depicted as indecisive and weak. Articulating discrimination and weakness together leads to several consequences. First, as was described in the previous section, this is an individualising move in which the effects of a social relation (gender) are located within the individual, so that instead of describing failures in the social, they become descriptions of personal failures. Second, this means that the possibilities for achieving a sense of agency become restricted. This is because, in the context of such an individualising process, it is harder to experience capability, as capability comes to mean being strong in the sense of “coping” with inequality. In other words, when voicing inequality is referred to as moaning, it is not very attractive if one wants to feel that one is capable and is the subject of one’s own life.

Yet another interview extract illustrates how articulations of individual strength and attitude function as a way to silence and undermine claims for just treatment:

Q: [D]o you have any thoughts, what it means that people are men or women, can it be used as an advantage in building a reputation or a brand or is it totally irrelevant?

⁷⁴ In their discussion of “the strong Finnish woman”, Soile Veijola and Eeva Jokinen (2001) state that the idea of equality and strength has been important for the poor and hard-working women of Finland’s past, but they also note that emphasising strength has rendered expressions of victimhood and weakness undesirable or forbidden. Marita Husso (2003), writing on violence, also notes that the emphasis on survival and active agency in accounts of gendered violence has made it very hard to recognise experiences of weakness and fracturing.

A: What a difficult question, I've never even thought of this. Just yesterday when I – I was glad when I got home and I read my emails there was a message from this personnel manager, she had been for a job interview, this is a person that does job interviews for a living, and now she was in an interview herself and she said that she got bronze, that out of four who had been invited, there were over 100 applicants I think and four were invited – that it was a victory to get there, and then she got the bronze in that game. So I could only congratulate her and tell her that the silver has been lost but the bronze has been won. And she is a woman. And the reasons why she wasn't in the battle for the gold medal had nothing to do with her gender. [...] I can't answer your question about – at the moment it is in fashion to recruit a woman.
(H5, male)

The interviewee begins with the acknowledgment that he has never thought what it might mean that people are men or women, and then quickly jumps to a seemingly irrelevant narrative about a friend who had a job interview. Again, then, the extract contains a fracture or a gap which invites closer attention. To unpack this rather surprising textual shift, it is helpful to look for the question that the interviewee is actually answering – an implied question, so to speak, since his answer does not respond to the (rather vaguely formulated) question that was asked.

Earlier in the interview, I had asked whether the problems for which solutions were sought in the coaching processes were ever related to inequality, and the interviewee had answered that he did not think the problems were gender-related in any way. In the answer quoted above, the interviewee seems to be continuing the discussion of gender-related problems. First he constructs a connection between attitude and success in the labour market, and then he articulates it in terms of the significance of attitude and the irrelevance of gender. In this way, the interviewee seems to be responding to the question about the relevance of gender and the existence of discrimination by answering that gender does not matter whereas attitude does, and that if one is not chosen in a job interview it is not about gender and should be accepted good-humouredly. In this way he makes a similar articulation to that made in the first extract, namely connecting discrimination with weakness.

The interview continues with the claim that at the moment it is “in fashion” to hire a woman, and then the interviewee states that “fashions come and go” and that “fashion is for those who do not have thoughts of their own” – clearly implying that he himself does

not think much of such fashion. Furthermore, this statement confirms the interviewee's opinion that gender should not be relevant but that it has nevertheless *become* relevant to employment and positions in the labour market. The interviewee thus implicitly states that gender has become an asset for women in the labour market, and that this development does not please him. I will return to the question of gender as an asset in chapter six. Here I just want to point out that it is rather apt that the appreciation of women in the labour market, which is of course connected to the mainstreaming of feminist views on gender equality, should be assessed in terms of *fashion* – a notion which carries connotations of feminine futility and vanity.

From the extract above, it is evident that approval of and even admiration for a woman with the right attitude can be used to deny the significance of gender and silence questions about inequality. The strong, energetic woman with the right attitude can function as proof that there is no discrimination. If she can make it, and if she can “cope”, then discrimination is not a relevant question – indeed, the question is whether women are unnecessarily favoured. What from one perspective is an empowering and hence an attractive construction of the self and personal growth that allows one to experience oneself as capable and autonomous, can from another perspective function as a disempowering and silencing vehicle. To conclude, if being a strong woman means being able to transform one's gender into an asset in working life, this possibility is not open to all, and it certainly comes with a price.

4.5. Conclusions

In this chapter, I have been concerned with how self-promotion is framed through different articulations concerning change. I noted that “big change” is articulated in coaching as an overdetermined or reified force in such a way that existing possibilities to affect social or economic change are silenced. These articulations also frame self-promotion as an appropriate response to “big change”, and self-promotion thus becomes meaningful as a way of conforming and adapting to changes which are deemed to be

outside the influence of subjects. Furthermore, I noted that articulations concerning personal transformation locate the self as the object of its own agency, emphasising a sense of agency at the same time as the capacity for political agency is narrowed. The self is thus framed as the subject and object of transformation, the outcome of which is articulated as the “real” self.

The connecting element between different articulations concerning change is that these articulations, in different ways, locate social relations and struggles within the individual self. There is thus a congruence between the framing of self-promotion and a particular ideologically inclined process of displacement that I have called individualisation. This process, as I have observed, leads to a framing of the self that is contradictory from the outset. In the next chapter, I will focus on the articulations of individuality to concentrate more closely on the kind of individual that is brought into being when the promotional self is framed.

5. Individuality

In the previous chapter I argued that the framing of the promotional self is rather contradictory, particularly in terms of a paradox between the quest for self-fulfilment and the demand for the transformation of the self in line with the demands of the labour market. I also examined a process of individualisation in which aspects of social reality are articulated through individual subjectivity: social contradictions are located within the self and made into problems of the individual. I will now continue to examine individualisation, but from a slightly different angle, asking *what kind of individuality* is actually produced through the articulations that frame self-promotion. What kind of individual is brought into being as the self is framed in self-promotion? My aim is to identify the *particular forms* that individuality takes in the processes of self-promotion, and to uncover their consequences.

I will begin with some theoretical background on individualism. I will then go on to look at how individuality becomes articulated in work-related coaching as something that has to be both recognised and expressed, and at how the expression of individuality becomes the condition for gaining a place in the labour market. I will then examine the “individual self” as it is framed in the research material, and will argue that it has two sides: the autonomous individual carries within it its opposite, the non-autonomous, incoherent, “lost” subject that emerges at the same time as the autonomous individual becomes articulated. After considering the implications of this “double self”, I will consider questions of class and gender in light of the preceding analysis and the overarching aims of this research.

5.1. Individualism

There are contradictory discourses of the individual in Euro-American societies, but in general it can be said that a long-term process in which individuals are given greater and greater importance is recognisable (Abercrombie et al. 1986, 35; Lury 1998, 8). This means that societies have developed a particular way of treating, and thinking about, the human condition: a way which emphasises the importance of individuals in relation to collectivities. This process is, as Nicholas Abercrombie et al. (1986, 36) state, utterly pervasive. It covers all aspects of human existence, from attitudes to death to the novel as a new literary genre (see Saariluoma 1989). The contradictory discourses involved in this Discovery of the Individual (Abercrombie et al. 1986, 35) identify particular qualities of individuals as important. Of these discourses, *individualism* is the most recognisable and ever-present in relation both to the individual and to the self in Euro-American societies. It has also been enormously historically significant in shaping the understanding of both society and nature as well as the human condition (e.g. Pateman 1988; Steinby 2008). In order to provide a background for understanding the forms of individuality assumed and produced in the field of coaching, I will therefore begin by looking more closely at individualism as it has been theorised and historicised by different scholars and through different perspectives.

Celia Lury (1998, 8) follows Abercrombie et al. (1986, 81–82) by defining individualism briefly as a “conception of human liberty as the natural state of humankind”. This means that the individual is sovereign in matters concerning his or her self, and this sovereignty is expressed in the capacity of individuals to act and transform the natural world. There are four interconnected aspects to individuality: freedom, action, rationality and self-motivation. The individual capacity to act is ordered by planning, calculation and rationality; through the exercise of self-motivation the individual is assumed to take responsibility for him- or herself. (Lury 1998, 8).

Abercrombie et al. (1986, 3) identify a contingent relationship between individualism and the emergence of capitalism, stating that individualism and capitalism

became locked in a functional circle in a particular period, and that individualism defines the form taken by capitalism. The relationship between individualism and capitalism means that, in its particular Western form, capitalism is connected to the assumption of a rational individual that is able to act freely in the economic sphere, and also to the assumption that the struggle of individuals in the marketplace will lead to shared economic accumulation. It is also notable that the political economy of capitalism is founded on the notion of the individual as a proprietor, capable of owning property and, most importantly, of owning his or her self (Pateman 1988). In this way, the relation of ownership is read back into the nature of the individual (Macpherson 1962, 3 – cited in Lury 1998, 13), and the individual self is defined as a possessive self.

In *Capital*, Marx provides an ironic summary of this possessive, competing individual and of the false assumption of equality in the society of contracts that he found in theories of political economy:

[...] a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labour-power, are determined only by their own will. They contract as free persons, who are equal before the law. Their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage.

(Marx 1976/1867, 280)

The reason for Marx's irony is his belief in a different kind of individuality, which he thought would not be realised under a capitalist regime (see Steinby 2008, 34). Although capitalism's liberal individualism has its roots in the Enlightenment values of sovereignty and rationality, the "possessive self" differs from the Enlightenment's humanist ideals of individuality in an important respect: capitalism's self, defined by possessive individuality, is no longer seen as a part of a community, but is essentially an autonomous, independent subject.

The heritage of the Enlightenment, which was founded on the appreciation of rationality, became laced with the Romantics' notion of the human as a fundamentally

social being. In this context individuality could only be fully realised in connection with a community. Humanity was seen as something that *required* connections to other people. (Steinby 2008, 33). In the context of market-oriented (neo)liberalism, however, the individual is seen as a naturally competitive unit set against other individuals, constantly maximising the profit gained through other persons (Steinby 2008, 44). This is illustrated in Adam Smith's (2003/1776, 23–24) statement: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own self-interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages."

Another aspect that might be added to the liberal individualism of Western capitalism is the emphasis on choice as a definitive component of individuality (Strahern 1992; Cronin 2000). As Anne Cronin (2000, 279) notes, in current neoliberal capitalism the abstracted notion of choice has become an inherent ideal as well as the expression of the inner authentic individuality of any person. The individual thus becomes defined by an "innate" capacity of "free choice" which is the expression of individuality, and this free choice is most often realised in the sphere of the commodity market. The project of the modern self which consisted of the belief in human development and individual potential in the context of communities and citizenship, has thus taken a different turn in the guise of the individual understood as a singular agent of free choice, cut off from social relations of mutual dependency.

Feminist theorists among others have paid attention to the ways in which discourses founded on Enlightenment rationality exclude women as well as lesbians and gay men, black people, working classes, children and the disabled, as Rational Man becomes the ideal of self-possessed self-control (Skeggs 2004, 56). Carole Pateman, for example, argues that individualism emerged through the subordination of women as a socio-natural grouping (Pateman 1988). Rational Man was formed through its opposition to women as frivolous, consuming and lacking self-control (Cronin 2000, 274). Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1999/1984) explains that the politics of Niccolò Machiavelli, who had an enormous impact on the formation of modern Western politics, were centred on masculinity or maleness, as they were based on the Renaissance appreciation of antiquity and Roman patriarchy in which heroism was associated with maleness and man was the head of the

household (*patria potestas*). Pitkin's account is particularly relevant here, since she claims that autonomy was developed as a thoroughly gendered concept that referred to man's ability to differentiate himself from women, children and animals, who are not autonomous. Both the individual of individualism and autonomy as his primary possession have thus been recognised as exclusive and politically privileged constructions which, as Cronin (2000) states, are actually founded on intra-categorical differences. This Enlightenment heritage has not disappeared from the notion of the individual as it has been restructured in the contemporary context.

The emergence of a certain kind of individuality reliant on the possessive self with inherently masculine connotations thus took place through a series of exclusions, and/or was connected to political economy, which justified and explained capitalism through its faith in the rational, autonomous, atomised individual. Although different accounts provide different perspectives, they are of course also interconnected, and it is instructive to note that both capitalism and relations of gender have participated (and continue to participate) in the construction and consolidation of this particular kind of individualism. That is, capitalism and the relations of gender have both shaped and been shaped by the emergence of the possessive individual.

5.2. Expression and recognition

In the previous chapter I examined how the subjects of self-promotion strive to create security in a labour market that is experienced and theorised as constantly changing. I argued that what is presented in the research material as the appropriate response to change and insecurity is a turn towards the self, a transformation and adjustment of the self to changing circumstances. A good example of this discursive pattern is the following interview extract, in which the loss of security is related to a crisis of capitalism (the credit crunch) and subsequent changes in the labour market, and is thus located as external to the self. The cure, however, is located within the self, as the search for security is tied to a person's conception of him- or herself:

Clearly since autumn 2007, when the crisis started, there has been this change, and what's more, it all of course depends on what kind of person you are, but not everyone has yet internalised that there are no secure jobs. So people come to coaching because they are seeking a feeling of security, whatever that might be. I like this kind of challenge though, to get the person to understand that the feeling of security comes from within, when you trust your resources and possibilities and make your own future.

(H16)

The responsibility for finding security lies within the self; external causes of insecurity are recognised but ultimately deemed irrelevant: it is up to the self to make its own future. Here insecurity is located within the self by articulating it as an emotion connected to fear, loneliness or confusion. For example, it is mentioned, that managers need coaching because they are so alone (H13), that coaching is needed in general because people are confused in a world of increasing options (“too many choices available”) or might experience too much stress (“too much noise”) (e.g. Pastila 2010). Insecurity is thus simultaneously presented both as something coming from the outside, related to the changes in capitalism and the labour market, and something experienced individually by each self. And, as was seen in the previous chapter, the search for security is firmly located within this experiencing self, not outside it.

Although the general tone in coaching texts is nearly always cheerful and optimistic, the experiences of fear, loneliness and confusion are nevertheless present as something that must be dealt with, transformed and got rid of. They are not often brought out explicitly as existing problems (and certainly not as anything experienced by the interviewees or authors themselves), but as rather vaguely defined challenges that are relevant because they are successfully confronted in coaching. Nevertheless, an entirety of experiences of insecurity can be seen as if in the cracks in the texts – rarely admitted and never overpowering, but always present.

One of the ways in which these experiences come to the fore in the research material is in discursive formulations aimed at conquering the fear of becoming redundant or not fitting into the terms of labour market. One formulation that is implicitly presented or assumed as well as produced across different sites of work-related coaching is the idea that *there is a place for everyone in the labour market, as long as one can find*

and express one's unique capabilities. This assumption is particularly typical of explicit practices of self-promotion (i.e. branding the self), but it can be recognised in different forms in different texts. The importance of owning the right kind of individuality, and consequently of fitting into the labour market, is raised in various contexts:

So if you are a researcher and want to get onto research projects that in a certain way resonate with your know-how, if you make visible certain things about yourself it is more likely that you will be taken on by the kind of project that you yourself want, and you will not just drift into some place, and this is the starting point, kind of. And then personal branding is related to this kind of rather ruthless belief or starting point that people are interested in you if you've got something that they want. And this is so wretched but if you turn it around, if you look at it in a positive way, it means that we all have something. It doesn't mean that if you've got money you are interesting or if you are beautiful you are interesting, but when you've got knowledge, skills that people want then in a certain way they are interested in you. But if you've got knowledge and skills that no one's aware of then the needs don't connect, and this is what's going on in practice.
(H10)

Employers demand the right kind of people, often formal competence is important but also the human as a personality is very important for the employer, he is looking for the right kind of person, the right kind of person is what employers want. A lot of things can be included in this right kind of person, but that they are flexible and customer service-oriented and all of these things are very important, but maybe it is, you have to be or you have to fit into the working community and suchlike, and this is what I try to tell people, that you have to think when you recruit that they will fit the team and work in it, because it takes so much energy if the person is the wrong kind of person for that team, but it is just, I think that in addition to professional competence there is more and more emphasis on the right kind of person.
(H9)

The idea that work concerns the subjectivity of the worker (see e.g. Julkunen 2008), reflected here in the idea that one needs to be the "right kind of person", is articulated as an affirmative belief in that it is possible to *be* the right person if one can express one's unique individuality, and in this way one will find just the right *niche* for him- or herself:

[...] Branding or that kind of marketing oneself is related to precisely that... when you think of your own strengths and needs for development so you'll find those strengths, and we of course help with finding and putting into words these strengths. So that you can sell yourself to the employer, so that the employer will

be interested.
(H3)

Differentiation – the ability to be seen as new and original – is the most important aspect of Personal Branding. If you can't be seen as different, you'll be seen as a follower; that makes capturing "market share" much more difficult.
(Montoya 2002, 12)

As it acquires meaning in the research material, individuality is not unique to persons but can be applied to organisations and companies as well. In the following interview extract, both the expressed individuality of the person and the expressed individuality of the organisation are seen as mutually useful in finding the right place to work. Here expressed individuality is considered as an image or brand that belongs either to the person or to the company:

Q: [...] Do you think that appearance or looks has anything to do with coaching or branding?

A: It is useful. It does relate. Yes it does. The first impression is essential. And images, they play a big role. But then it is also, if in career coaching you think of a specific task, you need, and in case of the organisation, what kind of brand-thinking does the organisation do, you want to look into it. And as a coach I try to look into it when I support processes, they can't be separated, and if you look carefully enough there won't be surprises. But anyway the most important thing is that you are yourself, that you are a unity that looks like yourself, that the person is not wearing the wrong clothes or the wrong shoes just to fit the organisation's brand. But then again when you mirror in the coaching, when you think about if that kind of person would like it in that kind of job in that kind of organisation, so that information is very useful. So again their image of that, and examining the brand, it does tell a lot about the company [...]. So it works in many ways and yes, I would say that it is central.

(H16)

Emphasising the company's need for "brand-thinking" in order to find suitable employees reflects a discussion concerning the shortage of workers that is often repeated, as a vision of Finland's possible near future. According to this vision, companies will have to compete for capable people and the labour market will be seller's market. For instance, in February 2011 *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)*, the main daily newspaper in Finland, wrote that competition between employers for motivated and good workers was intensifying, and suggested that when the "great generations" retired there would be more

“recruitment challenges” for employers (Masalin 2011). *HS* also reported competition for employees had already given birth to a whole new occupation devoted to the development of the employer’s image (ibid.). The vision of the labour market as a seller’s market does not seem very realistic, however, in light of the discrepancy between the number of unemployed people and the number of vacancies declared to employment offices. In January 2011 there were 266,100 unemployed job-seekers, and 76,600 vacancies.⁷⁵ Although the number of vacancies has increased, the difference is still notable, and the unemployment rate is over eight per cent. It is quite clear that the workers being competed for are not average workers but rather “top professionals” – the competition between companies is not about getting a workforce, but about getting the best possible workforce, and to this end they try to make themselves “distinct from other companies” (Masalin 2011). At the same time as people in coaching are trying to become distinctively individual in order to make it among sought-after “top professionals”, companies are also working at becoming distinctively individual in order to get those “top professionals”. There is thus a sense of competition for both the workers and the employers, but it is – in case of workers, at least – presented as an equal opportunities situation (see chapter four on how the subjects of work-related coaching are presented as equal from the outset) in which whoever is capable of distinction will be rewarded.

In an inversion of companies’ beliefs that creating a distinctive image will guarantee the best job applicants, work-related coaching relies on the idea that fostering individuality – that is, fostering one’s personal capacities – makes it possible to secure one’s position in the labour market, without having to abandon that which is unique and closest to the self. In other words, becoming sufficiently personal means becoming attractive and sought-after and in this sense irreplaceable, secure. This belief is most poignantly expressed in the “career mantra” repeated by the self-appointed branding gurus Arruda and Dixson: “Distinct or extinct” (Leonardi 2007). Self-promotion is thus framed as a necessary practice to achieve indispensability, as it is the means to express the unique individuality of a person which guarantees that one will not be made redundant or deemed worthless in the “ruthless” logic of labour market. What is needed is

⁷⁵ The web pages of Finland’s Employment and Economic Development Office (http://www.mol.fi/mol/fi/05_tyovoimatoimisto/06_uutiset/2011-02-22-01/index.jsp).

both expression and recognition of the individual self, and these can be achieved through self-promotional practices.

Importantly, practices of promotion also provide reassurance in the face of the fear that one will lose one's individuality by following the harsh-seeming logic of the market. The promise that security will be achieved by expressing one's individuality means that no one will have to give up their individuality in order to succeed. In a spirit of profound individualism, the self is thus framed as one who acts calculatedly to secure their position – thereby becoming indispensable – and who is nevertheless uncoerced and expressing their truest individuality. The individual is thus presented as achieving rationality, free will and self-motivation, with no consideration of how the context of action affects the self that acts. In other words, it becomes possible to retain the illusion of a self whose actions are uncompelled, transforming the world and staying free. This is of course an exaggerated interpretation of various practices, but I argue that it can be recognised in different forms across different sites. Even when there are other powerful ideological constructions also at work, the impact of this individualism remains significant. What is interesting, however, is that as this picture of the sovereign individual is produced, its opposite also simultaneously emerges: a weak non-individual self lacking coherence and needing support. This problematic will be examined in the next section.

To return to the promise of security through the correct expressions of individuality, complications also arise first from the tension between freedom and compulsion and second from the distinction between individuation and individuality, between the need to identify subjects and the need to become an individual. As has been described at length, the promise of security in both work-related coaching and self-promotional practices is used as a motivation for transformations aimed at finding the unique self. This means that a particular capacity for expressing selfhood actually becomes the condition for recognition and appreciation in the labour market. In this way the self that is portrayed as a freely acting individual is also a conditioned self. Anne Cronin (2000, 277) refers to similar contradictions in her account of the “compulsory individuality” of Western consumerism. She argues that as choice becomes the inherent ideal and the expression of the inner authentic individuality of any person, we have “no choice but to choose” if we are to express ourselves as individuals. The expression of

selfhood, Cronin states, is articulated as both a right and a duty, and the terms of “authentic individuality” become one of the few ways to access legitimate selfhood (ibid., 279).

Cronin’s account of compulsory expressions of individuality accurately depicts the quest to “find the authentic self” that permeates the self-promotional practices of work-related coaching. It is also significant that the way in which this kind of expressions of individuality is to be achieved is most often by consuming services provided by work-related coaches. Coaching can thus be seen as one particular means of gaining a legitimate selfhood by learning to express one’s individuality, an individuality that is framed through either explicit or implicit practices of consumption.

Self-management

Abercrombie et al. (1986; see also Lury 1998) identify a significant distinction between individuality and individuation. They argue that as the Discovery of the Individual proceeds and individuals gain increasing importance it also becomes more important to tell individuals apart, to identify, register and control them. In this sense the uniqueness of an individual is also his subordination (Abercrombie et al. 1986, 151–152). Individuation can be described as a process of subordination, complicated and fortified by the ways the individual comes to apply it to him- or herself through techniques of self-surveillance (see e.g. Rose 1998/1996). Individualism thus inevitably also brings control and self-management, and Lury (1998, 11) concludes that individuation and individuality, although in contradistinction, have joined forces in paradoxical ways: the exercise of self-surveillance is linked to or rendered an aspect of self-development or actualisation, which is conventionally a part of the cultivation of individuality. Compulsory individuality thus also means compulsory self-management connected to self-development and actualisation. The questions and theories related to internalised self-surveillance and control are varied and profound (see Bordo 1993; Rose 1998/1996; Vähämäki 2009), and I will not have the opportunity here to give them the attention that they deserve. Instead, I will briefly examine some aspects of self-management as they can be perceived in the

research material. These will illustrate the innate contradictions in practices which combine the search for individuality with individuation.

The forms that self-management takes in work-related coaching are various and include all kinds of encouragement to “work on yourself” in order to learn to control and redirect your thoughts, conduct and emotions. As described in chapter three, self-management is on some occasions also connected to bodily management. Some coaches sell services similar to those related to working life, for example to help people get fitter, lose weight or dress better. Mary Spillane’s self-help book *Branding Yourself* (2000) devotes hundreds of pages to advising on how to “look the part” of a successful brand.

The most obvious example of self-management, however, is the use of all kinds of tests and exercises to help one find and express, develop and interpret one’s individuality. These include enneagrams and personality tests. Some coaches have also developed their own tools for interpreting, developing and expressing individual selfhood. I will now take a closer look at one of these, because it is illustrative of the logic according to which these tools are used. This self-development tool, which I will here call “4corners”, is described in the interview at length. Here are a few extracts where the main idea is presented as clearly as possible:

The new paradigm of management is that we have a collective understanding of what we expect from other people [...]. What kind of behaviour, and the main contents are trust, meaning those things with which you build trust, those are like the starting point. That is supported by the security axis which means that I have a secure working environment, supported by appreciation. That I can encounter the individual as equal, worthy, not as a worker but as a human being. And I can show it to the other person. These are the first two cornerstones, and the others are enthusiasm, inspiration, motivation, I mean that people will find substance in their work, be animated by their work. And then the spirit of teamwork, a strong we-spirit, all the positive means by which we encourage, reward and are enthusiastic about people. [...] And these four cornerstones are all needed because the hierarchy of needs proceeds from us having needs for security, social needs, needs for growing. So it isn’t enough that I am good at this one thing, I should be good at all of these four things. Trust, appreciation, enthusiasm, learning, this is the core content.

(H11)

4corners is a tool to allow the person see his or her relations to others as significant and as a ground for development. It teaches the person to value him- or herself through a

universal model of selfhood and human relations based on a version of the hierarchy of needs. It is thus not very individualistic after all – on the contrary, relations to other people are emphasised and selfhood is viewed through universal categories. I was therefore curious in the interview, and asked about the universalism of the model, mentioning that I had the impression that in general in work-related coaching, the solutions sought are quite individual. This led the interviewee to explain 4corners again, this time in terms of individuality and self-management:

It's both [individual and universal]. Because, looking back, coaching always starts with the individual, because every person is different, our backgrounds are completely different. And that's why there is no mass concept. I can't tell you that your focus is on motivation, you yourself must think about your current situation, your acting environment, life experience, that is the essential thing. Every person, my task as a coach is to help you find your own thing, which means I am totally proceeding from the individual. So you can't do this mass-like. Because people are different, and we are all, that is the most wonderful thing in life that people are all different and that is where we start. There is no solution that will fit everyone, instead in this process you help the person to find their own strengths, their own development needs and they proceed according to that. [...] This [form of coaching] is a programme of learning to learn, it is not meant to be a problem-solving programme. But something that, in the long run, during my whole life, will give me a foundation to think things through, to develop myself, to grow as a person.

(H11)

Again there is a paradox, in that individuality and individuation exist at the same time, supporting but also contradicting each other. Individuation in a wide sense is a need to *know and identify* the individual as he or she is brought into being. The threat of individuation here is that personality tests and other such tools can be and have been used to categorise and control people, and thus they are in contradiction with the individualistic ideas nurtured in practices of coaching. This tension can be interpreted as a symptom that these kinds of practice are always caught between transforming and producing the individual and the universalised, indeed compulsory, conditions under which this production of individuality is possible. Thus the conditions for framing the self in these practices include a constraint first to *become individual*, second to express this individuality, and third to do so through practices which are inevitably tied both to universalising standards and the labour market, as was suggested in the previous chapter.

The threat of categorisation and external control (which applies to the most part to other psychological models as well) is here conquered through the emphasis on the people themselves and their responsibility to work with the tool, as they see fit in light of their individual needs. There is a strong emphasis that 4corners is not a tool for the coach to work on the person (as a psychologist might use a similar practice), but rather it is designed to help the person to work on him- or herself. In other words it is first and foremost a tool for self-development, and the coach's role is that of a facilitator of this development work, not of someone who will diagnose the person according to their test results (cf. Virolainen 2010, 202–203). The ideal here is thus a self that is capable of using tools like personality tests, not as defining categories but as useful only to the extent that they allow one to retain and fortify one's individuality. This was also recognised and commented upon in another interview in which personality tests were discussed:

We can do different personality tests which reveal something, not like after the personality test you are in a box and you are like this, but rather that you challenge the person to think that, ok, do you think you are like this? What is it in here that is particular to you? [...] As long as we see that they are only tools for self-reflection it is a good thing. So if we start using them like rubber stamps then we are doing the wrong thing.

(H10)

Another example of this kind of personality tool in coaching is the Johari window:

There's this idea that we have this window, which has four parts or four sides, and one part is this kind of window that I myself recognise, I myself can see, and the other can see as well, so it is that kind of public and open self [...], and I am aware of it and others are aware [...]. And at the far end there is the extreme right there at the foot, that I don't recognise in myself and others can't see it either, or they could see but don't see, some part of the self that is not communicated to myself and thus not to others. And in the middle there is that I recognise something about myself but others don't see it, or that others recognise and I don't see, so this kind of tool we have used to get the picture [...].

(H1)

The Johari window as a personality tool is focused on what is *expressed and recognised* in the self, by that self and by others. The self framed by this kind of tool is able to reflect

on themselves, to recognise aspects of their personality and (with help from others) to decipher how they appear on the outside, how they are recognised by other people. Most importantly, by using this tool the self is able to affect how he or she is perceived and appears on the outside. In other words, it is very suitable to practices of personal branding, in which “you get feedback on yourself, and ponder ‘what am I as a message, and where do the elements of that message come from?’” (H1).

Individuation through self-development means that one has to distinguish oneself from others *by being individual*. Achieving individuality demands control over the self, and this process is not without contradictions because the forms of control, in their universalism, contain the threat of a loss of individuality. And once the individuality is achieved, it will be presented in the labour market as something that the individual is offering for sale, something that might produce value. In order to be sold, individuality thus has to belong to the self, and in this sense the unique, indispensable self is also necessarily a possessive self. Individuality has to be owned as a property, otherwise it would not be possible to think in terms of *selling* one’s uniqueness on the labour market. In this sense the self is equated with the principle of ownership.

The capacity to own a self or to own individuality is not a natural given. Beverley Skeggs (2004), among others, highlights that it is a privilege based on categories of class and gender. Only privileged selves – particularly classed and gendered subjects – can possess their individuality and be recognised as individuals. However, as already noted, although the self as it is framed in the processes described here is equated with ownership and provided with individuality, the need for work-related coaching and other kinds of practices of self-development nevertheless also testifies to the precariousness of this individual, unique, possessive self. From this perspective, the sovereign, possessive self is not given, not even for the bourgeoisie or middle class, but is something that has to be achieved and constantly reinforced.

Dispensable workers

To understand these practices of the expression of individuality in the context of the labour market, we must also pay attention to the ways in which questions of individuality and indispensability are not only shaped and fortified but also contested in capitalism. The processes by which one successfully expresses individuality and subsequently sells it on the labour market are of course recognisable in some coaches' careers (Louise Mowbray's, for example). However, the idea that securing one's place in the labour market is an achievable or possible goal for everyone certainly faces complications. The most obvious question here concerns unemployment, which in the research material is connected to the fear of becoming redundant or replaceable. The claim that "there are no secure jobs" (H16) seems to hit the spot, but it leaves unspoken the question whether there can really be jobs for everyone under the current economic and social system.

Although there are references to unemployment or lack of work in early economic history, unemployment as we know it is first and foremost a problem of modern capitalism (Honkanen 2007, 28). It is not possible here to go deeply into the complex reasons for and consequences of unemployment, but I want to make some observations in order to give a context for the discursive constructions presented above. First, capitalism as a system depends on making workers redundant and replaceable to a certain extent. In *Capital*, Marx (1976/1867, 783–794) notes that as capitalist accumulation increases, it also produces people who are not needed and have no place in a society based on paid labour. There is thus an increasing amount of "excess population" – in other words, people who are considered futile and have no place in the labour market. This "reserve army", however, is not useless to capitalism. On the contrary, the existence of "futile people" facilitates the functioning of capitalism despite economic fluctuations, because by providing available labour power it makes possible to hire and fire flexibly according to economic tendencies. In addition, this reserve army operates as a control mechanism that forces people to work under conditions, and results in the cheapening of labour, as there are always people "in the reservoir" willing to work at any price (ibid.). This account by Marx is of course highly contested, but it well depicts and contextualises the experiences of fear and anxiety that I have read "between the cracks" in the research

material.⁷⁶

A concrete example of how the existence of a reserve army affects workers' security can be found in David Hesmondhalgh's and Sarah Baker's (2010) study on workers in the cultural industry. They describe "an army of graduates" who desperately compete for the relatively rare jobs in the culture industry. The volume of young persons competing for the same pool of positions is too high, which results in people working for free (in hopes of later getting a proper job) and – significantly – in their feeling concern about their "replaceability" (ibid., 7). The problems caused by an oversupply of workers are also familiar in the expanding service sector, where there is no shortage of willing employees and where the "right kind of person" is replaced quickly when their short-term contract expires. Similarly, the replaceability of any worker is acutely felt by an increasing number of employees whose work is being shifted from Finland to countries where the workforce is cheaper and the operating environment is better for employers. The awareness of one's dispensability is thus not limited to particular industries but extends across the labour market as an aspect of the precariousness experienced by contemporary workers.

The relevance of these accounts to work-related coaching was recognised in the interviews. The interviewee quoted at the beginning of this chapter reflected on the consequences of the economic crisis ("when the crisis started, there has been this change, and what's more, it all of course depends on what kind of person you are, but not everyone has yet internalised that there are no secured jobs"), but I think the most illuminating statement was made by another interviewee, who worked with young people who were unemployed or temporarily incapable of work:

The City Region Labour Force Service Centre has organised these kinds of, they've got a stylist and clients could go and get themselves styled, but we would rather hope for discussions of what should happen with structures and how we could create more low-threshold jobs, and not just that we fix people up, you know, now you qualify for the market, but rather we would look at this from a different angle. [...] They send a customer here and then they expect us to do

⁷⁶ The history of the reserve army also shows that it is women and ethnic "others" (immigrants or marginalised ethnicities) who have most often functioned as a buffer in the labour market (see Young 1981).

magic tricks so that the client will be good enough for the labour market.
(H2)

This interviewee's approach is unique in the research material, for she suggests that instead of "fixing up" the client it would be better to concentrate on "structures". She thus recognises that being individual is not, at least for her clients, nearly enough to find a place in the labour market, and that what is needed is a far bigger change than personal transformation. This bigger change, however, is not within her reach as a coach, as she works with clients and has no significant power over the politics of labour market. It is crucial to recognise that the tendency to concentrate on the individual and the self is in this way inscribed into the practices of work-related coaching: they are individualising by design, and have few possibilities to be otherwise. However, I still think that there are degrees to this individualising tendency, and the interview extract above is an example of how it is possible for a coach to recognise the underlying tendencies of these practices and speak them aloud. It is therefore significant that these kinds of statement are very rare in the research material. Rather than expressing concern over the efficacy of their work, the coaches are far more likely to appear overly confident in terms of the efficacy of coaching and its practices of individual self-development. Moreover, although individualisation is to a certain extent inherent in the practices of coaching, the individuality in question is not given; it is constantly being produced in the texts that comprise the research material. This is why I want to pay attention to the *forms* of individuality, in order to find out how these particular practices balance the figure of the rational, self-motivational, responsible individual who "makes his own life" against the threats (compulsion, incoherence, redundancy) that are also inscribed within the practices in their current context.

Finally, then, the practices of self-promotion and the framing of the self in these practices have to be placed in a context where different forces (most of them characteristic of capitalism and the social relations it depends on) work in contrast with the ideal of individualism. Plenty of people are reminded, at some point in their life, that they are not worthy as individuals and are not recognised as unique and indispensable selves. Individuality is not given, but can be replaced or made redundant, even though we are told that we have and should have the ability to possess, control and manage our

selves. In this context, the antidote offered by work-related coaching (among other actors) is a push to secure and reinstate a self that is constantly on the verge of becoming redundant and losing its recognition as an individual.

5.3. The double self

As soon as I began to examine the research material, it was quite clear that the self framed in these texts is in many ways the emblematic sovereign agent of individualism. He or she is “making his/her own future” and pushing forward in the world, trusting that the uniqueness at the centre of the self will secure that self in changing circumstances. This depiction of the sovereign individual is especially strong in the self-help material, but it also appears repeatedly in the interviews. Articulations that frame the self as a particular kind of individual – ultimately that of individualism – are repeated in different kinds of statement.

Transforming a personal image into a Personal Brand that creates business opportunity means taking *active* control of the process – defining how prospective customers, colleagues and members of the media perceive you. It means cutting and polishing your brand so everyone who comes into contact with it forms the same basic set of words in their mind when they hear your name. It’s packaging the things that make you great at what you do, and sending that message out into the world to sparkle.
(Montoya 2002, 15)

Successful personal branding comes from within – who you are today as well as the dreams of the kind of person you want to be. As someone who has been able to transform herself quite markedly based on a new vision of who I could become, I know that you, too, will be able to live your dream if you put in the effort.
(Spillane 2000, 11)

The extracts above are from self-help books, and as is typical of the general tone of these books, they are very “upbeat” and confident about individual capacities and display a strong belief that the self has an inherent capacity to act freely, to take one’s faith into one’s own hands, to pursuit happiness on one’s own terms. The possibility of “living

one's dream" is presented as attainable for anyone who "puts in enough effort". In short, these kinds of statement are saying that it is only a matter of (free) will to make the changes that need to be made. Similar ideas can be found in these statements by a coach in an interview with a women's glossy magazine:

Eklblom has noticed that people often think that something isn't possible – they shouldn't! It's enough if the coach gets the client to understand that one can change one's habits: lose weight, live healthily or find a new job. [...] So Eklblom did as she tells her clients to do: took matters into her own hands and changed the direction of her career.
(Pere 2010)

In another women's glossy, the brand expert Lisa Sounio describes herself through her family history, making use of Finnish national imagery as well as feminist discourses of independence to describe herself in terms of sovereignty and capacity:

At home it was always emphasised that a woman has to have her own job and her own salary. My mum set a good example. She saved money for a house, worked hard and always dressed beautifully. [...] My ancestors were land clearers and bear hunters. If it was a bad crop year, you had to forget your losses and try again. There was no social welfare system. These roots have given me strength to reach far.
(Huusari 2010)

The comment on welfare is especially noteworthy: welfare is referred to as something which was not needed, and furthermore nobody even thought of needing it, because there simply was none. This hinges on a (neo)liberal critique of the welfare state as a nannying institution that takes care of citizens and thus prevents them from developing a sufficient sense of responsibility and entrepreneurial spirit (cf. Harvey 2005).

In the extracts above it also becomes evident that the line between the coach and the client is somewhat blurred when it comes to questions of the self. Each person is of course their own individual self but the way coaches talk about clients is similar to the way they talk about themselves, and often, as in the case of Eklblom, they present themselves as examples of what they want to achieve by coaching others. This means that while they are describing their selves and their own personal histories, they are simultaneously discussing the people who are their clients. The self framed in these kinds

of statement is thus a self that might belong to the coach as well as to the client.

In the interviews too, some of the interviewees pointedly emphasised their belief in the individual as someone who is full of capacities and in possession of seemingly limitless willpower. The interviewees also repeatedly highlighted that the person (client) themselves has the best access to knowledge concerning themselves. This view was presented in the interviews in connection with the practice of questioning (see chapter three). It can thus be read as an opposition to the idea that *someone else* will tell the individual what to do, be or think. These kinds of statement probably spring from the recognition that the coach's role could be seen as interfering with the client's autonomy or "messing with the self" in a way that, for example, a therapeutic or pedagogic authority might do. As in the case of personality tests, it is clearly recognised here that the practices of coaching come dangerously close to disciplinary practices that have been used to control and "cure" unruly selves. It thus follows that a coach has to consciously reject any practices that might involve "telling someone what to do" or "making someone into something that he/she is not" in order to hold on to the ideal of the sovereign individual:

Everyone is the authority on their own life. [...] Because I can't know about your life, what is best for you, you yourself know best and I trust, my idea of man is such that you have all the know-how.

(H10)

As a coach I go to that door, and I say come on, come here, I can turn the handle, look here isn't this tempting? But the person has to walk in by themselves and start doing things. I can't do that, I can open the door and show that hey, there's great things, lifelong things, whatever you want to be. But that person has to go there by themselves.

(H11)

[Coaching is] more like questioning, listening, being present, challenging, so these are kind of the most important things. It's not like an instrument, method, or it has the coaching method which is important but not like if I had a model I take or some tools that I always use... We train people's thoughts and try to enhance the thinking process, not advising... I don't tell the client that hey, now you should, I think you should do this or that... together we look for what would be good.

(H14)

Some of the interviewees also mention that a person can be “led from the outside” and then, with the help of coaching, can find his/her inner motivation and be “led from the inside”, in other words, be autonomous and self-motivational:

Of course there are people who have given themselves up to the external world. Insecurity caused by low self-esteem, so you have to view it from a perspective like hey, you are valuable, you have to trust yourself, you have to be able to estimate things because you're worth it and you're up to it if only you believe in it. And follow your inner directions, not just outer directions. But mostly people today are directed from inside more than from outside.
(H11)

Then suddenly we notice that we've spent 20 years of our lives living on other people's terms, who was I again? And by the way the most typical client for coaching is in their 40s, a bit over or a bit under. That's the spot where you begin to wonder hey, whose choices have I been making?
(H10)

The autonomy of the individual is also connected to the ability to go against the grain, to question authority and choose differently from other people's expectations. In this way, the assumed autonomy is also seen as the possibility of a kind of individualism that does not fit the demands of the labour market or traditional values when these are in conflict with the “true self”:

here isn't any straightforward formula [for career changes], that everyone would aim for the sweeter life, but it is a lot more diverse and [clients have] really surprising career goals, which in my opinion only reflects how the person wants more than before to discover that true self and comes to coaching for this end.
(H16)

As coaching strives to discover the individual with free will, it is always also possible that there will be conflicts between what is expected by organisations as a result of coaching and what might suit the autonomous self. The clearest example that emerged in the interviews was that the client might discover, through coaching, that he or she is not currently in the right workplace and needs to change jobs. This might produce a conflict if the employer is paying for the coaching:

The ethical side of it [...] what if the coached person then starts, what if he or she recognises that “I don’t want to work here anymore.” And the payer pays for the process this comes out of, so... I think the standpoint is that if the person in coaching discovers that they don’t want to work here, then most likely they do not enjoy their work, so they are not the best possible members of the working community.

(H14)

The coach who described this situation then continued to ponder the potential conflict and how it could be negotiated ethically, and stated that “it can’t, in any case it can’t be against the organisation.” So the coach has to negotiate between the individual autonomy of the client and the interests of the organisation that is the paying sponsor, and must act as a mediator, similarly to the “middleman” whose situation was described in chapter three. As soon as there are organisational ties, then, the ideals of individual sovereignty might thus become conditional. This again illustrates the tensions involved in drawing on individualist ideals while remaining connected to organisations, companies and state offices and being bound by organisational and structural norms, practices and expectations.

In my discussion of coaching as affective labour, I raised the question of whether there is subversive potential in such practices. This question is again relevant here, and I think that practices which explicitly aim for autonomy and reflexivity do have the potential to subvert existing conditions. This might also partially explain their attraction both for the coaches and their clients – there is a promise of revolutionary potential, a promise of a change that could have far-reaching consequences. On the one hand, reaching for autonomy is always dangerous, as it can be used against the ruling powers – for example self-reflection might lead one to question the demands of working life – and in this sense it might be said that ideology in this case too contains the potential to turn against itself. On the other hand, though, as long as this subversive potential is articulated through individual choice, it is hard to see how it might be subversive – how it might pose a threat to the frames of self-promotion, for instance. In case of individuals there might thus be real revolutions on offer in coaching: one might conclude that one is better off working less or changing jobs, and this might well be a serious transformation that helps the individual. However, such transformations do not erode the frames uncovered

in this research; indeed, they might confirm them. Either way, the question of the subversive aspects of coaching is worth thinking about, and I will come back to it in my concluding remarks.

Reflexivity

With all the emphasis on “finding the inner self” and being “led from the inside”, it is clear that the self framed here has to be capable of reflexivity in order to be self-motivated and individual. The capacity for reflexivity is mainly taken for granted, as well as being considered a condition for becoming the distinctive sovereign individual. However, reflexivity is something that can be rehearsed and practised through different exercises or tests (described earlier in this chapter), or with the help of the coach in practices of mutual dialogue and “sparring”. It is thus not assumed that everyone will become reflexive automatically, but rather that everyone has the capacity for reflexivity, and that this reflexivity can be actualised with the help of either a coach or a self-help book.

The taken for granted of both the capacity and the need for individual (self-) reflexivity is congruent with theories concerning reflexive modernisation (e.g. Beck, Giddens & Lash 1994), which in different ways highlight reflexivity as the paradigmatic outcome of individualisation. Reflexivity in this approach is considered central to the formation of the contemporary subject (Giddens 1991). As also noted in the previous chapter, there are similarities in certain discursive patterns utilised in the research material and the theories of reflexive modernisation. One example is “making your own future” (see above), which resonates with Ulrich Beck’s and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim’s (2001) analysis. In their discussion of individualisation they state that people “are forced to take into their hands that which is breaking into pieces: their own lives” (ibid., 23). According to Beck and other theorists of reflexive modernisation (e.g. Scott Lash & Anthony Giddens), social structures are in the process of being reshaped, which means that they no longer function as a reference point for individual biographies or lives. The individual him- or herself is thus the only point of reference for making sense of his or

her life. Beck refers to individualised forms and conditions of existence that compel people to make themselves the centre of their own life-planning and conduct of life (ibid.).

The function of these kinds of theoretical statement appears twofold from the perspective of the politics of discourse (see chapter two). First, they seem to depict the world quite accurately as it is constructed in practices such as work-related coaching, and in this way they capture something essential, something real that is currently gaining ground, and also offer enlightening insights into these phenomena. One example can be found in Beck's & Beck-Gernsheim's (2001, 24) account of how structural unemployment as a burden of risk is shifted onto the shoulders of individuals, and social problems are turned into psychological dispositions. These aspects of individualisation are examples of the process in which social antagonisms are articulated through individual subjectivity, and they are central to this research.

Second, however, there is a tension on the level of the politics of discourse, which has already been touched upon in the previous chapter. In Beck et al.'s perspective it is the weakening or reshaping of "traditional" social structures that shapes individual lives into individualistic projects of autobiography. These kinds of argument give the impression that the processes of individualisation are unavoidable and predetermined. At the heart of such theories is the idea that the social is now increasingly constituted by and through the individual (see Adkins 2000) which is quite contrary to the approach that I take in this research. Instead of assuming that the individual is now the sole reference point which constitutes the social, my interest lies in examining *how* the individual becomes *articulated* as the sole reference point for the social, and what the consequences of such *articulation* are. In addition, the changes concerning social structures are not as straightforward and cohesive as Beck et al. claim (see Adkins 2000), and it must be argued that the processes of individualisation are not given or predetermined but rather are the products of discursive (and material) struggles. From this perspective it is rather unclear whether the analysis by Beck et al. recognises its own participation in the politics of discourse where such articulations are constituted and fortified.

What I find interesting about the demand for reflexivity is not whether it demonstrates the reflexive modernisation thesis or to what extent we have become self-

reflexive as a result of social change. Rather, considering the problematic of individuality, I think that the practice of self-reflexivity itself testifies to the particular precariousness and discomfort with individuality that was fleetingly mentioned above. If the self were the sovereign individual that it is assumed to be, why would it need help and so much exercise to be recognisable as an individual and a legitimate self? In this sense the self that is reflexive is not a self that is given. This perspective brings me to the other side of the articulations of individuality described above. Even if sovereignty, autonomy, free will and capacity are all given a great deal of credit in the research material, there is also a (sub)text that tells of a different kind of self. This “other” self is needy, helpless, in need of exercise, in fear of losing individuality or not finding it in the first place, in danger of losing itself and slipping out of control, and is also conditioned and “tied down” in many ways. Some of these aspects have already been addressed above, such as insecurity related to the labour market and the contradictions between individuation and individuality. I will now look more closely at the flipside of sovereignty in processes of self-promotion.

The flipside

Above it was suggested that experiences of insecurity can be read in the research material as if in “cracks” in the texts. In this way, the “other self” or the flipside of the sovereign individual can be recognised from texts which are actually intended to fortify individuality. This can be seen quite clearly in the following interview extract:

We take into account the person’s perspectives, also their problems. For example, I can tell you, I was teaching cadets this statement, there were 130 guys in the lecture hall saying it aloud together. The statement went like this: I value you so much as a person and as a soldier that I will refer you for treatment [for alcoholism]. We were talking about problems with alcohol. It’s care. We don’t hide, when we see that a person needs help we do what needs to be done for them, without fear of the consequences.

(H11)

On the surface, in this statement there is a fearless individual agent, a male, who is so

strong that he is capable of doing his duty under any circumstances, and this is of course what is produced as the ideal subject in coaching lectures. This agent is so strong that even if the extract begins by “taking into account” the person’s problems, it quickly shifts to learning to support others in their problems, which means that “having problems” is distanced from the self by articulating that self as the helper rather than the one with the problems.

Simultaneously, however, there is also in this extract a recognition of a self who might be afraid to interfere in others’ lives, who might leave others alone out of fear even when they are in serious trouble. In other words, this is a self who is not responsible to others and not autonomous in that he lets his feelings stop him from doing good things. Coaching is therefore needed in order to make this self into an autonomous, rational subject, who does not succumb to feelings such as fear but finds inner strength and a capacity to rescue others.

Yet there is also a third subject in this extract, one who is so weak that he needs to be taken care of, and this subject is also male. He is an alcoholic in need of intervention, in such a state that he cannot cope alone anymore. In this sense, he is a self who is an object of others’ agency, of others’ care and intervention, and hence is the opposite of the rational autonomous individual who would not under any circumstances succumb to others’ interference with his autonomy. All of these three possible “selves” are present and recognised in this extract, and they are constituted through each other. To put it simply, the existence of the weak self has to be recognised in order to depict how that self might become strong through coaching.

Feelings of incapability were recognised also in other texts, as were “problems of self-esteem” and feelings of worthlessness:

Motivation is based on feelings, it is really important [...] you can find the barriers there. The person is thinking, I would like to do so and so, but then I have this basic assumption, for example, that I am unable, or that I feel it doesn’t work or that I’ll be somehow abandoned, for example if I fail, so, yes, we deal with them [feelings].
(H14)

Those who have a long working history and then have been laid off for one reason or another, for them it’s like, when you are a bit old as well, the self-esteem might

be a bit lost, am I up to anything anymore and will anyone take me anymore, when you can turn that into a positive thing [...].
(H6)

Some interviewees represent coaching as an answer to a kind of loneliness that they recognise among their clients. They even see it as a factor in the future of coaching: in their account of the future of working life, people will be more lonely and there will be fewer traditional human relations and communities available for them. This is of course similar to the claims of reflexive modernisation theorists, but what is notable in my interviewees' accounts is that they nevertheless think that people necessarily need support and social relations, and that coaching is a form of business that can tap into this need. Instead of people having to cope on their own, they will need paid services to help them in the process of becoming autonomous individuals, and this can even be interpreted as underlining the hardship that such becoming involves:

Then if in [this town] 40 per cent of business – no, of private households are single households, 40 per cent is a lot, there is also the factor of who listens, who supports, who helps in situations, so psychological services are getting overloaded with all kinds of life problems.
(H16)

Loneliness is also seen as a result of the spatial dispersal of workers. If a worker no longer has either an immediate superior or any colleagues nearby, the coach is perceived as filling in this gap in social relations:

Management is really different, it's no longer that you have your superior close to you and the group of other workers... workers can be scattered across the globe, and there might be many more of them than in the old days. And a lot of work is done in networks, so that ... they are not workers any more, but they are what used to be called subcontractors, different kinds of collaborators. And this means that management is different, not nearly everyone has an immediate superior any more. And that is outsourced, like this, managing work as coaching like this. This is how I've thought of it.
(H13)

In one interview, reflexivity is characterised as a hard and demanding practice because it actually includes the acknowledgement of one's weaknesses and failures. This is a

remarkable notion because it also suggests that not everyone is capable of the “right kind of reflexivity”. Some selves are not coherent enough to allow a deeper exploration, and sometimes the conditions of reflexivity are such that failure is not accepted. Here it also becomes evident that the self is the product of memory and personal history, as it is personal history that makes it hard to achieve reflexivity:

[...] Publicity is full of this kind of “reflect on yourself” kind of stuff [...], it’s like a double-edged sword, it’s maybe not – in the end it’s rather dreadful, I think you asked how ready these people are, they are not that willing. There’s avoidance of painful incidents, because there will be such, there’s alcoholism, parents’ divorces and there’s – but they never appear, they can’t be talked about. It’s not, the way of talking does not allow talking about problems, you have to look good, be good, look like you’re doing well and then we have the facts [that young people are depressed].
(H1)

Some selves are recognised as simply *lost*, meaning that the self actually needs others’ support in discovering the object of its free will:

A: [...] we ask the person what they need and we proceed from that.
Q: Do people know what they need?
A: Some know and some don’t, and one of the challenges in our work is that sometimes we need to be really quiet, so we don’t say what we think you need but instead we try to drag out what the person themselves really needs, it can be quite laborious if the person is lost.
(H9)

In these and other ways, then, the individual is simultaneously brought into being and rendered unstable.

I want to end my account of the “other” of the autonomous individual with an extract from an interview with a coach who worked with young unemployed people. Her clients come to her through municipal services, so she did not seek or choose them herself. This interviewee's colleague, quoted previously, told me that there was no shortage of clients, but that there could be a shortage of funding for the services in the future, and expressed doubts about the effectiveness of the individualising practices of coaching when what was actually needed was structural change. The interviewee herself,

however, described another kind of worry in relation to her work:

Somehow, like I said I've been doing this work for a year and a half, by the end of this year it's going to be two years, and I see this kind of, that the clientele kind of, it's harder and harder. And it's somehow like, for example, young pensioners, under 30, pensioners aged 20–30, and it always gives you a shock, what's going on? [...] Really how I would describe it, the change in the clientele, it's that when I started here then many of the clients were close to working life, the goals were set so that after this period you'll go into training or you'll go into paid work, or we do applications for job vacancies. But now, mainly, the clientele in this building, they are here in rehab. They are here to practise how to get out of bed in the morning, how to get their daily routines in place, and the perspective has changed into kind of rehab, and access to working life is not that direct anymore.
(H12)

The interviewee above asks “what’s going on”, and this is a highly relevant question. What’s going on if the coach – who is, to put it simply, in the business of producing individuality – faces a situation in which, first, producing individuality is not enough to help people, and second, individuals are actually becoming less autonomous and rational, and their “free will” is not sufficient to cope with everyday life? In a wider perspective, what's going on if, at the same time as promotional selves are being produced as ideals of individualism, multiple figures are emerging as failures in terms of individuality? There are no definite answers, but in light of the different contexts provided throughout this chapter it is possible to sketch out some suggestions.

Individuality has from the outset been defined through exclusions, and thus it necessarily carries within it the definitive other, the excluded. As the articulations fostering a particular kind of individualism grow stronger, the threat of the other has to grow as well, which means that the tension and the need to police the boundaries of autonomous individuality are fortified. However, the excluded is no longer necessarily the woman or the child, but a more universal figure of weakness and failure – even if this figure might be characterised with feminine attributes such as dependency. Because the figure of failure can be *anyone*, it becomes more frightening: everyone has to fight against being a failure in terms of individualism. Practices of self-promotion might then be viewed as practices to fortify individuality, aimed at drawing the line between the self and the other; but while they are used to police the boundaries of individuality, at the

same time they bring into being that which is excluded, and in this way the tension only intensifies.

As was pointed out above, capitalism as a system simultaneously values and fosters possessive individuality and produces feelings or experiences of insecurity and instability, of misrecognition and worthlessness, which place the self in a double bind that it must negotiate if it is to be sustained. The framings examined in this chapter can be perceived as ways in which this double bind is negotiated precisely by articulating it through the individual self, in such a way that the self remains responsible for achieving, maintaining and defending its individuality and defeat – even the loss of individuality – can be perceived as an individual failure.

Here it might be useful to consider Renata Salecl's (2003) suggestion that capitalism produces anxieties and then capitalises upon them. From this perspective coaching is “a fix” that helps to produce the problem it aims to fix. In order to sell their self-promotion services, coaches need to articulate them within a frame that acknowledges subjects’ failures in terms of individuality and the fears of losing individuality or not being recognised as an individual described above. These anxieties are thus not only recognised but also co-produced or intensified by coaching, even if the coaches themselves are wholeheartedly in the business of helping people in empowering them to become the sovereign individuals of individualism.

To end this chapter on individuality, I want to focus on questions of class and gender. I have chosen to write on this subject in a separate section, even though I am aware that separating questions of class and gender might create the false impression that they belong to a separate sphere from “everything else”. I have chosen this strategy because it seems to me that first, I needed to discuss individuality from the perspectives utilised above before I could turn to class or gender, and second, I think that what I have found in regards to class and gender is not only a result of my analysis but offers a theoretical and methodological postscript concerning both the questions of individuality examined above and my approach in general.

5.4. Reflexivity reprise

I begin with a return to accounts of reflexivity and individuality. Of the reflexive modernisation theorists, it is Scott Lash (in Beck et al. 1994) who most clearly questions the assumption that social actors' powers will be ever increasing or that agency will outdo structures. In his account of reflexivity, Lash pays attention to the ways in which reflexivity might not only empower but also divide and differentiate agents. Lash asks, who the "reflexivity losers" of modern society might be, and in this way he considers access to reflexivity as the main dividing line between social groups or new classes, suggesting that it is women who are excluded from spaces of "reflexive production".

The question of reflexivity's losers has been taken further by feminist theorists such as Lisa Adkins (2000) and Beverley Skeggs (2004). Adkins (2000, 265) suggests that women's exclusion from labour market positions, together with an intensification of domestic and welfare servicing, does not entail a process of individualisation that involves the disembedding of people from the traditional constraints of gender as the theorists of reflexive modernisation have claimed (e.g. Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2001). Rather, she states that it involves a process of re-embedding women in circuits and networks of exchange where there is an intensification of traditional gendered norms and rules. Reflexivity is thus not necessarily a sign of detraditionalisation, but might also fortify existing power relations through the new socialities that it creates.

Skeggs (2004, 121–125), for her part, pays attention to the ways in which reflexivity has functioned as a classed technique of self-narration, of bringing the self into being through acts of telling and writing. She examines how the working class was excluded from the techniques of self-possession and instead became the object of legal decisions regarding social worthiness (ibid., 123); she argues that theorists of reflexive modernisation draw on notions of the self and reflexive individuality which are inherently middle-class. Skeggs states that we need to ask who is presenting themselves as reflexive, as having a self worth knowing, a voice worth hearing (ibid., 133).

These approaches, in their different ways, encourage the researcher to pay attention to the ways in which individuality is constituted through reflexivity as an exclusive category. This is a crucial and historically very significant question. However, when

considered in relation to processes of self-promotion, the recognition of exclusion becomes complicated. How might reflexivity in connection to self-promotion be exclusive of women or the working class in the specific context of work-related coaching? One aspect of such exclusivity, of course, is that work-related coaching is not equally possible or available for everyone. Here material wealth is undeniably a significant differentiator, which places women⁷⁷ and the lower classes at a disadvantage. One could also claim, following Skeggs (2004), that it takes not only economic but also cultural and symbolic capital to be able to successfully use the services of coaches – for example, to be able to construct the individual narratives that I have examined in this project.

However, it would be too simplistic to state that only the rich or the well-to-do have access to coaching. Indeed, there are tendencies which indicate that coaching is increasingly part of the repertoire of services provided to the unemployed or otherwise marginalised people, as was demonstrated in the interview extracts above. One example of these tendencies is an email which arrived in my supervisor's in-box (2011), asking whether she would be able to participate in a seminar on immigrants' employment opportunities. The organiser's idea was that self-branding might also be a useful approach for immigrants seeking employment, and that she might be able to lecture on this topic.⁷⁸

Even if the coaches who work with marginalised people do not necessarily see coaching as the best possible solution, on the institutional level it is deemed relevant and given public funding as well as funding from the European Union. Through coaching, then, reflexivity as a practice of becoming an individual, and self-promotion as a particular instance of individualisation, are legitimised as helping the marginalised to take "hold of themselves" – which rather than excluding the lower classes, is a forcible way of *including* them in the process of individualisation.

Moreover, in the business sector of coaching, some of the coaches I interviewed told me that they actually did coaching for free, as pro bono work for those they considered in need of support. Coaching in its business form can be considered a mainly white-collar enterprise aimed at white-collar clients, but at the same time there are other

⁷⁷ Because women's average income is lower than that of men, in Finland and elsewhere.

⁷⁸ Private discussion with Päivi Korvajärvi, 2011. The organisers of the seminar had seen Päivi Korvajärvi talking about self-branding in a video clip on the Internet.

aspects that tell us that the picture is altogether more complex.

Similarly, there is no differentiation between men and women in the sense that women are excluded or considered unworthy of the practices of coaching. There are differentiations and gendered expressions, as has been and will be analysed elsewhere in this research, but my analysis has not found that individuality is unanimously presented or understood as inherently masculine or naturally male. There is ambivalence: for instance, dependency is at some points characterised as feminine, as noted in chapter three, although this is done by a woman who wishes to disassociate herself from “feminine ways”. There are articulations in which the possession of autonomous individuality is emphasised by disassociating it from femininity, but there are also articulations in which femininity, or experiences connected with being a woman, can function as proof of individual capacity or competence. Particularly in connection with reflexivity, which is culturally associated with women, the inclusion of women in practices that produce individuality was notable. For instance, it was suggested in one interview that women might have it easier in terms of self-reflection because they are “used to” talking about themselves more than men (H1), and that the processes of self-promotion are thus more natural for women. Another interview, however, demonstrates the complexity of articulations of women and reflexivity: in this interview too the readiness of women to reflect on themselves was recognised, but this was then countered with the explanations that men are as capable as women of self-reflection “once they get started”, and that men might not talk as much but the talk might be “deeper” (H15). This indicates the processes of detraditionalisation described by Adkins (2000): even though the characteristics culturally associated with femininity (such as reflexivity, here described as talking) are given credit, that credit might not necessarily accrue to women.

In her account of compulsory individuality, Anne Cronin (2000) notes that women are simultaneously the epitome of the politics of choice and excluded from individuality. From the perspective of my research, this exclusion from individuality is, if not non-existent, then not articulated. Instead, there are articulations of gendered tensions and differentiations, which do not frame individuality as inherently masculine or exclusive but do seem to function as ways of hindering women from gaining advantages in the production of individuality. Overall, then, the emphasis is on individuality as an

enterprise that is not constituted on the basis of women's exclusion, but rather permeates and includes every subject regardless their gender.

Looking at this problematic from the standpoint of articulations shifts the perspective slightly and allows a different take on class and gender. I have in this and preceding chapters observed that self-promotion is framed through processes in which economic and social circumstances, conflicts and antagonisms are articulated through individual subjectivity. Keeping this in mind, I think it is important to ask what this perspective on individualisation might mean in terms of gender and class.

As was noted above, individuality can be perceived as precarious, unsure and unstable, and this flipside of individuality touches both men and women and all classes, even though the ways in which it is articulated have historical connections to femininity. It is of course true that some persons experience precarity, for example, more forcibly than others (e.g. Precarias a la Deriva 2009/2004), and there are important gendered and classed categorisations that effect how one's personal worth is recognised (e.g. Skeggs 2004). The framing of the self in processes of promotion, however, does not exclude any particular class or gender. Rather, the implication is that *everyone* (at least everyone involved in the labour market, which is the focus of this research) has to work to achieve individuality. The need for reflexivity indicates the hard work required in order to achieve the individual self. This means that no one can be sure of their individuality beforehand, not even those who are privileged or otherwise more easily included. In this way, the precariousness of individuality is not based solely on the dynamics of exclusion or inclusion, but also on the very ways in which individuality becomes articulated.

Individualising class

Regarding individuality, then, I suggest that one might consider class in terms other than those which rely on categorising individuals. My interest lies in processes and social relations, and class itself can also be viewed as a process and a relation. Richard Gunn (1987) provides an interesting take on class drawing on the Marxist tradition of class as the social relation between capital and labour. Gunn describes this relation as a line which

does not divide individuals but goes through them, meaning that it is a social relation that “penetrates” different individuals in different ways. Instead of identifying particular individuals as working-class or middle-class, Gunn is interested in the specific ways in which the capital-labour relation antagonistically structures particular lives.

Using Gunn's approach, it is possible to see the processes of particular kinds of individualisation described above as articulations through which the class antagonism that structures individual lives is articulated *within* the self. The relation between capital and labour produces the experiences of worthlessness and fear of failure related to working life described above (see Lahikainen & Mäkinen 2012). When these fears and experiences are articulated as problems that are fundamentally related to the self – when they are placed within the self and rendered the responsibility of the individual self – class as a relation becomes articulated through individuality. In this way, *everyone* is invited to participate in self-promotion, because everyone is penetrated by the antagonism which has to be resolved or silenced through individualising articulations.

Skeggs (2004, 85) refers to a similar process stating that “the rhetoric of ‘compulsory individuality’ is now seen to address all – whilst only being applicable to the few who have access to the requisite resources – and their lack of take-up is read as a consequence of their own individual failing.” This account of individual failing resonates with my understanding of processes of individualisation. However, my view differs from Skeggs’s perspective in that I am not confident that one will be granted success in the achievement of individuality, even with access to the requisite resources. Rather, based on my analysis in this chapter, I argue that compulsory individuality produces failures, and that even those who seem to succeed have to come to terms with the threat of losing their achieved individuality. From this perspective questions of class might be reformulated, because they concern not only exclusions or categories but also, and primarily, everyone’s involvement in a process which both silences class antagonism and individualises it as differences between individuals.

Matters concerning individuality and class are made more urgent by David Harvey’s (2005, 52) suggestion that the rhetoric of individual freedom, which I think functions through the individualising articulations described in this project, has been used in neoliberal politics to conceal the restoration of class power. Restoring class power has

included a dismantling of collective subjectivities (trade unions, for instance) which were previously – at least to some extent – able to protect individuals from the insecurity embedded in capitalist relations. Observed in this light, the process of individualising class – articulating class as personal characteristics or differences between individuals – has participated in a restructuring of the relations between capital and labour. This restructuring has rendered individual subjects more vulnerable.

Individualising gender

Following the same line of thought, a focus on articulation also allows a shift in the perspective on gender, towards an understanding not only of how women are excluded from articulations of individuality, but also of how gender as a social relation is displaced and concealed through individualising practices. This theoretical position on gender and individuality has already been examined to some extent in discussions concerning post-feminism (see e.g. Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer 2006; Gill 2007a; McRobbie 2007a; 2007b; 2009; Tasker & Negra 2007) in which compulsory individuality and the problems involved in celebrating individual empowerment are analysed in relation to gendered norms and expectations.

In the analysis conducted so far in this research, processes of displacement concerning gender have been highlighted as ways in which discrimination, for instance, is rendered a problem of the individual self, and in which gender is articulated as an individual resource and personal characteristic rather than a hierarchical social relation. In an interesting twist, individuality, with all its Machiavellian connotations, is not only possessed by women but also fortified through personal experiences, and even a kind of identity politics related to “being a woman”. In the next chapter I will look more closely at the relationship between fostering individuality and producing value, and will further develop my account of the meaning of gender in these processes.

I therefore suggest that even though gender is increasingly a resource or, as Adkins (2005) claims, a mobile object, this does not necessarily mean that gender is detached from the self or denaturalised. Rather, I think that articulating gender as a resource or

object is inherently connected to the ways in which gender as a social relation is individualised and increasingly understood as an individual possession, which not only can be used for individual gain by both men and women, but can also be used to produce particular forms of individuality. In this way one might need to think of gender not only as a resource upon which different people have unequal opportunities to capitalise, and not only as a mobile object detached from personhood, but also as a social relation that is articulated in a particular way – a way that changes our understanding of social conflicts and hierarchies, and that ultimately makes it increasingly hard to articulate gender in a non-individualised frame.

5.5. Conclusions

I began this chapter by asking what kind of individuality is brought into being through the articulations that frame self-promotion and the promotional self. I have discovered, first, that it is compulsory individuality, in the sense that the frames for self-promotion contain a compulsion to express a distinctive individuality, for within these frames individuality is what makes its possessor indispensable in the labour market. Producing a particular kind of individuality in processes of self-promotion is a way to respond to the insecurity and precariousness that characterise the position of the subject in capitalist relations.

Second, the individuality produced when the promotional self is framed has a double form. The self is articulated as the ideal of individualism: an autonomous, free individual endowed with capacity and the “right attitude”. However, these articulations also inevitably bring into being another kind of self that I have characterised as the “flipside” of the autonomous individual: a weak and incoherent self lacking individuality. It could also be characterised as the “abject” of the sovereign individual – it is the other that is used to define the boundaries of the self – to frame the self.

In terms of framing, one might conclude that frames for the promotional self are constructed by excluding the weak and incoherent self. However, it seems that somehow this self nevertheless also stays *within* those frames – not only as a constitutive outside

but also as a threat within the self. This relates to the temporalities inscribed in processes of self-promotion. The imperative to personal transformation, becoming what one already is, also contains the idea that one should change, that the present state is undesirable, and that the insecurity experienced at the present moment can be fought by becoming a better individual. There is thus an excluded other, but the articulations through which self-promotion is framed at the same time emphasise that this other could be – and is – anyone. This means that *everyone* has to strive to become distinctive, to become autonomous and capable. Becoming a promotional self is actually framed as striving to overcome the “other” within oneself.

From this perspective, individuality, which has been theorised as constituted through the exclusion of women, children, the working class and other marginalised groups, appears more complex in regards to exclusion and inclusion. I suggest that the promotional self is framed through a production of individuality that simultaneously excludes and includes. This means that everyone has to strive to achieve individuality, though some are better resourced than others, and everyone is also in danger of losing their individuality. Thus no one is excluded from the compulsion to become an individual, and any one can fail. In addition, as already noted, the frames for self-promotion, within which individuality is both brought into being and rendered unstable, are articulated through an ideological process of displacement which transforms the failure to become an individual into an individual failure.

The complexities involved in the construction of individuality through inclusion and exclusion prompt me to ask whether previous accounts of the constitution of individuality through the exclusion of women and the working class are entirely accurate in the context of self-promotion. To reconsider individuality in connection with gender and class, I have conceptualised both gender and class not as individual characteristics or possessions but as social relations in which everyone is embedded, albeit in different ways.

6. Potential

Throughout the previous chapters, my aim has been to examine the framing of self-promotion – how self-promotion becomes intelligible – and the framing that brings the promotional self into being. This has included, first, an overview of work-related coaching as an occupation and of the actual practices of coaching, and second, the analysis of different articulations of change and individuality in the field of coaching.

In this last chapter before my conclusion, I want to revisit questions concerning change and individuality from the perspective of value production. My approach here will again concentrate on particular articulations, this time articulations of potential that appear in the field of coaching. I will trace articulations concerning potential to uncover how the processes of value production participate in the framing of self-promotion and in the framing of the promotional self

Keeping in mind the research objective – to examine the interconnections between capitalism, gender and self-promotion – I have tried throughout the research to understand how the processes of self-promotion relate to different economic contexts. In this chapter I will continue along these lines with a particular focus on how value is produced in contemporary capitalism. This task is fairly complicated, for several reasons. First, the empirical material on work-related coaching does not point the reader (me) very directly towards particular forms of value production or profit-making. There is a continual repetition of “potential” in connection to forms of individuality – and this is where I begin my analysis – but direct connections to value production are for the most part either absent or silenced. In terms of method, I will therefore continue to read discursive patterns by looking for repetitions as well as gaps, cracks or silences within

those patterns, and in this way will aim to understand how repetitive discursive patterns concerning potential might be understood in relation to the research questions.

Another complication is that general discussions or analyses concerning value production are by no means unanimous or unambiguous. Questions of value production are directly linked to different contemporary conceptions or theorisations of capitalism – whether it is understood as the new economy, flexible accumulation, post-Fordist or cognitive – and they are similarly contestable and under constant negotiation. The most prominent example is the concept of immaterial labour (see chapter three) which is often used as a key to understand the current socio-economic organisation (see Hardt 1999; Camfield 2007; Toscano 2007) and which carries within it new formulations of both labour and value. According to Michael Hardt (1999), value is now produced not only in terms of temporal units of labour time but in terms of “life”, which means that exploitation and thus the production of value now concerns above all communication, sociality and the production of subjectivities. Whereas Hardt, Negri (2000) and other Italian autonomists (e.g. Lazzarato 2004) see immaterial labour as paradigmatic for the contemporary economy, there are other voices that remind us of the limited scope within which the paradigmatic nature of immaterial labour can be observed in empirical research (Camfield 2007; Kliman 2009; Nolan & Slater 2010). For these reasons, my analysis in this chapter will not be a definitive dissection of the research material in terms of a particular conception of value production. I do not want – and I do not have the resources – to make any fundamental theoretical assumptions about how value should be understood in contemporary capitalism. Rather, my aim is a tentative mapping of possible connections between the processes of self-promotion and value production, keeping open different perspectives concerning the current economy. Approaching questions of value with an open mind might offer some new viewpoints from which to approach existing theoretical debates.

Methodologically, this chapter differs slightly from the previous ones. I continue to trace articulations, but for the most part my argument is a development of the observations and analysis made in the preceding chapters. I will therefore not do as much close reading, or provide as many extracts from the research material. If in the previous chapters my writing has fluctuated between the textual (empirical) level and the

contextual and discursive level, here I want to lift my gaze somewhat and allow myself some detachment from the research material in order to have more space to develop the observations I have made so far. Because my aim in this chapter is to open up possible perspectives rather than to give definitive interpretations, I have also let my writing style follow this openness, which means that it has become more essayistic. As a whole, this chapter is intended to provide a bridge from my analysis to the concluding remarks I shall make in the last part of this thesis.

6.1. Maximising potential

As cited previously, the International Coach Federation's definition of coaching is as follows: "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal and professional potential" (coachfederation.org). In this statement, potential is placed at the centre of practices of coaching, and the aims of coaching are also defined in terms of maximising potential. What is this potential, and why is it important?

In previous chapters I described how coaching's characteristic underlying assumptions about change and individuality include a belief in a self that is simultaneously already "within" and in a state of becoming. Individuality is both striven for and taken for granted, and transformations are understood as being about both changing and finding "the real me". If we turn to the concept of potential, it seems that it is precisely the idea of potentiality that makes possible these contradictory claims for something that already is but then again is not yet. The idea of simultaneously finding and becoming in terms of potential is evident, for example, in the following interview extract. Here a coach emphasises potential in connection with both finding the desired individuality and allowing transformations or personal change:

I want to contribute to a person's self... to a person's level of identity in a way where I tell everyone that hey, you are really good, you've got enormous potential. A person can really use only maybe ten per cent of their intellectual

capacities or resources in one life. This is the informed guess of researchers, ten per cent, which means that every one of us, every one, has an enormous reserve already; it is here within me, a great potential, to learn, to develop, to grow, anything. If we can make use of it. So I want to develop people's perceptions of themselves, their identity, so that they realise that each one of us really has an enormous potential. And it is there, and it is up to me whether I want to use it or not, whether I want to know that side of me, what I could do if I only wanted, if I open the door that leads to learning.

(H11)

Personal change is at the centre of coaching, and being able to achieve change in terms of personal transformation implies that there is somehow potential for that change to take place. The ideal of human development requires a belief in humans' potential to develop, to become something else. In addition, potential is first and foremost individual potential. It is not discussed in relation to potential collective subjectivities, for example, but in relation to what is inside a person, as is made clear in the interview extract above. In this way, the concept of potential is at the core of the articulations of change and individuality examined in previous chapters. In some interviews, books and websites, potential is explicitly mentioned, but it is also present in many other texts in the form of implicit assumptions concerning human development and the goals of coaching.

When I first started to think about potential, I thought it might be understood as a form of capital – referring either to what has been theorised as cultural, social and symbolic capital in a Bourdieuan sense, or to human capital from the perspective first provided by Adam Smith (2003/1776). Potential might thus consist of the various skills and capacities that one accumulates in order to increase one's value in the labour market or as an employee, and coaching might be viewed as an instance of the accumulation of such capital. However, if that potential is something that not only is yet to come but also already exists, the idea of accumulation seems inaccurate, or at least insufficient: how can one accumulate something one already has?

As already described, coaches do not consider themselves teachers, and many of them emphasise in the interviews that coaching as a practice is not about learning: "The coach does not instruct at all, does not teach anything, but tunes [the client] into their own know-how" (H4). Coaching is not about acquiring skills, but about becoming conscious of the skills one possesses. In this sense, what coaching aims for is not so much the

accumulation of social/cultural/symbolic/human capital, but becoming conscious of the capital (potential) one has, and in this process the conceptual distinctions between skills, capital and self become rather blurred, as the aim is simultaneously to become conscious of one's potential *and* to become conscious of who one "really is" (see chapter four). Coaching as an individualising practice constantly returns to the individual self, and thus although there are references to skills and capacities and learning, the way in which potential is understood eventually coils back to the self. It is the self that becomes conscious of potential, owns potential and *is* potential

The process of becoming conscious of one's potential is most often discussed in connection to empowerment which, as described in chapter four, is understood in coaching precisely as a process through which one gains the strength that is already inside one or recognises something that is just waiting to be brought out. Potential can thus be described both as the potential to become conscious and as the "strengths and resources" (H14) of which one becomes conscious.

In these ways (and doubtless many others), potential is a complex concept, not easily bent to simple definitions. I will therefore approach potential – like change and individuality – as a nodal point that binds together different strands or articulations. Potential is a concept that can be mobilised in various directions. What is crucial here is that ideas of potential in work-related coaching are not really mobilised towards the actualisation of potential, if actualisation is understood as something that transforms the potential into the actual. This is what might be called a gap or silence in the texts that I have examined. A great deal of attention is paid to finding potential, but not much is said about what that potential is for – how it actualises, what forms it can take. According to the coaches, what one needs to do is to "make use of" or "maximise" or "become aware of" potential. The temporality inscribed into articulations of potential is a movement in which the self gains consciousness of, makes use of or maximises the potential and is thereby transformed, but in this process the potential itself is not transformed but remains from beginning to the end simply that: potential. The narrative of potential is not one of actualisation but rather one of discovery, in which the process of discovery contributes to the transformation of the self in question.

Potential thus stays the same, but because it “is not yet” it also cannot be thoroughly known – potential is thus exactly that, potential, rather than anything definitive or particular. Potential is something which – when needed – rises to the occasion and is flexible. And because potential, as noted above, becomes merged with articulations of the self, it also comes to mean that the *self* is capable of being exactly what is needed in any given instance. Maximising potential thus means maximising something which cannot be defined: in other words, maximising the capacity to respond to various situations, to become what is needed at any given moment. Maximising potential means maximising one’s personal flexibility.

6.2. Promises of flexibility

Thinking about potential in terms of personal flexibility might help us to see, why and how potential as it is articulated in work-related coaching is connected to the contemporary labour market and ultimately to the production of value. According to Richard Sennett (2006, 11), the ability to “rise to the occasion” is one of the most important characteristics that employers claim to be seeking when they are looking for workers. As Sennett notes, instead of highly specialised craftsmanship there is now a need for a new version of talent which is not content-specific or content-determined. Instead of learning one skill and then deepening one’s knowledge concerning that one specialised skill, one needs to be open and ready to adapt to any kind of situation or task that might come along.⁷⁹ Cutting-edge firms and “flexible organisations” are constantly changing, and therefore they need people who can learn new skills rather than cling to old competencies. Sennett thus suggests that in the contemporary labour market, a person’s human potential is equivalent to their ability to move from problem to problem, subject to subject.

⁷⁹ Jakke Holvas and Jussi Vähämäki (2005, 127) similarly observe that the new imperative in working life is that one has to be ready to fit – in a useful way – in any undefined job. The ideal “new worker” is, according to Holvas and Vähämäki, like a marmot: capable of “constantly digging new tunnels and exits” (ibid.).

For context and comparison it might be helpful here to consider the project of “lifelong learning”, which has gained increasing familiarity and popularity in Finland and elsewhere (Ojala 2010, 78). Although coaching is not straightforwardly about learning or teaching, there are common nominators. Most importantly, the concept of lifelong learning relates to the general move from the humanist ideal of individual development to the more individualistic conceptions of the self that were discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter. From the 1960s onwards, humanist ideals of lifelong education were considered fairly important in Finland. This was especially because access to education and to lifelong intellectual growth was thought to lessen the differences between social classes. The idea of lifelong learning was thus based on the ideals of equality, democracy and education, and on humanist conceptions of the potential for human development. In the 1990s, however, following changes in the economic, social and ideological climate, the ideals of democracy and humanism were converted into a governmental strategy of lifelong learning aimed at improving economic productivity and international competitiveness. This change brought individualistic and market-oriented goals into the centre of practices of lifelong learning. (Ojala 2010, 79). An emphasis on individuality and self-direction is thought to produce collectively responsible actors who have not only the ability to adjust to constant change, but also a sense that it is possible to affect those changes and their conditions (Koski & Moore 2001, cited in Ojala 2010, 79).

This emphasis on individuality, responsibility and the capacity to adjust resonates strongly with my findings in this research. This is the context in which potential is mobilised: the ability to learn lifelong or to manage new tasks in a new organisational environment, as a responsible and individual actor improving the economic well-being of the Finnish nation. There are still remnants of the humanist ideals, of course, but in this context they appear in a particular individualistic form which I suspect – as in the case of lifelong learning – is rather similar to what was examined in the previous chapter.

The difference between lifelong learning and coaching lies first in the idea or even imperative of constant learning which is essential to lifelong learning. In coaching there is no such imperative, simply a need to be *capable* of learning should such a situation arise. Another distinction concerns the idea that one might have “the sense of a possibility” to be able to affect the changes. As was described in chapter four, this is not a

prominent view in work-related coaching – quite the contrary. Another notable distinction lies in the scope or scale of individualism. Whereas the contemporary ideas concerning lifelong learning seem to have a strong explicit interest in the nation’s well-being – individualistic practices are thought to work for the benefit of Finland – in coaching the benefits are articulated quite strictly in relation to individuals only.

Despite these differences, a consideration of both lifelong learning and coaching can show how in the second half of the 20th century potential, along with the concept of individual, was converted from ideals of human development and human potential to a more individualistic and simultaneously more profit- and competition-oriented mode congruent with neoliberal ideology (e.g. Harvey 2005).⁸⁰ The labour market demands adaptable and flexible selves who are capable of lifelong learning, and this kind of selfhood is also promoted as desirable in Finnish government strategies. In this context the notion of potential encapsulates the demands for flexibility and adaptability, and also the implicit aim of economic improvement, without having to provide any further definition of fixed skills or capabilities or to acknowledge that mobilising potential might require social or material resources that are not equally available to everyone.

From this perspective, connections between the notion of potential and value production might be approached. First, the emphasis on potential in connection with competition-oriented individualism means that potential is not sought simply for the benefit of the self in terms of human development, even though the finding of one’s inner self and resources tends to be central in the discursive patterns I have analysed so far. In order to understand why potential receives so much attention and why the notions of flexibility and adaptability matter, we need to consider promotional selves as selves who

⁸⁰ In general, this large-scale social conversion or transformation, which has been characterised as a move towards neoliberalism, seems to have a great deal of explanatory power, and it is no doubt one of the contexts that surround and shape the practices of self-promotion. However, I refer to neoliberalism not as a definitive explanation, but in order to show that the practices I have examined throughout this research have connections and resonances across many sites, both ideological and empirical. The processes of framing the promotional self are part of a web of interconnections in which the repeated discursive patterns centre on individuality, change, responsibility and competitiveness. Neoliberalism as an ideological construction provides such discursive patterns, but as well as using neoliberalism as an explanatory context it is equally important to see how these discursive patterns are employed in particular practices, and how they respond to existing social contradictions, such as unemployment and the decline in value of previously acquired skills. Ideology, whether neoliberal or otherwise, is not imposed upon us from above, but is produced and fortified in everyday practices as it resonates with people’s experiences and seems to provide a means of coming to terms with existing social contradictions. In other words, to become effective or hegemonic, ideology has to have connections to social life (McNay 2000, 96–97).

– consciously or unconsciously – aim not only to become better humans, but to continually add value in every sphere of existence (see du Gay 1996, 65). Adding value then becomes inseparable from the self, as is most explicitly expressed in the practices of personal branding: “All business is based on relationships. People work with you not because of your size or reach, but because they know you, your reputation, and your character. *You create the value*” (Montoya 2002, 16). Merging the self with the aim of adding value is a process that is not without contradictions, as I have repeatedly argued throughout this research. Nevertheless, the need to add value – to become worthy in order to not be redundant – is real, and it motivates the need to combine soul-searching humanist practices with the requirements of working life.

As potential is not actualised, but is sought within the self and required in the labour market as *mere* potential, it seems that actualisation is not the way in which potential is translated into economic value. What employees are selling in the labour market, or what employers are looking for, is not a particular combination of skills, nor necessarily a particular personality, but rather a *potent self* ready to face whatever new situations might arise – in other words, a self that carries within itself the promise of *something more*. Potential will thus make a self desirable in terms of the labour market or working life. Lauren Berlant (2010, 94) notes that when we talk about an object of desire, we are talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make to us and make possible for us. Thus if a potent self is desirable, the self has to be able to articulate “a cluster of promises” concerning potentiality in order to become desired. The promotional self which seeks to add value to itself becomes valuable if it can articulate potential as a *promise* (or a cluster of promises) of flexibility, adaptability and capacity for self-improvement and learning. Articulating potential as a promise here can be understood as a performative act: only by being able to promise does the self become a potent self and hence desirable.

This notion of promise is central, because it opens up potential as a form of labour power (bought and sold on the labour market) that is essentially a promise of capability, and that is bought and sold in terms of promises, rather than of currently being capable of something or possessing a particular skill. In other words, what the employer buys when he hires a worker is a promise of flexibility and adaptability, and it is precisely this

promise that is given value and rewarded, not necessarily the actual practice of practically demonstrating flexibility. To put it in the rhetoric used in marketing, the desirable self has to be able to make a value proposition (promise) that articulates to the customer (employer) the kind of value the product (self) brings – why is it worth purchasing? Making a value proposition thus includes anticipation and calculation, both from the seller who wants to anticipate the kinds of thing the buyer might need or want, and from the buyer who anticipates the promised increase in value. This is what matters in practices of self-promotion: framing the self in terms of future potential, and articulating this potential as a promise of value rather than as present skills or specific capacities. Promotion means expressing simultaneously what might be and what already is, promising a potent self worth the investment of the employer.

6.3. Temporalities

Buying a promise means investing in the future, but at the same time it also means that the future in the form of potential is already here – the investment itself is made now, not in the future. Above I noted that in the narratives of potential, the story is structured in such a way that potential remains the same even though the self is transformed. Apart from transformation, however, there is another kind of relation to temporality contained in the notion of “unchanging” potential: it implies anticipation, but it also makes the future *present* in the here and now.

These implications concerning temporality resemble some recent theorisations of current capitalist production. Lisa Adkins and Eeva Jokinen (2008, 145) discuss the significance of gender in the new economy and note that capitalism at the moment does not organize its labour power retroactively, but with orientation to possibilities, open futures, and vitality. Maurizio Lazzarato (2004, 192) suggests that in contemporary capitalism, control over production means paying attention to events and being able to act, to anticipate and “be up to it”. The requirement to “be up to it” clearly resonates with

what was described above as “rising to the occasion”, and the emphasis on anticipation is of course contained and also expressed in the search for potential.

However, Lazzarato also claims that “all production is the production of services” (2004, 193); the anticipation of which he writes refers to the need to anticipate or even bring about a future customer demand. The attention to the importance of foreseeing, anticipating or bringing about future customer demand is also a familiar notion in many business or marketing theorisations (e.g. Katsaros & Christy 2005). This of course relates to the discursive patterns related to change that were described in chapter four; the current “common sense” perception is that there is “constant change” in the economic world, and that constant anticipation is therefore essential in order to keep up with the ever-changing scene. Potential thus also relates to change in this wider sense, as a general anticipatory tendency inscribed in current economic transactions.

In coaching, however, the anticipation implied in potential does not really concern the production of services. Rather, anticipation is directed towards future needs, which might be almost anything as long as they are concentrated on the individual. They might thus be the needs of the labour market, or those of the employer, or even the general needs of a society for responsible persons. Whereas Lazzarato (2004, 193) suggests that attention to events means that *production* has to be ready to anticipate changes in the market, in coaching it is rather the *individual* who has to be ready to anticipate any kind of demand directed towards his/her self, in other words it is the individual who has to have potential. The future thus also becomes present, or should one say embodied, in the individual self. In this way, yet again, we are confronted with a process which articulates an economic condition, that of the imperative of anticipation and the future in the present, placing it *within* the individual and consequently making it an individual responsibility to *have potential*.

For Lazzarato (2004) and Sennett (2006), the imperative of anticipation is characteristic and to a certain extent even definitive of contemporary capitalism. It is presented as something essentially new, and for Lazzarato (2004) in particular it requires a rethinking of central concepts and presumptions, such as those concerning production and labour. Commenting on these kinds of theorisation, however, Lisa Adkins (2011) follows Bourdieu in stressing that *ordinary action* is anticipatory. This means that people,

whether playing football or planning tonight's dinner, routinely make practical assumptions about the future. Adkins therefore questions the notion that anticipation might be considered exclusive to the contemporary social or economic condition, and she directs attention to the ways in which the future is always already in the present. She also emphasises Bourdieu's account of practice as temporalisation, arguing that time does not simply pass but is something that is made in practice. Considering these perspectives, I am not inclined to claim that the temporality inscribed in the notion of potential is necessarily specific to or paradigmatic of the production of value in contemporary capitalism. Rather, examining potential might simply show us how the relationship between the future and the present is bound to become complex once we start to look more closely at processes that bear an implicit ideal of self-actualisation and development in the context of the labour market and economic transactions.

Examining potential in terms of temporality might also offer a perspective on practices of coaching as practices of making time. Seeing oneself through the frames are constructed in practices of coaching means participating in the construction of a particular future as well as of the present. The discursive constructions concerning potential are not only forms of anticipation of the inevitable. In them, the future is both defined and simultaneously closed: it is no longer open but is already here, already made. In this sense framing the self also means framing the future. The discursive patterns concerning inevitable change that are employed in framing the promotional self are thus also performative in this way: they define and narrow not only current but also future agency.

To sum up: the self that is framed in promotional practices is potent in such a way that it knows its inner strengths and resources. Instead of being defined and given value according to particular skills, the promotional self is defined in terms of openness and ability to change. The promotional self is thus a potent self made valuable through an articulated promise of undefined capabilities. This brings us back to the importance of personal transformation, self-reflection and individuality.

Furthermore, to reframe the above in terms of economic exchange, it can be said that potential is a commodity with exchange value in the labour market, because employers are interested in it and are willing to exchange money (to make a contract of

employment) for the ability to use the employees' potential for the profit of the company or the organisation. However, the reason for this is that employers see potential not only as a commodity but as labour power, which means that potential is a particular kind of commodity – one that can produce surplus value.

However, articulating promises is not necessarily characteristic of potential alone, because it could also be said that any contract of employment is about making a promise or commitment in terms of an anticipated future. Similarly, any act of buying a commodity can be understood in terms of anticipation of the (near) future.⁸¹ In this way examining the implications of potential also makes visible the ordinary temporalities inscribed in acts of selling and buying labour power and other commodities. It could be said that a worker seeking to make a contract of employment is always making a “selling proposition” which concerns the future and a promise concerning things that he or she will do or be.

Nevertheless, what makes the promises articulated as potential differ from other such promises is the undefined character of promises articulated as potential – they are more open than a promise to be able to cut wood or spell correctly, for example. Instead of offering a valued skill, the value of potential lies in its openness: it could be anything, or in the future it could become anything, because it is not yet actualised. This might also pose a problem for the production of value in the form of potential, and especially for the person seeking to add their value and to become irreducible by offering potential in the market.

6.4. Individualised potential

Although flexibility is required, to become a successful promotional self one also needs to differentiate oneself from others. Particularly when neoliberal tendencies are underlining competition as the organising principle of the market (Harvey 2005; Lazzarato 2009, 116), it is becoming crucial to make oneself distinct: “distinct or

⁸¹ Wolfgang Fritz Haug (1983/1975–1982) uses the concept of the use-value proposition to describe how a commodity is marketed by making a promise of a particular use value.

extinct”, in the words of the self-appointed branding guru we encountered in the introductory chapter (Peters 2004). If everyone is full of undefined potential and capacity, how can we differentiate and evaluate this seemingly limitless potential? And if the actualisation of that potential is not an option, drawing distinctions becomes difficult, even though it appears to be necessary for competition to take place.

I suggest that distinctions are drawn by individualising and personalising potential. Potential remains undefined, but it is attached to an individual who has become one precisely through the processes of distinction. Yet, potential as an ideal of human development can be used to produce individuality, as was seen in chapters four and five. Attaching potential to individual selves thus helps to bring individuality into being *and* makes it possible for the individual to distinguish themselves and to compete in terms of undefined potential. Attributing value to potential therefore concerns a specific kind of production of value which is essentially tied to selfhood and individuality, and in which producing value becomes inseparable from practices of self-reflection and the transformation of the self.

To understand what happens in such processes of value production, it is helpful to consider them as instances of the commodification of the self (on commodification, see Marx 1976/1867). This means that the self is defined in a relation of exchange and is thus transformed into commodity. As argued above, when a person sells their labour power, that labour power is a commodity which gains value in exchange. Once it becomes impossible to distinguish the self from the labour power that this self is selling, the result is that the process of commodification extends to the self as well. Promoting the self is thus inevitably intertwined with the commodification of the self as soon as value comes to play a part in the processes of promotion. Adding value to the self in the labour market therefore contains a notion of the self as a commodity. This does not mean that coaching, for instance, can be reduced to the processes of commodification, any more than it can be reduced to processes of self-promotion, but rather that these processes are tightly interwoven with each other and with processes concerning the ideals of self-development and a sense of agency, as has been argued throughout this research.

So how is potential then individualised, or to put it differently, how does an individual produce potential or articulate the promise of certain kind of capability that has

value in the labour market? How does one become, or make oneself into, a commodity? In the context of work-related coaching, it seems that one way for a person to produce potential is to tell narratives in which the self becomes an individual characterised by potential. I will examine these narratives shortly, but I would like to start by looking at how narratives connect temporality and individuality. This will require some theoretical discussion, in which I will again follow Paul Ricoeur's (1980; 1991; see also Fraser 1999) notions concerning narrative.

In chapter four, I described narratives of personal transformation by employing Ricoeur's theory of narrative repetition. This theory is useful again here, particularly because Ricoeur (1980) places a great deal of importance on temporality. According to him, there is a reciprocal relationship between narrativity and temporality, and because narrative is a vehicle for constructing identity, there is also a crucial connection between temporality and the self (Ricoeur 1980, 169). In relation to time, Ricoeur (1980, 171) notes that both the theory of history and the theory of fictional narratives seem to take it for granted that whenever there is time, it is always laid out chronologically, defined by a succession of instants. In this conception of time, past, present and future follow each other separately as time moves onwards. The approach that Ricoeur advocates challenges the conception of time as a purely linear sequence of instants, and in doing so it comes close to the Bourdieuan view of time that was described above. Similarly to Adkins, Ricoeur (1980, 180) considers time in terms of temporal complexity, in which time is not simply something in which one is, but is also something that can be stretched and recollected.

Constructing selfhood and individuality through narrative involves a particular form of temporality that Ricoeur refers to as narrative repetition. This means that the conclusion of a narrative is actually the point from which the series of events constructing the story gains meaning and sense. As one looks backwards from the conclusion, it must be clear that this kind of ending required these particular events. If the narrative functions as a vehicle for achieving individuality, then the protagonist in the end must possess a story which he or she can consider constitutive of his or her personal identity or individuality. Thanks to narrative repetition, this individuality, which is the outcome of the narrative, is also already existent at the beginning of the story. (Ricoeur 1980, 180).

The end is already existent in the beginning, and the beginning is present in the end. In chapter four, I considered personal transformation as a narrative of empowerment, and concluded that the promotional self that is the outcome of the empowerment is always already there in the beginning, because it is from the outcome of the narrative that the beginning gains its meaning. This inherent form of recollective temporality manifests throughout the research material as discursive patterns in which transformation means becoming something else, but also becoming something that one already is.

Ricoeur's conception of how identity is constituted through memory and repetition is relevant here:

By reading the end in the beginning and the beginning in the end, we learn also to read time itself backward, as the recapitulating of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences. In this way, a plot establishes human action not only within time, [...] but within memory. Memory, accordingly, *repeats* the course of events according to an order that is the counterpart of time as "stretching-along" between a beginning and an end.
(Ricoeur 1980, 180, italics in the original)

Many of the interviewees told narratives which concerned their own past, and in previous chapters I considered these narratives as stories about how to become a coach, or about the meaning of gender in one's life, among other things. Next I will return to some extracts that I have already presented, in order to consider how they might be understood from the perspective of producing potential.

To understand the importance of narratives in relation to self-promotion and producing value, it is useful to note that telling personal narratives has specific value in practices of coaching that focus on personal branding. Constructing a personal brand means precisely that one ought to be able to tell particular narratives about oneself:

About branding, they ask whether you can manage brands if it is an image that is created in other people's minds, well yes you can, it is about what you tell about yourself and when you tell it so many times, then gradually the image will merge with what you are as a brand. And now the question is about what kind of things you want to communicate about yourself. Because if I want – I'm for example very systematic, and then again I'm hard in situations in which persons don't act

fairly. But then again I want to express that I am an easy person to approach and an easy person in general and not at all straight-laced, on the other hand.
(H10)

Self-promotion can be done by communicating certain personal characteristics in the form of stories. According to the interviewee quoted above, these narratives should have an inner logic which resembles the narrative temporality described by Ricoeur, namely that one should be able to make sense of the story when looking backwards from the conclusion:

My own work has been, very much, such that I've only drifted somewhere, and the same is – well, now as it is told afterwards, I thought if you wanted I could show you this case about how your career, when you tell it as a story, it might yet look very consistent. And that's what coaching is maybe partly about, that a person tells a story about themselves, about certain things they want to emphasise.
(H10)

The way in which personal narratives are constructed is such that events which make little sense to the self as they occur are given sense in the telling so that they appear congruent with the conclusion of the narrative – that is, congruent with the self the protagonist possesses. This extract also demonstrates how the practices of storytelling concern both the coaches and the narratives they tell in the interviews, as well as the practices that are promoted for the clients. In this way, then, narratives as they are used in coaching are at least partly a conscious construction of a certain kind of self, a construction which operates by giving past events meaning from the perspective of the present. Time is “stretched” between the present and the past, and memory is used to bring a particular kind of self into being.

The practices of narrating a particular kind of self are, I argue, practices through which certain promises are articulated in order to produce a potent self. This is explicitly stated in self-help personal branding books:

Your Personal Brand tells prospects what they can expect when they deal with you, which is why it's so powerful. It's an implied covenant between a service provider and a client; it's a promise that makes the client believe, “When I buy this, I will be getting that.” You see it all the time in consumer products from cars

to computers. People buy because a brand makes them feel a certain way; their choices are rarely rational. [---] If your brand is sending out the right message, telling prospects they will absolutely get what they're looking for when they work with you, they'll beat down your door and burn up your phone lines.
(Montoya 2002, 13)

In a less explicit way, the same message can be found in some of the interviews as well:

[About workshops] so far there hasn't been, for example, straightforward job descriptions or occupations or that kind of discussion, but more like these kinds of crosscutting things, what they say about working life, that there's activity and there's – in one group we talked about these organisational citizenship skills, that you should be able to tell and give feedback about yourself in a development discussion, and one perspective was that you should be able to communicate this skill or should be able to say what kind of persona I am, what do I want. These kinds of personal thing you should be able to communicate, and what might make it easier was if you were more aware of you own desires. But not – they're like a bit like, how would you call them, these kind of meta-skill things [...], communication skills, we have talked about a lot actually, they have somehow come through. And actually communicating is linked to this self-image or this, what I want to express.

(H1)

Potential in this context is thus defined in connection to the imperative to add value to the self through certain kinds of narrative.⁸² In these narratives, temporality functions as a way to produce a notion of individual potential. As described in previous chapters, narratives that produce potential draw on articulations concerning individuality and personal growth. This means that “maximising potential” translates into becoming a better person, which is an effective motivation for any individual to participate in the production of potential (also du Gay 1996, 60).

Making a value proposition concerning a potent self, promoting the self and understanding the self as a product or a brand to be sold – these are prime examples of the commodification of the self that result from a process in which individuality is

⁸² For clarity, it might be useful to note again that I am not claiming that work-related coaching, in every case, is straightforwardly about adding value and consciously turning oneself into a “promise that makes the client believe”. Rather, I am examining how the promotional self is framed, and it is in relation to such frames that individual persons (or selves) – whether coaches or clients – occupy individual positions that are more or less mobile and reflexive. Instead of claiming that this is all there is to coaching, then, I want to show how the notion of potential functions in a context where frames such as “adding value to the self” are more or less present, recognisable and influential.

attached to labour power to make it more valuable, as described above. Jussi Ojajärvi (2006, 126) describes the process of commodification as a discursive and institutional practice in which capital articulates and defines (or frames) reality. It might be said that when a self is articulated in terms of value propositions and branding, it is actually capital that is articulating the self. In other words, in such articulations, the experiences that different people have when they seek safe or profitable positions in the labour market are made understandable according to the perspective of capital. That these articulations are intelligible, and that they seem rather ordinary, is telling of the extent to which commodification structures the contemporary social world (Ojajärvi 2006, 128).

In the previous chapter I described how the current labour market creates fears of worthlessness and redundancy. These feelings are without doubt fortified by the erosion of the value of accumulated experience that Sennett (2006) among others describes. If achieved skills and competences are no longer valued, this also has consequences for the individual's perceptions of his or her worth and on expectations of future possibilities. The promise of personal development inherent in the production of potential thus offers a possibility to cope with the pressures that valuing potential places on individual workers. However, there is of course also another side to this process, which is that as potential becomes tied to personal development, failures in terms of potential are also experienced in a more personal way. Making distinctions then requires that comparisons be made between people and those comparisons become deeply personal (see Sennett 2006, 130).

To look a little more closely at how narratives can be used to add value to the self, I will now return to some interviewees' accounts of gender. These narratives are already familiar from the previous chapters; and they are taken up again here because the perspective of value production might enable new ways of thinking about gender in connection to self-promotion.

The final years, in the corporate hell, I sat in an executive group in which I was the only woman and the only one with background in economics, all the others being men and graduate engineers. At that time I really felt genuine pain that there had been no women who could have prepared the way, I saw then that I had to do a hell of a lot more work to be heard. Really I had to curse loudly and say that hey I've got a brain too and please be kind and listen for a while. The feminine resort then would've been to walk to the high-command office and say the boys won't

listen to me but I decided that to fight for my space there. And then in the end when I left the place one of these men in the group called me and said he's sorry he didn't defend me even though he had seen me floundering like crazy in the executive group, and he saw what the treatment was like when it came to women – if I were a man I would have had different power there. But I did contribute to the things that I wanted to, but I really had to work.

(H10)

Being a young woman manager I quite strongly have the idea that you don't need men for every task really, a woman can do many things too, and maybe in the beginning I had to be very convincing, I started my company when I was 26 so I had to dress quite firmly in that jacket suit and wear my hair in a bun and wear glasses that made me look older, in order to be in some way more acceptable when talking to men in their 50s, but now when we are here and I've got a fairly big company and so on and I don't have to think about that any more. Though when you're over 30 you are not a young woman any more in that sense [...] and everyone who comes to work with us, in some way they have to accept that the boss is a woman and often also younger than the people who work with us. But it has also maybe partially been a marketing asset that we've had very determined women whose main principle has been that they want to work in a company where there is a young female manager in charge, because often maybe some sets of values can be a bit different.

(H9)

When analysing these interviewees' accounts in relation to gender I emphasised that the hierarchical relations of gender and the consequences of gendered structures in society are individualised in personal narratives of growth and empowerment that relate to the post-feminist sensibility described by Angela McRobbie (2009) and Rosalind Gill (2007a; 2007b). For example, having a hard time in an all-male environment, being looked down upon because of being a woman, not being respected or given credit because of being a woman, are all carefully narrated in the interviews so that the accounts become stories about individual capacities, strength and stamina. The plot which makes these events into a story is such that there is a temporal movement from experiences of discrimination to personal empowerment.

Reflecting on coaching as work, I also suggested that in these narratives, *coping* with inequality becomes part of one's *vocational competence*. The purpose of telling these stories about gender is to signify that the person in question is capable of coping in difficult situations on her own. To extend this argument in relation to potential, I suggest

that in these narratives the accounts of gendered inequality actually function as a vehicle for an individual (a woman) to prove her potential. Telling stories of hardship becomes a way to provide evidence of one's inner capacities, and through these stories it becomes possible to articulate the promises of capacity that are given value in the labour market. Gender is thus employed and given significance in the context of producing potential and adding value to the self.⁸³

In the narrative constructions quoted above, gender is present as simultaneously the cause of hardship (social relation) and the source of strength (feminist empowerment), and it is the account of empowerment which dominates the narrative – the hardship is never presented as overwhelming, it is always overcome. As these stories are told, the account of empowerment is readily transformed into a testimony concerning the protagonist, that is, the self who is telling the story. This is because, as described above, these are first and foremost narratives concerning the individual self: overcoming hardship makes the self into what it always was; the self rises to the occasion and becomes strong in the face of trouble.

Telling narratives such as those presented above has significance for a self that seeks to add value to itself. Overcoming hardship proves that the self has in the past been able to use its inner resources, and this means that the self in question has potential in terms of capacities and the ability to use them. Telling a story about one's past experiences is thus a good way to articulate a promise concerning one's abilities, and if it is precisely these promises that are given value, then the proliferation of such stories is not very surprising. It must be taken into account, of course, that these stories emerged in the interviews in connection with an assumed shared context (of feminism) with the interviewer. This shared context probably invited the women to reflect on questions of equality and of being a woman. Maybe in another situation these narratives would have emerged in a different form. For example, one can imagine a job interview in which individual potential would have been articulated in a different manner. However, the

⁸³ Lisa Adkins (2000) refers to similar processes, stating that gender may now be performed and mobilised in different ways in order to succeed at work. However, Adkins also suggests that such processes may well involve a retraditionalisation of gender (for example, a revival of traditional gendered family forms), and should thus not simply be celebrated as an instance of increasing female agency.

narratives quoted above are very recognisable, not only in my research material but as the standard material of any magazine or advice book aimed at working women. As such, they also have significance beyond the particular interview situation.

In the extracts quoted above, there are also clear indications of (female) gender as an asset. From my perspective, however, it is not reasonable to straightforwardly claim that gender has become an asset for women. It is certainly not an asset to experience inequality, especially if that inequality can only be articulated in a personal mode. This means that if one is put down, it is first and foremost a question of the self “letting itself be put down”.

To understand the significance of gender here, I suggest that it is necessary to consider the post-feminist articulations which centre on individual empowerment and inner strength, and also to note that these articulations are congruent with a wider neoliberal tendency that relies on particular constructions of “autonomous individuality”. The combination of post-feminist sensibility with neoliberalism, self-promotion and commodification strengthens articulations which posit strong women as ideals. And it is also this intertwining of different processes which allows these statements concerning strong women to be used in a particular context where they gain significance from the nodal point of potential and from all the strings attached to it, so to speak. This means that in processes of promotion, gendered experiences can be *used* as an asset even if they were originally harmful and tough – but it is highly questionable how reliable and sustainable such assets are.

One might also ask why it is that women in particular feel the need to tell these kinds of stories, to constantly enforce the image of themselves as strong and capable. One reason of course, if one looks at my research material, is that for the men gender mainly carried no significance, and they did not have similar experiences of discrimination or oppression to relate.⁸⁴ However, there were not really any stories describing for instance a

⁸⁴ In the interviews gender was considered most often in connection with inequality, as has become clear from the extracts, though inequality was not necessarily inscribed in the formulation of the interview questions (“do you think that gender has any significance?”). Questions of gender also seemed to be attached to women in general, and men were not really mentioned in connection with those questions. Päivi Korvajärvi (1996) has noted how asking questions about gender in the context of working life brings out notions concerning women, and only on a general level. Discussing men in connection to gender is thus rather rare in research interviews. This applies to the coaches’ interviews as well. However, the narratives

“rise from rags to riches” either, although such stories might have been expected from the men.⁸⁵ Rather, it seemed that the personal turning point the interviewees described was not that of becoming wealthy, but that of achieving “everything” and then discovering that one had not been true to one’s “real self”. So why was it questions of gender that triggered narratives of surviving and being tough? One might look for answers in an interview extract in which one of the men actually told a story of hardship and of dealing with failure, and did so using a woman as the protagonist. This extract was also discussed in chapter four:

Q.: [D]o you have any thoughts, what it means that people are men or women, can it be used in advantage in building a reputation or a brand or is it totally irrelevant?

A: What a difficult question, I’ve never even thought of this. Just yesterday when I – I was glad when I got home and I read my emails there was a message from this personnel manager, she had been for a job interview, this is a person that does job interviews for living, and now she was in an interview herself and she said that she got bronze, that out of four who had been invited, there were over 100 applicants I think and four were invited – that it was a victory to get there, and then she got bronze in that game. So I could only congratulate her and tell her that silver has been lost but the bronze has been won. And she is a woman. And the reasons why she wasn’t in the battle for the gold medal had nothing to do with her gender. [...] I can’t answer your question about – at the moment it is in fashion to recruit a woman.

(H5, male)

Even if the incident has “nothing to do with her gender”, it is still remarkable that the man has chosen a woman as an example of events that have no significance whatsoever in relation to gender. Of course, he has a point to prove, as was noted in chapter four, but from the perspective of potential I suggest that Angela McRobbie’s (2007b) notion of (young⁸⁶) women becoming subjects of capacity might be accurate here. McRobbie suggests that in contemporary Western culture, young women are endowed with

that the women coaches told were rather individual which means that they broke the habit of talking about gender only on a general level.

⁸⁵ The rise from rags to riches is the essential narrative of the “man who makes his own destiny”, the man who very forcefully encompasses the ideals of individualism – or in whom these ideals are encompassed (see Kimmel 1996).

⁸⁶ McRobbie emphasises the figure of the girl, which is not very relevant to my research material. I talk about women, not girls, because it seems that it is not only young women but also women in their 30s, 40s and 50s who are invited to become “strong”.

economic capacity and invited to recognise themselves as subjects of social change. This is manifest, for example, in the way that the dynamics of regulation and control of women are now less about what young women ought not to do, and more about what they can do. McRobbie's stance on this process is critical, and she asks what is at stake in endowing the new female subject with capacity. (McRobbie 2007b, 721–722).

From the perspective of this research, becoming a subject of capacity clearly underpins the discursive pattern which invites women to take subject position as, or to become, explicitly gendered, potent and capable selves, that is “strong women”. As for what is at stake here, one might say that for one thing, by taking up this subject position, one becomes fixed in the sense that one is gendered not only as a woman, but as a certain type of woman. Framing the promotional self in this case means complying with and staying inside a rather closed gender category without much leeway to show weakness or even simply to defy the label “woman”.

To further consider the question of what is at stake, it is significant that the strength of this invitation (or interpellation) to become a strong woman lies at least partly in the pressures and benefits to be had in the labour market for the potent self. And if one looks again at a statement given by another man in the interviews, it is clear that there are also sanctions available for those women who fail to articulate such promises:

Q: Do you ever have clients whose problems are related to gender inequality in the workplace?

A: [...] When we talk about people in leading positions, especially women, there is something that I think – this is only my guess, but that these women have decided that whatever happens they are there to cope and they will not moan that they are being treated unequally.

(H4, male)

Might it be, then, that for women, a potent self is available if it is articulated in terms of post-feminist emancipation and strength, but quickly lost if one does not fit into the position of this lonely yet relentless feminine fighter? These extracts from the men's interviews also reveal why the narratives the women tell might take the form they do – even if these are not narratives of capability to be told on every occasion, they are the

“backbone” which allows the women to represent themselves as capable and to become the subjects of capacity that McRobbie (2007b) describes.

To return to the notion of commodification, one might also ask whether the figure of the strong woman can be considered a commodified form of femininity. Commodified femininity has usually been analysed in terms of women’s bodies and sexuality (e.g. Ojajarvi 2006, 216–220; Riordan 2001, 290). However, in the context of coaching, what one is thought to be selling is not so much the embodied subject as the ideal figure, the potent self. If becoming a potent self that can be successfully sold is articulated as becoming a strong woman, the figure of the strong woman can be understood as a form of desirable femininity articulated as indistinguishable from the self, in other words as a gendered commodification of that self. This does not mean that becoming a strong woman is not an individually motivated, subjectively experienced process. Commodification is a process in which individually experienced motivations are intertwined with a capitalist logic that aims to increase value production. What I have been describing in this chapter is how and why this kind of intertwining might take place.

When articulated through the nodal point of potential, the demand for flexibility comes to mean that ways of talking about gendered inequality are seriously restricted. The examples that I have given here are fairly isolated, but I think they also allude to the larger processes in which the notion of potential, tangled with the logic of value production, has consequences for the understanding of social hierarchies, conflicts and antagonisms, as well as for the understanding of the individual self. In the case of gender, these consequences mean that value production is tightly bound to a post-feminist sensibility that itself individualises social conflicts. The intertwining of post-feminist sensibility and value production thus increases the compulsory tendencies of individualisation by enforcing both the rewards for fitting into and the sanctions for deviance from the individualist ideal, which in case of gender is the strong woman. In addition, the intertwining of post-feminist sensibility and value production intensifies processes of commodification.

6.5. Conclusions

In this chapter I have been concerned with how processes of value production participate in the framing of self-promotion and the framing of the promotional self. I approached this problematic by focusing on the notion of potential, and noted a connection between potential as a valuable commodity in the labour market and potential as the goal of self-development in coaching. For the promotional self that strives to add value to itself, “maximising” potential is a means to become valuable in the context of a labour market that values flexibility and adaptability more than specific skills. Maximising potential in coaching thus means becoming a potent self that articulates promises of flexibility and capability in order to become desirable and valued in the labour market.

I also noted that ascribing value to potential is difficult unless there are ways of distinguishing between different kinds of potential, and I suggested that differentiations are made by attaching individuality to potential. This means that potentiality is achieved through narratives in which the individual subject becomes a subject of capacity. I also noted that the potent self available for women is framed through articulations of post-feminist individual empowerment and strength, and that these articulations have consequences for the struggle against inequality.

To conclude, potential can be conceived both as an individual possession and as a form of labour power, and the frames of self-promotion bring these notions together. Through articulations concerning potential, the production of value becomes inseparable from practices of self-development – and also inseparable from the production of individuality. This can be considered as an instance of the subjectification of work in the sense that value is produced through subjectivities and also in the sense that subjectivities are brought into being through value production. Or, to use another concept, this can be described as an instance of the commodification of the self, of the extension of the sphere of value production to the production of selfhood and individuality.

7. Becoming valuable selves

The problem lies in combating the ways in which the actuality of systemically maintained inequalities closes off the potentiality for change both at the level of material conditions and in terms of the individual's experiences of hope.
(Lois McNay 2003, 147)

This concluding chapter comprises two parts. In the first part, entitled “Concluding remarks”, I pull together the various threads that I have traced throughout the research and present my final interpretations of the processes of self-promotion and the intertwining between self-promotion, capitalism and gender. I also reflect on the insights that my research has provided in terms of ideology critique and feminist research, and present some suggestions for developing practices of coaching. The second part is entitled “Future directions”, and it concerns the issues that have been raised in this research but require further attention and development. Before outlining my conclusions, however, I want to clarify where I as a researcher stand in relation to the conclusions I am about to make.

Fredric Jameson (1991, 5), pondering historical periodisation, notes that there is an ironic logic to research which aims to describe systems or totalising dynamics. According to Jameson, the more powerful the system or the logic is, the more powerless the reader comes to feel. “Insofar as the theorist wins, therefore, by constructing an increasingly closed and terrifying machine, to that very degree he loses, since the critical capacity of his work is thereby paralysed, and the impulses of negation and revolt, not to speak of those of social transformation, are increasingly perceived as vain and trivial in the face of the model itself” (Jameson 1991, 5–6). Constructing a perfect inner logic to research might be a process which ultimately shuts down possibilities for change.

For this and other reasons, I have found it important to remain sensitive to aspects which do not “fit” the research design, or which do not seem to find their place in the big picture the researcher (me) is compiling. This has not always been easy, first because there is simply too much to take into account, and second because it always takes extra courage to admit that one’s carefully designed research has blind spots and other deficiencies. However, I have tried to present my research in a way that will allow the reader to see that there is always more: there are other perspectives, other agents, other meanings given to the same practices. The processes of self-promotion and the practices of work-related coaching are by no means emptied out by this research. As described at the beginning of the thesis, my emphasis is on accounting for contradictions, gaps and silences. The purpose has been to use this approach to show the complexity of the phenomena examined, even when my research does not fully attend to that complexity.

All this said, I also think that an exhaustive effort to account for everything and every perspective would be unwise in terms of knowledge production. As Susan Bordo (1990, 142) writes, this might only lead to a fantasy of escape from the very locatedness that I have emphasised as my epistemological commitment. Instead of adopting endlessly shifting vantage points, I prefer to make interpretations from the locations I own, even when I am aware that from a different location things might look – well, different. My making interpretations, taking a stance so to speak, will allow others to take different stances, and will create space for dialogue. The purpose of presenting sometimes rather strong interpretations is not to shut down other interpretations, but on the contrary to invite others to look at similar practices or phenomena from different perspectives, so that the knowledge produced might be evaluated and rethought. It is from this premise that I will now move on to my conclusions.

7.1. Concluding remarks

I began the analytical chapters by looking at coaching as a form of work, observing that coaching as an individual vocation encourages and also demands self-promotional

practices such as personal branding. I noted how the concept of individual vocation was connected to the subjectification of work, and observed that in the field of coaching, accounts of individuality, reflexivity and autonomy are rather prominent. I began to pay attention to accounts of gender as well, and found that they resonate with what has been called a post-feminist tendency.

I continued my analysis with an emphasis on conceptual nodal points – first that of change, later those of individuality and potential. These conceptual nodal points, which I chose because they were thematically central to the research material, functioned like knots: opening or unwinding them allowed me to open up and expand on the questions that I was interested in. The slight shift of perspective from coaching as work towards conceptual nodal points confirmed my observations regarding the convergence between the subjectification of work, post-feminism, the emphasis on individuality and autonomy, and processes of promotion. Following this observation, I began to find answers to my first question – how self-promotion is framed in coaching – gathering that it is in the intertwining of different but overlapping processes that self-promotion becomes meaningful and intelligible. To examine this intertwining, I concentrated on tracing articulations employed and produced in the field of coaching, drawing parallels and connections with other empirical sites as well as between and across different texts.

Examining the diverse field of coaching, I found resonances in many different directions. The most prominent and pervasive discursive resonances were with contemporary processes of *individualisation*, *the subjectification of work* and *commodification*, as well as to with *post-feminist tendencies*. Mapping the terrain of self-promotion, examining how self-promotion is framed, was thus transformed into an attempt to tentatively draw or map the interconnections between and extent of these processes in the field of coaching.

Of the above-mentioned processes, individualisation emerged as the most pervasive and encompassing in terms of self-promotion. Through different but mutually dependent and supportive articulations, processes of individualisation travel *beneath* and *through* other processes, including self-promotion, making these other processes intelligible and at the same time gaining strength from convergent articulations. The most prominent sign of the significance of individualisation is that other processes constantly rely on the ideal

figure of the autonomous individual. One might say that the other processes – including self-promotion – are silent or voiceless, and it is through the process of individualisation that they are articulated and voiced in everyday life.⁸⁷

Realising the importance of individualisation was an important turning point in the research process, for it provided a perspective from which the tangled and fuzzy aspects of self-promotion, and their interrelations, finally started to make sense to me. This gave the research process a stronger sense of purpose and orientation. In this sense, individualisation has functioned in this research as a key in methodological sense too, providing an approach which helped me redefine and focus my research objectives in a meaningful way.

Examining the processes of individualisation, then, became a central thread in my research. Individualisation, as I came to think of it, is not a process of subjects becoming increasingly free and autonomous, nor a process in which structural constraints are eroded (e.g. Beck 2008/1986). Rather, it is a process in which subjects are *articulated* as increasingly free and autonomous while they remain as entangled as before in different social relations and conflicts, and in which individuality becomes an imperative and an ideal rather than an existing condition. Individualisation in connection to self-promotion means, for instance, that the precariousness and insecurity caused by the social relations of capitalism are articulated as an individual problem which demands that the individual concentrate on “becoming a better self”. Through individualisation, the problem of unemployment is converted into a question of attitude, and the changes that happen in the social are converted into an imperative to transform the self.

Processes of individualisation, then, are processes in which social relations and antagonisms, conflicts and other contradictions, as well as the inequalities inherent to them, are articulated *as* individual – they become understood as if they were within the individual self, problems of the free and autonomous individual. Individualisation as it emerges in work-related coaching is thus a process of displacement and silencing, rather than of becoming free. In addition, it is a process that reifies existing social relations.

⁸⁷ I am indebted to Lauri Lahikainen for my understanding of individualisation (see Lahikainen & Mäkinen 2012), and for suggesting the idea of other processes as silent or voiceless.

Also, to be explicit, the processes that I named above – individualisation, commodification, the subjectification of work, self-promotion and post-feminism – are ideological processes. This is most visible in the case of individualisation, which, as already stated, effectively prevents social conflicts from being recognised or voiced. When articulated through the process of individualisation, other processes also participate in discursive struggles that produce “reality” and have material effects. Interrogating and disarticulating such processes is thus an intervention, an attempt to affect the discursive struggle by paying attention to the inherent contradictions, slips and cracks in such articulations and processes. This is the perspective from which I started first to understand and second to disarticulate the processes of self-promotion. Disarticulating processes of promotion came primarily to mean displacing the individual self as the sole reference point and “bringing back” capitalism and relations of gender as the context within which to understand self-promotion. I could also have concentrated on other social conflicts or relations, but I chose to “bring back” relations of capital and gender because those are relations that permeate the whole of society in a rather powerful way, and because I think their mutual relation still needs further attention.

Mapping the processes through which self-promotion becomes intelligible now also allows me to rephrase my understanding of self-promotion in relation to those processes. I suggest that self-promotion is a reflexive, self-conscious stance towards a process of commodification which increasingly concerns the self, articulated through the figure of the autonomous individual. Let me now clarify this claim.

In this research, I have considered capitalism and in particular value production as a significant context for understanding self-promotion. For this reason, I have examined how value is added to the self through the notion of potential, through individualised narratives. In relation to this, I have also discussed the processes of commodification inherent to capitalism as a system. Commodification, as already described, refers to capitalism’s tendency to continually extend the logic of commodities to new spheres of life so that, to put it simply, life in its various forms becomes increasingly subject to the logic of capital. It is a process of expanding the scope of value production. Commodification thus explains *why* questions concerning value production are relevant when asking “What kind of human beings have we become?” – as the logic of value

production permeates new life spheres, it also becomes a significant factor in the shaping of subjects (see Ojajärvi 2006, 28–30).

It is in connection to commodification that the process of the subjectification of work becomes particularly relevant and powerful. The subjectification of work is the term that I have used to indicate how new forms of work make it increasingly difficult to distinguish between labour power and the self. When these two processes – commodification and the subjectification of work – converge, the logic of value production is intensively extended to the self, which means that the self becomes defined and understood as a commodity. This does not mean that a self will only be a commodity, or that every self will inescapably be a commodity. Rather, this is a process which simply becomes a part of everyday life, structuring to differing extents our experiences and subjective accounts as well as the frames within which we become human beings.

It is through individualisation that other processes are given sense, made intelligible, and this applies to commodification as well. The intertwining of the above-mentioned processes with that of individualisation produces a situation where a subject who is placed in relations that increasingly commodify the self also increasingly strives to become the autonomous agent of individualism. As commodification is filtered through individuality, the value of a commodity-self has to be distinctively individual, with a coherent personal history and personal capacities and potentialities. To become autonomous and valued individuals, subjects have to try to appropriate the commodified self, to place the process of commodification under control – to take it into their own hands, according to a common expression in coaching – so that it can be used to add value to the self and foster their individuality. Self-promotion is thus the consolidation of an already commodified self. It is an attempt to become the agent of one's own life – or at least to achieve a sense of agency – while heavily involved in relations of exchange which produce experiences of worthlessness, marginalisation, dispensability, fear and frustration. To rephrase: self-promotion means trying to become a valuable self (in terms of both economic value and personal worth, which become somewhat inseparable) under conditions where the value of the self is increasingly defined in terms of exchange value, and achieving even that is increasingly precarious. *These are the frames in which self-promotion comes to make sense and in which promotional selves are brought into being.*

In the introductory chapter, I noted that Andrew Wernick (1991), speaking about promotional culture, distinguishes between economic production and cultural production. I suggested that contrary to Wernick's presumption, these are not divided spheres. The account I have given above illustrates why and how the economic and the cultural are intertwined in contemporary society, and why it is relevant, if we wish to understand capitalism, not to close off cultural analysis (and vice versa). It is clear that individualisation is a "cultural" process that nevertheless has relevance to processes of value production, and it is in the intertwining of both cultural and economic processes that self-promotion becomes meaningful.

In the introduction I also hypothesised that processes of self-promotion are an example of a mechanics that very concretely *rearticulates* the intertwining of culture and economy and locates this rearticulation within the subject. I also suggested that promotion might be considered the mode that defines the processes of commodification in the new economy. Now I want to reconsider these claims and suggest that in the processes of promotion, culture and economy really are intertwined, and this intertwining is rearticulated within the subject *through the figure of the autonomous individual*. I also suggest that as far as the commodification of the self is concerned, promotion is the mode through which that commodification *is lived and experienced by individuals*.

To describe my understanding of the processes of self-promotion, I have employed the concept of frame. Although I have not used this concept very much in the analytical chapters, it has nevertheless been useful and appropriate as it has directed my overall approach to self-promotion. The concept of frame has allowed me to examine self-promotion without constructing what Jameson (1991) refers to as "a closed and a terrifying machine" – it has allowed me to think of self-promotion not as something that determines subjectivity, but as something that simultaneously frames and makes possible overflows and unexpected turns of events, so to speak. Keeping in mind the concept of frame, then, helps us to understand that the processes that I describe are in motion, not fixed or immutable, and that the subjects situated within certain frames or brought into being through a particular framing are always more than those frames. This is particularly important in relation to my second research question about how the self is framed in promotional processes. Using the concept of frame to examine how the self is brought

into being, I have sought to emphasise that a particular framing does not imply that the subject will inevitably end up with a particular self. Rather, frames are what makes our selves intelligible to us; they define and in this way “bring into being”, but they do not completely contain us, and no one subject can be reduced to a particular framing.

I suggest that it is through the process of individualisation that the self is framed in self-promotion, and for this reason the framing of the promotional self is fraught with contradictions. The self is posited between the compulsion to become an individual, to find one’s core autonomous self, to become a free agent, and the conditions which make achieving individuality, autonomy, agency and coherence difficult. One reason for this hardness is the logic of value production, which is extended to the self through the process of commodification as described above. The self is thus an already commodified self, trying to become the autonomous agent of individualism. The contradictions between becoming an autonomous and individual agent and becoming a commodified self derive from the antagonisms inherent in contemporary social relations. The process of individualisation articulates these contradictions as individual and displaces them to *within* the self. As a consequence, the self of self-promotion emerges as a seemingly coherent, autonomous self acting freely in the world, with a fractured and fragile “other” hiding just beneath the courageous facade.

This double bind of the self also prompts me to comment on self-promotion as an emancipatory practice. As the various interviews and other texts have illustrated, in the field of coaching self-promotion is considered individually empowering and worthwhile. I suggest this is because practices of self-promotion, as well as other practices of coaching (they are actually somewhat inseparable), respond to anxieties produced by social relations – most prominently capitalism – and displaced to within the individual through the process of individualisation. Coaching thus provides self-promotion as an answer to, for example, the imperative to become an autonomous individual, the fear of redundancy and worthlessness, and the threat of losing coherent selfhood or simply being lonely; but both the problems and the answers are articulated as thoroughly individual. For this reason, even though it clearly helps individuals to cope with their anxieties and troubles, coaching simultaneously also participates in the process that produces and individualises those troubles.

I noted that bringing into being an autonomous individual inevitably also brings into being the weak and failed flipside of that individual, and that the process of fostering individuality thus also helps to place that individuality under threat. I also noted that becoming a promotional self in coaching is framed as striving to overcome the “other” within oneself. This means that reflexivity in self-promotion comes to mean awareness of not being good enough, awareness of the deficient other within oneself. Self-promotion in coaching, then, is a practice that both heals and fractures the self. Experiences of being able to heal were significant for the coaches I interviewed, but experiences of fracturing of the self were a continuous subtext throughout the texts that formed my research material.

To take further the discussion of the frames of self-promotion, I argue that these frames have implications concerning the possibilities of social change. To be precise, within these frames the horizon of social change disappears from view. This became evident when I examined more closely the articulations concerning gender. In these articulations, confronting, for instance, a woman’s subjection to degrading treatment on the basis of her gender turned into something that only made her stronger and thus functioned as proof of her potential and capacities. Simultaneously, the accepted response to gender inequality was defined as “coping”. The implication of these articulations is that voicing experiences of discrimination and making interventions – and relying on other people when doing so – is a sign of weakness. If one intervenes to confront gender inequality, this is viewed as “not having what it takes” to succeed. The articulations of gender in processes of promotion thus combine weakness with interventions against injustice. Inevitably, these articulations make it hard to voice experiences of injustice in any form other than an individual survival story, and this in turn makes it hard to effect any social change in relation to gender inequality or injustice.

As processes of commodification intertwine with post-feminist and individualist tendencies, gender is articulated either as an asset (for women) or as an attribute of the self (a particular kind of strength) through individualised narratives which build on gendered notions of strength. This means that in processes of promotion, experiences of injustice can be rearticulated as proof of competence or potential, and can thus be given

value in the labour market, which tends to restrict the possibilities for challenging existing hierarchies or social relations.

My observations concerning individualised accounts of gendered experiences are congruent with other research on post-feminism and contemporary gender relations (e.g. Cronin 2000; Gill 2008; 2007a; 2007b; McRobbie 2007a; Riordan 2001). I suggest that considering post-feminist tendencies in connection to self-promotion, individualisation and the commodification of the self opens up new perspectives and deepens existing insights on all of these processes. Also, I argue that the implications I observed in relation to gender are not unique: the processes of self-promotion combined with other processes also carry similar implications in relation to other social antagonisms and hierarchies.

Another example of these implications concerns class as an antagonism. Although I have not made it explicit, except at the end of chapter five, this research has continuously examined class. By this I mean that I have paid attention to relations between labour and capital – class relations – and investigated their relevance to the framing of self-promotion. This has been an implicit thread throughout the research. I have considered class as an antagonistic relation, not as difference between individuals, because I want to draw attention to how social antagonisms *become* differences between individuals through individualisation. From the perspective of class as antagonism, the process of individualisation means that the insecurity that derives from what can be called the condition of the proletariat is articulated as an individual problem. The proletariat here does not refer to workers in the sense of those who have jobs or a worker's identity; rather, it refers to the condition that one must be able to sell one's labour power in order to make a living. As Hardt and Negri (2000, 53) state, being within capital and sustaining capital is what defines proletariat as a class. When this condition is articulated as an individual problem, this is a process of silencing class (see Lahikainen & Mäkinen 2012). Within the limits of this research, I have not been able to explicitly attend to the problematic of the individualisation of class apart from in a very brief account. I thus suggest that this problematic invites further attention and theorisation. In order to think through individualisation and capitalism, class as antagonism cannot be left unattended.

In sum, my research has shown that understanding connections between capitalism, gender and processes of self-promotion is highly relevant to our understanding of how the

different processes mentioned above are rearticulated, reproduced and maintained, and how they support each other and make each other stronger. Understanding how capitalism, gender and processes of self-promotion connect also helps us to see the implications of those processes and to disarticulate their implicit assumptions. Consequently, I follow the heritage of Marxist feminists in claiming that if the aim is to reveal the horizon of social change, then exploring and disarticulating capitalism in connection to gender, and gender in connection to capitalism, is not only useful but necessary. Placing processes of self-promotion at the centre of such explorations has been a good starting point.

On critique

At the beginning of this book, I described my approach in terms of ideology critique, stating that my aim was to explore how “reality” is negotiated and contested, focusing on the notion of the (promotional) self. In this research, ideology has not been an entity that can be named (such as “self-promotional ideology”) and examined as such. Rather, my attention has been on discursive struggles which *affect* but also contest what comes to be counted as real and what comes to make sense. Now it is time to explicitly reconsider ideology critique or critique of power relations in light of the conclusions drawn above.

I begin this reconsideration with a question posed by Jussi Ojajärvi (2006, 57⁸⁸) in his examination of capitalism and the production of subjectivity in Finnish literature. Ojajärvi asks, “Can ideology take advantage of the dissolving of a psychological self, and reproduce that dissolving?” He continues: “If this is true, it means that critique of power relations or ideology critique can not be reduced to buzzwords such as ‘de-centering the subject’ – at least this term would have to be used with a sense of proportion. In addition, it means that defending the social preconditions for psychic coherence and wholeness might be a significant critical gesture.” (Ojajärvi 2006, 57).

The promotional self is brought into being within frames that are shaped in ideological processes, which do not completely hold or contain the subject but which

⁸⁸ Referring to Siltala (1999).

nevertheless have great significance, as I have suggested. Ojajärvi's question is not only relevant to these processes but rings true of them. The processes described in this research function precisely by taking advantage and simultaneously producing contradictions and fracturing within the self. As I have continuously emphasised, different insecurities and experiences of fracturing have a crucial place in that they render the subject open to participation in these processes, even though those processes simultaneously produce and fortify such insecurities and experiences.

I further suggest that recognising the bond which ties ideological processes to practices which make the subject "feel better" is crucial in terms of critique. The experience of feeling better – which has in this research been discussed mainly in terms of empowerment – invites critical consideration if it is seen in the light that ideological processes take advantage of insecurities related to the self. This is also a central concern in discussions about agency and social change. Paying attention to accounts of feeling better also means considering the political effect of feelings, and asking, as Sara Ahmed (2010, 50) puts it, "what is appealing in the appeal to happiness and good feeling".

In the context of this research, I found that the concept of *sense of agency*, in particular, provides an opportunity to dissect how experiences of feeling better connect with ideological processes and their implications. Thinking in terms of a sense of agency allows us to see a subject who develops ways of coping and ensuring the coherence of selfhood and sense of ability – ways of feeling better – under conditions which place the coherence of the self and the possibilities for political agency under threat. Fostering an active sense of agency is a means of maintaining a sense of oneself as a capable and coherent subject, and also a way of refusing to be a victim of the above-mentioned conditions. The practices of coaching that I have examined owe their attractiveness precisely to the promise to help clients gain a sense of being a capable and coherent self. Paradoxically, however, this sense of agency is achieved through processes that are articulated first and foremost through the figure of the autonomous and atomised individual, which means that practices of coaching concentrate on the self and emphasise a particular conception of individuality. As I have described in this research, this conception narrows down possibilities to form constructive relationships with other people and possibilities for political agency. In this way, the effect of the ideological

processes is to disarm the subject by taking away the possibilities for the kind of agency that might affect the conditions that threaten the self. The consequence is then, to put it simply, that the subject who wants to refuse the position of a victim is disarmed in the process.

Criticising these kinds of process does not mean that the subject should recognise itself as a victim, or even less that I as a researcher want to position the “self” of self-promotion as a helpless victim or “dupe” of overwhelming ideology. This has not been my purpose. On the contrary, the aim of critique is to reclaim arms, to equip the subject to achieve a sense of not only agency but specifically political agency. Instead of making a victim out of the assumed subject, the aim is to demonstrate why a mere *sense* of agency is not enough, and to suggest alternative forms of feeling better which would both make possible and require not only individual empowerment but also social change.

However, this perspective also includes the recognition that a sense of agency, although not enough, is nevertheless indispensable for social and political change. Paulo Freire (1972/1968, 17), writing on radical pedagogy, expresses the same idea in saying that the radical (the agent of radical politics) is never a subjectivist, but that radicalisation involves subjective commitment and engagement. “Subjectivity and objectivity thus join in a dialectical unity producing knowledge in solidarity with action, and vice versa” (Freire 1972/1968, 17).

This take on ideological processes and their relation to individual experiences also invites methodological attention. In the beginning of my research, I stated that my stance towards the people I interviewed has been one of critical respect (Gill 2007b). Now, in light of the above, I find it increasingly important to both respect the individuals and their accounts and locate those accounts in a wider context (cf. Gill 2007b). Lois McNay (2003) refers to a similar critical stance, when she follows Paul Ricoeur to suggest the perspective of critical hermeneutics. McNay is concerned to develop a “more rounded conception of agency” which, instead of offering a merely negative paradigm of subjectification, will also take into account active processes of self-interpretation and the creative and productive aspects immanent to agency. In terms of individuality and reflexivity, I find very relevant McNay’s concern with individuals’ capacities to respond in unexpected and innovative ways when faced with complexity and difference. One way

of conceptualising the active dimensions of agency, McNay suggests, is through critical hermeneutics, which means that an interpretative analysis of experience must always be resituated within the overarching problematic of power relations (McNay 2003, 147). What I have been aiming for in this research can be understood as one way of doing critical hermeneutics in this sense.

I hope my research has shown that taking seriously individual accounts of experiences of empowerment, for instance, does not have to mean that this appreciation is the end of the analysis. Accounting for individual experiences does not exclude critique, and nor does critique exclude accounting for individual experiences. Rather, giving attention and value to individual experiences can help us to see how and why processes such as individualisation come to affect what makes sense to us. Achieving this perspective, however, also requires methodological detachment from individualism, which means that the above-mentioned wider context cannot be found only by following the individual's own interpretations. If we want to see implications which reach beyond situated experiences, individual accounts have to be not only listened to but also questioned and interrogated (Gill 2007b, 78) and resituated within the problematic of power relations (McNay 2003, 147).

I have confirmed Ojajärvi's notion that ideological processes take advantage of the fracturing of the self, and this leads me to comment on the implication he draws, namely that defending the social preconditions for psychic coherence and wholeness might be a significant critical gesture. I agree, and will return to what this defence might mean in relation to practices of coaching in a moment. Before I do so, though, I want to comment on the question of defending psychic wholeness in light of my findings regarding individualisation. First, I want to emphasise that what ought to be defended is not an already-existing coherent selfhood, but rather the ability of the self to *experience* relative coherence and continuity. Second, I have suggested that the ideal of individualism penetrates various processes, producing as its flipside the insecure and fractured "other" self. For this reason, I think it is crucial that ideology critique or disarticulation, when aiming at psychic coherence, takes as its fundamental starting point this "other" self. By this I mean proceeding from accounts of weakness and disintegration and setting aside the figure of the strong, free and autonomous individual. Searching for psychic coherence

and wholeness, then, means accepting individual weakness and, as Ojajärvi states, focusing on building social preconditions which will *allow* the individual to be weak and fractured and yet able to experience coherence, continuity and security in a way that does not foreclose political agency. Instead of idealising particular forms of autonomous individuality – figures of strong women, for instance – there is a need to recognise and accept the fundamental fragility of the self, if the critique is to object to or disarticulate compulsory forms of individuality.

Also, as I think is evident from my conclusions, there is a need to turn back the tide of individualisation by recognising that contradictions are inherent to contemporary social structures. Here I draw on Rosemary Hennessy's understanding of the meaning of critique:

Critique aims not to heal over or resolve cultural crisis, but to demonstrate that internal contradictions in a cultural text are the product of crises in the larger social formation, contradictions that cannot be satisfied by the system as it is at present. As Seyla Benhabib has argued, critique is “crisis diagnosis” that enables future social change (Benhabib 1986, 109). In this sense, it foments and makes use of ideological crisis for social transformation.
(Hennessy 1993b, 28)

Following Hennessy, I have traced a particular framing of the self and argued that this framing contains a crisis which cannot be resolved by staying within the notion of the individual self. I have observed how different social contradictions are articulated as individual, and that individuals aim to fix these contradictions by making themselves better persons, by becoming “strong”, by engaging in self-promotion. It has thus been necessary to detach from individualism, both theoretically and methodologically, for it is precisely the process of individualisation which silences the crisis that my research has attempted to make – at least partly – visible. Only detachment from theoretical and methodological individualism enables the recognition of the need for social, rather than individual, transformation.

On gender

Throughout the research, I have paid particular attention to gender, as my explicit interest has been in tracing the connections between processes of self-promotion, capitalism and gender. I found that such connections do exist and that examining them provides important insights, as argued above. Using relations of gender as an example, I have been able to further demonstrate the consequences of individualisation, self-promotion and the commodification of the self as well as the congruence of self-promotional processes with the post-feminist sensibility. Focusing on gender has thus allowed me to demonstrate my claims as well as to deepen and expand on the insights and observations provided elsewhere in the analysis. In addition to providing a better understanding of self-promotional processes, however, the perspective of gender has also led me to note some relevant issues concerning shifts in relations of gender and the consequences of those shifts in relation to feminist critique.

Several feminist theorists have suggested that there has been a historical shift in gender relations (see Adkins 2000; Fraser 2009). For example, Angela McRobbie (2007b) claims that we have a new sexual contract.⁸⁹ Within this post-feminist sexual contract, according to McRobbie, young women are attributed with capacity and constructed as the ideal subjects of success, particularly economic and productive success. I referred to McRobbie's argument in the previous chapter and noted that it is congruent with what I have observed in the field of coaching. Following McRobbie and other feminist interrogators of post-feminism and the detraditionalisation thesis (Adkins 2000, Veijola & Jokinen 2008), my work thus contributes to the discussion of the historical shift, although I am aware that this shift does not necessarily concern all spheres of life to the same extent – one might prefer to talk about several shifts with different consequences and extents. However one wants to phrase the issue, there has nevertheless been a shift which, I suggest, has both empirical weight and methodological significance when it comes to developing feminist critique. I will now clarify how I see this shift and its methodological and theoretical implications in light of this research.

⁸⁹ Although McRobbie uses “sexual contract” in a slightly different sense than Pateman (1988).

As I noted in the chapter on individuality, previous theoretical accounts focusing on gender and individuality have often been concerned with exclusion. In particular, feminist theorists have described how individuality has historically been and continues to be defined through the exclusion of women (e.g. Pateman 1988). When I started to think about individuality in connection to self-promotion, my attention was on articulations that exclude women or define individuality against femininity, because these were what I expected to find on the basis of previous feminist critique. These kinds of articulation did come up in the research material, but they were rare. Furthermore, it also seemed that individuality was defined and produced in particular through accounts of “being a strong woman”. The position of femininity in relation to individuality was not that of a defining other, but was much more ambivalent. In the case of individuality and self-promotion, accounts of exclusion thus did not provide sufficient grounds for feminist analysis or critique.

For a long time, my fixation on looking for exclusion prevented me from seeing how and why gender matters in terms of individuality and self-promotion. This was crucial, because as the research proceeded, questions related to individuality and later individualisation became more central to the research design, and I was rather frustrated at not being able to understand the significance of gender in relation to these questions. Gradually I realised, mainly by following the discussions of post-feminism (Gill 2007a; McRobbie 2007a; 2007b; 2009; Tasker & Negra 2007), that the significance of gender in relation to individuality did not need to be defined in terms of exclusion. Rather, it might be that women are forcibly included in the production of individuality – but this does not mean that gender has lost its significance, or that gender equality has been achieved.

For me, then, it seems that there has been a shift, regarding gender and individuality, from exclusion to inclusion – at least in the rather narrow context of practices of coaching. Trying to think what this shift might mean in a wider context, however, is rather complex. Has there been a change in gender relations such that women are now included in spheres of life from which they have been excluded? Is this kind of change relevant when considering working life? In the Finnish context in particular, this question is difficult, for in Finland women have historically been included in working life

in the sense that women from all social classes have worked (the housewife institution never became a norm), even though there has been and still is notable gender segregation.

While thinking about inclusion, exclusion and working life in the Finnish context, I came across Liisa Rantalaiho's (1994, 13) account of capitalism in relation to gender duality. Rantalaiho refers to Sylvia Walby (1986) and notes that in a society based on paid work, capital is gender-blind in the sense that it is not interested in whether the worker is a man or a woman. Women are cheap labour power (because their pay is lower than men's), and from the perspective of capital they are worth using; thus the inclusion of women in the labour market serves the logic of value production (see also Adkins & Jokinen 2008, 143). Rantalaiho notes that capitalist logic bypasses gender duality in this respect, but the distinction between genders nevertheless reappears in the form of gender segregation. Value production through paid labour thus integrates women into working life, but it does not eradicate gender difference.

The simple idea of capital as gender-blind, so to speak, prompts me to reconsider the inclusion of women in the production of individuality from the perspective of value production. The convergence of the subjectification of work and the commodification of the self means that value production extends to the self too, and in this research I have described how value is produced by bringing into being potent selves and a particular kind of individuality. If women are included in value production through paid work, and if work is now inseparable from the production of selfhood and individuality, then the inclusion of women in this production is not surprising.

From another perspective, namely that contemporary capitalism "feeds from" differences (Hardt & Negri 2000, 150–154; Skeggs 2004, 172; Kaitila & Lahikainen 2006) rather than eradicating them, the inclusion of women in the production of individuality in a way that nonetheless maintains gender difference seems rather understandable. If differences can be capitalised and thus used in the production of value, then individualised gender differences become profitable. The narratives in which the figure of the strong woman is employed to bring a potent and capable self into being can thus be seen as examples of capitalising on gender difference – even if the individuals who tell these narratives do not think of them in this way at all.

Here it might be useful to make a conceptual differentiation between gender as difference and gender as social relation. Gender can be conceived first as a difference between individuals, and second as a social relation based on a hierarchical duality.⁹⁰ Through the process of individualisation, the social relation of gender is articulated, comes to make sense, as a difference between individuals. And if gender is articulated as a difference between individuals, it is easy to see how gender – in the form of a particular individual's gendered experiences, for instance – can be employed as an asset, as a way of distinguishing oneself and adding value to oneself as I have described in this research. It thus seems that gender as it is articulated in work-related coaching is precisely this, a difference between individuals, and can be used to differentiate one person from others when this suits the person in question.

I would tentatively suggest that gender in contemporary capitalism is part of value production as an individualised difference. The process of individualisation connects to the logic of capital in the sense that individualised articulations of gender can be used in value production, because through them, gender becomes a difference that can be capitalised on.

At the same time, though, gender as a social relation is concealed or muted through that same individualising process. As I have noted, the accounts concerning gender focus on the individual and individual capacities. However, when read closely these same accounts also show that gender does matter as a social relation, for they are nevertheless also accounts of how gender duality affects everyday life – they transmit experiences of gender as a hierarchical social relation that positions subjects in a certain way, and that variously constrains subjects and rewards them for conformity.

Understanding individualisation as an ideological process, I argue that women are included in this process no less than men, as well as in other processes entangled with self-promotion. I also argue that as individualisation converges with value production, gender comes to make sense primarily as an individual difference, and inclusion in individualisation thus seems to mean that gender has lost its significance as a hierarchical relation.

⁹⁰ This differentiation is similar to the one I have made between class as difference and class as antagonism.

Inclusion does not mean achieving equality or social justice in terms of gender. Rather, as I have argued, inclusion prevents the articulation of experiences of injustice in other than individual terms, which effectively renders subjects incapable of affecting the social relations that are the cause of such experiences. The inclusion of *everyone* does not in the slightest entail any changes in existing power relations. On the contrary, my analysis suggests that it *cements* hierarchical relations and social antagonisms and renders them invisible. There is thus an acute need to be able to theorise and understand inclusion in these terms. On the basis of this research I think that this requires tools with which to disarticulate individualised understandings concerning gender and with which to examine how individualised accounts of gender produce value in contemporary capitalism. For this reason, my discussion of methodology above is particularly germane of feminist critique. Individual experiences should be respected and listened to, but they also have to be interrogated and questioned.

The narratives concerning gender to which I have kept returning in this research follow to a great extent the individualised logic that everyone is free and autonomous, and they also pose the figure of the autonomous individual as the ideal for which one should aim. In this respect these narratives resonate with some feminist accounts that somewhat simplistically emphasise agency and free will (see Bordo 1993, 245–276).⁹¹ Discussing the problematic of agency and choice in feminist research, Rosalind Gill (2007b, 72) asks what kind of politics follows from a position that understands all behaviour within a discourse of free choice and autonomy. In the case of coaching, this kind of feminist politics would probably mean taking the women’s narratives at face value, celebrating their individual successes and viewing the figure of the strong woman as a positive ideal that encourages and empowers individuals. Such a perspective would also probably view coaching as an important feminist practice because it aims to bring “strong women” into being and helps to confirm women’s autonomy. From some perspectives this would be a reasonable account, and I think it would also sound reasonable to many of the women I interviewed. As is evident, however, I have chosen a

⁹¹ For more examples and discussion of these kind of accounts, see e.g. “Ain’t I a Woman? A Global Dialogue between the Sex Workers’ Rights movement and the Stop Violence Against Women movement”, Bangkok, Thailand, 12-14 March 2009. Available online at <http://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/aint%20I%20a%20woman.pdf>.

different perspective. I have listened to the narratives concerning gender, and respected the experiences of the interviewees, but I have situated these narratives so that they can be viewed in the light of ideological processes, particularly individualisation. This perspective has also enabled me to see beyond the achieving, victorious individual, and to recognise the conflicts that are still inherent in relations of gender. It has also revealed the consequences of individualised understandings, which, as I have stated, include the silencing of conflicts, the muting of struggles and the disabling of political agency.

To sum up, I think that the shift from exclusion to inclusion in terms of individuality invites closer critical attention to processes of individualisation. This implies that relying on unquestioned notions of agency or free will as a basis of feminist critique is not sufficient, for it will lead to blindness to many important consequences of this shift. I thus join Lisa Adkins (2000), Rosalind Gill (2007a; 2007b), Angela McRobbie (2007b; 2009) and Lois McNay (2003), among others, to ask for critical feminist interventions on the notions of choice, autonomy, agency and free will, and suggesting that it is precisely by developing our understanding of individualisation that such interventions can be made.

On coaching

Work-related coaching has occupied a peculiar position in this research. The objects of the research do not really concern coaching, but it has nevertheless been at the centre of every chapter as the main empirical focus. Every argument that I have made has to be understood in the context of the empirical field of coaching, but many of my arguments also have implications for coaching, and some of them are actually about coaching rather than self-promotional processes. In short, in tracing processes of self-promotion I have made critical interventions on the practices of coaching, even though making such interventions was not my original purpose. It is therefore reasonable, I think, to discuss coaching here too, and to further examine the implications of the research in terms of coaching.

I was concerned above with whether coaching can be seen as an emancipatory practice, and my answer was negative. In chapter three, I stated that although coaching contains subversive or revolutionary potential, the actualisation of such potential is “not to be expected”. Now I want to reconsider the question of coaching as a potentially emancipatory or liberating practice. I shall do this by briefly offering some suggestions for developing coaching on the basis of the critique presented throughout the research. My account again follows Rosemary Hennessy’s (1993b, 28) conception of ideology critique (see above). This means that I start by asking whether, instead of individualising social problems and contradictions, coaching as a practice could participate in making these visible.

My critique of the ideal of the autonomous and atomistic individual also contains a critique of how this ideal is employed and reproduced in practices of coaching. This prompts me to ask: if the existing ideal of individualism fails to provide the full emancipatory potential that (at least some of) the coaches want to offer, then what might be the other possible routes which would allow different, less compulsory forms of becoming-individual, and which might also push subjects towards political agency? I realise that coaching as a practice is deeply embedded in the logic of the labour market and value production, and it is also, as I have noted, a fundamentally individualising practice. Despite this, I think it worthwhile to be optimistic and recognise that social change does not come from outside existing reality. Rather, and especially if one follows the Bourdieuan account of temporality (see chapter six), the future is made in the here and now, and also future change is therefore embedded in everyday practices, imperfect (and harmful) as they may be at the moment.

Moreover, if one takes seriously individual experiences of empowerment or feeling better, it is relevant to ask, as I did above, how such experiences might be achieved in a way that will allow the subject not only to feel capable but also to become capable, so that instead of merely coping with constant change, for example, the subject can become the *agent* of social change. Are there ways in which coaching could help to produce this kind of agency? To be clear, I am not trying here to provide straightforward tools for the “right kind of empowerment” which would make subjects capable all at once. But if I am

criticising certain practices, I consider it reasonable to take the time to also think of ways in which such practices might be developed in a different direction.

There might be something to gain here by looking again at the “other” of the free and autonomous individual. In the chapter on individuality I described this other in terms of weakness, incoherence and uncertainty, and above I suggested that ideology critique should take as its starting point this notion of a fractured and weak self. I stated that critique should proceed from experiences of weakness and disintegration, and should set aside the figure of the strong, free and autonomous individual. It might be worth asking, then, what coaching would be like if, instead of taking for granted the ideals of atomistic individualism, it were to admit the weakness and imperfection of the self and take this admission as the basis of its practices. Perhaps this would not be such a big leap after all, since the articulations I have examined *already contain* this other self, albeit in a rather concealed or silenced form. The admission would mean articulating together not strength and individual survival, but weakness and hope.

Another similar move, although in a slightly different direction, would be to concentrate not on the self who is coached but on the dialogue between different subjects (different selves) in coaching. The autonomous individual actually has several “others”: one of these is the fractured self, but another could be a self that is always and already constructed in connection to other people – the idea of the individual which was at the centre of Romanticism and the Enlightenment (see chapter five). One could then ask whether the potential of coaching might be strengthened if one were to give up the idea of the coach who does not engage or express their thoughts and perspectives to the client. Would it be possible to develop practices in which both persons participating in coaching would confront or meet each other so that the purpose would be not only the individual empowerment of the client but a dialogue which would challenge and change both participants? Again, I do not think this is very far-fetched in terms of existing practices, for I have noted how the seemingly detached participation from the side of coaches is not neutral but contains assumptions and ideals. Might it be interesting if these assumptions and ideals were not taken for granted, but made the subject of a dialogue between different persons?

The ideas underlying these suggestions come from three different directions. First, the idea of admitting the weakness of the self and of struggling to build the social preconditions to support the coherence and agency of the self resonates with the principles on which voluntary work with mental health is based in Finland.⁹² In my encounters with the approaches used in mental-health work, I was quite surprised to realise how close some of those approaches and principles are to coaching, and yet how different the ethical framework employed in mental-health work is. While in coaching the focus is on the autonomous self, the mental-health work with which I have become familiar is based on the admission that everyone needs support and connections to other people, and that social justice is an important factor if we wish to defend everyone's right to a meaningful life. In previous chapters I noted the congruence between coaching and therapy, and thus the suggestion to consider mental-health work as a source of different directions and principles for coaching is not that far-fetched. Maybe there is something to learn from this work that, like coaching, involves trust in a person's inner resources and an emphasis on individual well-being, but which also aims to achieve and defend social justice.

Second, the idea of combining individual well-being and the struggle for social justice, if seen from a historical perspective, has resemblances to the feminist consciousness raising practices that were developed at the end of the 1960s in the women's liberation movement. Paying attention to the connections between the personal and the political, and creating links between individual and collective action, was central to consciousness raising as it was first understood. In the 1970s, as radical feminism and the New Left declined in the United States, consciousness raising transformed into a therapeutic milieu, and the political aspects of participating in a consciousness raising group were cast aside (Rosenthal 1984). It is nevertheless noteworthy that the practices that are at the moment understood as therapeutic have connections to, or even "roots" in, the radical feminist groups aimed to change not only the self, but also the world.

The association to feminist consciousness raising came to my mind as one of the interviewed coaches told me that she planned to develop coaching intended especially for women. She had bought a mansion that she thought could function as a place for groups

⁹² See www.mielenterveysseura.fi/mielenterveysseura/arvot_ja_tavoitteet.

of women to come together and be coached. Remnants or echoes of feminist practices thus remain within the practices of coaching, and consciousness raising could therefore be considered as one possible source of inspiration for combining individual empowerment with social goals.

The third direction I wish to suggest is the legacy of radical pedagogy, mainly the work of Paulo Freire (1972/1968). Though I also see problems in some of the presumptions in Freire's work (the idea of false consciousness, for instance), I think that there is already some convergence between practices of coaching and Freire's radical pedagogy. Thinking coaching through radical pedagogy does not demand a total change of directions, but merely takes further the principles already inscribed in practices of coaching. For this reason, if we want to find ways to overcome the narrowing aspects of coaching that I have observed, especially in terms of agency, it might be useful to draw on the perspective of radical pedagogy as an inspiration. For instance, this would mean taking further the idea that the coach is not a teacher but a facilitator, in a way which would turn coaching sessions into occasions of mutual engagement and learning. It would also mean taking further the idea of empowerment, rethinking it in a way that respects and listens to the experiences of others and builds on connections rather than atomism. In addition, proceeding from the premises of radical pedagogy might extend the idea of respecting individuals to encompass not only respect for the ideal of the autonomous individual but also a consideration of the diverse premises and conditions within which it is possible for individuals to become autonomous agents.

To repeat, these suggestions are based on tendencies that are already found within the practices of coaching, and I am certain that there are coaches who are already moving in these directions. By emphasising these possible directions of development, I want to stress that practices of coaching also contain valuable elements. In this research I have described why these valuable aspects of coaching are not currently being actualised as well as they could be, and here I have provided some possible ways in which they might come to have a more central role in coaching.

7.2. Future directions

Throughout this research I have examined cracks and silences as well as contradictions in various texts, and at this point it is reasonable to admit that my own research also contains silences. Some issues, though important, have been left aside or neglected, as always in any research process. I therefore want to end my thesis by highlighting some of the issues that were discussed or referred to earlier but still invite closer critical attention.

I have already noted that questions concerning class as antagonism have been left somewhat implicit in this research, despite their importance. In particular, the idea of individualisation as a process of displacement seems to provide inspiring perspectives for thinking of class outside the simple categorisations of “working-class” and “middle-class” that currently seem to hold sway in sociological and cultural accounts. By this I do not mean that research should abandon these categorisations but rather that differences between individuals and groups of individuals might be considered in light of the ideological process that individualises social relations. Class is not explained away by defining persons, habits or styles as middle-class; the challenge is to think these categorisations in connection to social forces. How does class as a capitalist social relation transform into a lived and experienced individual difference?

In addition to class, one of the central issues in this research has concerned questions of strength and weakness. I noted that accounts of female strength articulated through the figure of the autonomous individual are an efficient means of silencing and concealing social inequality and restricting women’s agency. Issues of strength, female agency and work are of course no new in feminist research, and they have a particular significance and history in Finland (see Markkola 2002). However, in terms of the shift that I have found regarding individuality, from exclusion to inclusion, it seems to me that the interplay between different articulations of strength and weakness still needs to be examined further. While in this research my attention has been on individualised articulations of strength, there are also other ways of both articulating and disarticulating strength and weakness in connection to gender and agency. Thinking through these other ways might also open up both our understanding of why and how both strength and weakness matter. There is a long history not only of discussing female strength but also

of discussing weakness in connection to women, and continuing this line of thought and investigation could lead to a reconsideration of feminist as well as other influential accounts of weakness and strength in the context of individualisation and inclusion.

Another central but implicit concern of this research has been the role of affect, especially good feelings, in connection to the processes of individualisation and commodification. In her account of happy objects, Sara Ahmed (2010, 50) suggests that feminist research pay closer attention to the appeal and implications of happiness and good feelings. She notes that the assumption that bad feelings are closed and conservative and good feelings are progressive, forward and open allows historical forms of injustice to disappear from view. My observations of the ways practices of empowerment and feeling better are entangled in ideological processes also suggest that investigating the role of good feelings is crucial for understanding how processes of silencing and displacement take place in the here and now. I would therefore add to Ahmed's argument that it is not only histories of injustice that are made to disappear through equating good feelings with progress, but also present forms of injustice. In this research, I have not had the opportunity to properly consider theoretical and empirical discussions concerning happy affects, and this is therefore clearly a task for future research.

Finally, questions of embodiment have been discussed rather superficially in this research. However, they are central to gender and capitalism, as has been continually emphasised in feminist research, especially in socialist-feminist scholarship. Embodiment is also a central thread in discussions concerning post-feminism. In this research, accounting for embodiment, and in particular for the embodied practices and experiences of self-promotion, would have demanded a different kind of research material and different kinds of questions. However, although they have for the most part been left aside here, questions concerning embodiment, gender and capitalism in processes of self-promotion need more attention.

I conclude by asking more attention to thinking class as an individualised antagonism, to accounts of strength and weakness, to accounts of happy feelings and to questions of embodiment.

Research material

Interviews

H1-H17
4/2008 – 2/2010

15.9.2009	H1
18.8.2009	H2
19.5.2009	H3
28.4.2008	H4
5.9.2008	H5
10.2.2009	H6
10.2.2009	H7
24.8.2009 (by phone)	H8
20.2.2009	H9
21.10.2008	H10
1.10.2009	H11
29.9.2009	H12
19.11.2009	H13
23.11.2009	H14
26.11.2009	H15
7.12.2009	H16
4.2.2010 (by email)	H17
+ Introduction session February 2010	

Online material

Newspaper and magazine articles⁹³

AllBusiness: Why Self-Promotion is the Key to Success. Retrived 10.2.2010,
www.allbusiness.com/human-resources/careers-job-hunting/1608-1.html.

Goldberg, Marilyn: Expert Question Asking. Retrieved 23.5.2011,
www.coachfederation.org.

Gorchov, Joshua 2009: What Can Coaches Do for You? *Harvard Business Review*.
January 2009, www.hbr.org.

Holm, Lars 2010: Rekrytointi päättyi anteeksipyyntöön. *Taloussanomat*. 1.2.2010,
www.taloussanomat.fi.

⁹³ Date of retrieval noted when the retrieved document itself did not contain any date of publication.

Knowledge@Wharton 2009: Advertising Yourself: Building a Personal Brand through Social Networks. April 15, 2009,
<http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=2208>

Kokko, Outi 2010: Tällainen tyyppi saa työpaikan. *Taloussanomat* 31.10.2010,
www.taloussanomat.fi.

Kokko, Outi 2006: Kaikki haluavat hyvän tyyppin. *Taloussanomat* 29.10.2006,
www.taloussanomat.fi.

Lampinen, Anne 2007: Brändää itsesi. *Myynti & Markkinointi/ m&m-verkkolehti*.
Retrieved 19.11.2007, www.myyntijamarkkinointi.fi.

Lampinen, Anne 2008: Elämää ja elämyksiä. Retrieved 27.1.2008, www.yrittajat.fi.

Lehto, Tia Maria 1999: Perustele väitteesi ja ole myönteinen. Asiantuntijoiden vinkit kesätyönhakuun. *Sähkö-Aviisi* 3/99, www.uta.fi/lehdet/aviisi/9903.kesatyo.html.

Lahti-Kala, Anniina 2008: Imagoja ja innovatiivisuutta; ideatehdas Muovassa. *ComPosti* 01/08, http://www.comediary.com/tiedostot/ComPosti_1_08.pdf.

Leonardi, Christine 2007: 'Distinct or extinct' is the new career mantra for success, reports GIBS. *Leader.co.za*. 30.6.2007, www.engine.co.za.

McKinsey & Company 2007: *Suomen talous. Saavutukset, haasteet ja prioriteetit*.
[Www.McKinsey.com](http://www.McKinsey.com).

Mol.fi 2009: Miten etsiä työtä. [Www.mol.fi](http://www.mol.fi).

Niipola, Jani 2010: Herätys, tavis – brändää itsesi!. *M&M*. [Www.marmai.fi](http://www.marmai.fi).

Peters, Tom 2004: Brand You Survival Kit. *Fastcompany*. Issue 83, June 2004,
www.fastcompany.com.

Peters, Tom 2007: The Brand Called You. *Fastcompany*. December 18 2007,
www.fastcompany.com.

Raheem, Olu 2009a: Kannattaisiko meidän brändätä itsemme (osa 1). 22.6.2009,
<http://www.clients.fi/arkisto/2009/kannattaisiko-meidan-brandata-itsemme/>.

Raheem, Olu 2009b: Kannattaisiko meidän brändätä itsemme (osa 2). 20.7.2009,
<http://www.clients.fi/arkisto/2009/kannattaisiko-meidan-brandata-itsemme-osa-2/>.

Rajalahti, Hanna 2005: Hyvä tyyppi saa töitä. *Talouselämä*. 28.4.2005,
[www.talouselämä.fi](http://www.talouselama.fi).

Scheier, Jacob 2008: Facing my Facebook self. *NOW Magazine*. 2008: 27(24), <http://www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=161754>.

Taloussanommat 23.2.2010: Tämän vuoksi ansioluettelosi ei enää riitä. [Www.taloussanommat.fi](http://www.taloussanommat.fi).

Yle 19.2.2010: Hallitus pestasi amerikkalaiskonsultin ideoimaan seuraavaa hallitusohjelmaa. [Www.yle.fi](http://www.yle.fi).

Web pages

www.advisor.fi (8.11.2008)
www.ambitio.fi (28.4.2008)
www.authenticpromotion.com (4.10.2011)
www.coachfederation.org (4.9.2011)
www.coachinc.com (4.1.2011)
www.coaching-yhdistys.com (9.10.2010)
www.deeplead.com (6.8.2011)
www.facefactory.fi (6.8.2008)
www.fakta-fiktio.fi (30.7.2009)
www.icffinland.fi/ (10.9.2011)
www.johtoloisto.fi (16.10.2008)
www.justrecruitme.com (14.12.2011)
www.leadershipbrands.blogspot.com/ (12.10.2011)
www.mahdollistaminenestys.fi (3.1.2011)
www.midagon.fi (4.1.2010)
www.minnaekblom.com (4.9.2011)
www.mol.fi (15.9.2009)
www.mowbraybydesign.com (12.11.2011)
www.novetos.fi (7.2.2011)
www.odos.fi (11.1.2011)
www.reachbrandingclub.com (23.11.2007)
www.resepticonsulting.fi (23.1.2011)
www.resultscoaches.fi (4.1.2011)
www.sensitiva.fi (12.1.2011)
www.scy.kotisivukone.com/ (5.1.2011)
www.speakersforum.fi (4.1.2011)
www.uranus.fi (8.12.2008)
www.valmentamo.fi (21.2.1011)
www.williamarruda.com (23.11.2007)

Published material

Newspaper and magazine articles

Huusari, Eija 2010: Lisa Sounio. ”Janosin nuorena kaupunkilaiselämää”. *Eeva* 11/2010.

Kasanen, Marja 2007: Tsemppiä työhön. *S-viesti* 2007.

Lind, Seppo 2009: Konsultti kävi kylässä. *Pirkkalainen* 18.11.2009.

Loehr, Jim & Schwartz, Tony 2001: The Making of a Corporate Athlete. *Harvard Business Review* January 2001.

Lundberg, Tom 2008: Näin saat paremman pomon. *Ykköset!* 28.8.2008.

Luomajoki, Hanne-Leona 2009: Uraputkesta urapolulle. *Jade* 5/2009.

Masalin, Satumiia 2011: Työnantajien kilpailu motivoituneista ja hyvistä työntekijöistä kiristyy. *Helsingin Sanomat* 25.2.2011.

Pastila, Kaisa 2010: Auttaisiko life coach? *Anna* 12.6.2010 (24).

Pere, Eeva-Liisa 2010: Riko rajat! *Gloria* tammikuu 2010.

Porttinen, Katri 2005. Elämän sparraajat. *Talouselämä* 16/2005.

Rifkind, Hugo 2008: Brand new me. *The Times* 23.2.2008.

Storgård, Päivi 2010: Tule, rakkaus. *Anna* 23.8.2010 (38).

Valtavaara, Marjo 2009: Nuorten työpajoihin tungeksitaan. *Helsingin Sanomat* 11.4.2009.

Valtonen, Heikki 2010: Työnhakijan tulee tuntea itsensä. *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 2010 (specific date of publication unknown).

Books

Bridges, William 1997: *Creating You & Co. Learn to think like the CEO of your own career*. Perseus Books.

Montoya, Peter 2002: *The Brand Called You. The Ultimate Brand-Building and Business Development Handbook to Transform Anyone into an Indispensable Personal Brand*. With Tim Vandehey. Personal Branding Press.

Sounio, Liisa 2010: *Brändikäs*. Talentum.

Spillane, Mary 2000. *Branding Yourself. How to look, sound and behave your way to success*. London, Oxford & Basingstoke: Pan Books.

Lectures

L1 Pöysti, Tom 2009. SpeakersForum 20.2.2009. Hotel Scandic, Tampere.

L2 Valtonen, Mato 2009. SpeakersForum 27.3.2009. Hotel Scandic, Tampere.

L3 Lundberg, Tom 2008. Työtä ja elämää. Valopilkku-luento 8.12.2008. University of Tampere.

L4 Saarinen, Mikael 2011. Tunneäly ja työn ilo. Työnilon julistus ja seminaari 12.1.2011. University of Tampere.

Other Documents

Spring House 2009: Tule työelämävalmentajaksi, osaksi menestystarinaamme. [Www.springhouse.fi](http://www.springhouse.fi). (Recruitment advert)

Novetos Oy 2010: Coaching-katsaus 2010. Koonnut Ville Lähdesmäki. [Www.novetos.fi](http://www.novetos.fi).

Kauppalehti: Valmennus Extra 7.2.2011 (16 p.).

References

Abercrombie, Nicholas, Hill, Stephen & Turner, Bryan S. 1986: *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. London: ALLEN & UNWIN.

Acker, Joan 2011: Theorizing Gender, Race and Class in Organisations - Jeanes, Emma L., Knights, David, Yancey Martin, Patricia (eds.) *Handbook of Gender, Work and Organisation*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 65–80.

Adkins, Lisa 2011: Practice as Temporalisation: Bourdieu and Economic Crisis - Susen, Simon & Turner, Bryan S. (eds.) *The Legacy of Pierre Bourdieu: Critical Essays*. London: Anthem Press, 347–365.

Adkins, Lisa 2005: The New Economy, Property and Personhood. *Theory, Culture and Society* 22(1), 111–130.

Adkins, Lisa 2001: Cultural Feminization: “Money, Sex and Power” for Women. *Signs* 26(3), 669–695.

Adkins, Lisa 2000: Objects of innovation. Post-occupational reflexivity and re-traditionalisations of gender - Ahmed, Sara, Kilby, Jane, Lury, Celia, McNeill, Maureen & Skeggs, Beverley (eds.) *Transformations. Thinking Through Feminism*. London & New York: Routledge, 259–272.

Adkins, Lisa & Jokinen, Eeva 2008: Introduction: Gender, Living and Labour in the Fourth Shift. *Nora – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 16(3), 138–149.

Ahmed, Sara 2010: Happy objects - Gregg, Melissa & Seighworth, Gregory J. (eds.) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 29–51.

Ahmed, Sara 2006: *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects and Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahmed, Sara, Kilby, Jane, Lury, Celia, McNeil, Maureen & Skeggs, Beverley 2000: Introduction: Thinking through Feminism - Ahmed, Sara, Kilby, Jane, Lury, Celia, McNeill, Maureen & Skeggs, Beverley (eds.) *Transformations. Thinking through Feminism*. London & New York: Routledge, 1–24.

Alaimo, Stacy & Hekman, Susan 2009: Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory – Alaimo, Stacy & Hekman, Susan (eds.) *Material Feminisms*. Bloomington & Indianapolis, 1–19.

Alasuutari, Pertti 2005: Yhteiskuntatutkimuksen etiikasta - Räsänen, Pekka, Anttila, Anu-Hanna, Melin, Harri (eds.) *Tutkimus menetelmien pyörteissä. Sosiaalitutkimuksen lähtökohdat ja valinnat*. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus, 15–28.

Alasuutari, Pertti 1995: *Researching Culture. Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*. London, Thousand Oakes & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Althusser, Louis 1971 (ed.): *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*. Transl. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Aufheben 2006: Keep on smiling. Questions on immaterial labour. *Aufheben* #14/2006, 23-44. Retrieved at <http://libcom.org/library/aufheben/aufheben-14-2006/keep-on-smiling-questions-on-immaterial-labour> 20.7.2011.

Bal, Mieke 2002: *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities. A Rough Guide*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press.

Baltes, Paul B, Staudinger, Ursula M. & Lindenberger, Ulman 1999: LIFESPAN PSYCHOLOGY: Theory and Application to Intellectual Functioning. *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, 471–507.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah & Portwood-Stacer, Laura 2006: “I just want to be me again!” Beauty pageants, reality television and post-feminism. *Feminist Theory* 7(2), 255–272.

Beck, Ulrich 2008/1986: *Risk Society. Towards a New Modernity*. London, Thousand Oakes, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Beck, Ulrich & Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth 2001: *Individualization*. London, Thousand Oakes, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Beck, Ulrich, Giddens, Anthony & Lash, Scott 1994: *Reflexive Modernization*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Berlant, Lauren 2010: Cruel Optimism - Gregg, Melissa & Seighworth, Gregory J. (eds.) *The Affect Theory Reader*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 93–117.

Blackman, Lisa, Cromby, John, Hook, Derek, Papadopoulos, Dimitris & Walkerdine, Valerie 2008: Creating subjectivities. *Subjectivity*. 22, 1–27.

Bonefeld, Werner 1991: The Reformulation of State Theory - Bonefeld, Werner & Holloway, John (eds.) *Post-Fordism & Social Form. A Marxist Debate on the Post-Fordist State*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: Macmillan Academic & Professional LTD, 35–68.

Bonefeld, Werner & Holloway, John (eds.) 1991: *Post-Fordism & Social Form. A Marxist Debate on the Post-Fordist State*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: Macmillan Academic & Professional LTD.

Bordo, Susan 1993: *Unbearable Weight. Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*.

Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bordo, Susan 1990: Feminism, Postmodernism and Gender-Scepticism - Nicholson, Linda J. (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York and London: Routledge, 133–156.

Bourdieu, Pierre 1989: *Distinction*. London: Routledge.

Braidotti, Rosi 1991: *Patterns of Dissonance. An Essay on Women in Contemporary French Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith 1990: *Gender Trouble*. New York & London: Routledge.

Calàs, Marta B. & Smircich, Linda 1993: Dangerous Liaisons: The “Feminine-in-Management” Meets “Globalization”. *Business Horizons* March-April 1993, 71–81.

Callon, Michel 2007: An Essay on the Growing Contribution of Economic Markets to the Proliferation of the Social. *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(7-8), 139–163.

Camfield, David 2007: The Multitude and the Kangaroo: A critique of Hardt and Negri’s Theory of Immaterial Labour. *Historical Materialism* 15(2007), 21–52.

Campbell, Marie L. 2006: Institutional Ethnography and Experience as Data - Smith, Dorothy E. Lanham, Boulder (eds.) *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*. New York, Toronto, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 91–107.

Casey, Catherine 1995: *Work, Self and Society, After Industrialism*. London: Routledge.

Collins, Patricia Hill 1998: *Fighting words: Black women and the search for justice*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Chari, Anita 2010: Toward a political critique of reification: Lukács, Hononeth and the aims of critical theory. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 36(5), 587–606.

Cronin, Anne M. 2000: Consumerism and ‘compulsory individuality’. Women, will and potential - Ahmed, Sara, Kilby, Jane, Lury, Celia, McNeill, Maureen, Skeggs, Beverley (eds.) *Transformations. Thinking through feminism*. London & New York: Routledge, 273–287.

Csarniawska, Barbara 2006: Doing Gender unto the Other: Fiction as a Mode of Studying Gender Discrimination in Organisations. *Gender, Work and Organisation* 13(3), 234–253.

De Lauretis, Teresa 1987: *Technologies of Gender. Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Félix 1987: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and*

Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

DeVault, Marjorie & McCoy, Liza 2006: Institutional Ethnography: Using Interviews to Investigate Ruling Relations - Smith, Dorothy E. Lanham, Boulder (eds.) *Institutional Ethnography as Practice*. New York, Toronto, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 15–44.

Dhamoon, Rita Kaur 2011: Considerations on Mainstreaming Intersectionality. *Political Research Quarterly* 64(1), 230–243.

Du Gay, Paul 1996: *Consumption and Identity at Work*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Duits, Linda & van Zoonen, Liesbet 2007: Who's Afraid of Female Agency?: A Rejoinder to Gill. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 14(2), 161–170.

Duits, Linda & van Zoonen, Liesbet 2006: Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in Multicultural Society. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 13(2), 103–117.

Erickson, Karla & Pierce, Jennifer L. 2005: Farewell to the organization man. The feminization of loyalty in high-end and low-end service jobs. *Ethnography* 6(3), 283–313.

Fairclough, Norman 1993: The Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis - Wetherell, Margaret, Taylor, Stephanie & Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) *Discourse as Data. A guide for analysis*. London, Thousand Oakes, New Delhi: Sage in association with The Open University, 229–266.

Fairclough, Norman 2001: *Language and Power* (2nd edition). London: Longman.

Federici, Silvia 2009: Precarious Labor: A Feminist Viewpoint. *In the Middle of a Whirlwind: 2008 Convention Protests, Movement & Movements*. www.inthemiddleofawhirlwind.info. Retrieved at http://www.scribd.com/full/3108724?access_key=key-27agtedsy1ivn8j2ycc1 17.11.2011.

Federici, Silvia 2004: *Caliban and the Witch. Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Brooklyn: Autonomedia.

Flax, Jane 1990: Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory - Nicholson, Linda J. (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York and London: Routledge, 39–62.

Foucault, Michel 2008/1978–1979: *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979 (Naissance de la Biopolitique: cours au Collège de France 1978–1979)*. Transl. Graham Bulgrave. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Foucault, Michel 1986/1984: *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality, vol. III (Histoire de la sexualité, III: le souci de soi)*. Transl. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon.
- Fraser, Nancy 2009: Feminism, capitalism and the cunning of history. *New Left Review* 56. Retrieved at www.newleftreview.org 17.8.2011.
- Fraser, Mariam 1999: *Identity without Selfhood. Simone de Beauvoir and Bisexuality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freire, Paulo 1972/1968: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Pedagogia del oprimido)*. Transl. Myra Bergman Ramos. London: Penguin Books.
- Fromm, Erich 1989: *Omistamisesta olemiseen. Itsetiedostuksen teitä ja harhapolkuja. (Vom Haben zum Sein. Wege und Irrwege der Selbsterfahrung)*. Ed. Rainer Funk. Transl. Maarit Arppo. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä.
- Gambino, Ferruccio 1996: A Critique of the Fordism of the Regulation School. *Libcom.org*. Retrieved at www.libcom.org 13.2.2010.
- Giddens, Anthony 1991: *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Gill, Rosalind & Pratt, Andy 2009: Precarity and Cultural Work. In the Social Factory? Immaterial Labour, Precariousness and Cultural Work. *Theory Culture & Society* 25(7-8), 1–30.
- Gill, Rosalind 2008: Culture and Subjectivity in Neoliberal and Postfeminist Times. *Subjectivity* 25, 432–445.
- Gill, Rosalind 2007a: Postfeminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10(2), 147–166.
- Gill, Rosalind C. 2007b: Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and “Choice” for Feminism: A Reply to Duits and van Zoonen. *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 14(1), 69–80.
- Goffman, Erwin 1990/1959: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Books.
- Gordon, Tuula 2005: Toimijuuden käsitteen dilemma - Anneli Meurman- Solin & Ilkka Pyysiäinen (eds.) *Ihmistieteet tänään*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 114–130.
- Gray, Ann 2003: Enterprising Femininity: New Modes of Work and Subjectivity. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 6(4), 489–506.

- Gregg, Melissa 2009: Learning to (Love) Labour: Production cultures and the affective turn. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6(2), 209–214
- Gross, Elizabeth 1987: Conclusion: What is feminist theory? - Carole Pateman ja Elizabeth Gross (eds.) *Feminist Challenges. Social and Political Theory*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 190–204.
- Grossberg, Lawrence 1997: Cultural studies, modern logics, and theories of globalization - McRobbie, Angela (ed.) *Back to Reality? Social Experience and Cultural Studies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 7–35.
- Gunn, Richard 1987: Notes on Class. *Common Sense* 2. Retrieved at <http://libcom.org/library/notes-class> 13.3.2011.
- Halberstam, Judith 1998: *Female Masculinity*. Duke University Press.
- Hall, Stuart 1996: Introduction. Who Needs 'Identity'? - S. Hall & P. Du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London, Thousand Oakes & New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1–17.
- Haraway, Donna 1991: *Simians, cyborgs and women. The reinvention of nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Harding, Sandra 1990: Feminism, Science and the Anti-Enlightenment Critiques - Nicholson, Linda J. (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. New York and London: Routledge, 83–106.
- Harding, Sandra 1993: Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is Strong Objectivity? - Alcoff, Lida & Potter, Elisabeth (eds.) *Feminist Epistemologies*. New York and London: Routledge, 49–82.
- Hard, Michael & Negri, Antonio 2004: *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York: Penguin.
- Hardt, Michael & Negri, Antonio 2000: *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard.
- Hardt, Michael 1999: Affective Labour. *boundary 2* 26(2), 89–100.
- Hart, Linda, Kovalainen, Anne & Holli, Anne Maria 2009: Gender and Power in Politics and Business in Finland - *Kön och Makt i Norden*. Köpenhamn: Nordiska ministerrådet, 67–130.
- Harvey, David 2005: *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David 1989: *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Basil Blackwell.

- Harvey, David 1982: *The Limits to Capital*. London & New York: Verso.
- Haug, Frigga 1992: *Beyond Female Masochism. Memory-Work and Politics*. Transl. Rodney Livingstone. London & New York: Verso.
- Haug, Frigga et al. 1999/1983: *Female Sexualization. A Collective Work of Memory*. Transl. Erica Carter. London & New York: Verso Classics.
- Haug, Wolfgang Fritz 1983/1975-1982: *Ideologiset mahdit ja vastarinta*. Transl. Erkki Astala, Anja Bisso, Heikki Hellman, Airi Leppänen, Kauko Pietilä, Veikko Pietilä, Raija Sironen & Anja Turtiainen. Ed. Heikki Hellman & Kauko Pietilä. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.
- Hearn, Alison 2008: 'Meat, Mask, Burden'. Probing the contours of the branded 'self'. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8(2), 197–217.
- Hennessy, Rosemary 1993a: *Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse*. New York: Routledge.
- Hennessy, Rosemary 1993b: Women's Lives/Feminist Knowledge: Feminist Standpoint as Ideology Critique. *Hypatia* 8(1), 14–34.
- Hesmondhalgh, David & Baker, Sarah 2010: 'A very complicated version of freedom': Conditions and experiences of creative labour in three cultural industries. *Poetics* 38, 4–20.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russel 1983: *The Managed Heart. Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press.
- Holvas, Jakke & Vähämäki, Jussi 2005: *Odotustila. Pamfletti uudesta työstä*. Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Teos.
- Honkanen, Pertti 2007: *Työttömyys ja arvoteoria. Tutkielma työttömyydestä, talousteorioista ja sosiaalipolitiikasta*. Turku: Turun yliopisto.
- Husso, Marita 2003: *Parisuhdeväkivalta. Lyötyjen aika ja tila*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Hyvärinen, Matti 2007: Kertomus ja kertomuksen rajat. *Puhe ja kieli* 27(3), 127–140.
- Ikonen, Hanna-Mari 2008: *Maaseudun naiset yrittäjinä. Elettyjä käytäntöjä ja jaettuja tulkintoja yrittävässä yhteiskunnassa*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Illouz, Eva 2007: *Cold Intimacies: The Making of Emotional Capitalism*. Cambridge & Malden: Polity.
- Jameson, Fredric 1991: *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

London & New York: Verso.

Janmohamed, Abdul 1995: Refiguring values, power, knowledge or Foucault's disavowal of Marx – Magnus, Bernd & Cullenberg, Stephen (eds.) *Whither Marxism?: global crises in international perspective*. New York: Routledge, 31–64.

Jokinen, Arto 2004: Diskurssianalyysin kourissa. Sotilasteksteissä muotoutuva miehisuus - Marianne Liljeström (ed.) *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 191–208.

Jokinen, Eeva 2005: *Aikuisten arki*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Jones, Edward E. & Pittman, Thane S. 1982: Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation - Suls, Jerry (ed.) *Psychological Perspectives on the Self. Volume 1*. Hillsdale, New Jersey & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 231–262.

Julkunen, Raija 2008: *Uuden työn paradoksit. Keskusteluja 2000-luvun työprosess(e)ista*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Kaitila, Joel & Lahikainen, Lauri 2006: Performatiivisuus - Jakonen, Mikko, Peltokoski, Jukka & Virtanen, Akseli (eds.) *Uuden työn sanakirja*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 334–347.

Kalela, Jorma 2000: *Historiantutkimus ja historia*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss 1977: *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Katsaros, John & Christy, Peter 2005: *Getting It Right the First Time. How Innovative Companies Anticipate Demand*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Kimmel, Michael 1996: *Manhood in America. A Cultural History*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo, Singapore: The Free Press.

Kinnunen, Merja 2001: *Luokiteltu sukupuoli*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Kinnunen, Merja 1997: Making Gender with Classifications - Rantalaiho, Liisa & Heiskanen, Tuula (eds.) *Gendered Practices in Working Life*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire & London: MACMILLAN PRESS LTD, 37–51.

Kinnunen, Merja & Korvajärvi, Päivi 1996: Johdanto: Naiset ja miehet työelämässä - Kinnunen, Merja & Korvajärvi, Päivi (eds.) *Työelämän sukupuolistavat käytännöt*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 9–22.

Kliman, Andrew 2009: Kukaan ei tiedä, onko kriisi ohi. An interview with Andrew Kliman. Kaitila, Joel, Lahikainen, Lauri & Peltokoski, Jukka. *Megafoni* 03/09. Retrieved at www.megafoni.org 15.3.2010.

- Koivunen, Anu 2004: Teorian aika on nyt-hetki - de Lauretis, Teresa *Itsepäinen vietti*. Ed. Anu Koivunen, transl. Tutta Palin & Kaisa Sivenius. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Koivunen, Tuija 2011: *Gender in Call Centre Work*. Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Kolehmainen, Marjo & Mäkinen, Katariina 2009: Tyylihomot ja talous. Seksuaalisuus, kuluttaminen ja luokka tositelevisiossa. *Kulttuurintutkimus* 26(2-3), 47–60.
- Korvajärvi, Päivi, forthcoming: Individual Competence and Official Support: Women on Company Boards in Finland - Fagan, Colette *et al.* (ed.) *Women in Corporate Boards and Top Management*. London: Palgrave, 109–127.
- Korvajärvi, Päivi 2001: Ammatin taitamisesta osaamisen esittämiseen - Anttila, Anu-Hanna & Suoranta, Anu (eds.) *Ammattia oppimassa*. Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura 2001. Väki Voimakas 14.
- Korvajärvi, Päivi 1998: *Gender Dynamics in White-collar Work Organizations*. Tampere: University of Tampere.
- Korvajärvi, Päivi 1996: Sukupuoli työpaikalla - Kinnunen, Merja & Korvajärvi, Päivi (eds.) *Työelämän sukupuolistavat käytännöt*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 89–108.
- Korhonen, Anna-Reetta, Peltokoski, Jukka & Saukkonen Miika 2009: *Paskaduuneista barrikadeille – prekariaatin julistus*. Helsinki: Like.
- Kortteinen, Matti 1982: *Lähiö. Tutkimus elämäntapojen muutoksesta*. Helsinki: Otava.
- Koski, Leena & Moore, Erja 2001: Aikuisten koulutus elinikäisen oppimisen yhteiskunnassa – Jauhiainen, Arto, Rinne, Risto & Tähtinen, Juhani (eds.) *Koulutuspolitiikka Suomessa ja ylikansalliset mallit*. Turku: Suomen kasvatustieteellinen seura, 367–384.
- Lair, Daniel J., Sullivan, Katie & Cheney, George 2005: Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self. The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding. *Management Communications Quarterly* 18(3), 307–343.
- Lahikainen, Lauri & Mäkinen, Katariina 2012: Luokka erona ja antagonismina. *Kulttuurintutkimus* 1/2012 (forthcoming).
- Lash, Scott 1994: Reflexivity and It's Doubles. Structure, Aesthetics, Community - Beck, Ulrich, Giddens, Anthony & Lash, Scott *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Traditions and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Lavikka, Riitta 2000: Palvelukseen halutaan ”hyvä tyyppi” eli osaaminen perinteisessä teollisuudessa. *Sosiologia* 37(1), 1–17.

- Lazzarato, Maurizio 2009: Neoliberalism in Action. Inequality, Insecurity and the Reconstitution of the Social. *Theory Culture & Society* 26(6), 109–133.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio 2004: From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life. Transl. Valerie Fournier, Akseli Virtanen & Jussi Vähämäki. *ephemera* 4(3), 187–208.
- Lehtonen, Mikko 1996: *Merkitysten maailma. Kulttuurisen tekstintutkimuksen lähtökohtia*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Leidner, Robin 1993: *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinisation of Everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Leonard, Diana & Adkins, Lisa (eds.) 1996: *Sex in question. French materialist feminism*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Leppänen, Taru & Rojola, Sanna 2004: Musiikki ja tutkimus. Feministisiä kytköksiä rakentamassa - Liljeström, Marianne (ed.) *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 70–90.
- Liinasson, Mia & Holm, Ulla 2006: PhDs, Women's/Gender Studies and Interdisciplinarity. *Nora* 14(2), 115–130.
- Liljeström, Marianne 2004: Feministinen metodologia – mitä se on? - Liljeström, Marianne (ed.) *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 9–21.
- Lukács, Georg 1971/1923: *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Transl. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Lury, Celia 1998: *Prosthetic Culture. Photography, memory, identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Lury, Celia 2004: *Brands. The logos of the global economy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Macpherson, Crawford Brough 1962: *The political theory of possessive individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Marazzi, Christian 2008/2002: *Capital and Language. From the New Economy to the War Economy (Capitale & linguaggio. Dalla New Economy all'economia di guerra)*. Transl. Gregory Conti. Semiotext(e).
- Markkola, Pirjo 2002: Vahva nainen ja kansallinen historia - Gordon, Tuula, Komulainen, Katri & Lempiäinen, Kirsti (eds.) *Suomineiton hei! Kansallisuuden sukupuoli*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 75–92.

Marx, Karl & Engels, Friedrich 1996/1848: Manifesto of the Communist Party - *Marx. Later Political Writings*. Transl. & ed. Terrell Carver. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–30.

Marx, Karl 1976/1867: *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy. Volume 1 (Das Kapital, Kritik der politischen Ökonomie)*. Transl. Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review.

McDowell, Linda 2009: *Working Bodies. Interactive Service Employment and Workplace Identities*. Wiley-Blackwell.

McDowell, Linda 2003: *Redundant Masculinities. Employment Change and White Working Class Youth*. Malden, Oxford & Carlton: Blackwell Publishing.

McNay, Lois 2003: Agency, Anticipation and Indeterminacy in Feminist Theory. *Feminist Theory* 4(2), 139–148.

McNay, Lois 2000: *Gender and Agency. Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McNay, Lois 1999: Gender and narrative identity. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4(3), 315–336.

McNay, Lois 1992: *Foucault and Feminism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

McRobbie, Angela 2009: *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*. Los Angeles, London, Singapore, Washington, DC, New Delhi: SAGE.

McRobbie, Angela 2007a: Postfeminism and Popular Culture. Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime - Tasker, Yvonne & Negra, Diane (eds.) *Interrogating Postfeminism. Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 27–39.

McRobbie, Angela 2007b: TOP GIRLS? Young women and the post-feminist sexual contract. *Cultural Studies* 21(4-5), 718–737.

Merton, Robert K., 1948: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. *The Antioch Review* 8(2), 193–210. Retrieved at www.jstor.org/stable/4609267 15.1.2012.

Moss-Racusin, Corinne A. & Rudman, Laurie 2010: Disruptions in Women's Self-Promotion: The Backlash Avoidance Model. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 34, 186–202.

Mohanty, Chandra 2003: *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

- Mouffe, Chantal 2008: Critique as Counter-Hegemonic Intervention. Retrieved at transform.eipcp.net 10.8.2010.
- Mäkinen, Katariina 2010: Sukupuolittuneen ruumiin arvo. *Arvo. Peruste* 2/2010. Helsinki: Vasemmistofoorumi.
- Mäkinen, Katariina 2008: Homon kanssa posliinikaupassa. Hetero- ja homominuuden tuotteistuminen tv-sarjassa Sillä silmällä. *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 21(2), 21–32.
- Mäkinen, Katariina 2007: Sukupuoli ja minuuden tuotteistuminen *Sillä silmällä* -tv-sarjassa. Pro gradu -tutkielma. Naistutkimus. Tampereen yliopisto.
- Nellen, Annette & Efrat, Raft 2008: Teaching tax through the Socratic method. *Tax Adviser* Nov2008 39(12), 773–776.
- Nolan, Peter & Slater, Gary 2010: Visions of the future, the legacy of the past: demystifying the weightless economy. *Labor History* 51(1), 7–27.
- Ojajärvi, Jussi 2006: *Supermarketin valossa. Kapitalismi, subjekti ja minus Mari Mörön romaanissa Kiltin yön lahjat ja Juha Seppälän novellissa "Supermarket"*. Helsinki: Suomen Kirjallisuuden Seura.
- Ojala, Hanna 2010: *Opiskelemassa tavallaan. Vanhat naiset ikäihmisten yliopistossa*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Overholster, James C. 1999: Elements of the Socratic Method: Promoting Virtue in Everyday Life. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* 36(2), 137–145.
- Pateman, Carole 1988: *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Peltokoski, Jukka 2006: Postfordismi - Jakonen, Mikko, Peltokoski, Jukka & Virtanen, Akseli (eds.) *Uuden työn sanakirja*. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto, 113–124.
- Peräkylä, Anssi 1990: *Kuoleman monet kasvot. Identiteettien tuottaminen kuolevan potilaan hoidossa*. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Precarias a la Deriva 2009/2004: *Hoivaajien kapina. Tutkimusmatkoja prekaarisuuteen (A la deriva por los circuitos de la precariedad femenina)*. Transl. Laura Böök, Riie Heikkilä, Eeva Itkonen, Anna-Reetta Korhonen & Eetu Viren. Helsinki: Tutkijaliitto.
- Pietilä, Ilkka 2010: Ryhmä- ja yksilöhaastattelun diskursiivinen analyysi. Kaksi aineistoa erilaisina vuorovaikutuksen kenttinä - Ruusuvoori Johanna, Nikander, Pirjo & Hyvärinen, Matti (eds.) *Haastattelun analyysi*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 212–241.
- Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel 1999/1984: *Fortune Is a Woman. Gender and Politics in the*

Thought of Niccolò Macchiavelli; with a new afterword. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Pongratz, Hans J. & Voß, G. Günter 2003: From employee to 'entreplooyee'. Towards a 'self-entrepreneurial' work force?. *Concepts and Transformation* 8(3), 239–254.

Rantalaiho, Liisa 1994: Sukupuolisopimus ja Suomen malli - Anttonen, Anneli, Nätkin, Ritva & Henriksson, Lea (eds.) *Naisten hyvinvointivaltio*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 9–30.

Read, Jason 2009: Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the production of subjectivity. *Foucault Studies* 6, 25–36.

Rehmann, Jan 2007: Ideology Theory. Transl. Peter Thomas. *Historical Materialism* 15, 211–239.

Ricoeur, Paul 1980: Narrative Time. *Critical Inquiry* 7(1), 169–190.

Ricoeur, Paul 1991: Narrative Identity - Wood, David (ed.) *On Paul Ricoeur. Narrative and interpretation*. New York & London: Routledge, 188–200.

Ringrose, Jessica 2007: Troubling agency and 'choice': A psychosocial analysis of students' negotiations of Black Feminist 'intersectionality' in Women's Studies. *Women's Studies International Forum* 30, 264–278.

Riordan, Ellen 2001: Commodified Agents and Empowered Girls: Consuming and Producing Feminism. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 25(3), 279–297.

Roberts, Martin 2007: The Fashion Police. Governing the Self in *What Not to Wear* - Tasker, Yvonne & Negra, Diane (eds.) *Interrogating Postfeminism. Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 227–248.

Rojola, Lea 2004: Sukupuolieron lukeminen. Feministinen kirjallisuudentutkimus - Liljeström, Marianne (ed.) *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 25–43.

Rose, Nikolas 1998/1996: *Inventing Our Selves. Psychology, Power, and Personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rose, Nikolas 1989: *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge.

Rosenthal, Naomi Braun 1984: Consciousness Raising: From Revolution to Re-Evaluation. *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 8(4), 309–326.

Rudman, A. Laurie 1998: Self-Promotion as a Risk Factor For Women: The Costs and Benefits of Counterstereotypical Impression Management. *Journal of Personality and*

Social Psychology 74(3), 629–645.

Ruusuvuori, Johanna, Nikander, Pirjo & Hyvärinen Matti 2010: Haastattelun analyysin vaiheet - Ruusuvuori Johanna, Nikander, Pirjo & Hyvärinen, Matti (eds.) *Haastattelun analyysi*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 9–38.

Saariluoma, Liisa 1992: *Postindividualistinen romaani*. Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Saariluoma, Liisa 1989: *Muuttuva romaani. Johdatus individualistisen lajin historiaan*. Hämeenlinna: Karisto.

Salecl, Renata 2003: Success in Failure, or How Hypercapitalism Relies on People's Feeling of Inadequacy. *parallax* 9(2), 96–108.

Sargent, Lydia (ed.) 1981: *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism & Feminism. A Debate on Class & Patriarchy*. London: Pluto Press.

Schindler Zimmerman, Toni, Holm, Kristen E. & Haddock, Shelley A. 2001: A Decade of Advice for Women and Men in the Best-Selling Self-Help Literature. *Family Relations* 50(2), 122–133.

Sherman, Rachel 2011: The Production of Distinctions: Class, Gender, and Taste Work in the Lifestyle Management Industry. *Qualitative Sociology* 34(1), 201–219.

Sherman, Rachel 2010: 'Time Is Our Commodity': Gender and the Struggle for Occupational Legitimacy Among Personal Concierges. *Work & Occupations* 37(1), 81–114.

Seeskin, Kenneth 1987: *Dialogue and Discovery. A Study in Socratic Method*. Albany: State University of New York.

Sennett, Richard 2006: *The Culture of the New Capitalism*. New Haven & Connecticut: Yale University Press.

Sennett, Richard 1998: *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*. New York & London: W. W. Norton and Co.

Siltala, Juha 1999: Sosiologinen ja psykologinen minä - Näre, Sari (ed.) *Tunteiden sosiologiaa II. Historiaa ja säätelyä*. Helsinki: SKS, 371–465.

Silverman, David 2005: *Doing Qualitative Research. A Practical Handbook. Second Edition*. London, Thousand Oaks & New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Skeggs, Beverley 2004: *Class, Self, Culture*. London & New York: Routledge.

Skeggs, Beverley 1997: *Formations of Class & Gender. Becoming Respectable*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Smith, Adam 2003/1776: *The Wealth of Nations*. Ed. Edwin Cannan. New York: Bantam Dell.

Sointu, Eeva & Woodhead, Linda 2008: Spirituality, Gender, and Expressive Selfhood. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47(2), 259–276.

Steinby, Liisa 2008: Ryöstelijät ammutaan. Moderni minä ja mitä sille sitten tapahtui – Ojajärvi, Jussi & Steinby, Liisa (eds.) *Minä ja markkinavoimat. Yksilö, kulttuuri ja yhteiskunta uusliberalismin valtakaudella*. Helsinki: Avain, 25–66.

Strathern, Marilyn 1992: *After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suoranta, Anu 2009: *Halvennettu työ. Pätkätyö ja sukupuoli sopimusyhteiskuntaa edeltävissä työmarkkinakäytännöissä*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Tasker, Yvonne & Negra, Diane 2007: Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture - Tasker, Yvonne & Negra, Diane (eds.) *Interrogating Postfeminism. Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1–26.

Taylor, Stephanie 2001: Locating and Conducting Discourse Analytic Research - Wetherell, Margaret, Taylor, Stephanie & Yates, Simeon J. (eds.) *Discourse as Data. A guide for analysis*. London, Thousand Oakes, New Delhi: Sage in association with The Open University, 5–48.

Toscano, Alberto 2007: From Pin Factories to Gold Farmers: Editorial Introduction to a Research Stream on Cognitive Capitalism, Immaterial Labour, and the General Intellect. *Historical Materialism* 15(2007), 3–11.

Uotinen, Johanna 2005: *Merkkillinen kone. Informaatioteknologia, kokemus ja kertomus*. Joensuu: Joensuun yliopisto.

Walby, Sylvia 1986: *Patriarchy at Work*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Warhurst, Chris & Nickson, Dennis 2009: Who's Got the Look? Emotional, Aesthetic and Sexualised Labour in Interactive Services. *Gender, Work & Organization* 16(3), 385–404.

Wellington, Christine A. & Bryson, John 2001: At Face Value? Image Consultancy, Emotional Labour and Professional Work. *Sociology* 35(4), 933–946.

Wernick, Andrew 1991: *Promotional Culture. Advertising, ideology and symbolic expression*. London & New York: Sage.

Wittel, Andreas 2001: Toward a Network Sociality. *Theory, Culture & Society* 18(6), 51–76.

Wittig, Monique 1992: *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Vehviläinen, Marja 2005: Tekniikan miehisten käytäntöjen jäljillä: sukupuolen ja teknologian tutkimuksesta - Husu, Liisa & Rolin, Kristina (eds.) *Tiede, tieto ja sukupuoli*. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 150–169.

Veijola, Soile & Jokinen, Eeva 2008: Towards a Hostessing Society? Mobile Arrangements of Gender and Labour. *Nora – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 16(3), 166–181.

Veijola, Soile & Jokinen, Eeva 2001: *Voiko naista rakastaa? Avion ja eron karuselli*. Helsinki: WSOY.

Virolainen, Ilkka 2010: *Johdon coaching: Rajanvetoja, taustateorioita ja prosesseja*. Lappeenranta: Lappeenrannan teknillinen yliopisto.

Vuori, Jaana 2004: Sukupuolen ja seksuaalisuuden retorinen analyysi - Liljeström, Marianne (ed.) *Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 93–117.

Vuori, Jaana 2001: *Äidit, isät ja asiantuntijat. Sukupuoli, toisto ja muunnemat asiantuntijoiden kirjoituksissa*. Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Vähämäki, Jussi 2009: *Itsen alistus*. Helsinki: Like.

Yancey Martin, Patricia 2006: Practicing Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity. *Gender, Work and Organisation* 13(3), 254–275.

Yancey Martin, Patricia 2001: “Said and Done” versus “Saying and Doing”. Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work. *Gender & Society* 17(3), 342–366.

Young, Iris 1981: Beyond the unhappy marriage: a critique of the dual systems theory - Sargent, Lydia (ed.) *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism & Feminism. A Debate on Class & Patriarchy*. London: Pluto Press, 43–70.

Zakin, Emily 1998: Materialist Feminism and the Politics of Discourse. *Constellations*. 5(1), 125–128.

Zink, K.J., Seimle, U. & Schroder, D. 2008: Comprehensive Change Management Concepts. *Applied Ergonomics* 39(4), 527–538.

Žižek, Slavoj 1994a: How did Marx invent the symptom? - Žižek, Slavoj (ed.) *Mapping Ideology*. London & New York: Verso, 296–331.

Žižek, Slavoj 1994b: Introduction. The Spectre of Ideology - Žižek, Slavoj (ed.) *Mapping Ideology*. London & New York: Verso, 1–33.

Unpublished:

Salmenniemi, Suvi & Vorona, Marya 2012: Reading Self-Help Literature in Russia: Governmentality, Psychology and Subjectivity. Working paper in the symposium *Rethinking the Self: Transnational and Transdisciplinary Bioethical and Biopolitical Concerns*. Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies 11.4.2012.

Appendix I: Interview outlines in English and in Finnish

Interview outline in English

- What is your profession, how do you describe your job?
- Tell about your work in practice, what kinds of things are included in your daily work?
- Your education, work experience?

Brands

- Are brands or branding somehow related to your work?
- Are you familiar with personal branding, have you heard about personal brands of branding?

Working life coaching

- Tell about the concrete practises of coaching: how long does the coaching last, is it lectures, group work, individual meetings, phone conversations?
- Is there a background material that you use to plan your work?
- How much do you charge for coaching?

- What kinds of theme are included in the coaching process?
- What kinds of effect do you aim for, what do you want to change? (Is the coaching concentrated on interaction, job interviews, self-management or appearance for instance?)
- How would you describe the ideal result of coaching?
- When can you say that the coaching process has been a success?
- How do you account for the client's personality and gender in the coaching process?
- Is there a difference in whether you are coaching a man or a woman?

Clients

- How would you describe your clients?
- Is there a majority of women or men?
- In what kinds of situation do they come to meet you?
- Do they come through their organisations or recruiting services?
- Are they single persons or groups?
- Do their organisations pay for them?

Business branch and profession

- How is work-related coaching organised in Finland as a business?
 - Is there a general education that would qualify one as a coach?
 - How would you estimate the general professional background of Finnish coaches?
 - Are there differences between male and female coaches in the emphasis of coaching?
- Can you see any distinctive characteristics?
- Has there been any changes in the field of coaching, or is there a change going on at the moment?
 - How do you see the future of your field – to what direction you think coaching is headed, what seems interesting, for what is there demand?

- Could you suggest any businesses or possible interviewees involved in coaching or personal branding?

Interview outline in Finnish

- Millaisessa tehtävässä toimit, ammattinimike?
- Mitä työhön käytännössä kuuluu?
- Koulutus, kokemus?

Brändäys

- Liittyvätkö brändit tai brändäys jollakin tavalla työhösi?
- Ovatko henkilökohtaisen brändäyksen tai minäbrändien käsitteet tuttuja - oletko kuullut tai onko sinulla käsitystä henkilökohtaisesta brändäyksestä?

Työelämävalmennus/coaching

- Miten valmennus konkreettisesti etenee: kauanko se kestää, koostuuko luennoista, ryhmätöistä, henkilökohtaisista tapaamisista, puhelinkeskusteluista jne
- Onko jokin valmis materiaali, jonka mukaan valmennus etenee?
- Tai onko jokin taustamateriaali tai taustamateriaaleja, jota käytät työn suunnittelussa?
- Mitä valmennus maksaa?

- Millaisia teemoja valmennuksessa käydään läpi
- Millaisiin asioihin valmennuksella pyritään vaikuttamaan eli mitä halutaan muuttaa (keskitytäänkö esim. vuorovaikutukseen, työhaastattelukäytäntöihin, itsetuntemukseen, ulkoiseen vaikutelmaan)?
- Millainen on valmennuksen ihannelopputulos?
- Milloin valmennus on onnistunut?
- Millä tavoin asiakkaan persoonallisuus ja sukupuoli otetaan huomioon valmennuksessa?
- Onko eroa siinä valmennetaanko miestä vai naista?

Asiakkaat

- Miten asiakkaitasi voisi kuvailla?
- Ovatko asiakkaat mahdollisesti enemmistöltään miehiä tai naisia?
- Minkälaisissa tilanteissa asiakkaat tulevat valmennukseen?
- Tulevatko he organisaatioiden tai rekrytointipalvelujen kautta?
- Yksittäisiä henkilöitä vai ryhmiä?
- Maksavatko itse?

Ala

- Millä tavoin työelämävalmennus on Suomessa järjestäytynyt Alana?
- Onko jokin yleinen koulutus, jota kautta työelämävalmennukseen pätevoidytään?
- Miten arvioit suomalaisia työelämävalmennuksen ammattilaisia, millaisista ammatillisista taustoista he tulevat?

- Ovatko naisten ja miesten tekemät valmennukset painottuneita eri tavoin, voiko havaita mitään eroavia suuntauksia?
- Onko alalla tapahtunut selkeitä muutoksia tai onko jokin muutos juuri tapahtumassa?
- Millaisena oman alasi tulevaisuus näyttäytyy - mihin suuntaan arvelet työelämävalmennuksien kehittyvän, mikä vaikuttaa kiinnostavalta, mille on kysyntää?
- Osaatko vinkata työelämävalmennuksessa/henkilöbrändäyksessä vaikuttavia mahdollisia haastateltavia tai yrityksiä?

Appendix II: Interview extracts in Finnish

Very short citations have been left out.

Chapter 3

3.1.

[...] musta ois tullu tämmösen psykiatrisen yksikön johtaja, ja punnitsin siinä sitten vaihtoehtoo et otanko tämän vai menenkö tyhjän päälle yrittäjäksi ja valitsin sit sen yrittäjyyden kuitenkin siinä kohdassa, ja alkuperäisenä ideana oli että työllistän itteni ja ehkä pari muuta, [...] et mä toimin ehkä enemmän konsulttina ja mä myyn itseäni eteenpäin siitä, mutta kun on vähän semmonen James Bondimainen asenne et mikään ei riitä niin tässä sitä ollaan nyt. [nauraa] H9

Ja sitten, kun ihminen varttuu, niin jossain vaiheessa sitä alkaa miettiä, että mikä se on se todellinen minä, mitä työssäänkin haluaa tehdä, niin mulle tää henkilöstöpuoli oli kuitenkin tätä teknologiaa ratkasevampi ja mä löysin itsestäni tämän luontaisen psykologin, joka ei ollut vielä kyllä opiskellu psykologiaa, mutta se löytyy jotenkin itsestäni ilmiselvästi, että jos kouluttautuisin uudelleen, niin opiskelisin psykologiaan. H16

No mun tausta on sellanen että [tällanen diplomi-insinöörin tutkinto on vaiheeseen eli] ollu nyt viimeset 11 vuotta myynnin kanssa ja olin ekan neljä vuotta aika kovassa myyntikoulussa eli näitä viikko-osakkeita, se on aika hyvä myyntikoulu ja niillä vuorovaikutustaidoilla niin tajusin että pystyy myymään oikeestaan mitä tuotetta tahansa ja palvelua ja sitä kun on tullu kaikenlaista kokeiltua niin on sitten todennu sen että jotta se oma asenne ja motivaatio pysyy kohdallaan niin se tuote mitä myy tai palvelu mitä myy niin sil pitää olla aidosti merkitystä eli sillä työllä merkityksellisyyttä ja olen myynyt aikasemmin valmennus- ja koulutuspalveluja ja oon niistä aina tykänny ja sitten kun CV:ssä sitä nyt oli sen verran paljon niin tavallaan tää [...] kehittämispuoli on langennu mulle mutta meillä on kaikki ihan, kaikki kollegat ihan yhtä päteviä valmennuspalveluiden myyjiä et ehkä mä oon ehkä sellanen meillä tällanen tarjousgeneraattori sitten joka osaa konstruoida ne tarjoukset oikeenlaisiks mitä se tilaaja haluaa ja kyl tää vähän vaikuttaa eläkeviralta tällä hetkellä että tää on niin hieno juttu et jokainen työpäivä on erilainen, jokainen keissi on erilainen ja sinällään pääse leipääntymään tähän. H7

Mut sit kun tuli se tilanne ettei mikään raha eikä mikään auto enää korvannut sitä puuttuvaa osaa, niin sit oli aika lähtee. H10

no nyt mä oon varmaan siä huipulla, en mä tästä enää viitti ylemmäs lähtee, niin sitten tulee semmonen, sit tuli tää.. syvällisempi kerros H15

mä oon -92 valmistunu [yliopistosta] kauppatieteiden maisteriks ja oon ollu töissä vieraila.. 2007-vuoteen asti. Ja talouspääällikkönä, eri alojen yrityksissä suurimman osan ajasta. Sit 2007-vuodesta lähtien mä oon ollu yrittäjänä eli tehny konsultointia eri yrityksille ja taloushallintoon, tietojärjestelmiin liittyen mutta sit myöskin tämmöstä ulkoistettu talouspääällikkö-palvelua. Ja.. ja ja, nyt sitten kouluttamista ja tätä coachaamista, tässä viime aikoina ottanu mukaan tähän, tai ehkä pyrkiny suuntautumaan enemmän näihin uusiin asioihin. H13

Eli ne on oikeestaan kaks asiaa on esimiehisuus ja sitten on tää muutosprosessista vastaaminen ja sitten mä koulutan, jonkun verran ja siitä, sillon mä käytän nimitystä just itestäni enempi valmentaja kun tämmönen kouluttaja, koska kouluttaja on mulle ihminen, joka puhuu.. sieltä edestä ja sitten opettaa muita, jolla on tietoa enempi kun niillä osallistujilla ja ei kovin paljon osallista. Mut taas valmentaja on ihminen, joka lähtee liikkeelle siitä, et ne osallistujat, niillä on itse asiassa aika pitkälle se tieto ja valmentajan tehtävä on tarjota työkaluja siihen heidän työhönsä. [...] Eli tavallaan se valmentaja on tämmönen fasilitaattori. Ja sitten neljäs kenttä tän esimiestyön, muutokset ja sitten valmentamisen lisäksi on se, et mä toimin coachina. Ja.. lähinnä coachaan yksilöitä. Ja siä coachattavissa ne on yleensä esimiehiä tai johtoo. H14

K: ja sitten yksilövalmennuksessa, niin tuleeko nää kaikki yksityisinä henkilöinä vai?

V: ..Tulee..

K: ..Et ne ei tuu yritysten kautta?

V: Nyt tulee sillä lailla tuoltakin niistä prosesseista, joita mä oon yrityksissä tehny, et ne tietää, et mä teen tän tyyppistä. Et ne tulee sillon kun ne on vaihtanu tehtäviä tai vaihtamassa tehtäviä. Niit tulee ristiin. Eli ne on voinu olla mulla jossain T&K-hankkeessa ja ne tulee sillon, et ”Hei, [nimi] voisitko sä auttaa, et mä oon aatellu, et mä haen tätä tehtävää?” ja muuta, et tota. Tää on nyt sillä lailla, mutta pääsääntöisesti yksilövalmennukseen tulee puskaradion kautta, että yksilön suositukselta taikka. Taikka sillai, et mä en markkinoi, koska mä teen niin paljon näitä yritysvalmennuksia. H16

K: Joo, mitenkä tuota onko sun mielestä tässä työelämävalmennuksen kentällä tapahtumassa mitään muutoksia tällä hetkellä, et tähän on ilmeisesti aika uus ala suhteessa

V: Suhteessa mihin

K: No vaikka, opettajan ammattiin

V: Opettajan ammatti on vanha, se on ihan totta. Työelämävalmennusta on ollut vuosikymmenien ajan meillä on täällä suuria kansainvälisiä toimijoita [yritys], jonka kanssa mä oon itse tehnyt yhteistyötä [...] H5

K: Onko sun mielestä liikkeellä tän alan piirissä mä en tarkota nyt noita teidän jäseniä vaan sen ulkopuolella siis tämmöstä huuhaata

V: No kun mun mielestä mun mielestä pitäis sanoa näin et kun me puhutaan näin yksinkertasisista asioista ja menetelmistä jotka sopii niinku periaatteessa tämmösen yksinkertaisen moton alle että puhuminen auttaa niin ei mun mielestä se ei voi olla mitään huuhaata et kun me puhutaan niin ku yleensäkin tähän valmennukseen ei sisälly mitään ihme mantroja eikä seremonioita eikä tämmösiä näin et sit puhutaan ihan selkeesti jostain muista skientologien jutuista tai mistä puhutaankaan.

K: Just joo.

V: Mutta tuota semmonen niinku mä käytin sanaa hömppä sillä tavoin et niinkun meillä ei oo lyödä sillä tavoin pöytään niinku niin selvästi psykologian tai kauppatieteen tai mistä nyt vaan semmosia niinkun selkeitä tutkimuksia että miten tää toimii. H4

mä väitän että kaikista voi tulla coacheja, jos on halu muuttua ja ymmärtää se että tää ammatti ei oo mikään messiaan ammatti. Siis se et me ollaan tukemassa ihmisiä, me ei olla korjaamassa niitä. H10

Mä aloitin nää yksilövalmennukset siinä vaiheessa kun esimerkiksi eräs mobiilialan yritys, sen omistaja vaihtui ja tuli uhkakuva siihen, et se mun työni loppuu siellä, niin mä sillon otin tän toisen. Ja sit mulla oli kilpailukielto siinä vaiheessa aika kova päällä, että mä en voinu tehdä sitte rinnakkaisille yrityksille, niin piti tavallaan luovia, niin mä kehitin tämän konseptin siihen, että jos joku muutos tapahtuu. Tavallaan se omien riskien hallinta siinä oli lähtökohtana. Ja sitten tuli tää monimuotoisempi ja mä oon pitänyt tästä monimuotoisuudesta itse asiassa, koska siinä niinkun edistää, tavallaan tehdään niitä tiimejä, tehdään niitä luentoja, tehdään niitä erilaisia prosesseja ja sitten tehdään myöskin tätä henkilökohtasta ja sitä kautta kun on vaan muotoutuneet nyt sitten aina sen asiakkaan ja tilanteen mukaan Se on tollai. Tost markkinoinnista vielä, että musta sit kuitenkin, niin mä oon sellanen kehittäjä ja kehittyjä, niin mä oon taas kokoamassa sitten isompaa joukkoa nyt, koska mä nään nää, täs tulee sulla se kysymyksen vastaan, niin mä nään näitten markkinoitten kasvavan. H16

K: Sinulla on siis psykologin koulutus?

V: Joo.

K: Minkälainen muuten sun työhistoria on ollu että, mitä kautta sä oot tänne päätyne? Ei tarvi henkilökohtasuuksia kertoa.

V: Mä olin kymmenen vuotta lastensuojelu-, lastensuojelupiirissä tein töitä ja lopetin sen sitten, kun olin tehnyt sitä riittävästi ja sitten olis sitä sattumankauppaa sitte, pääsin tänne. H2

K: Minkälaiset koulutustaustat teillä on?

V1: No me ollaan peräkkäin valmistettu tuolta [yliopiston] kasvatustieteiden tiedekunnasta kasvatustieteen maistereiksi. Ja sitte mulla on siinä lisäksi sitte sosiaalipedagogiikan, tämmöset ammatilliset opinnot. Ja jotaki hajanaisempaa sitte et erityiskasvatus, esimerkiksi.

V2: Niin ja mullaki tuohon liittyen niin, tai siis tähän, nykyseen niin opinto-ohjaajakoulutus. H3

V: [...] mä oon koulutukseltani sosiaalipsykologi, ja, kävin viime vuonna semmosen lisäkoulutuksen ku neuropsykiatrinen valmentaja, mikä kesti vuoden, tuolla [yliopistossa] ja. Sain siitä sitte lisää työkaluja, et miten valmentaa tämmösiä erityisasiakkaita, joilla on vaikka ADHD tai Asperger tai tän tyyppisiä pulmia.

K: Joo. Liityks se, tai tavallaan se neuropsykiatrinen, niin liityks se just näihin jotenki todella psykiatristen ongelmien tai...

V: Joo, tai siihen niin ku, kyllä meillä käytiin sitä ihan tämmöst aivokemiallista puoltakin läpi, mutta tavallaan et miten toimia näitten ihmisten kaa, miten valmentaa että. Arjessa on erilaisia pulmia kuin taviksilla tai, vuorovaikutus voi olla hyvin erityyppistä että, niin ku joo, kyllä.

K: Jep. Ja, niin sä oot siis sosiaalipsykologi ja sitte sul on... Mut olitsä kuitenkin, niin ku tavallaan ,et ennen sitä erillistä valmennuskoulutusta ni olitsä kuitenkin sitä ennen myös täällä töissä vai?

V: Joo mä oon ollu nyt noin kolme ja puol vuotta täällä. Mä oon neljää eri, neljässä eri työkuvassa ollu, et nyt tässä viimesimmässä, reilut puoltoist vutota.

K: Joo. Aivan. Ootsä tätä ennen sitte, ennen tätä [yhdistys] niin ollu saman tyyppisissä hommissa vai?

V: En oo, en oo missään. Ainoostaan harjoittelussa, kaks kuukautta vankilassa olin. Mutta että muuten, mä tulín tänne sillai että mä en ollu vielä valmistunu, ni mä sitten graduni tein tässä samalla kun olin töissä. H12

K: [...] tosta henkilökohtaisesta brändäyksestä, onko se sulle tuttu?

V: Joo... Kyllä siis.... KTM-taustalla brändäys on, erinomaisen tuttu asia.

K: Joo, ootko sä tai aatteletko sä et se liittyy sun työhön millään tavalla?

V: Totta kai se liittyy, kun tekee yksin yrittäjänä niin sitä se nimenomaan on, et pikkuhiljaa pitää pystyä rakentamaan semmosta, brändiä, joka.... tuo sitten niitä uusia asiakkaita. Tai ainakin luo semmosen... vakuuttavuuden, että kun tulee uusia kontakteja, niin.... on kiinnostuneita yhtenä vaihtoehtona.

K: Joo. Miten se tavallaan, että... että mitä se oikeastaan käytännössä tarkoittaa se brändin rakentaminen, et minkälaisia keinoja siihen tarvitaan?

V: No... Se on varmaan lyhyesti voisi sanoa, että se on sen oman sanoman kirkastaminen, että mitä mä teen ja... mitkä on mun tavoitteet. Että ei yritä tehdä ihan kaikkea koko maailmassa ja olla ratkaisuna kaikkien asiakkaitten kaikkiin ongelmiin, vaan keskittyä johonkin tiettyihin alueisiin ja... sitä kautta sitten... vahvistaa sitä omaa osaamistansa ja toisaalta vahvistaa sit sitä mielikuvaa mikä sillä mahdollisella kohderyhmällä on niin itsestä.

K: Joo... Oletko sä ajatellut, että sä voisit myös valmentajana tehdä ikään kuin henkilökohtaista brändäystä? Et voisiko se mennä myös niin päin?

V: Mä en ihan ymmärrä, eli siis...

K: Tai tavallaan että koska on olemassa myös sellasta valmennusta, jossa autetaan ihmisiä sen oman henkilökohtaisen brändin luomiseen, niin oletko sä ajatellut, että sä voisit...

V: Aa, en en, semmonen coach mä en oo, koska se on enemmän taas sitten markkinointipuolen ihmisten juttu, joo. H13

Olen tietoinen että brandini olen mina ja olen myös itse tuotteeni paras mainos ja edustaja, joten coachin täytyy ”practice what they preach”. Olla roolimalli. H17

nyt on hirveen... hirveen hienoa puristaa sitä kaikkea semmoseen kompaktiin pakettiin, mitä se oikeasti on, mitä siitä saa tämmöstä [minun] näköistä juttua irti. Et monta kuukautta tässä on mennyt niin kuin nyt alkaa valjeta se, semmonen, kiteytymä, että mikä se mun, miten mä sen osaamiseni kiteytän. Että kyllä tääkin on ensimmäinen versio, mutta se alkaa nyt olla hahmolla kuitenkin. H15

Mä istuin viimiset vuodet, silloin kun mä olin vielä tuolla pörssiyhtiöhelvetissä, mä istuin johtoryhmässä jossa mä olin ainoa nainen ja kaupallisella taustalla kun kaikki muut oli miehiä ja diplomi-insinöörejä. silloin mä tietyllä tavalla niin kuin tunsin todellista tuskaa siitä ettei ollut enempää naisia jotka ois raivannut sitä tietä jo aikaisemmin että silloin näki että kyl sai niin kuin oikeesti tehdä hemmetisti enemmän hommia saadakseen oman äänensä kuulluksi. Ja oikeesti piti niin kuin kirotta aika kovaa ja todeta että hei mullakin on aivot ja olkaa ystävällisiä ja kuunnelkaa hetken aikaa. Se just että naisellinen keinohan olis ollut sitten esimerkiksi kävellä ylimpään johtoon ja sanoa et pojat ei kuuntele mua mut että mä päätin että mä tappelen sen tilani siellä. Ja sit kun lopunkaiken kun mä lähdin talosta niin mulle soitti yks näistä johtoryhmän jäsenistä ja pyysi anteeksi että hän ei ollut puolustamassa mua siinä kun se näki, että mä räpiköin siellä niin kuin hulluna johtoryhmässä ja näki kyllä että mikä on niin kuin se kohtelu suhteessa nais – jos mä ois ois ollut mies niin mulla ois ollu ihan toisenlainen äänivalta siellä. Mutta kyl mä sitten sain ne asiat vietyä eteenpäin mitä mä halusin mut niin kuin tosissani sain tehdä töitä. H10

mä olen nuori naisjohtaja niin mulla on aika voimakkaasti se ajatus juuri siitä että ei täällä kaikkeen hommaan miehiä tarvita niin vahvasti että voi nainenkin tehdä monia asioita ja ehkä alkuun mä oon joutunut aika voimakkaasti myös vakuuttamaan sen että mä oon 26-vuotiaana perustanut yrityksen niin sillon joutui olemaan tiukasti se jakkupuku päällä ja tukka nutturalla ja käyttämään silmälasia jotta näyttää vanhemmalta ja on jollain tavalla hyväksyttävämpi varsinkin jossain neuvotellessa jossa mä neuvottelen viiskymppisten miesten kanssa, mutta että nyt kun ollaan tässä vaiheessa ja mulla on kuitenkin suht koht iso yritys ja muuta niin uskaltaa myöskin

olla sitten rennommin ja mun ei tarvitse enää ajatella, toki päälle kolmekymppisenä ei enää olekaan mikään nuori nainen niin kuin siinä mittakaavassa, niin kyllä varmaan on ja kaikki jotka meille tulee töihin niin tietyllä tavalla täytyy myös hyväksyä se että johtaja on nainen ja aika monesti myös nuorempi kuin mitä ihmiset jotka meillä työskentelee. Mut se on myös ehkä osittain ollu meillä semmonen markkinointivaltti et meille on tullut hyvin täpäköitä naisia joilla on perusperiaatteena ollut se että heitä kiinnostaa työskennellä yrityksessä jossa on nuori naisjohtaja vetämässä sitä, koska monesti ehkä meidän, monet asioiden arvomaailmat voi olla vähän erilaisia. H9

Mun ihmiskäsitys on sellanen että mä en sukupuolta erittele itse. Eli minusta sanotaan, vaikka mä oon tällanen pieni, sirpakka nainen, niin sanotaan monta kertaa niissä projekteissa, että mä oon hyvä jätkä, tyyliin. Et mun oma persoonallisuus on sellanen, että mussa on enemmän voimaa ja vahvuutta kuin ulopsäin näkyy. Niin mä asennoidun, mulla on monta veljeä itselläni ja mä oon isosta sisarusarjasta, niin mä asennoidun molempiin sukupuoliin samanvertaisesti. Niin siihen peilaten, niin valmennuksessa sillä ei oo mitään merkitystä mulle sillä sukupuolella. [...] se, mikä on ihmisen sen tavoitteen ja elämänvaiheen tilanne, niin on enemmän ratkasevaa kuin sukupuoli. [...] Se varmaan tulee siitä että mä oon oppinu sen tasa-arvo-ajattelun ihan itse niin selkeenä. H16

3.2. Working with clients

niin mulla rupes heräämään huoli siitä et kuka auttaa sit näitä yksittäisiä ihmisiä jotka on sit siinä yt-neuvottelurumbassa ja mistä ne saa voimat siihen et ne selviää tästä niinkun niitä vaan heitellään resursseina sinne sun tänne. H10

ihminen motivoituu jotain kohti niin miten häntä vois auttaa motivoitumaan sellasia asioita kohti jotka vievät häntä eteenpäin siihen mihin hän haluaa. H10

Itse asiassa siellä on kaks juurta. Toinen tulee jenkeistä joo kyllä, ja jenkeissä se on adaptoitu viel lähemmäs bisnesmaailmaa mut sit sen toinen lähtökohta on Englannista, jossa coachingia käytettiin – no se tulee tietysti opiskelijamaailmasta missä on tämmönen coachi joka on ehkä tuutorinomainen hiukan mut sit on kanssa sosiaalisesti yhteiskunnan ulkopuolelle ajautuneita ihmisiä autettiin löytämään omat voimavaransa ja asettamaan itsellensä tavoitteita, joskin pikkusia tavoitteita mut niin että he pikkuhiljaa tuli semmonen et hei itse asiassa mä olenkin nyt se joka vastaan tästä mun omasta elämästä ja tekemällä asioita toisin mä voin itse päästä takas niinku sille polulle joka vie sit siihen et mulla on oma elämänhallinta. Et sosiaaliset taustat mut sit tällä on toki myös liike-elämän taustat. Et viimiset 20 vuotta tää on ollut hyvin kasvava ala ympäri maailmaa ja kyl niinku jenkko-coachaus ja keskieuropalainen coachaus pikkasen eroaa toisistaan tuol jenkeissä tuntuu siltä et siillon pikkasen enemmän tämmönen new age juttu siellä taustalla joka ei mun mielestä oo ollenkaan paha asia niin kauan kuin tiedetään kuitenkin sitten mitä ollaan tekemässä. Niin ihan hyvä koska new agessahan on valtavan kauniit arvot ja muut mut se on enemmän ehkä semmonen life coaching maailma toi jenkit, kun taas sitte esimerkiksi Saksassa niin tää on merkittävä bisneksen kehittämisväline. H10

Mä sanoisin kyllä että jos tiivistää sen yhteen sanaan niin se sana on kirjava. Siis monenlaista löytyy ja mä voisin oikeestaan niinku jaotella ne niinku ääripäät sillä tavoin että toisessa päässä on ihmiset joilla on jollakin tavoin psykologin koulutus tällanen terapia- ihmistyö-tunnetyökoulutus ja sitten toiseessa päässä on ihmisiä joilla on niinkun ihan mikä tahansa koulutus ja sit kokemusta siitä työstä, siitä ympäristöstä josta ne asiakkaat on. H4

No kun mä olin ne koulutukset käynyt niin tietyl tavalla opin ymmärtämään erityisen paljon sitä et tää on äärimmäisen vahva työkalu ja väärissä käsissä tai ymmärtämättömissä käsissä niin se aiheuttaa ihmisille huomattavasti enemmän ongelmia kuin että se hyödyttäis ketään ja mussa on vähän tämmöstä moraalinvartijan vikaa siinä suhteessa et mä en halunnu, et tää ala muuttuu sellaiseksi. H10

Et ainoa asiantuntija coaching-suhteessa on se asiakas, joka on oman elämänsä asiantuntija. Ja jos mä rupean coachina antamaan neuvoa ihmisille et minkälaisia tavoitteita sun pitää itselles asettaa tai että mitä sun pitäis tehdä jotta sä saisit paremman henkilöbrändin, niin mä oon jo astunut yli sen rajan mikä on niinku coachingissa eettistä. Koska mä en voi tietää sun elämästä että mikä on siihen parasta vaan sä itse tiedät sen parhaiten. H10

Mitä siellä tehdään niin mun rooli pääasiassa on vaan esittää kysymyksiä. Ja mä yleensä sanon et mä esitän tyhmiä kysymyksiä. Eli mun rooli on esittää sellasia kysymyksiä joita kukaan ei välttämättä oo aikasemmin esittänyt ja mun tehtäväni on myös ihmetellä. H10

Koska hirveen useinhan me tehdään sellasia valintoja joista me oletetaan et yhteiskunta vaatii, vanhemmat vaatii tai joku vaatii ja mun tehtävä on tavallaan olla sillä tavalla tyhmä et mä en ymmärrä näist yhteiskunnan normeista mitään vaan mä esitän kysymyksiä, aijaa, mitä se tarkoittaa. Ja se lisää taas sitä oivaltamista et totta muuten miten niin mun tarvii olla 12 tuntisia työpäiviä ollakseni niinku hyvä työntekijä, kuka niin sanoo? Ja mun rooli on siinä se. H10

No tota mulla on tämmönen tosi epätieteellinen mittari. Mä nään sen mun asiakkaan silmistä. Eli tota sillon kun jokaisessa coaching-istunnossa siinä vaiheessa kun mun asiakkaan silmissä välähtää mikä se sit ikinä onkaan, se on voima tai se on energia tai se on ilo tai jotain semmonen niinku että hitto mä oon makee tyyppi. H10

Sillä on vaikutuksensa. Sillä on toki vaikutuksensa. Mä en näe et se on ensisijaisen tärkeä mut toki sillä on merkitystä. Siis sillä tavalla et kun me ihmiset ollaan ihmisiä me tehdään niinkun kun meidän aivothan toimii tälleen hyvin stereotyyppisesti et me aika nopeesti niinku laitetaan ihmisiin leima, tahtomattammekin. Sillä tavalla että mitä me hänestä nähdään. Ja jos haluaa sitten tietyllä tavalla niinkun vaan tehdä tämmösiä enhancement-palasia siihen omaan brändiinsä. Niin toki se että jos mä viestin olevani strategisti ja mun tavoitteeni on olla hallitusammattilainen jonain päivänä. Jos mun tavoitteeni on olla hallitusammattilainen ja mä haluan viestiä strategista, strategistiä, niin mun ei välttämättä kannata ilmaantua mun tyypillisimmässä asussa eli farkuissa ja villapaidassa paikkaan jossa mä yritän tehdä niihin ihmisiin vaikutuksen jotka uskoo tai on uskomatta siihen että musta voisi olla hallitukselle hyötyä. Sillä tavalla siitä on vaikutusta tai on merkitystä mut se että – mä en nyt, liike-elämä on nyt varmaan yks rajatapaus. Mut kyl mä enemmän uskon kuitenkin siihen että sitten kun ihminen pukeutuu sillä tavalla että hänellä itsellään on varma olo tai viihtyy itsessään niin kyllähän se taas mitä ulospäin kuvastuu siitä ihmisen innostuksesta niin varmasti korvaa paljon sitä jos se pukeutuminen ei oookkaan täysin konservatiivista tai sopivaa just siihen maailmaan. H10

esimerkiks sitte tän tarinan lisäksi me voidaan tehdä erilaisia persoonallisuustestejä jotka kertoo jotain eikä niin että sen persoonallisuustestin jälkeen nyt sä oot täs lokerossa ja nyt sä oot tämmönen vaan enemmänkin sit haastatellaan tai haastetaan ihmistä miettimään sitä että no okei ootsä mielestäs tällänen. Mikä tässä on nyt ihan selvästi sitä mikä on sussa ominaista. Ja must on tullu ihan – mä oon aina ollut sitä mieltä et persoonallisuustestit ei kerro ihmisestä yhtään mitään. Mut kun ne osaa sillain oikeella tavalla ottaa ja löytää sieltä niinku et mikä mulle on oikeasti ominaista, nyt musta on tullut ihan ylpeä niinku tiettyjen tämmösten ominaisuuksien kantaja. H10

Siinä coaching-keskustelussa puhutaan koko ajan vain tän yksilön tavoitteista. Kun taas business coaching on tämmönen kolmitahonen. Siinä puhutaan organisaation tavoitteista ja tän yksilön tavoitteista ja coachin tehtävä on pitää huolta että ne molemmat tulee tasapuolisesti edustettuina siinä keskustelussa. H10

Se että kuka mun asiakkaani loppujen lopuksi on että jos nää tavoitteet on hyvin ristiriidassa toistensa kanssa tai mä huomaan et jommankumman arvomaailmaa rikotaan. Ni mun asiakkaani – ja tää on mun henkilökohtanen valinta, mä tiedän myös coacheja jotka on tehny toisenlaisen henkilökohtasen valinnan – vaikka rahat tulee organisaatiosta ni mä nään, että ainoo ihminen joka on tietyllä tavalla mun huolenaiheeni sillä hetkellä on tää ihminen ketä mä coachaan. Ja mä perustelen sen sillä että organisaatiolle on edullisempaa pidemmän päälle et jos ihminen on väärissä tehtävissä tai sellasissa tehtävissä jotka rikkoo tän ihmisen tai uuvuttaa tai kuinka vaan tai ei vaan niinku hänen vahvuutensa ei tuu hyödynnettyä, ni on myös organisaation etu et tää ihminen itse keksii et hei mä voisinkin valita toisen reitin. Mut et täst, tää on varmaa kans coachikohtanen tää ero. H10

varsinkin tääl julkisella puolella, niin tuntuu olevan hirmusessa mylläkässä työntekijät ei tosiaan tiedä mitä tapahtuu, meille ei kerrota mitään, lehdest saadaan lukee, niin sit on... mieli pyörii levottomana sen asian ympärillä, mitä huomenna mitä tapahtuu ja sitä yritetään käydä sitä muutosprosessia sitten läpi siinä, että johtuuko tää meistä vai muista. Keskitytään niihin asioihin, mitkä on meidän omissa käsissä... eikä niihin, jotka on korkeimmassa kädessä. H15

Johto on kaiken yläpuolella tai luulee olevansa ja ei tää meitä koske, hoida noi kuntoon.. siis melkein rivien välistä lukis toimeksiannosta, et muuten menis ihan hyvin, mut meil on työntekijöitä, jotka ei nyt ymmärrä mist on kysymys, voisitko selittää nää asiat niille, niin et ne ymmärtää. H15

selvästi näkee, että ei niitä ny oikein oo kuunneltu saati kunnioitettu, ja mä en voi lähtee haukkumaan niitten kuorossa sitä työnantajaa, toimeksiantajaa niin välillä tulee semmonen olo, että mä löydän itteni selittelemästä, työnantajan motiiveja. Enkä mä, eikä sekään oo hyvä rooli, et jos siinä, siihen menee kovasti niin kyllä ne huomaa sen, että jaa sä ootkin täälä työnantajan kätyrinä, sun on käskettykin näköjään selittää meille musta valkoseks. Se on hyvin lähellä joskus semmonenkin jutska. Koska mä en voi nähdä asiaa toisaalta niin mustana kun se pahimmillaan se porukka puhuu.. et kaikki on syvältä sieltä.. Mä yritän ettiä niitä positiivisia valosia pilkkuja, et onks nyt ihan, onks jotain poikkeuksia. Millon on ollu asiat hyvin, mitä silloin tapahtu. Mitä jos asiat menis paremmin, mitä pitäs tapahtua. Ja se vainoharhanen kuulija taikka osallistuja niin kyllä saattaa tän ristiriidan hiastaa ja havaita, että.. se on semmosta.. se on semmosta.. välivänkärin hommaa.. Et kyllä muutostilanne, niin kyllä se, johdon ajatukset voi olla justiin se, et selitä noille ja sitten työntekijöiden odotukset, että selitä niille. H15

se on julmaa palautetta mitä sielt tulee, vaikkakin ne on tietysti usein siinä tilanteessa ne on affektissa, sillai et täälä ei oo ketään työnantajan edustajaa eikä esimiestä paikallaan, annetaan tulla nyt tonne konsultin retaleelle kaikki ja vähän dramatisoidaan. H15

mä meen aina syvälle, sinne ihmisten tasolle, yksilöiden tasolle, mä kuuntelen kaikkia H15

mulle sopii ihan hyvin tämmönen.. hoiva..yhteisöjen coachaaminen, mä ymmärrän sitä puhetta, mä ymmärrän ihmisen tunne-elämää ja sen vaikutusta käyttäytymiseen, ei se tuu mulle yllärinä mitenkään, koska ne voi olla joskus vähän rajujakin.. H15

Suurin homma, suurin.. ansio kuitenkin kuuluu niille ihmisille, jotka siinä työyhteisössä toimii, niin johdossa kun.. työntekijäportaassakin, et niitten ajatusmaailma on muuttunu ja et ne haluaa jotain yhteistä, et niil on yhteneväisempi näkemys siitä, mitä tavoitellaan, vaikka ne lähtis eri teitä.. mut et jotenkin semmonen yhtenäisempi.. yhtenäisempi näky siitä tulevaisuudesta ja että ymmärrys on lisääntyny puolin ja toisin, siitä yhteisestä realiteetista, mikä on tässä edessämme tai sitten tavoitteesta, joka on kauempana H15

Chapter 4

4.2. Resisting and managing change

muutosvastarinta [...] ei mitään muuta kun perusteluiden kysymistä, kyseenalaistamista, miksi tämä muutos, mutta kun se jos sekin koetaan loukkaavana, et mitäs tommosia kyselet, tää on päätetty jo, senkun sopeudut. Siihen kuka tahansa terve ihminen pistää hanttiin. H15

Ihmiset ei tänä päivänä tajua että kaikki johtaminen on, ja toiminta oikeestaan muutoksen toimimista, muutoksen johtamista, elikkä se kuinka yhteiskunta on muuttunu, kuinka nopeaksi, niinku toimintaympäristön ulkoinen muutos on menny ni se tavallaan edelleenki yllättää ihmiset. H11

et tää hyökyy, tulee joku hyökyaalto mun niskaan tää näitten ihmisten.. jotkut muutosvastarinta tai näin. H14

4.3. Personal transformations

Ja se lähtee siitä, tavoitteen määrittelystä aina se valmennusprosessi liikkeelle, mutta sen sisältö ja sen luonne tulee sitten siitä mikä on sen asiakkaan tavoite, että jos on haasteena tehdä yksittäinen ansioluettelo, niin se prosessi ei kovin kauaa kestä, mutta yleensä siihen kiedotaan kyllä sitten se koko muutosprosessi, että mihin sitä käytetään ja mistä tilanteesta asiakas lähtee ja miten sitten kunhan miettii eri vaiheissa, että uskaltaako tai rohkeneeko tehdä niitä muutoksia, niin taas ne motiivit sinne taustalle, että onko se muutos tässä vaiheessa tai jossain muussa vaiheessa hänelle tarkoituksenmukainen. H16

Meidän ytimessä on se ihmisen asenne [...] mä itse teen ne päätökset mitkä liittyy mun elämänhallintaan, mun ruokailutottumuksiin, mun liikuntatottumuksiin, mun elämäntapoihin. Ja se sama asia se asenne, et haluunks mä tehdä itselleni terveellisemmän elämän vai en. Et sitä on turha työnantajan miettiä et jos ei yksilö tee sitä päätöstä niin, ei mitkään kuntokuurit eikä mitkään liikuntakestit auta siihen, jos ei ihminen itte halua vaikuttaa omaan terveyskäyttäytymiseen. Eli aina ku sana käyttäytyminen esiintyy, sen takana on aina se oma halu ja asenne toimia ja se on se millä me operoidaan ja mä väitän et työelämässä on kasvava tarve, kun puhutaan suomalaisesta yhteiskunnasta, niistä haasteista mitä meillä on, kasvava tarve operoida sillä alueella. Koska se on ainut alue missä tehdään pysyviä muutoksia, eikä vaan keksitä tämmösiä kikkoja ja kepposia, jotka saattaa lyhyellä aikavälillä tarkasteltuna näyttää joltakin mut ei tuu mitään pidempää tulosta. H11

Toinen onnistumisen mittari on kyllä siinä, et se asiakas on sen voimaantumisen kokenu, et ne omat oivallukset ne tulee pintaan. H16

Asiakas saavuttaa halutun tavoitteen ja on oppinut hallitsemaan elämänsä niin, että hän voi jatkaa siitä eteen- ja ylöspäin itsevarmasti vahvalta pohjalta. H17

tulee tietosemmaks omista vahvuuksista ja voimavaroistaan. H14

ja aina tähtää siihen asiakkaan omaan oivallukseen ja sitä kautta voimaantumiseen, että innostus ja energia syntyy siinä. [...] Se näkyy ihmisessä ihan kokonaisvaltaisesti kun se löytää sen clue:n, että ”hei, että tässä tää pullonkaula on”, et joku sellanen, joku asia. H16

Kaikki löytyy jokaisesta ihmisestä sisältä. H11

Jokasella meistä, ihan jokasella on ihan valtava reservi mukana jo täällä minussa sisällä, hirvittävä potentiaali, oppia, kehittyä, kasvaa, ihan mitä vaan. Jos me saadaan se käyttöön. Et mä haluan kehittää ihmisten käsitystä itsestään, identiteettiään sillä että he tajuaa sen että jokasessa meissä on aidosti valtava potentiaali. Ja se on siellä, ja musta itsestä riippuu että lähenkö mä ottaa sitä käyttöön vai en, haluunko mä tutustua siihen puoleen itsessäni, että mitä mä oikeesti voisin jopa osata jos mä vaan haluaisin, jos mä avaan oppimiseen johtavan oven. H11

4.4. Becoming strong women

On varmaan jo pelkästään siitä et kun mä olen nuori naisjohtaja niin mulla on aika voimakkaasti se ajatus juuri siitä että ei täällä kaikkeen hommaan miehiä tarvita niin vahvasti että voi naisenkin tehdä monia asioita ja ehkä alkuun mä oon joutunut aika voimakkaasti myös vakuuttamaan sen että mä oon 26-vuotiaana perustanu yrityksen niin sillon joutu oleen tiukasti se jakkupuku päällä ja tukka nutturalla ja käyttää silmälasia jotta näyttää vanhemmalta ja on jollain tavalla hyväksyttävämpi varsinkin jossain neuvottelussa jossa mä neuvottelen viiskymppisten miesten kanssa, mutta että nyt kun ollaan tässä vaiheessa ja mulla on kuitenkin suht koht iso yritys ja muuta niin uskaltaa myöskin olla sitten rennommin ja mun ei tarvii enää ajatella, toki päälle kolmekymmpisenä ei enää ookaan mikään nuori nainen niinkun siinä mittakaavassa [...]. Mut se on myös ehkä osittain ollu meillä semmonen markkinointivaltti et meille on tullu hyvin täpököitä naisia joilla on peruseriaatteena ollu se että heitä kiinnostaa työskennellä yrityksessä jossa on nuori naisjohtaja vetämässä sitä. H9

K: Ja onko jotain sellasia eroja, mitkä liittyy ikään tai sukupuoleen, mitkä on ikään kuin joko niissä ongelmissa tai tilanteissa, jota ratkaistaan tai sitten johonkin muuhun asiaan liittyvää?

V: [...] se mun ihmiskäsitys on sellanen, että mä en sukupuolta erittele itse. Eli minusta sanotaan, vaikka mä oon tällanen pieni, sirpakka nainen, niin sanotaan monta kertaa niissä projekteissa, että [...] on hyvä jätkä, tyyliin. Et mun oma persoonallisuus on sellanen, että mussa on enemmän voimaa ja vahvuutta kuin ulospäin näkyy. Niin mä asennoidun, mulla on monta veljeä itselläni ja mä oon isosta sisarusarjasta, niin mä asennoidun molempiin sukupuoliin samanvertaisesti. Niin siihen peilaten, niin valmennuksessa sillä ei oo mitään merkitystä mulle sillä sukupuolella. [...] se, mikä on ihmisen sen tavoitteen ja elämänvaiheen tilanne, niin on enemmän ratkasevaa kuin sukupuoli. [...] Se varmaan tulee siitä, että mä oon oppinu sen tasa-arvoajattelun ihan itse niin selkeenä [...] H16

Mutta luonnollisesti sitten naisilla kytkeytyy monta kertaa myöskin se rooli työssä ja perheessä vahvemmin kujiin miehille, et siinä tulee se ero. Et naisia joutuu enemmän tukemaan ja valmentamaan siihen ajatteluun, että he pitävät puolensa. Miksi olen hyvä uravalmentaja naisille on se, että mun kauttani on ainakin edistynyt semmonen asia, että naiset osaa vaatia samaa palkkaa. H16

Mut se on myös ehkä osittain ollu meillä semmonen markkinointivaltti et meille on tullu hyvin täpäköitä naisia joilla on peruseriaatteena ollu se että heitä kiinnostaa työskennellä yrityksessä jossa on nuori naisjohtaja vetämässä sitä. H9

K: Tuleeks koskaan semmosia asiakkaita joiden ongelma tai joiden ongelmaan liittyy jotenkin sukupuolten tasa-arvoon liittyvät ongelmat ni siellä työpaikalla?

V: [...] voi olla osaltaan sitä että tota sillan ku puhutaan niinku johtotehtävissä toimivista ihmisistä, on ne sit tai varsinkin kun ne on naisia, ni siihen ehkä jotenkin liittyy myös semmonen että siinä, se että – nyt mä, tää on mun arvaus ihan vaan tässä että ne naiset ovat päättäneet että tapahtuu mitä tahansa että he ovat siellä pärjätäkseen eivätkä ala itkeä sitä että mua kohdellaan niinku epätasa-arvoisesti H4

Onpas vaikea kysymys, enkä oo ees koskaan miettinyt sitä. Mä just satuin eilen taikka ilolla kun tulin kotiin luin sähköposteja mä sain yhden henkilöstöjohtajalta sähköpostin hän oli ollut työpaikka haastattelussa, hän siis haastattelee ihmisiä työkseen ja nyt hän oli ollut itse työpaikkahaastattelussa ja sano että pronssia tuli, että neljästä kutsutusta, oli kai yli 100 hakijaa ja 4 kutsuttiin et se oli jo voitto päästä siihen ja sitten niissä kisoissa tuli pronssia. Niin mä saatoin häntä vain onnitella sillä että hopea hävitään, pronssi voitetaan. Ja hän on nainen. Ja ne perusteet että miksi hän sitten ei ollut kultamitalitaistelussa eivät liittyneet hänen sukupuoleensa millään tavalla, [enemmänkin niihin sen organisaation näkemyksiin ja hänen näkemyseroihinsa ehkä siihen koska siinä vaiheessa ei enää ihmisen kompetenssia mitata vaan hänen sisäistä asenneilmastoaan jos niin voi sanoa.] Mä en osaa vastata sun kysymykseen siitä että – tällä hetkellä on muotia rekrytoida nainen tehtävään. H5

Chapter 5

5.2. Expression and recognition

selkeesti on 2007 syksystä, jollon tään talouskriisin voi sanoa käynnistyneen, niin on tää muutos tapahtunu ja, tää asia vielä, että kaikki, riippuu tietysti ihmistyypistä, mut kaikki ei oo mieltäny sitä, et ei turvattuja työpaikkoja oo olemassakaan. Et valmennukseen tullaan sitä varten, että haetaan sitä turvallisuuden tunnetta, että mikä se sitten voisi olla ja. Sellasesta haasteesta mä kyllä pidän, että sais ihmisen oivaltamaan tavallaan sen, että se turvallisuuden tunne syntyy ihmisestä itsestään, luottaa niihin omiin voimavaroihin ja mahdollisuuksiin ja niillä tekee sitä tulevaisuuttaan. H16

Et jos sä oot tutkija ja haluat päästä mukaan sellasiin tutkimusprojekteihin jotka tietyllä tavalla resonoi just sun osaamisen kanssa niin tekemällä näkyväksi tiettyjä asioita itsestäsi niin on todennäköisempää et sä pääset mukaan sellasiin projekteihin kun mitä sä itse haluat eikä niin et sä sit ajaudut jonnekin ja se on niinku se lähtökohta. Sit toi henkilöbrändäys liittyy aika raadolliseenkin niinku tällaseen uskomukseen tai lähtökohtaan eli että ihmiset on kiinnostuneita susta jos sulla on jotain sellasta mitä ne haluaa. Ja tää on hirveen raadollista mut toisaalta jos sen kääntää toisinpäin, jos sen kääntää itsellensä positiiviseksi niin se meillähän on kaikilla jotain. Se ei tarkoita mitään et jos sul on rahaa niin sit sä oot mielenkiintoinen tai jos niinkun viehättävä niin sä oot mielenkiintoinen vaan sulla on tietoa, sulla on taitoa jota ihmiset haluaa niin tietyllä tavalla sillan sä oot kiinnostava heille. Mut se et sulla on tietoa ja taitoa ja kukaan ei tiedä siitä ni sit ne tarpeet ei kohtaa ja siit tässä on nyt käytännössä kysymys. H10

Työnantajat vaatii oikeenlaisia tyyppejä, että usein muodollinen pätevyys on toki tärkeää mut myöskin se ihminen persoonana on hirvu tärkeä siinä työnantajalle eli hän etsii sitä oikeaa ihmistä, oikea hyvä tyyppi on se mitä työnantajat haluaa. Hyvään tyyppiin sit sisälle mahtuu paljon monenlaisia asioita mutta se että se on joustava ja se on asiakaspalveluhenkinen ja kaikki nämä asiat on tietysti tärkeitä mut ehkä se on se et pitää olla tai täytyy soveltua siihen työyhteisöön ja muuta et se on myös tärkeää ja sitä mä yritän ainaki aika paljon ihmisille myös kouluttaa, että mieti myös sitä et ketä rekrytoit että se sattuu siihen tiimiin ja se toimii siinä, koska se vie hirveesti energiaa jos ihminen on taas vääränlainen siihen porukkaan, mut ehkä se on just, mä luulen että ammatillisen pätevyyden lisäksi tulee entistä enemmän korostuu se oikeanlainen persoona. H9

brändäys tai se semmonen niinku itsensä markkinointi liittys just siihen että ku miettii niitä omia vahvuuksia ja kehittämistarpeita niin löytää ne vahvuudet, ja me niinku tietenki autetaan siinä niitten vahvuuksien löytämisessä ja sanallistamisessa. Jotta, pystyy myymään itteesä sinne työnantajalle jotta joku työnantaja vois kiinnostua. H3

K: [---] liittykö sun mielestään tällasiin, joko valmennukseen sinänsä tai näihin brändäysasioihin ulkonäkö jollaki tavalla? Tai tällanen ulkoinen olemus?

V: On siitä hyötyä. Se liittyy kyllä. Kyllä se liittyy. Ensivaikutelma on oleellinen. Ja mielikuvat, niillä pelataan paljon. Mutta sitten taas myöskin sitä, uravalmennuksessa tehtävää vasten ajatellen, niin tarvitsee myös, ja organisaatiota vasten ja sitten minkälainen on sen organisaation brändiajattelu, niin niihin kannattaa perehtyä ja minä valmentajana pyrin perehtymään kun jotain prosesseja tuen, niin niitä ei voi erottaa ja kun niihin huolellisesti paneutuu, niin ei tuu yllätyksiä, mutta kaikkein enitenhän on tärkeä, tai mun mielestä on se, että on se oma itsensä ja itsensä näköinen kokonaisuus, eikä laiteta väärin vaatteisiin ja väärin saappaisiin sitä henkilöä vaan pelkästään sitä, et se näyttäisi tai sopisi siihen organisaation brändiin. Mutta sitten taas siitä kun peilataan siinä valmennuksessa sitä, että viihtyisikö sen tyyppinen henkilö sen tyyppisessä tehtävässä sen tyyppisessä organisaatiossa, niin siitä tiedosta on hyvin paljon hyötyä. Et hänen mielikuvansa taas siitä ja sen brändin tutkiminen, niin kertoo paljon myöskin siitä yrityksestä [...]. Niin se toimii niin moneen suuntaan, et kyllä se on asia, joka on keskeistä. H16

Ja tää on tän johtamisen uuden paradigman lähtökohta et meil on kollektiivinen näkemys siitä et mitä me odotetaan toisilta ihmisiltä [...]. Minkälaista käyttäytymistä, ja sen pääsisällöt on luottamus, elikkä ne asiat jolla rakennetaan luottamusta, elikkä ne asiat jolla rakennetaan luottamusta, ne on niinku se lähtökohta. Sitä tukee turvallisuusakselilla, elikkä sillä että mulla on turvallinen toimintaympäristö, tukee arvostus. Se että mä pystyn kohta yksilön tasavertasena, arvokkaana, ei työntekijänä vaan ihmisenä. Ja osottaa sen toiselle. Ne on kaks ensimmäistä kulmakiveä sitten kaks muuta on innostus, inspiroida, motivoida, elikkä et ihmiset löytää työstään semmosen sisällön, syttyy siihen työhön. Ja siihen liittyy myöskin se tiimissä tekemisen juttu, me-henki, vahva me-henki, kaikki ne positiiviset keinot joilla kannustetaan, palkitaan ja innostutaan ihmisistä. [...] kaikki nää neljä kulmakiveä tarvitaan koska ihmisen tarvehierarkia lähtee siitä et meil on turvallisuudentarpeet, meil on sosiaaliset tarpeet, meil on kasvutarpeet. Näitten kaikkien tueksi tarvitaan nää kaikki neljä kulmakiveä. Eli ei riitä et mä oon yhdessä hyvä, vaan mun pitäis olla oikeesti aika hyvä kaikissa näissä neljässä jutussa. Luottamus, arvostus, innostus, oppiminen, tää on ydinsisältö. H11

Tää on sekä että. Elikkä takaapäin niin tää valmennus on aina yksilölähtöstä, koska kaikki ihmiset on erilaisia, meidän taustat on täysin erilaiset. Ja siitä syystä ei oo mitään massamastokonseptia olemassa. Emmä voi sanoa sulle että sun painopiste on nyt nimenomaan motivoinnissa, sä itse mietit et mikä sun tähetkises tilantees, toimintaympäristös, elämäkokemukses kohtaa on se olennainen asia. Jokasen ihmisen, mun tehtävä valmentajana on auttaa sua löytämään se oma juttu

mikä on täysin yksilölähtöstä tässä mielessä. Et tätä ei voi tehdä massamaisesti. Koska ihmiset on niin erilaisia, ja me ollaan kaikki, sehän on kaikista hienointa tietysti elämässä et ihmiset on oikeesti erilaisia ja siitä lähdetään liikkeelle. Ei ole mitään valmista ratkasua joka sopii kaikille vaan tässä prosessissa autetaan ihmistä löytään ne omat vahvuudet, omat kehittämistarpeet ja ne lähtee etenee niitten mukaisesti. [...] on oppimaan oppimisen ohjelma, eli tän tarkoitus ei oo olla tämmönen ongelmanratkasuohjelma. Vaan nimenomaan semmonen mikä antaa mulle pohjan pitkällä aikavälillä kokonaisvaltaisesti, koko elämän varrella, niinku miettiä asioita, kehittää itseäni, kasvaa ihmisenä, [...] H11

me voidaan tehdä erilaisia persoonallisuustestejä jotka kertoo jotain eikä niin että sen persoonallisuustestin jälkeen nyt sä oot täs lokerossa ja nyt sä oot tämmönen vaan enemmänkin sit haastatellaan tai haastetaan ihmistä miettimään sitä että no okei ootsä mielestäs tällänen. Mikä tässä on nyt ihan selvästi sitä mikä on sussa ominaista. [...] Koska niin kauan kuin me nähdään et ne on vaan työkaluja itsetutkiskelulle niin niin kauan se on hyvä asia. Et sit kun me mennään niinku käyttämään niitä jotenkin niinku leimana ihmisestä niin sit me ollaan tekemäs ihan vääriä asioita. H10

Elikkä siin on semmonen ajatus siitä, et meillä on tämmönen ikkuna, jos on neljä puolta tai neljä osaa, ja yks osa on semmonen ikkuna, että mina itse tunnistan, minä itse nään ja sitten toinen myös näkee, että se on semmonen julkinen ja avoin minä [---] mä itse olen tietoinen siitä ja sitten muut on siitä tietosia [---] ääripäässä on sit sellanen, että toinen ääri justiin tonne oikeeseen alareunaan, että mina en tunnista itsestäni eikä tietenkään muutkaan sitten sitä näe, tai voisivat nähdä mutta eivät sitä nää, et on joku semmonen puoli minuudesta, joka ei kommunikoidu ei minulle itselle eikä sitten toiselle. Sitten täs välis on se että minä itse tunnistan jotain itsestäni mutta muut ei nää, tai sitten että muut tunnistaa ja mina en nää, siis tällasella työkalulla on sitten rakennettu sitä kuvaa myös [...] H1

saadaan palautetta omasta itsestä ja mietitään sitä, et “mikä minä olen viestinä, ja mistä ne viestin ainekset kumpuaa”. H1

ja TYPPi esimerkiks on järjestäny semmosia ne on joku stailaajan hankkinu sinne jossa asiakkaat voi käydä stailauttamassa itteesä mutta [tauco 7 s] enemminki sitte toivottas semmosta keskustelua että mitä rakenteidesta pitäis tapahtua ja kuinka me saatas matalan kynnyksen työpaikkoja luvattua lisää eikä niin että me puurataan täällä ihmisiä että nyt te kelpaatte sinne markkinoille vaan, mieluummin katottas vähän toisesta suunnasta. [...] ne lähettää asiakkaan tänne ja sitten ne odottaa meidän tekevän jotain taikatemppeja että siitä tulis kelvolline työmarkkinoille. H2

5.3. The double self

Et ainoa asiantuntija coaching-suhteessa on se asiakas, joka on oman elämänsä asiantuntija. [...] Koska mä en voi tietää sun elämästä että mikä on siihen parasta vaan sä itse tiedät sen parhaiten ja mä luotan mun ihmiskäsitys on sellanen et sulla on kaikki taidot ja tiedot. H10

Mä valmentajana niin, mä hiippailen sinne ovelle sanon hei tuus tänne näin, mä pystyn kääntään sitä kahvaa, hei katos tänne eikö oo aika houkuttava näky, mut ihmisen pitää itte kävellä sinne sisälle. H11

Mut enempi se on tää kysyminen, kuuntelu, läsnäolo, haastaminen eli ne on tavalllaan ne, jotka siin on ne tärkeet asiat. Se ei oo mikään semmonen väline, metodi tai siinä on se coachauksen

metodi on se tärkeä asia mut ei mikään tämmönen, et mul ois joku malli, jonka avulla mä vien tai jotkut työkalut, jotka mä aina otan.. Et jumpataan ihmisen ajatuksia ja sitä ajatusprosessia pyritään edistään, ei neuvota.. et mä en sano siinä coachattavalle, et hei nyt sun, mun mielestä sun kannattas tehdä näin tai näin.. vaan hakee yhdessä niitä, et mikäs tässä nyt sit ois hyvä. H14

Tietysti on ihmisiä jotka on antautunu sen ulkosen maailman ohjattavaks. Epävarmuutta huonon itsetunnon takia niin sitä pitää tarkastella sitten tästä näkökulmasta et hei että sä oot arvokas sun pitää luottaa ittees, pitää itse pystyä tekee arvioita asioista koska sä oot sen arvonen ja sä oot sen mittanen, kun vaan uskot siihen. Ja noudattaa sitä omaa sisäistä ohjeistusta eikä vaan pelkästään ulkoista ohjeistusta. Mut suurin osa ihmisistä kyllä nii jo tänä päivänä ohjautuu kyllä siitä sisäisestä maailmasta käsin, enemmän ku ulkosesta. H11

Mut se että me ruvetaankin yhtäkkiä huomaamaan et nyt meni 20 vuotta elämästä siihen et mä oon elänyt käytännössä muiden ehdoilla, et kukas mä sit taas olin. Ja se on muuten tyypillisin ihminen joka tulee coaching asiakkaaks se on nelikymppinen ihminen. Pikkasen alle tai pikkasen päälle. Et se on se kohta jossa rupee niinku miettimään et hei kenen valintoja mä oon täs tehnyt. H10

Eli ei oo semmosta yksiselitteistä kaavaa, että kaikki tähtäis sinne makiampaan päin, vaan nyt on paljon monimuotosempaa ja ihan semmosia yllätyksellisiä uratavoitteita, jotka mun mielestä kuvastaa vaan sitä, että ihminen haluaa entistä enemmän löytää sen todellisen minänsä ja sitä varten hakeutuu valmennukseen. H16

tää eettinen puoli [...] että mitä sitten jos se coachattava rupeekin, se tunnistaa siinä, että et mä en haluakaan olla täällä töissä, enää. Niin ja maksaja maksaa prosessin, jossa se tulee esiin, niin.. aika pitkälle se kanta varmaan on se, että jos ihminen coachauksessa löytää sen, että mä en halua täällä olla töissä niin todennäköisesti hän ei oo hirveen hyvin viihdy siinä työssään eli hän ei oo varmaan paras mahdollinen sen työyhteisön jäsen. H14

sen ihmisen näkökulmat otetaan huomioon, myöskin hänen ongelmansa. Esimerkkinä tästä voisoin sanoa et mä opetin kadeteille tällästä lausetta me lausuttiin sitä 130 kaveria, yhtee ääneen lausuu luentosalissa. Tämmöstä lausetta: Minä arvostan sinua niin paljon ihmisenä ja sotilaana et minä ohjaan sinut hoitoon. Ku me puhuttiin alkoholiongelmosta. Se on huolenpitoa. Et me ei panna päätä pensaaseen, vaan ku nähään et ihminen tarvii apua ni me tehään se mitä hänelle pitää tehdä, pelkäämättä niitä seurauksia. H11

motivaatio on tunneperustaista, niin kyllä se on tosi tärkeä asia [...]. Et koska sillai sit taas sieltä voi löytyä ne esimerkiks ne esteet. Että ihminen ajattelee, et mä haluaisin tehdä näin ja näin. Mut sitten mul onkin et semmonen perusoletus esimerkiks, et emmä pysty tai mä koen että ei se toimi tai mä tuun jotenkin hylätyks, esimerkiks jos mä epäonnistun niin, kyllä niitä käsitellään. H14

pitkän työkokemuksen omaavia ja syystä tai toisesta jääneet työttömäks niin heidän kohallaan se niin, että kun on pitkään tehny samaa työtä ja ikääkin rupee olmeaan niin se itsetunto voi olla vähään hukassa et onks musta enää mihinkään ja huoliiko kukaan mua enää, kun sen pystyy kääntämään positiiviseksi [...] H6

Sitten jos [kaupungissa] 40 prosenttia organisaa-, yksityistalouksista on yksin asuvien talouksia, 40 prosenttia on jo paljon, niin sit on myös se tekijä, että kuka kuuntelee, kuka tukee, kuka auttaa tilanteissa, niin psykologipalvelut alkaa olla jo näinä aikoina melko ylikuormitettuja moninaisten elämänongelmien vuoksi H16

Et.. esimiestyö on ihan erilaista, et ei oo enää niin, et on se esimies siinä lähellä ja sil on se oma alaisten joukkonsa siinä vaan.. alaiset voi olla ihan ympäri maailmaa ja niitä voi olla ihan hirveen paljon isommat määrät, kun joskus ennen aikaan. Ja sitten paljon tehdään verkostona työtä, niin että.. ne.. ei oo enää työntekijöitä vaan ne onkin alihankki- tai siis vanhalla kielellä sanottuna alihankkijoita, tämmösiä erilaisia yhteistyökumppaneita. Ja silloin tää esimiestyö on ihan erilaista, eikä oo semmosta lähiesimestä läheskään kaikilla ihmisillä enää. Ja sitäkin tavallaan ostetaan tällai ulkoistettuna, sitä esimiestyötä tällai coachauksena. Näin mä oon sen ajatellu. H13

julkisuus on täynnä tätä “kelaa itseäsi” -tyyppistä [...]. Et se on vähän niin ku sellasta kaksterästä, et ei se oo kuintenk-, se on aika ahdistavaa sit loppupeleis kuitenkin, et taisit itekin sanoo et se monesti et kuinka valmiita ne sitten loppujen lopuks on, niin eipä siinä sit kovin pitkälle olla halukkaita. Et vältellään niit kipukohtia, koska niitä väistämättä tulee sitte, siellä on alkoholismia ja siellä on vanhempien avioeroja ja siellä, mut nää ei tuu koskaan, niistä ei saa puhua. Ei se, se puhetapa ei salli sitä, et siellä puhutaan ongelmista, vaan pitää näyttää hyvältä, pitää olla hyvä, pitää näyttää semmoselta hyvinvoivalta ja sit kumminkin faktat kertoo, [...] H1

[...] et kysytään siltä ihmiseltä mitä se tarvii ja mitä se haluaa ja viedään sitä eteenpäin.

K: No tietääkö ihmiset mitä ne tarvii?

V: Osa tietää ja osa ei, ja sitten ehkä meidän työssä yks haastavinta on se että meidän pitää välillä olla vaivan hiljaa että ei sanota se että mitä minun mielestä sinä tarvitsisit vaan yritetään kaivaa se että mitä ihminen oikeesti itse tarvitsee, se on aika työlästä joskus jos ihminen on hukassa sitten. H9

Että jotenkin se, niin ku mä sanoin ni mä oon tätä työtä tehny puoltoist vuotta, tän vuoden lopulla, no itse asias tulee kaks vuotta, ni mäkin huomaan jo tietyn semmosen, et asiakaskunta jotenkin, tulee aina vaikeempaa ja vaikeempaa. Ja sit se jotenki niin ku esimerkiks, nuoria eläkeläisiä, alle kolmekymppisiä, 20–30-vuotiaita eläkeläisiä, ni se aina jotenki itteeki sävähdyttää että, et mitä ihmettä. [...] Oikeestaan se miten mä kuvaisin sen, sen muutoksen mitä täs on tapahtunu näissä asiakkaissa niin, niin silloin ku mä alottelin tässä niin, moni asiakas oli lähellä työelämää, et ne tavoitteet asetettiin yhdessä siihen että, tän jakson jälkeen sä lähtisit vaikka harjotteleen tai menisit palkkatukitoihin tai, tai tehään ihan avoimille työmarkkinoille hakemuksia. Mut nyt pääasiassa asiakaskunta tässäki talossa, ni ne on täällä kuntoutumassa. Ne on harjottelemassa sitä, että kuinka ne pääsee aamulla punkasta ylös, ja saa päivärytminsä kuntoon ja, se näkökulma on kääntyny enemmän tämmöseen kuntoutumiseen ja, et ne, se töihin pääseminen ei oo vielä niin akuuttia. H12

Chapter 6

6.1. Maximising potential

Mä haluan vaikuttaa ihmisten minuuden, ihmisten identiteettitasoon sillä tavalla että mä kerron kaikille et hei te ootte tosi hyviä, te is on valtava potentiaali. Ihminenhan pystyy omista älyllisistä kyvyistään, resursseistaan käyttämään elämänsä aikana ehkä 10 %. Tää on tutkijoitten valistunut arvio, 10 %, joka tarkoittaa sitä et jokasella meistä, ihan jokasella on ihan valtava reservi mukana jo täällä minussa sisällä, on hirvittävä potentiaali, oppia, kehittyä, kasvaa, ihan mitä vaan. Jos me saadaan se käyttöön. Et mä haluan kehittää ihmisten käsitystä itsestään, identiteettiään sillä että he tajuaa sen että jokasessa meissä on aidosti valtava potentiaali. Ja se on siellä, ja musta itsestä riippuu että lähenkö mä ottaa sitä käyttöön vai en, haluunko mä tutustua siihen puoleen itsessäni, että mitä mä oikeesti voisin jopa osata jos mä vaan haluaisin, jos mä avaan oppimiseen johtavan oven. H11

valmentaja ei kouluta mitään, ei opeta mitään vaan tekee tietoiseksi omasta osaamisestaan. H4

6.4. Individualised potential

Niin se että brändäämisestä ylipäänsä kysytään että voiks niinkun brändejä hallita kun se on muiden ihmisten mielessä syntyvä mielikuva niin kyllä voi, kysymyshän on vaan siitä mitä sä kerrot itsestäsi ja kun sä kerrot sen riittävän monta kertaa niin pikku hiljaa se mielikuva rupee yhdistymään siihen mitä sä oot brändinä. Ja nyt kysymys on sit enemmän siitä mitä asioita haluaa viestiä itestänsä. Koska se et mä haluan – mä oon hyvin esimerkiksi systemaattinen ja mä oon ankara semmosessa tilanteessa missä ihmiset ei toimi oikeudenmukaisesti. Mut sit toisaalta mä haluan viestiä myös sitä et mä oon helposti lähettyvä ja helppo ihminen enkä ollenkaan tiukkapipo, sit toises päässä. H10

Et mun oma työ on ollu hyvin pitkälle semmosta et mä oon oikeestaan vaan ajautunut jonnekin ja sama on sitte nyt näin jälkikäteen kerrottuna mä ajattelin jos sä haluat niin mä voin näyttää tämmösen keissin siitä et miten työura kun se kerrotaan tarinana niin se voi ollakin hyvin johdonmukasen näkönen. Ja sitä on ehkä osittain sit valmennus kanssa et ihminen kertoo tarinaa omasta itsestään niiltä osin kuin hän haluaa painottaa jotain tiettyjä asioita. H10

[...] ei oo ainakaan ollu sellasta suoraa esimerkiksi toimenkuvaa tai ammattia tai sellast keskusteluu, vaan on tämmösiä vähän niin ku tällasia läpileikkaavia juttuja, mitä nyt paljon puhutaan työelämästä, että on aktiivisuutta ja on siellä – jossakin ryhmäs oli puhetta näistä alaitaidoista, että pitäis pystyy kertomaan ja antamaan itsestään palautetta jossain kehityskeskustelussa ja tämmönen tuli yks näkökulma, että tällaista taitoa pitäis pystyä kommunikoimaan tai pitäis pystyä kertomaan, et minkälainen minä olen, mitä minä haluan. Just tämmösiä henkilökohtasia asioita pitäis pystyä kommunikoimaan, että sitä voisi helpottaa se, jos ois tietoisempi niistä omista haluistaan. Mutta ei – ne on vähän tämmösiä.. miksikä niitä nyt sanottais, tämmösiä metataitotyyppisiä, [...], viestintätaidoista, siitä on oikeestaan aika paljon puhuttu, ne on tullu sieltä jotenkin läpi. Ja oikeestaan tähän viestimiseen sitten liittyikin tämä omakuva tai tämä, että mitä minä viestin. H1

Mä istuin viimeiset vuodet, silloin kun mä olin vielä tuolla pörssiyhtiöhelvetissä, mä istuin johtoryhmässä jossa mä olin ainoa nainen ja kaupallisella taustalla kun kaikki muut oli miehiä ja diplomi-insinöörejä. Silloin mä tietyllä tavalla niinkun tunsin todellista tuskaa siitä ettei ollu enempää naisia jotka ois raivannu sitä tietä jo aikasemmin että silloin näki että kyl sai niinkun oikeesti tehdä hemmetisti enemmän hommia saadakseen oman äänensä kuulluksi. Ja oikeesti piti niinku kirotta aika kovaa ja todeta et hei mullakin on aivot ja olkaa ystävällisiä ja kuunnelkaa hetken aikaa. Se just että naisellinen keinohan olis ollut sitten esimerkiksi kävellä ylimpään johtoon ja sanoa et pojat ei kuuntele mua mut et mä päätin et mä tappelen sen tilani siellä. Ja sit kun lopunkaiken kun mä lähdin talosta niin mulle soitti yks näistä johtoryhmän jäsenistä ja pyysi anteeks että hän ei ollu puolustamassa mua siinä kun se näki, että mä räpiköin siellä niinkun hulluna johtoryhmässä ja näki kyllä et mikä on niinkun se kohtelu suhteessa nais – jos mä oisin ollut mies niin mulla ois ollut ihan toisenlainen äänivalta siellä. Mut kyl mä sit sain ne asiat vietyä eteenpäin mitä mä halusin mut niinkun tosissani sain tehdä töitä. H10

mä olen nuori naisjohtaja niin mulla on aika voimakkaasti se ajatus juuri siitä että ei täällä kaikkeen hommaan miehiä tarvita niin vahvasti että voi nainenkin tehdä monia asioita ja ehkä alkuun mä oon joutunut aika voimakkaasti myös vakuuttamaan sen että mä oon 26-vuotiaana perustanut yrityksen niin silloin joutui olemaan tiukasti se jakkupuku päällä ja tukka nutturalla ja käyttämään silmälasia jotta näyttää vanhemmalta ja on jollain tavalla hyväksyttävämpi varsinkin

jossain neuvotellessa jossa mä neuvottelen viiskymppisten miesten kanssa, mutta että nyt kun ollaan tässä vaiheessa ja mulla on kuitenkin suht koht iso yritys ja muuta niin uskaltaa myöskin olla sitten rennommin ja mun ei tarvitse enää ajatella, toki päälle kolmekymppisenä ei enää olekaan mikään nuori nainen niin kuin siinä mittakaavassa, niin kyllä varmaan on ja kaikki jotka meille tulee töihin niin tietyllä tavalla täytyy myös hyväksyä se että johtaja on nainen ja aika monesti myös nuorempi kuin mitä ihmiset jotka meillä työskentelee. Mut se on myös ehkä osittain ollu meillä semmonen markkinointivaltti et meille on tullut hyvin täpäköitä naisia joilla on peruseriaatteena ollut se että heitä kiinnostaa työskennellä yrityksessä jossa on nuori naisjohtaja vetämässä sitä, koska monesti ehkä meidän, monet asioiden arvomaailmat voi olla vähän erilaisia. H9

Onpas vaikea kysymys, enkä oo ees koskaan miettinyt sitä. Mä just satuin eilen taikka ilolla kun tulini kotiin luin sähköposteja mä sain yhden henkilöstöjohtajalta sähköpostin hän oli ollut työpaikka haastattelussa, hän siis haastattelee ihmisiä työkseen ja nyt hän oli ollut itse työpaikkahaastattelussa ja sano että pronssia tuli, että neljästä kutsutusta, oli kai yli 100 hakijaa ja 4 kutsuttiin et se oli jo voitto päästä siihen ja sitten niissä kisoissa tuli pronssia. Niin mä saatoin häntä vain onnitella sillä että hopea hävitään, pronssi voitetaan. Ja hän on nainen. Ja ne perusteet että miksi hän sitten ei ollut kultamitalitaistelussa eivät liittyneet hänen sukupuoleensa millään tavalla, [enemminkin niihin sen organisaation näkemyksiin ja hänen näkemyseroihinsa ehkä siihen koska siinä vaiheessa ei enää ihmisen kompetenssia mitata vaan hänen sisäistä asenneilmastoaan jos niin voi sanoa.] Mä en osaa vastata sun kysymykseen siitä että – tällä hetkellä on muotia rekrytoida nainen tehtävään. H5

K: Tuleeks koskaan semmosia asiakkaita joiden ongelma tai joiden ongelmaan liittyy jotenkin sukupuolten tasa-arvoon liittyvät ongelmat ni siellä työpaikalla?

V: [...] voi olla osaltaan sitä että tota sillan ku puhutaan niinku johtotehtävissä toimivista ihmisistä, on ne sit tai varsinkin kun ne on naisia, ni siihen ehkä jotenkin liittyy myös semmonen että siinä, se että – nyt mä, tää on mun arvaus ihan vaan tässä että ne naiset ovat päättäneet että tapahtuu mitä tahansa että he ovat siellä pärjätäkseen eivätkä ala itkeä sitä että mua kohdellaan niinku epätasa-arvoisesti. H4