

THE READING ROOM

Sarah David and Lizzie Bentley-Bowers have selected works that they have found usefully provocative. We hope that you will find within them a useful blend of support and challenge as you consider the theme of identity.

For all those with an internal dialogue over the multiplicity of perspectives concerning our leadership and coaching, we highly recommend **The Future of Coaching** by Hetty Einzig. For us, there are so many powerful questions in this book from which leaders and coaches can reflect on their current and future roles and practice. 'Are we alive to the voice of

our own conscience, and what does it say to us? And to what degree should the coach be transparent or even overt about their values base?' Einzig's observations are compassionately offered, giving readers the opportunity to receive and reflect on provocations that can land anywhere on a scale from affirming to insightful to devastating. She challenges the relationship between our lives within and beyond work, and the role of coaches as disruptors.

For navigating change and for courageous conversations with others

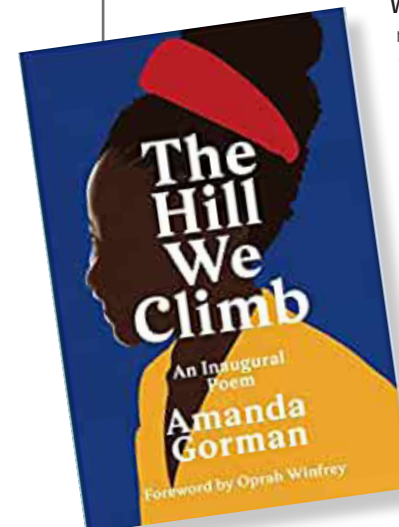
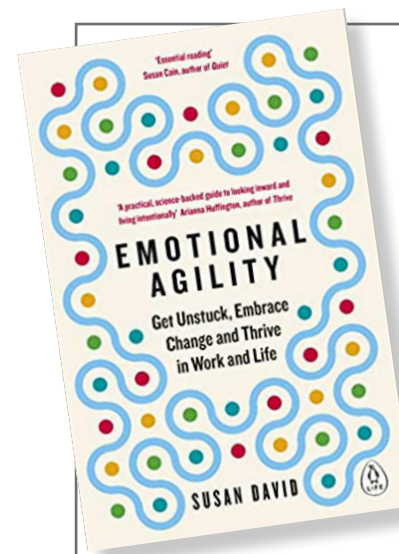
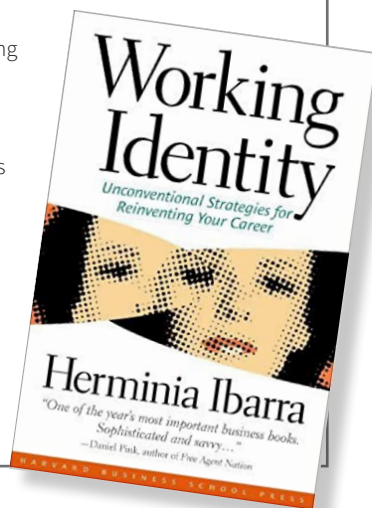
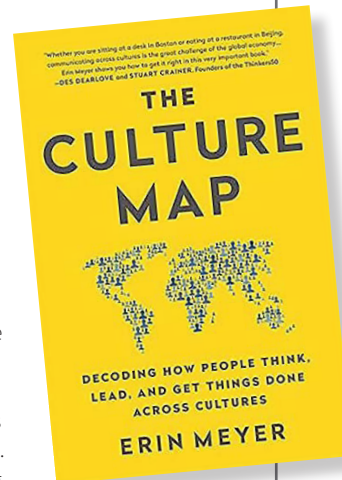
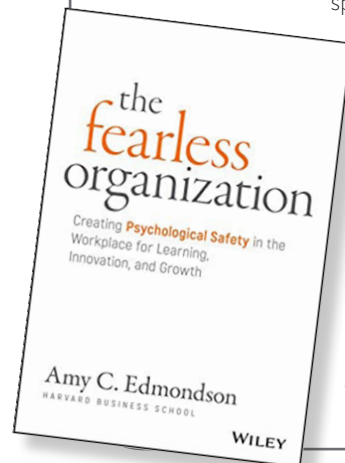
and ourselves, the starting point is arguably psychological safety. This is a term that, despite increasingly being framed as a desirable or indeed necessary skill of leadership, is in our experience more often spoken about than actually prioritised

and practised. Every time we return to Amy Edmondson's

The Fearless Organization we find new insights into what psychological safety is; what it is not; what is made possible by the presence of psychological safety; and, importantly, some ways to develop it and foster climates in which 'people feel safe enough to take interpersonal risks by speaking up and sharing concerns, questions or ideas.'

We see the world how we see the world, and for coaches and leader-coaches working in global organisations there is a need to raise not only awareness of but also sensitivity to how we are being experienced by others. **The Culture Map** by Erin Meyer reminds us of the importance of going beyond a necessary basic respect for individual perspective. Meyer draws on extensive research and multiple examples from her own and her clients' experiences to illustrate how vital additional layers of awareness of cultural difference are. Building trust, persuading, influencing, agreeing, disagreeing, listening and interrupting are just a few of the interactions that are influenced by cultural differences. Meyer reveals that although we might be open-minded and open-hearted, without a more nuanced knowledge of our differences we risk missing the opportunity to fully recognise, respect and lean into those differences.

We turn next to those moving through career changes, redundancy or retirement, or who are supporting someone navigating such changes. Full of insight, guidance, pertinent questions and prompts for reflection, Herminia Ibarra's **Working Identity** is the book Sarah has most recommended to her clients across 15 years of coaching work. Ibarra's gift is to share a multiplicity of stories of career exploration and to exhort the reader to create their own stories too; in her own words, without a 'compelling story that lends meaning, unity, and purpose to our lives, we feel lost and rudderless'. Ibarra displays deep empathy for the possibility that a career change can be 'a time of confusion, loss, insecurity,



and uncertainty', while leaning into the concurrent possibility that it could be the best thing that ever happened, going on to provide tactic after tactic to navigate these potentially parallel experiences.

In the context of the challenges and opportunities the theme of identity presents, a resource we have found particularly useful is **Emotional Agility** by Susan David.

Empathising, adapting, responding (rather than reacting) and being ok with whatever comes our way are just some of the facets of leading and coaching that benefit from us being able to name, get comfortable with and flex between a full range of emotions. By developing our emotional agility, David offers a way to 'ensure that we're not just making a living, but also truly living'.

A closing quote from **The Hill We Climb** by Amanda Gorman reminds us of the work done and the considerable work still to do to foster inclusion. It encourages us not only to reflect, but to act as members of society within our roles as coaches and leader-coaches to create the conditions for all to thrive:

'And so we lift our gaze, not to what stands between us, but what stands before us...'

... for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.'

We'd love to hear your thoughts on our choices, and to hear what would be on your reading list for the topic of identity. As well as getting in touch through social media, we are delighted to be launching The Reading Room Live – a space where we can come together to share insights from the books we have shared here, and to hear your recommendations for books and resources related to the topic that weren't on the list. Our first session is on Friday 10 March 2023 at 1pm GMT. We'd love you to join us. The Reading Room Live is a complimentary webinar hosted by the AC for all coaches and supervisors. Visit the AC website for more details and to sign up.



ABOUT THE REVIEWERS

Sarah David focuses on creating positive direction with leaders who want to make a difference. She partners with clients to clarify strategy, accelerate leadership impact and nurture positive culture. Having worked at executive and non-executive level in global and multi-site businesses, she is experienced in embracing complexity and working with leadership teams to find simple, impactful solutions. Sarah is a qualified lawyer with a strategy MBA, and is a master's-level coach with research focused on the role of leaders' mental fitness.

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Lizzie Bentley Bowers is an accredited coach working with senior leaders and teams who understand the far-reaching impact they have on both organisational outcomes and individual wellbeing, and who want to create and sustain environments in which they, their colleagues and their organisations thrive. She is skilled at supporting and challenging teams to understand and leverage their strengths, and to uncover what is getting in their way in order to increase wellbeing, trust and performance.

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