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The coaching process as a catalyst for transformation: perspectives of coaches in South Africa

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Business Executive Coaching

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ABSTRACT

South Africa is a multicultural and diverse state; executive coaches practicing in this country are likely to be presented with a myriad of issues from their clients which they themselves may be challenged by. Therefore, it is important for them to be aware of their own assumptions and beliefs which inform their worldviews and shape the way they coach when embarking on a coaching journey with a client.

This study explored how the coaching process may be transformational for executive coaches. The main theory that underpinned this study was that of the dialogic and, as dialogue is a medium for both critical moments and critical reflection, these aspects were considered as they incite the generation of new understandings and challenge previously held views to allow a shift in perspective- which is transformation. As this study sought to understand the coaches' individual experiences, an interpretive approach was taken. A total of eleven coaches who met the selection criteria were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis which resulted in several themes emerging.

A noteworthy theme in the research findings was the importance of the coach education or training that the executive coaches underwent as that led to the development of self-awareness that they required to engage with their clients at a dialogic level. Another noteworthy theme in the findings was the participants' physiological response to critical moments. The participants not only processed critical moments in their minds, but involuntarily through their bodies as well. The findings suggest that the dialogic exchange as part of the coaching process is transformative for both the coach and the client. Through the dialogue with the client, the coach's beliefs and assumptions about themselves, their environment and the people around them are challenged and ultimately changed.

KEY WORDS

Executive coaching, dialogue, critical moments, critical reflection, transformation

DECLARATION

I, Venessa Lopang Mogatusi, declare that this research report is my own work, except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Business Executive Coaching at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Signature:

Signed at ……

On the …….. day of …… 20…..

DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate this research report to the following people:

To my loving grandmother, Janet Ndaba. Although it has been many years since your passing, your legacy of faith continues to live on. Thank you for planting a seed in me that would grow to be unshakeable faith. It was through faith in a loving and infinite God that this research report was started and completed.

Then, to my extraordinary mother, Audrey Lindiwe Mogatusi. To this day I sit in awe of how blessed I am to have had a mother like you. Your tenacity, fortitude and hard-working nature rubbed off on me and without these qualities, this research report would have not been possible- thank you.

To my father, Arios Semela Mogatusi who I believe missed his calling to become a comedian. Papa, not only do you know what to say to have us rolling on the floor with laughter, you have also been gifted with great wisdom to know what to say when we encounter situations that are far from amusing. Thank you for being the father that you are to us.

Lastly, to my late best friend, confidant and incredible partner in everything, Alastair Jon Ellis Diack. Thank you for being the epitome of unconditional love. It was tragic to lose you so soon after I had embarked on this two-year journey but your undying love and support at its beginning carried me through to its end. Thank you for being the beautiful person that you were.

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To all the coaches who participated in this study, sparing their time to share their experiences with me, I would like to express my deepest gratitude. My encounter with each and every one of you left me transformed. Thank you for adding richness and depth to this study.

And finally, Modimo Ntate, Modimo wa lehodimo le lefatse. Ha hona ya tswana le Wena. Papa, ke a go leboga.

“The transformation of the world is brought about by the transformation of oneself.”

- Jiddu Krishnamurti

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

1. COMENSA- Coaches and Mentors of South Africa
2. CPD- Continuous Professional Development
3. ICF- International Coaching Federation
4. PCC- Professional Certified Coach
5. PRS- Personal reflective space
6. SNS- Sympathetic nervous system

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

This qualitative study explores how the coaching process may foster a transformational experience for executive coaches by investigating:

- Whether and how the coaches' practical experience influences their approach to the coaching process
- how coaches experience the coaching process
- whether and how the coaching process translates into a transformational experience for coaches

Cox (2013) defines the coaching process as "a facilitated, dialogic, reflective learning process" (p.1). While Bearwald (2011) defines it as a process that instigates new insights, transforms knowledge into wisdom and evokes change in behaviour to improve the quality of life. Essentially, the coaching process can be viewed as a process that generates new understandings through dialogue which results in learning. The nature of dialogue is that it offers the possibility of double-loop learning and transformation not only for the client, but for the coach as well, though the changes in either party will be unique (Armstrong, 2012; Brockbank, 2008). Figure 1 below, is the conceptual framework for the study.



Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the study

It is also a diagrammatic representation of how the coaching process may foster a transformational experience for coaches. The primary colours of yellow and blue represent the independent components of: a) the coach; and b) the coaching process, respectively. The secondary colour of green represents the fusion of these two components which results in a transformational experience. Each component is represented by circles to emphasise its completeness.

The first circle is the coach's preferred approach and level of practical experience which will inform how they facilitate this process. Barner and Ideus (2017) explain that there are three levels at which coaches can work; the first level is concerned with giving advice, the second generating insight, whilst the third level focuses on facilitating transformational learning. They argue that some coaches refrain from working at the third level because it requires a certain degree of emotional engagement that they may prefer to remain removed from (Barner & Ideus, 2017). In addition, experienced coaches are more prone to self-deception (Bachkirova, 2015) as they are likely to hold certain beliefs, views and assumptions about the process and their clients which can be a hindrance to the coaching process. The second circle is the coaching process. Dialogue is what enables the coaching process and critical moments and critical reflection can only occur within it. Dialogue is a medium for both critical moments and critical reflection (Taylor, 2011) to occur and these incite the generation of new understandings for the coach. The third circle is the transformational experience. This is first the challenging of current perspectives and then the acceptance of new ones as a result of the coaching process.

1.2 Context of the study

Coaching has been defined in a variety of ways. The International Coaching Federation (ICF) defines coaching as a collaboration between the coach and the client in a creative, stimulating process that encourages them (the client) to capitalise their potential (ICF code of ethics, 2015). Peterson (1996) believes that the process of coaching is one in which clients are provided the necessary knowledge, skills and opportunity to further develop themselves in order to live

effective lives, while Spear and Bacon (2011) state that “coaching in business contexts can generally be defined as an informed dialogue whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities, and insights in the interest of individual learning and organisational advancement” (p.xvi).

As coaching is still an emerging field (Bozer, C. Sarros, & C. Santora, 2014), studies investigating executive coaching are limited (Bachkirova, Jackson, Gannon, Iordanou, & Myers, 2017; Baron & Morin, 2010; Wallis, 2016). Although there seems to be an improvement in recent years, much of the research conducted on executive coaching focuses on its effectiveness as an organisational development intervention, as well as its impact on the coaching client, amongst other topics. Research pertaining to the impact of the coaching process on the executive coach appears to be limited (Mukherjee, 2012), especially in South Africa, and it is for this reason that this study explores this topic.

Executive coaching is a relatively new field in South Africa where it is still placed under the same umbrella as mentoring (COMENSA, 2019). Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA) acts as a non-statutory professional body for both professions. Due to the diverse and multicultural society that South Africa is, coaches in this country are likely to be presented with a myriad of issues or problems from their coaching clients. Anand, Kothari, and Kumar (2016) indicate that unemployment amongst females, black people and the youth remains high. They also indicate that South Africa is plagued by “large skill mismatches”, poor educational results, perpetuated inequality and slow job growth (p.20). Furthermore, the race divisions within the South African labour force are apparent, as 42% of black and coloured workers find themselves in low-paid employment compared to 11% of Indian and only 6% of white workers (Bhorat, Lilenstein, Oosthuizen, & Thornton, 2016). Gauteng is one of nine provinces in South Africa. Although it is geographically the smallest, it is the most densely populated province with an approximated population of above 12 million (Statistics South Africa, 2011). Gauteng is considered South Africa’s financial centre; however, issues affecting the country, such as those highlighted above,

tend to be more acute in an urban environment such as Gauteng (Mushongera, Zikhali, & Ngwenya, 2017).

Due to the social and political climate, executive coaches in South Africa coach executives who function in unpredictable corporate environments. Some of the challenges executives face today include corruption (Luiz & Stewart, 2014), increasing retrenchments and brain-drain, amongst others. Challenges such as these are inclined to affect not only the executives' performance, but their entire well-being. In a country as diverse as South Africa, these challenges are likely to present differently with different executives. Shoukry (2016) states that coaches working in difficult environments are likely to be affected by the context and some of their client's struggles may resonate with them. He argues that coaches need to be mindful of their own beliefs and assumptions as well as the factors that shape their client's thinking in order to facilitate coaching that is emancipatory. It is important that executive coaches understand their clients' cultural, educational, ethnic and racial backgrounds, as this will increase their level of competence and ensure that the interventions incorporated into the coaching engagement are empowering (Stout-Rostron, 2014).

Not only do coaches have to learn and understand their clients' cultural backgrounds, they also have to suspend whatever assumptions, beliefs and views they may have about their client's culture in order to create a safe, non-judgmental space (Schein, 1993). Bachkirova (2016) emphasises that coaches need to be cognisant of the fact that the views they hold shape their coaching, hence it is vital for them to be cognisant of their own views, assumptions and beliefs during the coaching engagement.

1.3 Research problem

As coaching is an emerging field, the focus of much of the research conducted around it has pertained to its effectiveness and value, particularly for coaching clients. There seems to be a paucity of research however, on the experiences of coaches themselves.

Since its inception, executive coaching has been used as an organisational development intervention to enhance job functioning. Smith, Van Oosten, and Boyatzis (2009) indicate that this is due to the increasing demand for high-quality managerial talent, as well as the high cost of executive leadership failure. Many traditional forms of coaching focus on the executive's successes and what areas they need to develop in order to improve their performance (Boyatzis, Smith, Van Oosten, & Woolford, 2013b), but neglect to focus on aspects that build the executive's competence in all areas of their lives.

However, more progressive approaches to executive coaching tend to increase awareness of self, others and the various structures that the client functions in, so that they are able to develop the ability to meet present and future challenges (Grant, Cavanagh, & Parker, 2010). Such approaches include person-centred coaching and narrative coaching which focus on providing the client with a personal reflective space (PRS) (Grant et al., 2010; Segers, Vloeberghs, Henderickx, & Inceoglu, 2011). This space, which some refer to as a critical reflective space, is a space in which the coach encourages the client to remove themselves from their situation and reflect on it whilst they, the coach, hold the space for the client without providing any answers or explanations (Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009). Grant et al. (2010) state that leadership and executive coaching predominantly employs these approaches. De Haan, Culpin, and Curd (2011) agree, stating that "the promise of executive coaching is not to offer instant, ready-made solutions, but rather to foster learning and change" (p.25).

In fostering learning and change, coaches need to be comfortable exploring client issues at a deep level; questioning their strongly held views and allowing them space in which to reflect and consider their issues from different perspectives. Being an active participant in this process is likely to lead to their own learning.

Thus, this research explores how the coaching process may foster a transformational experience for executive coaches.

1.4 Research objectives

The research objectives are as follows:

a) To explore whether and how the coach's practical experience influences their approach to the coaching process.
b) To explore how coaches experience the coaching process.
c) To explore whether and how the coaching process translates into a transformational experience for coaches.

1.5 Research questions

How can the coaching process foster a transformational experience for coaches?

1.5.1 Sub-questions

a) How, if at all, does the coach's practical experience influence their approach to the coaching process?
b) How is the coaching process facilitated by dialogue?
c) How does dialogue cultivate critical moments and critical reflection which ultimately foster a transformational experience for the coach?

1.6 Significance of the study

This study endeavours to contribute to understanding the coach's experience of the coaching process, and how this process may foster a transformational experience for them.

Armstrong (2012) is of the view that coaching is an activity for meaning-making wherein the coach enables the client's self-exploration through dialogue. She further indicates that the purpose of this is to explore how the client makes sense of situations. This dialogue between the coach and the client often leads to coaches experiencing inner dialogue in the form of meta-questioning (Wallis,

2016). In his study, Wallis (2016) found that “an interesting element of this inner dialogue was that it frequently took the shape of self-directed questions with the purpose of raising awareness of a particular moment in the coaching session…” (p.22). Dialogue allows for something new to emerge during the coaching session (Armstrong, 2012).

As stated above, studies pertaining to the coaches’ experience of the coaching process and how it may be transformational for them, seem to be limited (Boyatzis, Smith, & Beveridge, 2013a; Mukherjee, 2012). Transformational experiences lead to changes in worldviews, frames of reference, and essentially paradigm shifts. As the coaching process is fundamentally reflective (Jackson, 2004), it enables transformational learning, not only for the client, but the coach as well. Transformational learning allows for a deeper understanding of self, which is likely to enrich the coaching experience (Mezirow, 1997). Barner and Ideus (2017) are of the view that transformational learning leads to less defensiveness and an openness to other people’s viewpoints. For the coach, this would translate into creating a non-judgmental, safe space for their clients. This (safe) space created between the coach and client can affect the dialogue (Sammut, 2014).

The above discussion shows how coaches may experience transformation through the coaching process. This is important because exploring the coach’s experience of the coaching process and how it fosters a transformational experience could have an impact on the way in which coaches facilitate the process, and it could lead to deeper explorations within the coaching engagement. As the coach becomes more and more aware of their own views and assumptions and experiences a shift in perspective, they are likely to be more open to differing perspectives, leading to more meaningful dialogue during the coaching engagement.

1.7 Delimitations of the study

These were the delimitations of the study:

- This study was confined to executive coaches working in Gauteng.
- This study did not consider the coaching client's perspective.
- Only executive coaches who had been practicing for at least three years or more were considered.
- Only executive coaches who had general work experience of at least five years or more were considered. This included the three years mentioned above.
- Only executive coaches who had received formal coach education or training were considered.
- Only coaches who coach independently or as part of a coaching practice were considered. Coaches who work as internal coaches in organisations were not considered, as it was assumed that their primary client would be the organisation that they work for, whether they considered this to be the case or not.
- For this study, both South African and foreign coaches were considered.

1.8 Definition of terms

1.8.1 *Executive coaching*

Executive coaching was defined as "an informed dialogue whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities, and insights in the interest of individual learning and organisational advancement" (Spear and Bacon, 2011: p. xvi).

1.8.2 *Formal coach education or training*

As defined by Mallett, Trudel, Lyle, and Rynne (2009), training opportunities that allow prospective coaches to have "access to experts, formal assessment

procedures, quality assurance measures, and recognition of achievement" (p.330).

1.8.3 *Coaching Process*

As defined by (Cox, 2013), "a facilitated, dialogic, reflective learning process" (p.1). Essentially, this a dialogue-enabled process that encourages the generation of new understandings and allows for critical reflection in order to achieve learning.

1.8.4 *Critical Moments*

These are defined as breakthrough moments within the coaching process and in which an individual's awareness is raised (De Haan, 2008b). De Haan (2008b) states that "critical moments are very often a blessing for the coaching process because they are moments in which deeper layers and ways of viewing and assessing things differently are found" (p.102).

1.8.5 *Critical reflection*

Critical reflection is defined as a critique of the assumptions and preconceptions that underlie our belief systems (Fook, 2015). Fook (2015) identified two main components to critical reflection from the work of Mezirow (1990) and Brookfield (2000). The first component involves unearthing and scrutinising deeply held assumptions (Mezirow, 1990), whilst the second focuses on challenging dominant ideologies and the power relationships they justify (Brookfield, 2000). Both these components of critical reflection lead to significant change (Fook, 2015).

1.8.6 *Dialogue*

This was defined as a multifaceted process that enables people to explore deeply held assumptions, suspend judgment in order to enrich communication, and increase consciousness (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). This study focuses on

dialogue between two people who experience a flow of meaning as they engage (Armstrong, 2012).

1.8.7 *Transformational experience*

This will be defined as an experience that challenges an individual's essential assumptions, worldview, beliefs and values that influence how they understand themselves and the world around them (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). This experience leads to a change in the individual's outlook and results in long-term changes in how they view themselves and the world (Schlitz, Vieten, & Miller, 2010).

1.9 Assumptions

- This study assumed that all participants will provide the researcher with honest responses about their experiences in practice.
- It was assumed that all participants will provide accurate details in relation to their experience, training and preferred approach.
- It was assumed that the participants will request clarity on the definitions of concepts should they not be clear on them.
- It was assumed that all participants are self-aware and able to self-analyse.
- From an interpretivist position, it was assumed that the coaches' social realities were shaped by their subjective experiences.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will explore and summarise pertinent themes relating to the coaching process and how it may be a transformational experience for executive coaches. The literature review will begin by defining some key concepts, followed by a discussion of how the executive coach's practical experience has an influence on their approach to the coaching process. This will then be followed by a discussion on how the coaching process is facilitated by dialogue, and finally, this chapter will then discuss how dialogue cultivates critical moments and critical reflection, which foster a transformational experience for coaches.

2.2 Definition of topic or background discussion

Executive coaching has been defined in various ways. Some like Kilburg (1996) and Grant (2014) emphasise that it is a helping relationship formed to assist the executive improve their performance in order to ultimately improve the effectiveness of the organisation. Others argue that it is a one-on-one learning intervention to assist the executive in improving their performance or behaviour (Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck, 1999 as cited in Joo, 2005). For this study, however, the definition for executive coaching that will be employed is from Spear and Bacon (2011) who indicate that "coaching in business contexts can generally be defined as an informed dialogue whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities, and insights in the interest of individual learning and organisational advancement" (p. xvi). Executive coaching differs from business and life coaching in that the focus is on the achievement of the individual client's career goals rather than the development of specific skills to achieve business objectives or a particular focus on personal goals (Clegg, Rhodes, Kornberger, & Stilin, 2005; Scoular, 2012).

In executive coaching literature, the coaching process is mainly defined as a sequential process that includes the following components: a) contracting; b)

building a relationship; c) goal setting; d) facilitating change and evaluation (Kilburg, 1996; Feldman and Lankau, 2005). Parker, Wasserman, Kram, and Hall (2015) on the other hand, argue that the coaching process is a process formed by three main constructs: the positive environment created by the coach and the relationship built with the client; the success created and the client's internalisation of skills. For this study, however, the coaching process will not be defined by its junctures or constructs, but rather as "a facilitated, dialogic, reflective learning process" (Cox, 2013, p. 1). This definition of the coaching process is aligned with this study's definition of executive coaching. Both emphasise the significance of dialogue, the facilitation of new possibilities as a result of reflection, and the fostering of learning.

Coaches play a pivotal role in the coaching process as they are the instrument (Bachkirova, 2016) through which this process plays out and, although literature is limited in terms of how this process affects the coaches themselves, some studies have been conducted. De Haan (2008), De Haan et al. (2010), De Haan et al. (2011), De Haan et al. (2015) conducted inquests into 'critical moments' in coaching and how coaches experienced and made sense of these, which contributed to the understanding of how the coaches experience the coaching process.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Mukherjee (2012) which investigated the impact of the coaching process on internal coaches, found that the coaches had gained both direct and indirect benefits from the process, such as improved interpersonal skills, increase in confidence levels, improved listening ability and work-life balance. Although the sample was internal coaches, which were excluded from this study, the findings suggest that the coaching process has an effect on coaches, and this study explored to what extent this was transformational.

For this study, a transformational experience is one in which the coach's fundamental assumptions, worldview, and beliefs, which influence how they see themselves and others, are challenged (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). The challenging of these assumptions and beliefs then leads to a shift in perspective and results

in lasting changes in how the individual views themselves and the world (Schlitz et al., 2010).

2.3 How can the coaching process foster a transformational experience for coaches?

Some of the literature on executive coaching emphasises the coach's role as a facilitator of the coaching process (Eggers & Clark, 2000; Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker, & Fernandes, 2008; Ratiu & Baban, 2015). However, Whitten (2014) is of the opinion that the coach's role is to collaborate with the client through the process. A collaborative approach to the coaching process implies that the coach is a partner in the learning, and as such, the coach would also generate new insights from the process. Anderson (2001) believes that from a collaborative standpoint, practitioners also experience transformation, as they are part of a mutual and continuous process, rather than being the agent of change.

2.3.1 *How, if at all, does the coach's practical experience influence their approach to the coaching process?*

a) Coach education and training

Joo (2005) emphasises that "important coach characteristics include coaching experience and academic background" (p. 476). Currently, executive coaching is not regulated; anyone can brand themselves an executive coach, and the ICF, which is a large international coaching body, has raised concerns over the credentials of executive coaches (Feldman & Lankau, 2005). Grant and O'Hara (2004) state that a significant number of practicing coaches do not make use of theory-based approaches or valid techniques (as cited in Grant et al., 2010). Bachkirova and Smith (2015) indicate that there are many avenues one could take in order to become a practicing coach; some coaches begin after taking a short course, whilst others begin with no type of training at all. In addition, some enrol at a university to complete a postgraduate programme, whilst some complete a short training programme affiliated with a professional body in order to gain accreditation (Bachkirova & Smith, 2015). The accreditation is generally associated with a professional level and Bachkirova and Smith (2015) argue that

there is no solid case supporting the notion that coaching offered by accredited Master coaches is more effective than that provided by Practitioner coaches. According to Bachkirova and Smith (2015), these short accreditation programmes emphasise the completion of the required coaching hours as well as the development of skills as opposed to the development of "critical thinking and understanding" that postgraduate university programmes offer (p. 125).

Bachkirova et al. (2017) believe that training is a point of entry for the profession of coaching as it focuses on the skills required to be a coach. However, an education in coaching, on the other hand, goes beyond that, and focuses on the development of expertise and promotes research within the field.

Coaching is a multidisciplinary approach and the people who work as coaches come from various professional backgrounds (Bachkirova et al., 2017; Bachkirova & Smith, 2015; Cox, Bachkirova, & Clutterbuck, 2014). Much of the literature surrounding executive coaching has emerged from the field of psychology (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Newsom & Dent, 2011). Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001) state that this is due to the fact that qualified psychologists already have the necessary skills to become executive coaches, thus support for qualifications of psychologists or those in psychology related fields as executive coaches is sufficient (Newsom & Dent, 2011). Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) highlight that executive coaches that are adequately trained are better able to identify the limitations of their skill and manage these accordingly.

Bozer et al. (2014) are of the opinion that a coach's education and training plays a part in their approach to coaching. They believe that the coach's academic background will define their approach to the coaching process. A study conducted by Bono, Purvanova, Towler, and Peterson (2009) compared the practices of executive coaches who were psychologists and those who were not psychologists, as well as those from different disciplines within psychology. The results indicated that the coach's background predicts, to a degree, how the coach will approach the coaching process, who they will coach, what tools they will use and how they will evaluate the effectiveness of the process (Bono et al., 2009). Although in general the differences between the groups were not

significant, it was found that executive coaches who were psychologists tended to approach the coaching engagement with the goal of creating sustained behavioural change, whilst coaches who were not psychologists tended to focus on just increasing their client's insight and self-awareness (Bono et al., 2009).

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a difference between education and training, this is not the focus of the study. The focus here is the coaches' experience of undergoing the education or training.

b) Years of experience

Bachkirova et al. (2017) state that coaching is generally undertaken as a second career much later in an individual's life, and though there are some disadvantages to this, there are also advantages, such as a commitment to continuous learning, drive and motivation. Bozer et al. (2014) attribute this to the fact that executive coaching is still a fairly new profession, and although many coaches have been employed in full-time jobs for a number of years in other industries, they have only been coaching for relatively fewer years.

Despite this, an executive coach's experience in practicing the art of coaching plays an important part in how they approach the coaching process. A study conducted by Kombarakaran et al. (2008) measuring the effectiveness of executive coaching as a method for leadership development suggested that experienced coaches portray a certain level of professionalism and have an appreciation for ethical standards that contribute to the success of the coaching intervention.

Page and Wosket (2001) distinguish between newly trained and experienced practitioners. They believe that newly trained practitioners are more likely to focus on tools and techniques, concerning themselves with the different stages of the process whilst more experienced practitioners focus on relationship dynamics. While Bachkirova (2016) does not distinguish between novice and highly experienced practitioners, she does argue that there are two approaches, or what she refers to as 'languages', when speaking of the coaching process (p. 147). The first approach is technical; thus its primary focus is on the tools, techniques and sequential stages of the process, whilst the second approach is personal and

focused on sense-making, dialogue and the relationship (Bachkirova, 2016). Table 1 below illustrates a comparison of the two approaches, which she calls the ‘competent self’ and the ‘dialogic self’.

Table 1: A comparison between the competent and dialogic selves

Aspects	Competent Self	Dialogic Self
Role of the coach	Expert at least in the process of coaching	Partner in a dialogue
Skills and tools	Are main assets of the coach	Are secondary in comparison to collaborative engagement
Concerned with	Good practice, effectiveness, impact	Joined meaning making in the session
Coaching relationship	Is a means for successful work (development of trust)	Is a purpose in itself – a model of joined inquiry
Communication is	Dialectic (dealing with explicit meaning of statements)	Dialogic (attending to implicit intentions behind words
Aiming for	Resolutions and action points	Often does not lead to closure and appreciate the value of issues remaining unresolved.
Potential problems	Excessive structures and frameworks may stultify the process and reduce creativity	Coaching process without structures could move around in circles without benchmarks for progress

(Bachkirova, 2016, p.147)

Bachkirova’s comparison between the two ‘selves’ suggests that without experience, a coach cannot develop from the ‘competent self’ into the ‘dialogic self’. On the other hand, an experienced coach can remain as the ‘competent self’. Experience provides coaches with confidence to engage with their clients at the level of the dialogic self. At this level, structure ceases to exist, and the executive coach needs to be comfortable moving within the process without any indication of progress or success. Laske (1999) argues that the developmental level of the coach plays a part in the generation of a transformational experience for the client as it will enable the coach to co-generate insights to affect change (as cited in Joo, 2005).

However, years of experience could also negatively impact the manner in which the executive coach approaches the process. Bachkirova (2015) states that self-deception is an obstacle for experienced coaches. She argues that experienced coaches may be susceptible to filtering information through their own anxieties, self-doubt and motives, suggesting that their capacity to increase their client’s self-awareness may be restricted (Bachkirova, 2015).

2.3.2 *How is the coaching process facilitated by dialogue?*

For this study, dialogue was defined as a multifaceted process that enables people to explore deeply-held assumptions, suspend judgment in order to enrich communication and increase consciousness (Banathy & Jenlink, 2005). Lyons (2000) is of the opinion that dialogue is at the core of coaching. He adds that through dialogue, a client's assumptions and opinions can either be challenged or strengthened.

Dialogue as a concept is rooted in disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and rhetoric (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Dialogic theory embodies principles of communication that have been developed to facilitate interaction between parties (Buber, 1970 as cited in Kent 2017). This theory has been influenced by scholars such as Martin Buber, Carl Rogers, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Richard David Laing, Paulo Freire, Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin and others (Kent, 2017).

Buber (1958), in his work *I and thou,* proposed that dialogue is founded on the principle that human beings can engage in two types of interactions, "I-it", which is instrumental, and the " I you", which is dialogic or interpersonal. He believed it was more rewarding when people engaged in dialogic interaction and viewed each other as equal rather than treating each other instrumentally (Buber, 1958; Kent, 2017). He identified 3 distinct types of dialogue, highlighting that genuine dialogue was one in which both participants were mindful of the other in their present, and had the intention of developing a reciprocal relationship between them, whether the dialogue was spoken or unspoken (Honeycutt, 2011).

The concept of establishing an equal and reciprocal relationship was further developed by Carl Rogers (1962) who pioneered the *Person-Centred Approach*. Similar to Buber, Rogers also believed that dialogue was relational and maintained that within this relationship there has to exist congruence, which is authenticity and the state of being aware of one's own feelings; empathy which is an understanding of the other person's world; and unconditional positive regard, which is the neutralising of judgments and the unconditional acceptance of the whole person (Anderson, 2001; Rogers, 1962). Carl Rogers emphasised that in dialogue, it was important for the practitioner to be sincere, cognisant of

and honest about their emotions and experiences during the engagement (Anderson, 2001).

Other scholars who also contributed to dialogic theory emphasised the notion that dialogue is relational but some like Paulo Freire (1972) believed that dialogue could liberate the oppressed and emphasised that dialogue could only be achieved when the parties engaged in it perceived their own ignorance and their own judgmental attitudes, amongst other conditions.

After a review of the literature, Kent and Taylor (2002) compiled a list of generic features of genuine dialogue. These are: risk, mutuality, propinquity, empathy and commitment. Figure 2 below, is a diagrammatic representation of these features.

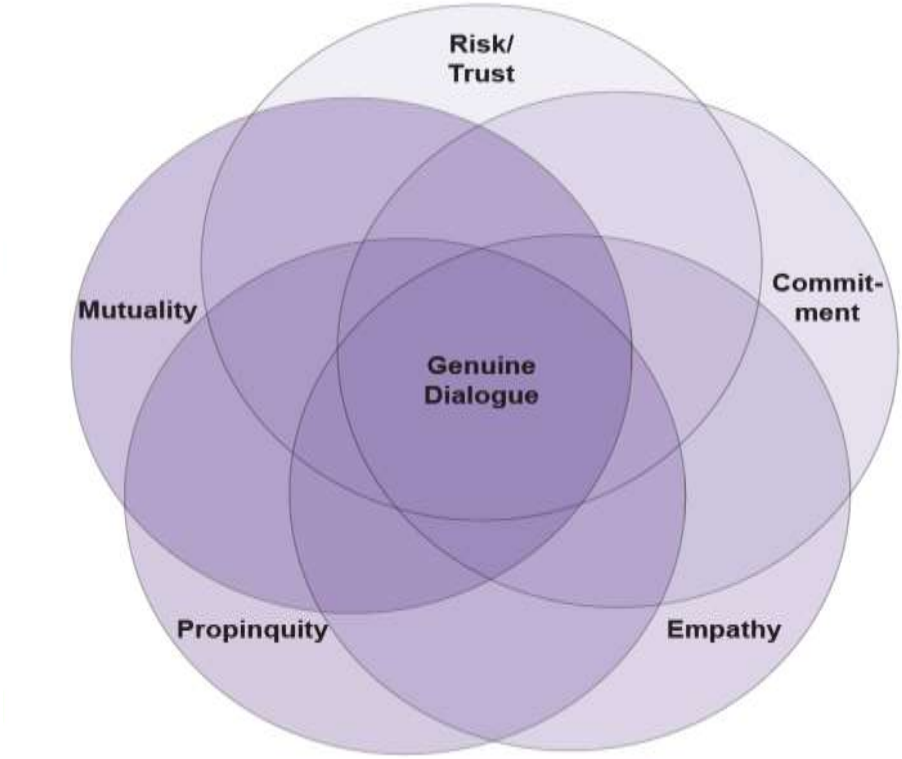

Figure 2: Dialogic Model, (Kent, 2017; p. 5)

The first feature, risk, involves vulnerability which promotes self-disclosure, is the ability to remain open to unexpected experiences, and involves accepting the individuality of others unconditionally (Kent, 2017; Kent & Taylor, 2002). The

second feature, mutuality, involves a partnership with others and emphasises a spirit of equality during interactions (Kent, 2017). The third, propinquity, involves presence and communication in shared spaces (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The fourth is empathy, which involves the affirmation of others, and the last feature is commitment, which encompasses authenticity, commitment to the dialogue and attempting to understand the other party's perspective (Kent, 2017; Kent & Taylor, 2002).

a) Risk/Trust

This feature in the dialogic model requires vulnerability from all parties involved in the exchange, as well as the acceptance of others' individuality (Kent, 2017). Holton (2001) is of the opinion that trust develops overtime, through regular and meaningful engagements that promote and support diversity of views, rather than uniformity. These engagements allow individuals to share their views openly and have their ideas, beliefs and views challenged without risk or fear of consequence (Holton, 2001). Trust is a multidimensional concept that is important in several disciplines, such as sociology, education and management (Carless, 2013). The two most relevant dimensions for this study include: 'competence trust', which in executive coaching is the clients trust in the coach's ability to facilitate the session professionally and effectively, which creates a conducive environment for information sharing; whilst 'communication trust' involves the eagerness to share ideas and information truthfully, transparently and with good intention (Carless, 2013, p. 92). In terms of competence trust, the clients may feel comfortable engaging with coaches at a dialogic level as they trust that they are capable to do the work of a coach. Similarly, the coach trusts that the client has all the resources they need to understand self in order to modify their behaviour as may be required (Rogers, 1980 as cited in Anderson, 2001). Communication trust involves both the client and the coach's eagerness to communicate their thoughts and ideas openly and transparently, believing that their best interests are held in the heart of the other (Carless, 2013). Trust enables both client and coach to be vulnerable with one another, allowing both parties to be "shaped and reshaped – transformed – as they go about their work together" (Anderson, 2001, p. 353).

b) Mutuality

This feature involves a partnership with others and emphasises a spirit of equality during the dialogic exchange (Kent, 2017). This feature requires that the coach approaches the coaching engagement as the dialogic self, as proposed by Bachkirova (2016), due to the special emphasis on a partnership and collaboration. In this partnership, the coach acknowledges the client as an expert in their own life, and that they, the coach, do not have exclusive control of knowledge or the truth (Anderson, 2001). This requires that the coach suspends their academically gained knowledge, and remains cognisant of the preconceptions that they hold that could infiltrate their interaction with the client (Guilfoyle, 2003). Guilfoyle (2003) adds that in dialogue, power's discernibility is supressed, which allows for mutual influence and mutual moulding as it encourages the generation of new meanings, meanings that have not yet been perceived before. Sutherland and Strong (2011), on the other hand, are of the view that power should be shared by the coach offering their views as disputable rather than incontestable. Nevertheless, in order to engage in genuine dialogue, Guilfoyle (2003) believes that the coach should be willing to take three stances: (1) not being an expert; (2) mutuality; and (3) open interpretation of meaning.

c) Propinquity

The third feature of the dialogic model is propinquity, which relates to presence and interacting in a shared space (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Cox (2013) believes that coach presence is a state in which the coach not only pays full attention to what occurs in that very moment of the dialogic exchange, but also to what might come next. She adds that this is comparable to mindfulness. Mindfulness in coaching is described by Passmore and Marianetti (2013) as the coach's ability to focus their attention on their client, taking in only the present moment, and seeing how resourceful they can be as a result. Tolle (2003) indicates that in paying attention, special focus should be given to the silent reflective spaces or PRS (Clutterbuck, 1998; Grant, 2005), the gaps between reflections and the gap between breaths, as these gaps encourage an awareness that is pure and does not require identification or definition. He goes on to add that when the coach listens, there is a mindful presence that emerges, and it is in this space that their awareness

meets their clients awareness without the barricades that thinking based on principles and ideas creates (Tolle, 2003). This unification of awareness diminishes othering, as both the coach and the client are united in their awareness (Tolle, 2003).

d) Empathy

Empathy as a feature is concerned with the support and the affirmation of others (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Batson, Ahmad, Lishner, and Tsang (2002) define empathy as an emotional response experienced by someone as a result of perceiving another's well-being. In other words, coaches experience a certain emotional response as a result of what they perceive their clients to be experiencing. Empathy is the awareness that the feeling they are experiencing is the emotion they perceived from their client (Cuff, Brown, Taylor, & Howat, 2016). Kent and Taylor (2002) state that empathy as a feature of genuine dialogue encourages the support of others, ensuring their involvement in the process, as well as affirming their value and humanity.

e) Commitment

This last feature of the dialogic model focuses on authenticity, acknowledgement and a willingness to understand the other's perspective, as well as a commitment to meaning-making for the purposes of mutual transformation (Kent & Taylor, 2002). Authenticity and recognition of the other are very important elements in this feature, as the coach needs to be able to appreciate their client's dissimilarities without surrendering their own genuineness (De Haan & Gannon, 2016). Gan and Chong (2015) believe that in order to diminish the dissimilarities between the coach and their client and focus instead on acknowledging and appreciating and valuing each other, the coach and the client should have a mutual understanding, mutual interest in one another and a contract between themselves (as cited in De Haan & Gannon, 2016). Commitment to the meaning-making process allows for new actualities and new narratives to be created through the dialogue (Stelter, 2007). Stelter (2007) indicates that this dialogic meaning-making process "revolves around attention to, and perceptual awareness of, specific and selected situations with a focus on revisiting an event

from a here-and-now perspective" (p. 194). He adds that this attention and perceptual awareness is founded on the suspension of judgment (Stelter, 2007). Suspension, according to Schein (1993) is the ability to rest our opinions, judgments and feelings in order to observe how the dialogue will unfold. To suspend is to resist reacting emotionally to the situation and to rather hold the view until there is an understanding of where the client is coming from. The elements in this feature support the possibility of mutual transformation.

A number of coaching approaches encompass the five features identified by Kent and Taylor (2002) for genuine dialogue. Some of these approaches include: the cognitive-behavioural approach, which emphasises collaboration (Whitten, 2014); gestalt coaching, which emphasises increasing awareness and directing that awareness into action (Allan & Whybrow, 2008); narrative coaching, which emphasises the identification of the underlying meaning in the clients' narratives and redeveloping new storylines (Law, 2008), and the person-centred approach, which emphasises an authentic relationship with the client and having unconditional positive regard (Joseph & Murphy, 2013).

Genuine dialogue is therefore a vehicle through which the coaching engagement achieves change. Although Kent (2017) states that it is not necessary for each feature to be part of every interaction, he adds that more features that are present during an interaction will result in a stronger "dialogic bond" (p.5). Thus, change within the coaching relationship cannot be achieved in the absence of dialogue. Unlike in a discussion where an individual holds their position and just makes their opinion known, in dialogue, though a person may prefer a particular standpoint, they do not hold resolutely onto it (Bohm & Peat, 2010). For real dialogue to take place, Bohm and Peat (2010) state that the parties involved should be willing to face their differing ideas without confrontation and be open to perspectives that they would not usually subscribe to. These views are in line with much of the scholars of dialogic theory that emphasise that dialogue promotes collaboration, equality, openness to differing perspectives and commitment and understanding the other person.

A study conducted by Zorn, Roper, Weaver, and Rigby (2012) between a group of layperson participants and scientists, found that an individual's attitude or

perception could be changed just from engaging in dialogue. The results of the study suggest that involvement in dialogue contributes to learning and shared understanding which results from a shift in perspective in how people view themselves, others and the subject matter.

Burbules (2000) believes that dialogue is not without its limitations, however. One of its major challenges is around the concept of diversity; more specifically, language. What language is to be spoken when engaging in dialogue and how should matters be discussed (Burbules, 2000)? He expresses that there are some differences that cannot be bridged by dialogue, “gaps of understanding or belief” that dialogue cannot bridge and attempting to bridge them may place some parties at risk more than others (Burbules, 2000, p. 258).

Even with its existing limitations, dialogue remains a vehicle through which change occurs during the coaching process. Concerns over language and approach should be addressed by both coach and client, and some risk is necessary for mutual learning and transformation to occur. As the literature indicates, dialogue not only leads to an increase in awareness, it promotes a shift in perspective because it is relational, and its features identified by Kent and Taylor (2002) promote a deep connection between the executive coach and the client. In this connection, there are no power dynamics at play, as it encourages a spirit of mutual equality. As a result, executive coaches that engage in genuine dialogue are likely to experience transformation.

2.3.3 *How does dialogue cultivate critical moments and critical reflection which ultimately foster a transformational experience?*

The literature indicates that dialogue is a vehicle for change and it also acts as a medium for pivotal events to occur (Taylor, 2011). These events are identified as critical moments and critical reflection.

a) Critical moments

As mentioned earlier, dialogue offers a medium in which a shift in perspective can be obtained. This moment, in which an individual realises that there are other possibilities to the one they understand to be true, can be described as critical. This study defines critical moments within the coaching process as 'breakthrough moments', in which an individual's awareness is raised (De Haan, 2008b). Critical moments could also be understood to be critical incidents within the coaching engagement. Although these two concepts could be considered very different depending on how they are defined, for the purposes of this study, critical moments and critical incidents will be considered the same concept.

Although Lean, Moizer, and Newbery (2014) define a critical incident as an important event that rouses a deeper understanding through a process of questioning, critical incident as a construct has been defined in different ways (Gremler, 2004; Halpern, Maunder, Schwartz, & Gurevich, 2012; Kirby, 2012; Shapira-Lishchinsky, 2011). In essence however, a critical incident can be described as an incident or event that was meaningful to a practitioner in their practice (Savaya, Gardner, & Stange, 2011), similar to critical moments. The key elements in defining a critical incident are: a personal occurrence, reflection and transformation of understanding (Parker, Webb, and D' Souza, 1995 as cited in Kirby, 2012).

The concept of critical incident analysis came about through the work of Flanagan (1954) in the aviation industry to assist in the investigation of faults and mishaps that could have led to accidents. In recent years, however, the focus of critical incident analysis in some fields has been less about investigating failure and more about how these incidents lead to critical reflection (Lister & Crisp, 2007). Critical reflection, as will be discussed later in this chapter, is an important aspect of learning. Kirby (2012) points out that critical incidents are life-changing and leave a lasting impression on the individual, hence reflection assists the individual to construct a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the incident. Table 2 below is an adaptation of the critical incident analysis framework proposed by Lister and Crisp (2007):

Table 2: Critical Incident Analysis Framework

Critical Incident Analysis Framework	
Number	Stage
1	Incident account
2	Initial response to the incident
3	Dilemmas encountered as a result of the incident
4	Learnings that occurred as a result
5	Outcomes

Adapted from Lister and Crisp (2007)

Stage one in the framework is the actual account of the incident, stage two is the practitioner's response (i.e. their thoughts and feelings), stage three are the dilemmas experienced by the practitioner as a result of the incident, stage four are the learnings that were gained as a result of the incident, and stage five are the outcomes thereof (Lister & Crisp, 2007).

Lean et al. (2014) state that critical incidents have the potential to affect significant change as they are generally unforeseen and unexpected. The learning produced from such uncommon incidents often results in transformation, as new behaviours will need to be adopted in order to match the conditions of the new environment (Cope, 2003 as cited in Lean et al., 2014).

De Haan (2008b) conducted a study exploring what coaches perceived to be critical moments within the coaching process and found that coaches perceived a moment to be critical when they experienced some anxiety or doubt during the coaching process. From the study he concluded the following: a) critical moments reflect something concerning the coach and the client; b) critical moments are breakthrough moments; c) an increase in critical moments is better for the coach and d) critical moments enable coaches to continue learning (De Haan, 2008b). In exploring this topic further, De Haan and Nieß (2015) found that critical moments generate new insights and lead to learning. Analysis of critical moments enables critical reflection, which leads to learning. As De Haan (2008b) discovered from his study, this enables ongoing professional and personal development.

Dialogue is the medium through which these critical moments occur. Without dialogue, the possibility of these moments occurring during the coaching process would not exist.

b) Critical reflection

For this study, critical reflection will be defined as a critique of the assumptions and preconceptions that underlie our belief systems (Fook, 2015). Brookfield (2009) argues that reflection is a learning process which begins the moment our assumptions and viewpoints are challenged. Engaging in dialogue enables these moments to occur, allowing transformational learning to begin.

Fook and Gardner (2007) state that critical reflection is a process of uncovering deeply-held assumptions of an environment in order to make changes to it. They add that the process begins with the "unsettling of assumptions", as this creates the discomfort required to stimulate learning (p.18). Critical reflection amalgamates both an emotional and cognitive experience, and enables us to better understand what our beliefs and assumptions are founded upon (Carroll, 2010).

Brookfield (2009) distinguishes between reflection and critical reflection and highlights that in order for these assumptions to be unsettled or challenged, they must first be identified, which is the task of reflection. Hickson (2011) states that critical reflection requires a deeper contemplation of our experiences than reflection, as we need to make sense of our experiences in respect to our environments and use our learnings to implement change. She adds that although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, critical reflection is a more structured method of reflection (Hickson, 2011).

For executive coaches, critical reflection could be said to be a process that begins with questioning. A study conducted by Wallis (2016) on the experiences of coaches and generating questions found that some coaches experienced inner dialogue that came in the form of meta-questioning. Meta-questioning requires that coaches take cognisance of their questions and ask questions about their questions. This is likely to lead them to question what influences their questions, thus initiating a process of critical reflection. Malthouse, Watts, and Roffey-

Barentsen (2015) propose that self-questioning is also a process that initiates reflection. They argue that self-questioning encourages the practitioner to be more conscious of the assumptions they make in order to reflect on them and identify any “blind spots” in their thought patterns (p.75).

Critical reflection is the key component of a transformational experience (Baumgartner, 2001; Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1997; Moons, 2016; Taylor, 2011). Taylor (1998) identified individual experience, critical reflection and dialogue as key components to transformation (as cited in Taylor, 2011). The experience of having their assumptions unsettled and challenged can be viewed as the beginning of transformational learning for coaches. The phases of transformational learning were derived from the work of Mezirow, Brookfield and Freire (Henderson, 2002). The most common phases of transformational learning from all three are indicated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Common phases of transformational learning

	Phases of transformational learning
1.	Some disruptive event occurs in the learner’s life that challenges his or her view of the world.
2.	The learner then critically reflects on beliefs, assumptions, and values that shape the current perspective.
3.	The learner develops a new perspective to deal with the discrepancies surfaced by the triggering event.
4	The learner integrates the new perspective into his or her life.

(Henderson, 2002: p. 203)

In phase 1, engaging in dialogue incites critical moments and incidents that act as the unsettling events that challenge the coaches’ worldviews. In phase 2, the coach critically reflects on their deeply-held beliefs upon which their worldviews are founded, leading to the generation of alternative perspectives, which is phase 3. In phase 4, the coach adapts a worldview that is more inclusive.

2.3.4 *Proposition: the coaching process fosters a transformational experience for coaches*

From the literature, it can be considered that the coach's education or training and practical experience may influence how they approach the coaching process. The literature indicates that dialogue is at the core of the coaching process and acts as a medium for critical moments and critical reflection. The features of genuine dialogue: risk, mutuality, propinquity, empathy and commitment create the possibility for mutual transformation to occur. Thus, just from engaging in the dialogic exchange which cultivates critical moments and critical reflection, the coach is inclined to experience transformation.

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature reveals that a coach's level of experience and background may influence how they approach the coaching process (Bozer et al., 2014). A study found that the coach's background predicts, to a degree, how the coach will approach the coaching process, who they will coach, what tools they will use and how they will evaluate the effectiveness of the process. Adequate training of coaches was also found to be of significance, as this results in coaches understanding the boundaries within which they need to practice and manage these accordingly (Grant et al., 2010; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Years of experience is also an important aspect as some research reveals that newly trained practitioners emphasise the use of technique and the right tools, whilst experienced practitioners emphasised the relationship with the client (Page & Wosket, 2001).

The literature also revealed that dialogue is at the core of the coaching process. Genuine dialogue allows for mutual transformation to occur and not just for one person to affect change in the other (Anderson, 2001; Armstrong, 2012). Dialogue contributes to learning and shared understanding and it is a medium for critical moments- moments of awakening that lead to critical reflection, which is a key component of a transformational experience.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides a detailed description of the research methodology. This section will begin by outlining the methodology and the paradigm that guided this study. Then a description of the research design, data collection methods, as well as the research instrument used, will follow. Finally, a summary of the ethical considerations, validity, reliability and the limitations of the study are discussed.

3.1 Research methodology and paradigm

This study was exploratory in nature as it intended to understand how the coaching process can be transformational for coaches. In order to explore the given research question, a qualitative approach would be most appropriate. Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002) believe that qualitative research intends to address questions that are centred around understanding human and social phenomena. This type of research highlights the socially constructed nature of reality and relationships between the researcher, the phenomena and the circumstances that influence the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This type of research was important for a study of this nature because it sought to take individual experiences into account and place emphasis on the individual's perspective.

As this study strived to better understand individual experiences and their meaning, the paradigm that this study worked within was that of interpretivism (Khan, 2014). Due to the fact that subjective meanings are varied and numerous, researchers working within this paradigm seek to understand complexity rather than to taper meanings into a few ideas (Creswell, 1998; Khan, 2014). Thus, the collection of data, the analysis thereof and the ethical considerations all emphasised an interpretive position (Creswell, 1998).

3.2 Research design

Qualitative research intends to give privilege to the research participants' perspectives and to emphasise subjective meaning (Levitt et al., 2018). The design of this study was qualitative so that it could achieve this aim through the use of one-on-one interviews. Interviews provide the researcher with in-depth information about the experiences and perspectives of participants in relation to the subject matter (Turner III, 2010). Thus, one-on-one, semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. The main advantage to this design is that it is able to generate a rich set of data (Levitt et al., 2018). However, Qu and Dumay (2011) identified some disadvantages that also needed to be considered for this study, as it aimed to understand the participants' experiences:

1. It is assumed that the participants are competent, principled truth-tellers.
2. The data collected may be viewed as unreliable and subjective by quantitative researchers.
3. This design can be considered an "asymmetry of power", as the researcher will appear to be in "charge of questioning a more or less voluntary, and sometimes naïve, interviewee" (p.239).
4. In addition to asking informed questions, this design requires additional competencies, such as active listening and note-taking.

Another advantage to this type of design, is that it promotes a conversation setting, placing the participants at ease to share information they would not otherwise share in another context (Morgan, Ataie, Carder, & Hoffman, 2013).

3.3 Data collection methods

As indicated in 3.2, the main method of data collection was semi-structured interviews. Qu and Dumay (2011) describe a semi-structured interview as a set schedule of questions guided by the themes identified by the researcher, interposed with scheduled and unscheduled probes in order to elicit elaborate responses. As a result of the fact that the study sought to understand individual

experiences and aimed to obtain a rich set of data, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with willing participants, two of which were conducted via video calling for a duration of more or less one hour each. The one-on-one interviews provided the researcher with non-verbal cues that would provide additional insight. The interviews were audio-recorded with the knowledge and consent of the participants, and field notes were also taken to provide supplementary information.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 *Population*

The study aimed to explore the experiences of executive coaches. Focus however, was on executive coaches practicing within the Gauteng region of South Africa.

3.4.2 *Sample and sampling method*

The sampling method that this study adopted was that of purposive sampling. This sampling method was used as the participants in this study were required to possess certain qualities (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). The study targeted executive coaches across age, race and gender. As the literature indicates, experience plays a role in the coach's approach to the coaching process. Thus, the selection criteria were as follows:

a) They should have been practicing as executive coaches for at least 3 years;
b) The coaches would have had at least 5 years working experience, including the 3 years mentioned above;
c) They should have received formal coaching education or training;
d) They must coach independently or as part of a consulting coaching practice.

There is very little agreement surrounding sample size as a number of factors can affect the size required to reach saturation (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a large sample size that was representative of the population to deem the outcome generalisable was not appropriate, as the emphasis was not to determine to what degree the study would be generalisable, but rather to understand the participants' experiences and perspectives. On the other hand, it was not the intention of the study to have a sample so small that each participant had a "locatable voice" within the study (Robinson, 2014, p. 24).

The sample size for this study was eleven participants. The researcher believed that data saturation had been reached at this stage, as there was no new data coming out of the interviews and, thus, no new themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hancock, Amankwaa, Revell, & Mueller, 2016). The participants mentioned the themes and sub-themes a number of times (Hancock et al., 2016). However, some themes and sub-themes were mentioned more than others. Burmeister and Aitken (2012) emphasise that it is not about the number of participants, but about the depth of the data collected (as cited in Fusch & Ness, 2015). The participants sampled provided data that was both rich (high quality) and thick (high quantity), resulting in a lot of data that is multi-layered and intricate (Fusch & Ness, 2015). As a result of this, a sample of eleven participants was sufficient for this study.

3.5 The research instrument

An in-depth, semi-structured interview schedule was used for the data collection process. Qu and Dumay (2011) are of the view that "because it has its basis in human conversation, it allows the skilful interviewer to modify the style, pace and ordering of questions to evoke the fullest responses from the interviewee" (p.246). The questions in the interview schedule were formulated to achieve the research objectives and explore the research question and sub-questions. Appendix A attached, is a table indicating how the interview guide was formulated to address the research questions. The interview guide was divided into section 1 and section 2. Section 1 focused on the participants' demographics, while section 2

asked questions pertaining to their experience with the different constructs identified in this study.

The interview schedule consisted of a sequence of open-ended questions. Unscheduled probes were used to clarify issues, increase understanding and further elaboration. The interview questions were examined prior to the collection of data, and the questions were amended where necessary. The researcher presented the questions to an executive coach who met the selection criteria as well as to other professionals who made recommendations for improvement where questions were not clear or were closed. Turner III (2010) believes that the testing or piloting of the questions assists in identifying any limitations or weaknesses in the interview schedule and allows for revisions to be made prior to data collection.

The researcher was also the interviewer and they played a vital part in ensuring that the research instrument was exercised effectively, as they had in-depth understanding of the study and were able to generate relevant questions. There was a likelihood of interviewer-bias being present in this study as the interviewer is an executive coach, and interviewer bias is present to some extent in most studies (Pannucci & Wilkins, 2010). However, the interviewer attempted to minimise this by remaining open-minded to the responses and suspending any judgments that they may have had prior to the interviews. An example of the interview schedule is attached in Appendix B, whilst the information or cover letter is attached in Appendix C.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

As highlighted in Section 3.3., the method of data collection was semi-structured interviews conducted on a one-on-one basis to a sample of eleven participants. The researcher searched for coaches that would meet the selection criteria on a social media site, as well as an online coach directory. The coaches that met the selection criteria were then contacted via email and invited to participate in the study. Some of the participants, however, were referrals, and were contacted via

telephone. Once the coaches agreed to form part of the study, an appointment was set-up for the interview.

The duration of each interview was between 45 minutes to 1 hour 30 minutes. With the participants consent, the interviews were recorded, and field notes were made by the interviewer for additional information. The broader elements of the research were explained to each participant before commencement of the interviews, and any concerns they had relating to the research were addressed. Two interviews were conducted via video-calling, whilst the rest were face-to-face. Most of the interviews were conducted at the participants' homes or places of work, as being in a familiar environment would help put the participants at ease and encourage more authentic and genuine responses. The one-on-one interviews allowed the interviewer to gain additional insight through non-verbal cues such as body language, eye contact and tone of voice.

After each interview, the audio-recordings were saved and then later transcribed verbatim. Some scholars have argued that the verbatim transcriptions coupled with the interviewer's field notes highlighting the participants' non-verbal cues is crucial to the validity, reliability and accuracy of qualitative data collection (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2012) agree, stating that the details in the transcript can be quite revealing. The transcriptions from the audio-recordings were the substance of the data analysis.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

As the interpretivist paradigm informed the methodology of this study, this implied that the analysis of the data should make sense of individual experience. The data analysis process that was most appropriate for this was thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2012) state that thematic analysis is a way of methodically detecting, arranging and providing understanding into patterns of meaning across a data set. They emphasise that this will enable the researcher to comprehend collective experiences and shared meanings. One can make use of both inductive and deductive methodologies in thematic analysis (Alhojailan, 2012). The main difference between these two coding processes is that, while deductive analysis

attempts to place the data into a pre-existing coding frame, inductive analysis does not (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For this study, an amalgam of both coding processes was applied. A predominantly inductive approach was used, as patterns that emerged most frequently were coded; however, the data was coded with the research sub-questions and the conceptual framework in mind, thus there were pre-existing coding frames that were used as well.

Braun and Clarke (2006; 2012) developed a six-phase approach to thematic analysis. The six-phase approach is as follows:

- Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the data
- Phase 2: Generating initial codes
- Phase 3: Searching for themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes
- Phase 6: Producing the report

During the first phase, the researcher immerses themselves in the data by listening to the audio-recordings, reading and rereading the transcripts in order to become familiar with it and be able to distinguish what is important and relevant for the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The second phase of generating initial codes is the beginning of the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding organises the data in a systematic order and categorises it (Saldaña, 2013). This can be done inductively or deductively. The third phase involves categorising the coded data into possible themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the fourth phase, the researcher reviews the themes and refines them. Some themes may collapse into other themes, and where there is not enough data to support a certain theme, or where the data is too scattered, those themes may be discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the themes have been refined, they may be defined, which is the fifth phase (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The last phase is presenting the information in a report. Braun and Clarke (2012) believe that “the purpose of your report is to provide a compelling story about your data based on your analysis. The story should be convincing and clear yet complex and embedded in a scholarly field” (p. 69).

This approach was applied to analyse the data for this study. Figure 3 below illustrates the data analysis process:

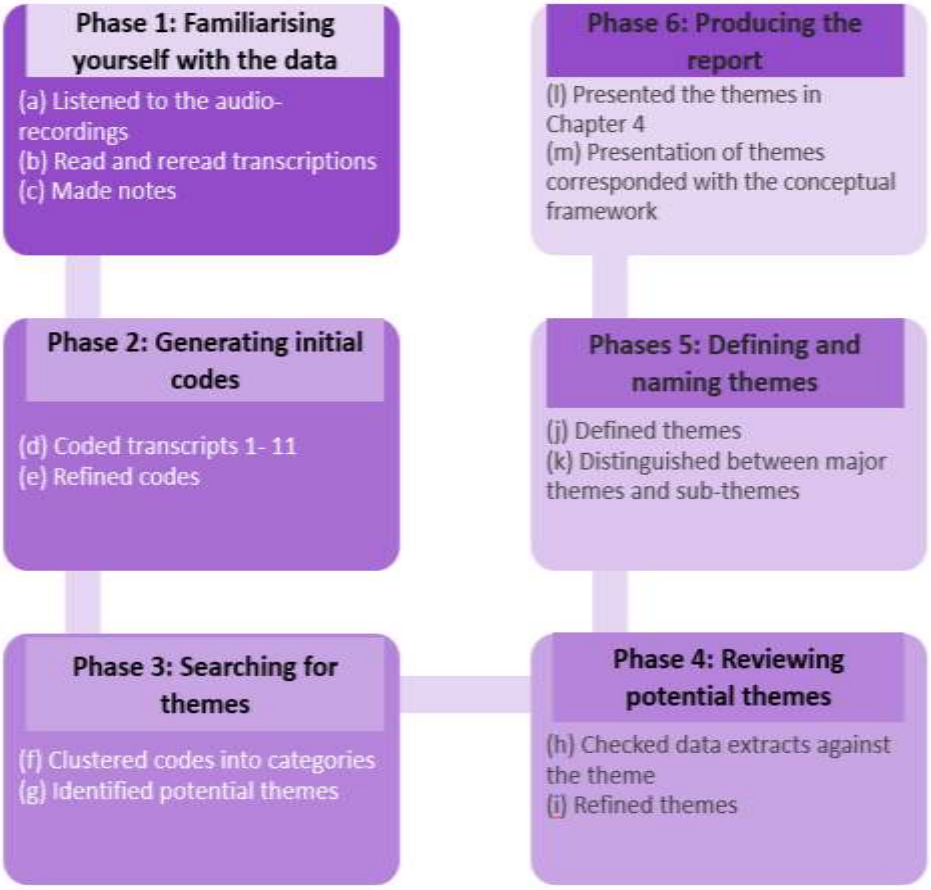

Figure 3: Six-phase approach to thematic analysis, (adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

After the interviews were recorded, the audio-recordings were sent to a company for transcribing. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and a cross-check was conducted to include the non-verbal exchanges that were noted by the interviewer during the interview. This was the beginning of the first phase of familiarising oneself with the data. The audio-recordings were listened to, and the transcripts read and reread. Although notes were made during the process of listening to the audio-recordings and reading the transcripts, additional notes of certain areas of interest and the connections between certain aspects in the transcripts were made afterwards. The second phase (generating initial codes)

then began, and all eleven transcripts were coded. Codes were assigned to significant phrases.

As highlighted, an amalgam of both deductive and inductive coding was used; however, most of the coding was inductive. A deductive approach was used, as the research questions, conceptual framework and the literature review conducted for the study informed the pre-existing coding frames that guided part of the coding process. The coding was completed on a Microsoft Word document. An example of the codes per theme is attached in Appendix D. Although each of the transcripts were imported to Microsoft Excel documents and each line of the transcript numbered, coding on a separate Microsoft Word document proved to be more effective, as it accommodated note-making for areas of interest. The codes were then refined, which led to the third phase of clustering the codes into categories and identifying potential themes. The fourth phase was to check that the data extracts coincided with the potential themes, the themes were then refined if the data extracts didn't coincide with them, and those that lacked supporting data were discarded. During the fifth phase, the themes were then defined, and major and sub-themes distinguished. For the last phase, the data was presented in chapter 4, or the findings section of this study, and the themes were presented in a manner that corresponded with the conceptual framework. Throughout the analysis process, the research questions were referred to as the findings presented needed to address them. Appendix E attached is a research audit trail example of the analysis process that the researcher embarked on to get from the raw data to the final themes.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study were as follows:

- The study only considered coaches who had general work experience of 5 years or more, which included 3 years of practising as a coach.

- Qualitative research is subjective; thus, the researcher always needed to ensure that their own biases do not interfere with the data collection, data analysis and reporting process.
- In terms of thematic analysis, as it is subject to the researcher's interpretation, other key themes could have been overlooked.
- The constraints of time and resources may have impacted this study. Due to the time-consuming nature of this type of research and a lack of availability of resources, only participants in the Gauteng region could be considered.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Due to the nature of this study, it was important to consider the ethical principles that needed to be applied. Before data collection commenced, the researcher obtained ethical clearance from the university to proceed as this study involves human subjects.

3.9.1 *Informed consent*

All participants were informed of the nature of the study, including the methods to be used. They were also asked to sign two forms. The first form requested their permission to take part in the interview and it clearly stipulated that:

- Participation in the interview was voluntary
- They could refuse to answer any questions they would prefer not to
- They could withdraw from the study at any time
- No information that could identify them will be included in the research report, and their responses would remain confidential

The second form the participants were asked to sign was one requesting their permission to audio-record the interview. The form stipulated that:

- The audio-recordings and transcripts would not be seen or heard by any person other than the researcher and her supervisor

- All audio- recordings would be destroyed after the research was complete
- No identifying information would be used in the transcripts or the research report
- Direct quotations may be used in the final research report, but with no identifying information

Copies of both forms are attached as Appendix F and G, respectively. All participants were informed that the results of the study would be used in a final research report, and should they be interested, a summary of the research would be made available to them on request.

As there were time constraints associated with this research, the researcher was unable to transcribe the interviews herself, and thus paid a company for the transcription service. The company assured the interviewer in writing that confidentiality agreements had been signed with all their transcribers.

3.9.2 *Confidentiality and Privacy*

The participants were assured that participation in the study was voluntary, and that they may withdraw from the study at any point if they wish. They were informed that there will be no advantages or disadvantages to participating in this study. Their confidentiality was guaranteed using a numerical coding system. No identifying information was used in the research report, and if direct quotes were used, no identifying information would be included. All data collected from the interviews would be kept in a secure place that is only accessible to the researcher. Once the research has been concluded, all raw data will be destroyed.

3.10 Validity and reliability

Creswell and Miller (2000) indicate that qualitative researchers need to demonstrate the credibility of their studies. However, some scholars believe that the credibility of qualitative studies depends on the researcher's ability and their

effort (Golafshani, 2003). Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest the following, amongst others, to ensure credibility of qualitative studies:

- Disclosure of the researcher's assumptions, beliefs and biases early in the process and suspension of these as the study proceeds
- Remaining in the field (research site) for an extended period
- Collaboration with participants as co-researchers
- Rich descriptions of themes and details pertaining to qualitative study

3.10.1 *Validity*

In order to demonstrate the credibility of the study, the researcher remained mindful to state their position very clearly and disclosed any assumptions and biases that may have interfered with the process. The researcher was also sure to provide rich and detailed descriptions of the research methodology and analysis.

3.10.2 *Transferability*

External validity refers to the extent to which the findings are applicable in other contexts or for another population (Morse, 2015). From a qualitative perspective, this is known as "transferability". In order to enhance the transferability of this study, the researcher provided a thorough description of the research context, as well as the assumptions that were central to the study. The researcher ensured that the sample and sample size were appropriate, and that the participants understood the study.

3.10.3 *Credibility*

Internal validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent the phenomenon being investigated (Zohrabi, 2013). In qualitative terms, this is considered "credibility". As the intention of this study was to comprehend the phenomenon being investigated through the eyes of the participant, they are ultimately the only ones that can confirm the credibility of the results. However, in order to maintain internal validity, the researcher endeavoured to provide detailed

descriptions of the data collection and analysis processes. The researcher also aimed to present the perspectives of the participants accurately.

3.10.4 *Dependability*

Reliability relates to the consistency of the study (Morse, 2015). In qualitative terms, this is considered “dependability”. Yilmaz (2013) believes that “the study has dependability (reliability) if the process of selecting, justifying and applying research strategies, procedures and methods is clearly explained, and its effectiveness evaluated by the researcher and confirmed by an auditor, which is called ‘audit trail’” (p. 320). Should the study be replicated, it is unlikely to yield the same results. The purpose of this study was to understand the phenomenon from the eyes of the participants; no two people are the same, so even if this study was replicated exactly as it was conducted, due to the fact that the sample would be different, the researcher and the biases and assumptions they have would be different, as well as the process of analysis would be different, the study would not yield the same results.

3.11 Demographic profile of Participants

This study had a sample size of eleven participants. These participants were varied across age, race and gender. Table 4 below presents the demographic profile of the participants:

Table 4: Demographic profile of participants

Participant	Coach Training/Education level	General work experience range (in years)	Executive coaching experience range (in years)
Participant 1	Masters degree	40-49	10-19
Participant 2	Certificate	30-39	1-9
Participant 3	Masters degree	20-29	1-9

Participant 4	Certificate	1-9	1-9
Participant 5	Masters Degree	20-29	1-9
Participant 6	Certificate	30-39	1-9
Participant 7	PCC accreditation	40-49	10-19
Participant 8	Certificate	40-49	10-19
Participant 9	PCC accreditation	30-39	10-19
Participant 10	Masters degree	30-39	1-9
Participant 11	Certificate	20-29	10-19

The selection criteria for this study is indicated in section 3.4.2. All the coaches had received formal coach training through a university or an accredited coaching institution. The gender distribution was 80 percent female and 20 percent male. 55 percent of the Participants had been practicing for 5 years or more, whist the other 45 percent had been practicing for 3 years. Only one participant was a foreign national, while the rest were South African.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This study aimed to answer the main research question which was: how can the coaching process be transformational for coaches themselves? This chapter will endeavour to answer this question, as well as the sub-questions that follow from it which are: a) how, if at all does the coach's practical experience influence their approach to the coaching process; b) how is the coaching process facilitated by dialogue and c) how does dialogue cultivate critical moments and critical reflection which ultimately foster a transformational experience for the coach?

This chapter will outline and discuss the main findings of this study and a summary of the themes that emerged from the data will be presented, each theme will be outlined and discussed and construed in light of the literature from the literature review. The themes were identified through a process of thematic analysis, and direct quotations from the transcripts will be included. The chapter will conclude with the trends identified between the themes and will provide an overview of the main findings.

4.2 Findings pertaining to the Proposition

This study proposed that the coaching process fosters a transformational experience for coaches. The conceptual framework of this study outlined how this could be possible and together with the research questions, guided the thematic analysis process as well as the findings to be presented. Table 5 provides a summary of the themes that emerged from the data.

Table 5: Summary of findings

Main Themes	Sub-themes
The coaches' continuous journey of learning	Self-awareness as a result of the learning process
	Learning continues after the qualification
The coaches' style affects the coaching process	Coaching as a calling
	Coaching the whole person
	The coaching relationship supersedes the process
	The coach is no expert

The coaches' use of the dialogic model	Risk/Trust: Dialogue requires a connection and vulnerability
	Risk/trust: Vulnerability opens up new opportunities
	Mutuality: The coach as a human companion
	Propinquity: Complete presence
	Empathy: Providing the right support
	Commitment: A coach needs to be curious
	Commitment: Coaches need to be aware of how they are listening
Critical moments as moments of 'awakening'	Coaches coach their own challenges
	Critical moments trigger physiological reactions
Critical reflection is about exploring what needs to change	Self-questioning as a process of (critical) reflection
Coaching is transformative	Coaching changes the way you see and behave in the world

The themes presented in this table are inter-linked and should not be viewed in isolation. Various sub-themes can be categorised under other main themes, suggesting that there is a clear link between all the constructs identified in the conceptual framework.

4.2.1 *The coaches' continuous journey of learning*

Many of the participants in the study indicated that learning is a continuous journey for them. Some highlighted that although they had completed their education and training in coaching, they continued to attend short courses in order to continue their development. Some participants indicated that the learning for them does not only occur through the attendance of short courses, but it also occurs within the coaching sessions as well, as they learn from their clients. Many of the participants indicated that they had developed self-awareness as a result of receiving education and training to become a coach; however, their self-awareness continues to increase as they continue to learn.

a) Self-awareness as a result of the learning process

Most of the participants interviewed believed that undergoing coach training resulted in an increase in self-awareness. Many felt that the journey that the training took them on uncovered many aspects of themselves that they were not necessarily aware of, and allowed for deeper self-reflection and self-growth, as indicated by Participant 8:

> *…so the self-awareness I think is the is the biggest growth… Uhm, which I certainly didn't have before. (line 364-367)*

> *And the one thing that I said to many people after I finished the course was, I learnt so much about myself. So, it was like, what did they teach you? [Laughs] …Let me think about what it is that they taught me, but I know so much more about myself. (Participant 3, line 26)*

Some of the participants explained that the process of becoming a coach enabled them to recognise and understand their shortcomings and perceptions of themselves, which led to breaking down the old self and reconstructing a new self:

> *…my experience of doing PCC, uhm, is PCC focused so much on building self-awareness, you were almost broken down and rebuilt. We really had to become so self-aware and face all our shortcomings, all of our perceptions about ourselves, uhm, and lots and lots and lots of tears. (Participant 7, line 91)*

Formal coach training encourages self-exploration, which lays the foundation for effective coaching. In a study conducted by Gatling, Castelli, and Cole (2013) self-awareness was strongly correlated with the effectiveness of coaching. The more a coach is aware of their own emotions, including triggers and strengths, the more they can manage them and engage better with the client. Similarly, Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) state in the literature that executive coaches that are adequately trained are better able to identify the limitations of their skill and manage these accordingly.

Self-awareness also contributes to a more authentic manner of relationship-building. As the coach gains understanding of their own thinking and emotions, they are likely to act in a manner that is congruent to who they really are. This consistency within the coaching relationship is likely to establish a stronger bond and increase trust.

Coach education and training generally employs learning techniques such as self-reflection exercises, role-plays, collaborative learning, amongst others that increase self-awareness and thus affect character development (Crossan, Mazutis, Seijts, & Gandz, 2013). One of the participants indicated that self-

reflection exercises such as journaling, amongst other aspects of his training, played a significant role in cultivating his transformation:

Participant 1:	*So, the biggest shift in terms of a coaching journey has been, I have increased my rate of personal development quite significantly. The MPhil was as transformational for me in my personal capacity as the MBA was from a business perspective. (Participant 1, line, 25)*
Interviewer:	*Okay, and how so? (Line, 26)*
Participant 1:	*Through the intense journaling and development and self-awareness and unpacking other issues. (Participant 1, line, 27)*

These findings suggest that the transformative experience for coaches is instigated by the process of qualifying as a coach. The teaching interventions employed in coach education and training encourage a level of self-reflection and interaction with others that leads to an increase in self-awareness which shifts the coach's beliefs about themselves and how they relate to the world around them.

b) Learning continues after the qualification

Most of the executive coaches agreed that the learning continues long after the initial qualification. Some of the coaches expressed that they had expanded their knowledge base and gained additional skills through the completion of other coaching courses. Most believed that executive coaching is a process of continuous learning:

> *So, it's a never-ending journey (of learning) but it's journey that I'm enjoying, so you know… (Participant 1, line 253)*

One coach even believed that as a coach, you have to deliberately place yourself within these learning environments:

> *…you need to continually put yourself in a learning environment around coaching so, its continually… so, so, I have done… I've*

done courses throughout my coaching journey… (Participant 9, line 115)

In order to continue in their effectiveness, coaches are expected to embark on a journey of continuous professional development (CPD). CPD has been defined in a number of ways in executive coaching; however, it can take the form of supervision and attending courses (De Haan, 2008a; de Haan & Blass, 2007). De Haan (2008a) argues that a coach's development is a double-edged sword. While it increases the coach's knowledge base to equip the coach to deal more effectively with situations that could be deemed difficult, it also assists the coach to be more aware and sensitive to unspoken cues, encouraging the coach to be tougher yet more vulnerable at the same time (De Haan, 2008a).

Some of the participants in the study alluded to attending supervision or being part of a supervision group, and thus their professional development continued in that regard; however, others indicated that the experience of coaching itself was a journey of learning that deepened self-awareness:

Uhm, and I think that the experience is just the deepening of self-awareness and the gifts that you get for coaching, from being a coach, are immeasurable. (Participant 9, line 39)

…that's why I'm saying as a coach, as you coach, you grow as well, and you learn… (Participant 2, line 328)

One coach indicated that they learn particularly from their clients:

…And I'm still learning continuously from my clients. (Participant 7, line 73)

The findings suggest that coaches not only seem to increase their self-awareness when embarking on a coaching qualification but continue to deepen their understanding and awareness of self as they coach. Learning for coaches does not only begin and end with their coaching qualification but it continues in the form of CPD and, more profoundly, through the coaching engagement with their clients.

4.2.2 *The coaches' style affects the coaching process*

How the coaches viewed their work seemed to have an impact on how they approached it. Some of the coaches believed that their work was a calling and thus emphasised achieving overall wellbeing for their client over just merely achieving their career goals. Word (2012) believes that people who view their work as a calling tend to be more engaged and satisfied in it outside of financial security. Many of the participants in the study indicated that they prefer employing an amalgamation of approaches in order to address their client's issues holistically. They also seemed to acknowledge and embrace their non-expert position in the coaching dyad and placed the relationship with the client above the process.

a) Coaching as a calling

Although the participants recognised the value their formal coach qualification offered, some of them believed that coaching was more than just a career, but a calling:

> *…But it's realising also that, actually, this is me, the coaching within, even without the degree I would have gone into this kind of life. (Participant 10, Line 68)*

> *And ja, whether you've done Masters of two years or whether you've done a three-year qualification, I just feel there are some people who are coaches at heart… Doctors say it's a calling, so, I actually think coaching is a calling… (Participant 5, line 364 and 474)*

One participant believed that in order to be a good coach, it had to be a calling:

> *I believe that there, to be a truly good coach, there has to be some kind of a calling. (Participant 8, line 419)*

Boyatzis and Saatcioglu (2008) are of the opinion that over and above the right knowledge and competencies, the key component to successful performance is using one's talent which is driven by a sense of calling, values and philosophy,

amongst other things. Although there is no agreement with regard to the definition of a calling, it is predominantly believed to be a psychological construct that can be understood in the context of larger career theories (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Dik and Duffy (2009), however, define a calling as “a job that provides personal meaning/purpose and that is used to serve others” (as cited in Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013, p. 42). Coaches whose positive view of self ensues from the meaning they find in their work and their ability to establish a constructive working relationship with others, are likely to hold the position of *I’m OK,* according to the transactional analysis (TA) model (Passmore, 2007). Belief in their clients’ resourcefulness and their ability to find solutions to their own difficulties may be considered the You’re OK position (Passmore, 2007). Figure 4 below illustrates the different life positions:

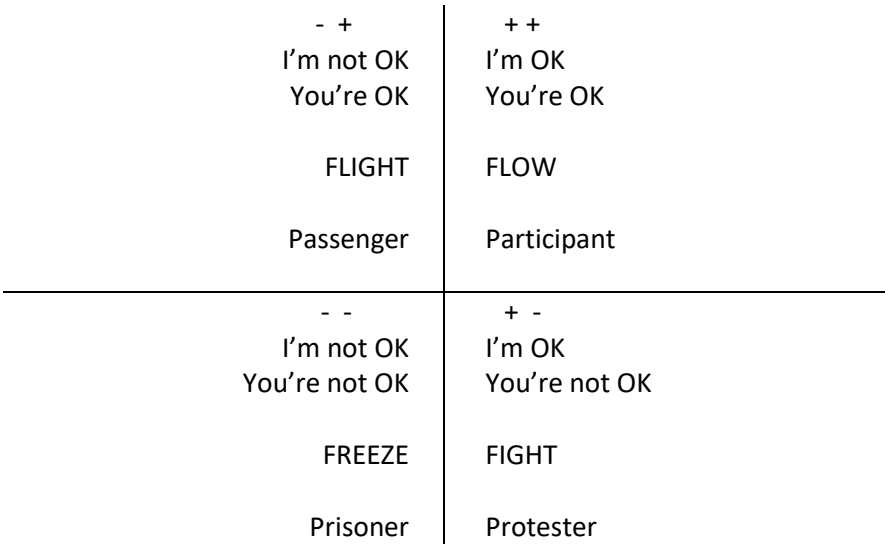

Figure 4 Life positions and flow, (Newton & Napper, 2010, p. 182)

Coaches who hold the *I’m OK, You’re OK* position engage with clients in a way that allows the coaching process to co-create and rewrite the client’s personal story (Newton & Napper, 2010). Newton and Napper (2010) argue that in the process of challenging the client’s beliefs and re-writing their stories with them, coaches update their own life scripts and re-write aspects of a healthier story for themselves. Thus, the participants who believed that the work they were doing was a calling, are likely to experience transformation just from the position they chose to hold.

b) Coaching the whole person

The literature suggests that the coach's educational background will define the coach's approach to the coaching process (Bozer et al., 2014). A study found that coaches who had completed their training in a psychology-related field approached the coaching engagement with the goal of creating sustained behavioural change, whilst coaches who had not, focused on increasing their client's self-awareness (Bono et al., 2009). The findings of the study contradicted the literature in respect to this, as none of the coaches in this study were psychologists or had completed a qualification strictly within the discipline of psychology. However, many of them coached with the goal of creating sustained behavioural change. In order to do this, the coaches believed that it was important to coach the whole person and focus on working with them at multiple levels rather than just having a singular focus of improving their performance. Some of the coaches recognised that although they are not life coaches, their clients are affected by situations that arise from other social systems that they need to address. One of the participants shared of a situation with a client that made her realise that she needed to address the problem at its source:

> *It's in her personal life where the energy drops immediately and that's where the spiral kicks in… And then the business experiences the consequences of that drop. So, I've got to go back to where… I've got to go back to origin. (Participant 6, line 385-387)*

One coach indicated that it is important to coach through issues that may surface from their client's personal life so that they may receive the support required at that time:

> *We have to coach through those and give the person, in my opinion… we could give the person the space and the support they need in that moment, and because it's part of their fabric. (Participant 1, line 277)*

The literature indicates that coaches could take one of two approaches to the coaching process. The first approach is technical (competent self) and thus focused on the use of tools and techniques, whilst the second is personal

(dialogic self) and focused on sense-making and the relationship (Bachkirova, 2016). Many of the participants in the study were inclined to the personal, which focuses on sense-making and the relationship with the client. In facilitating this process of sense-making, the participants appreciate that their client's lives are not compartmentalised and that every social system the client is a part of impacts them on various levels.

The findings suggest that due to a preference in approaching the coaching process in this manner, the participants are able to be a partner in the dialogue (Bachkirova, 2016), and thus co-create and re-write their clients' personal stories with them, which in turn impels them to re-write and update elements of their own story, as suggested earlier.

c) The coaching relationship supersedes the process

Many of the participants believed that the coaching relationship should supersede the process. All of them had a clear understanding that the agenda belonged to the client, and appreciated the importance of meeting their clients where they were at, rather than trying to enforce a process:

> *The worst thing is to have someone sit for an hour or more talking about something that's not important to them at that point, which is not urgent to them at that point, but they feel forced because you're a coach, you know these things. So, it's something that would not be fair. (Participant 10, line 86)*

One participant even indicated that they had learned to understand where their clients were and responded to where the client was, instead of trying to impose the process on them:

> *Uhm, it's very instinctual in response to where the client is now, what the client is dealing with, what the client's way of being is and how I've learned they respond. So, I… it… I'm very conscious of who they are, where they are and what they need in that moment, and I respond to that rather than imposing a process on them. (Participant 7, line 103)*

In terms of the tools and techniques, some of the participants indicated that when they were starting out or beginning their coaching journey, they focused on getting the technique right and using the necessary tools to achieve results; however, this often resulted in them losing the client:

> *…when I was really starting now, after I was introduced to Meta-Coaching, so that was what I was doing. I was trying to focus more on the technique, and I realised that the more I focus on the technique, I lose the client. (Participant 4, line 102)*

One participant indicated that the client themselves would resist the tools and techniques being employed and that led to the coach using the tools only as a guide:

> *When I first started off, I was very much familiar with the CLEAR model or the GROW model you know, you've got get there… well, sometimes the client resists and it doesn't matter how much you try and force it, the client resists and… uhm, so, I use the models and the frameworks and things more as a guide than as an absolute… (Participant 1, line 257)*

Whilst another participant indicated that they only use the GROW model when things are not working:

> *…the GROW model, it's become like the go-to model when things are really, not working [laughter] (Participant 3, line 60)*

The literature suggests that newly-trained practitioners are more likely to focus on tools and techniques, while more experienced practitioners focus on relationship dynamics (Page & Wosket, 2001). The findings of this study coincide with the literature, as most of the participants in the study indicated that when they first began their coaching journey, much of their focus was on using the tools and techniques that they had just been taught and paid much less attention to the relationship. All the participants in the study had been coaching for three years or more, and although they still tended to use the tools and techniques that they had been taught from time to time, their focus had shifted from this to their

relationship with the client. All the participants in the study seemed to approach the coaching process as the dialogic self (personal) rather than the competent self (technical), which means that there is a stronger focus on the relationship when they enter a coaching engagement rather than a focus on employing the right tools and techniques. Although, either one of the two selves could take the lead at any point during the process (Bachkirova, 2016), the participants in this study predominantly preferred to employ the dialogic self.

The dialogic self approach requires the coach to be a partner in the dialogue and collaboratively make meaning with the client. Bachkirova (2016) believes that "the truth cannot be held within a single mind and might only emerge in a genuine dialogue" (p. 11). In taking this approach, the participants laid the foundation for genuine dialogue to take place and, as suggested by the literature, engaging in genuine dialogue promotes a shift in perspective of oneself, others and the world in general.

d) The coach is no expert

The participants expressed that they do not hold the position of expert in their coaching relationships, as they do not possess all the answers. One participant believed that the effectiveness of the process relies on the coach's ability to appreciate that they are no expert:

> *Ja no that's a… and I think that's the vulnerability that comes with wanting to be as good a coach as you can be is to acknowledge the fact that you are no expert in anybody's life. (Participant 9, line 129)*

The realisation that the coach is not the expert and thereby does not have all the answers, is engendered by the appreciation that the answers lie elsewhere:

> *I think it's for you as a coach to recognise that you don't have the answers, the answers lie within that individual. (Participant 2, line 108)*

This realisation on its own impelled a major shift for one participant:

> *And one of the first real 'ahas' I had as a coach or shifting to a coach was, as a coach you don't have the answers (Participant 1, line 53)*

The participants conveyed an awareness that by virtue of not possessing all the answers, they could not hold the role of expert in the coaching engagement. The literature suggests that, although experienced coaches can approach the coaching relationship as a partner in the dialogue and emphasise collaboration, they are also prone to self-deception- filtering the information through their own issues. Although the participants in the study are experienced, they expressed an awareness of their role as collaborator in the process and the appreciation that the agenda belongs to the client and, thus, they cannot be in possession of all the answers. Rogers (2012) states that "the more you know about the content, the more likely you are to be seduced into the role of expert" (p.82). Coaches who approach the coaching engagement with the view of being an expert in the content of their client's lives, predispose themselves to a 'monologic' instead of a 'dialogic' manner of relating to their clients (Guilfoyle, 2003, p. 332). A monologic way of relating to clients does not allow for the co-creation of meaning; instead, meanings that exist in the coach's reservoir of expertise are reproduced and this results in the influence only being in the direction of the client while the coach remains embedded in their knowledge system (Guilfoyle, 2003).

The findings imply that because the participants in this study approach the coaching engagement in a dialogic or non-expert manner, they are able to change the nature of the conversation between themselves and their clients (Barner & Ideus, 2017), promoting a collaborative process of shared influence and transformation, as the literature suggests (Guilfoyle, 2003; Sutherland & Strong, 2011).

4.2.3 *The coaches' use of the dialogic model*

After a review of the literature, Kent and Taylor (2002) developed a dialogic model that comprised of the generic features of dialogue. The participants in the study explained that dialogue is core to their coaching engagements, with its generic

features identified by Kent and Taylor present in their interactions with their clients. Figure 5 illustrates how the sub-themes that emerged from the coaches' use of dialogue can be categorised into the dialogic model:

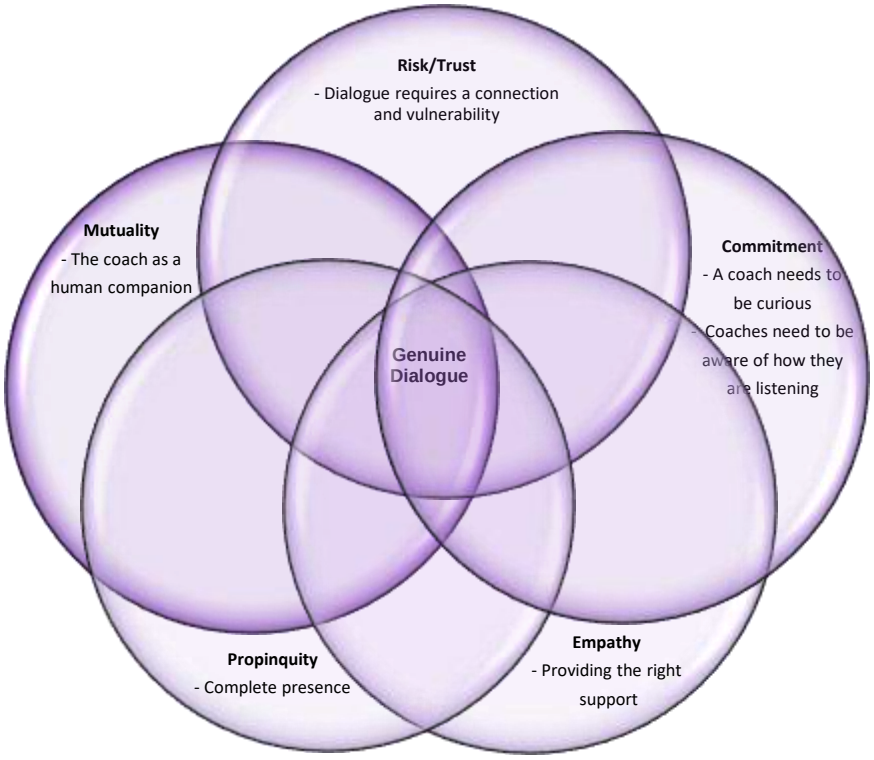

Figure 5: The coaches' use of the dialogic model

a) Dialogue requires a connection and vulnerability

The participants seemed to agree that dialogue cannot happen without a connection:

> *I mean, the one very important thing about coaching is, is uhm, being able to connect with the clients, right? Because if you don't connect then you can't have a dialogue… (Participant 11, line 121)*

> *Ahm, well you can't have the dialogue without that connection. You have to establish a connection... [pause] and then build the trust and rapport… [pause]. (Participant 8, line 509)*

An initial connection with the client is considered vital in order to be able to engage in dialogue. Coaches who provide a warm, non-judgemental environment, who listen actively and allow the client to speak about themselves openly without giving advice or too much information, are likely to promote the establishment of a connection between themselves and their client (Sexton, Littauer, Sexton, & Tømmerås, 2005). According to Participant 8, its only from the ability to connect with the client that the coach can build trust and establish rapport. Trust, as can be seen in the model, is a necessary ingredient to engaging in genuine dialogue. It is, however, not easy to build, and can be easily lost, as Participant 10 stated:

> *but it's amazing what you learn as you continue coaching and you grow… that when you talk trust with people, it's a really deep thing, that you need to go deep, and you go wide and pull all stops until they're comfortable because one step, [clicks fingers] it's gone. (line, 90)*

The initial connection with clients and the ability to gain their trust and to trust them to be open and vulnerable is the first step to establishing a coaching relationship that will result in mutual transformation (Anderson, 2001; Gyllensten & Palmer, 2007). Jowett, Kanakoglou, and Passmore (2012) assert that one of the key ingredients to a coaching relationship is mutual trust, and since the coaching relationship is the foundation of the coaching engagement, it has the potential to be the most problematic, should it be taken for granted. Mutual trust promotes vulnerability in the coaching relationship.

Some participants believed that an environment of mutual trust can only be established once the coach allows themselves to be vulnerable. They believed that approaching the relationship in a dialogic manner, allowing themselves to be vulnerable, shifts the conversation and makes room for new possibilities:

> *Well, a coaching presence and creating a sense of trust and intimacy, letting that person know that they are completely heard, being there in a non-judgemental uhm, generative way uhm, and holding the space and being able to… be able to access your intuition and your own wisdom and to reflect that back without*

having to be right uhm, but to be actively curious; I think all of that really is, is what makes that happen. (Participant 9, line 57)

Being able to say to the client what I feel and then that naturally shifts the conversation, rather than having to find the right answers myself or feel that my assumptions are right… […] Oh, it does you know whenever you are vulnerable, it opens up a whole new space for something else to happen. (Participant 7, Line 271 and 275)

As the literature suggests, the risk/trust feature of genuine dialogue involves vulnerability, the ability to remain open to unexpected experiences, and accepting the individuality of others (Kent, 2017; Kent & Taylor, 2002). Trust and vulnerability are closely linked, and in a dialogic relationship, people tend to take a risk and show their real selves, expressing exactly how they feel without fear of harmful action coming against them (Cox, 2012). It is mainly through vulnerability and risk that a transformational dialogic relationship can be established (Kent & Taylor, 2002). People who engage in dialogue have to be willing to surface as new and different from their exchanges (Kent & Taylor, 2002). These findings coincide with the literature that states that trust and vulnerability within the dialogic exchange allow for the shaping and reshaping of both the coach and client. By making themselves vulnerable in putting aside their need to be right and allowing the conversation to shift where it needs to, the participants in the study open themselves up to new experiences that result in their transformation with every exchange.

b) The coach as a human companion

The second feature in the dialogic model is that of mutuality. Mutuality is characterised by collaboration and is in essence “spirit of mutual equality”; thus, power dynamics should not be at play in dialogic exchanges, instead, all parties should strive for humility (Kent & Taylor, 2002, p. 25). The participants in the study expressed that in order to engage in genuine dialogue, there is a level of oneness that needs to be established:

So, it’s not like that, that having a barrier of, of, I’m the coach you’re the coachee. It’s almost a merging. Where you literally feeling what

they're feeling and hearing what they're hearing and seeing what they're seeing. (Participant 8, line 815)

Participant 8 holds the belief that a barrier between the coach and client should not exist; instead, a unity of thought and action is what will lead to a change in the dialogic exchange. The exercise of power distorts the flow of the conversation, making it unidirectional (Kent & Taylor, 2002), whilst striving for humility enables the conversation to flow in multiple directions, promoting mutual influence.

Striving for humility encourages coaches to see themselves as a human companion rather than the expert with whom the answers lie:

So, coaching is essentially a human conversation, uhm, and I think that the dialogue happens… the depth of dialogue and the transformational dialogue that happens when in a coaching environment is when the coach positions them self as a human companion to that person. (Participant 9, line 55)

According to Participant 9, how the coach positions themselves will affect the level of the dialogic exchange. As mentioned earlier, coaches who approach their coaching relationships in a monologic manner tend to prefer holding the position of expert; remaining embedded in their knowledge system. However, coaches who view themselves as a partner in the dialogue and a fellow human companion who is prone to the same struggles and anxieties as their clients, open themselves up to being influenced and changed through the collaborative, dialogic exchanges.

In allowing themselves to be a human companion, coaches are able to observe subtle nuances that are at the core of being human. Involuntary physical reactions to emotional stimuli form part of our design as human beings. Coaches who position themselves as human companions and equal partners in the dialogue are able to recognise these involuntary physical reactions in others:

…even if I see slight shifts, 'so your pupils are dilating what was that about?' Sometimes they know, sometimes they don't know, but

when there's an energy change I will describe the energy change and I'll ask the client what that was… (Participant 6, line 349)

…and being aware of narratives, uhm, being aware of all the non-verbal thoughts of communication that accompany that dialogue; it's a very intricate involved intense process and very complex as well that you are in awareness around everything that's involved in that dialogue, that's the complexity of coaching, really. (Participant 9, line 55)

According to Participant 9, the complexity of coaching is being aware of everything happening within the dialogic exchange and being able to navigate it. It is about listening to what is being said and what is not being said at the same time. It is being able to hear the thoughts that are verbally communicated whilst reading the ones that are communicated gesturally. Armstrong (2012) states that dialogue is often taken for granted; hence, it appears to be a very simple and straightforward process, "however, as we are always responding to something-often beyond our consciousness, dialogue is actually very complex" (p.35). She adds that dialogue's complexity is both its power and magnetism, as it is that level of complexity that creates the conditions for new possibilities to emerge (Armstrong, 2012).

By positioning themselves as a human companion, the participants in the study immerse themselves into the complexity of dialogue and navigate their way through it in collaboration with their clients. This, as Armstrong has highlighted above, creates an environment for new and unusual possibilities to surface.

c) Complete presence

Propinquity is the third feature of the dialogic model, and involves presence and communication in a shared space. The participants in the study implied that complete presence is an important condition for genuine dialogue to occur. It requires a total awareness of what is happening in the session with the client and being fully engaged in their space, as Participant 7 indicated:

> *It's instinctual it's about deep listening… And just being deeply conscious of what's happening in front of you and being so, present, so present with the client that you are truly engaged in their space. (line 103)*

Being fully present and engaged in the client's space requires that the coach not only be aware of what the client is saying and how they are saying it at that very moment, but to also be aware of the silences and the quality of those silences as one participant suggests:

> *…the body language and there's the tone and the pitch of the voice, it's the quality of the silences and what they're doing with those silences. (Participant 1, line 117)*

Some participants expressed somewhat of an uncertainty when it came to managing these silences:

> *I think that the big challenge for many coaches is probably the, the space between, well the balance between the questions and the and the silence… (Participant 3, line 30)*

> *And you know I've learnt in coaching that silence does not mean, eh… it's not wrong (Participant 5, line 236)*

Participant 2 however, asserted that it was not only important to be aware of the silences, but to allow them as well:

> *…that's how I see dialogue sometimes people tend to see dialogue as you engage a lot, it's because sometimes there's even room for silence you know and it's important to allow that as well. (line 106)*

According to Participant 2, an important aspect of propinquity is being completely present and being so conscious and aware of what is happening with the client that you allow or create the space they need to reflect.

These spaces of silence are sometimes considered a personal reflective space (PRS) (Clutterbuck, 1998; Grant, 2005) or spaces of creative reflection (van der Veen, van Kruistum, & Michaels, 2015). PRS are quiet moments of thinking in

which the individual can explore and reflect on different perspectives, consider a more objective view of their issue which will stimulate them to go beyond the parameters of their own thinking (Clutterbuck, 1998; Grant, 2005; van der Veen et al., 2015).

One participant indicated that these silences are not only for the benefit of the client, but also for their own:

> *I've learnt to allow for silence, not only for the coachee, but even for me. (Participant 2, line 280)*

The silences that the coaches allow within their dialogic exchanges enable exploration and reflection on differing perspectives which ultimately stimulate them and their clients to go beyond their own thinking. The silences within the dialogue encourage an examination of their own prejudices and partialities, and encourage an understanding of meaning other than their own (van der Veen et al., 2015).

d) Providing the right support

The fourth feature of dialogue, empathy, involves the affirmation of others and providing the necessary support in order for the dialogue to be successful (Kent & Taylor, 2002). The participants expressed that an important aspect of dialogue was being able to provide the client with the right support, essentially meeting them where they are:

> *Uhm, so, ja, I think it's a combination of support and challenge deep empathy uhm, being able to be on the dance floor and the balcony with your client at the same time. (Participant 9, line 49)*

One participant explained how she realised she needed to change how she was dealing with one of her clients, as she was not providing him the right support at the time:

> *I realised that I had been dealing with him at a brain level and I needed to really shift to dealing with him at a heart level because that's where all of the things were happening for him, even though*

our coaching was around enabling him to go through a very unusual business process. (Participant 7, line 191)

Passmore (2007) believes that empathy is the coach's ability to demonstrate concern and understanding for the coachee. Carl Rogers (1962), however, placed much more of an emphasis on empathy being a necessary condition to any relationship that promotes growth. He believed that empathy allowed the coach to understand the client's inner and most private experiences as though they were their own, whilst still maintaining a level of objectivity (Rogers, 1962). Empathy, Rogers (1962) believed, is what makes it possible for people to understand and learn about themselves, leading to transformation. Empathy allows the coach to step into the shoes of their clients and see the world from their perspective in order to give them the right support. Shifting their vantage point in order to better support their client, enables the coach to perceive alternative perspectives which makes it possible for them to increase their understanding of their clients, the situation and ultimately themselves.

e) A coach needs to be curious

The last feature of the dialogic model is that of commitment. This feature encompasses attributes such as authenticity and genuineness and is a commitment to the intersubjective process of understanding and appreciating the perspective of others (Kent, 2017). Two sub-themes emerged in line with this feature. The first relates to a coach's need to be curious.

The participants believed that an important aspect of the coaching dialogue is curiosity:

And be able to listen deeply, be more present and be curious about so, what's going to happen, what's going to come up. (Participant 7, line 117)

Uhm, being actively, passionately curious about a person and being deeply respectful of walking in their life for a period of time. (Participant 9, line 49)

The participants alluded to being curious, not only about the coaching session itself, but about the client, which translates to a desire to gain a deeper understanding of them and the topic on the table. One participant indicated that an obvious way for the coach to gain a deeper understanding is to ask questions:

> *Uhm, but obviously the dialogue is always asking questions… [….] … you, sitting there and you, and you just keep asking questions you're going a bit deeper and going a bit deeper... (Participant 10, line 539 and 547)*

> *I mean one of the fundamentals is to ask curiosity questions, in other words, questions for that you have no answer. (Participant 1, line 163)*

The participants indicated that it was important to be curious and ask clients questions that lead to a deeper understanding for their clients and for themselves. Anderson and Piro (2014) believe that "questions are required to stimulate thought, define tasks, express problems, identify assumptions, and explore multiple perspectives" (p.2). The questions and answers provided in the coaching relationship result in learning due to the fact that the coaching relationship in and of itself results in learning (Cox, 2013 as cited in Wallis, 2016). As mentioned earlier, learning in the dialogic exchange is a mutual process. As the participants are curious and ask questions that lead to more questions (or some which have no answers), they learn by virtue of engaging in that exchange.

f) Coaches need to be aware of how they are listening

The second sub-theme that emerged in respect to commitment as a feature in genuine dialogue relates to how coaches listen to their clients and pose the questions that they do. As stated in the literature, a coach's views shape their coaching, so they need to be cognisant of the views and assumptions they hold during the coaching engagement (Bachkirova, 2016).

Most of the participants seemed to appreciate the fact that their views shape their coaching, which could interfere with their attempts to understand their clients'

perspectives. They understood that they had to be mindful of how they were listening:

> *So, listening to your listening is sometimes when somebody speaks, my interpretation of what they are saying may not be exactly what they are saying so, I'm listening to it with a lens of maybe oh, 'they are white male'. So, my listening… in my listening I've already made what you call assessments, opinions, assumptions eh… in my listening so, I have to critically sift that. (Participant 2, line 276)*

> *…and I'm listening to myself in terms of my coaching role and I'm listening to their answers I do get insights okay in terms of that okay, that's my stuff, okay, that's not my stuff, whatever it may be… (Participant 1, line 177)*

The coaches expressed that even as they engage in dialogue with their clients, they have to be aware of how they are listening. Participant 2 stated that what the client says can be interpreted according to the lens she is listening with. These lenses of listening have already been tinted with preconceived ideas or prejudgments, and she as a coach has to be cognisant that these are the lenses with which she is listening.

The coaches also expressed that an important aspect of being aware of how they are listening is knowing and understanding their deeply held beliefs and assumptions and how they impact on their line of questioning:

> *…but I must search first where I'm coming from with my questions so that they are as neutral as possible, and before I find myself banging on the desk about 'get rid of that trash' type of thing (Participant 3, line 86)*

> *…to be able to really test in the moment but very rapidly what assumptions am I making and to learn to put them on the table first, so, he [the client] knew where I was coming from… posing questions for which, we have no answers has really uhm, also exposed how often prior to that subconsciously I had assumptions in place that weren't necessarily true (Participant 1, line 205)*

One participant described the dialogue as a slate on which the client writes and the questions that a coach generates should be based, only on what the client has asserted and not on what they may believe the client to be saying:

> *When you are a coach, you enter your coaching session with a clean slate. You allow the client to write the slate and you ask questions based on what is written on the slate. (Participant 4, line 104)*

The literature states that coaches need to be aware of the views and assumptions they hold, as these shape their coaching (Bachkirova, 2016). They need to suspend their judgment in order to be better positioned as an impartial partner in the dialogue. These findings coincide with literature, as many of the participants expressed an awareness of their biases and how that interferes with their listening and essentially shapes the coaching session. They stated an awareness of where they were coming from with their line of questioning and are conscious of suspending their preconceived views and assumptions in order to better understand their client's perspective. Schein (1993) is of the opinion that suspension is the ability to rest our opinions, judgments and feelings in order to observe how the dialogue will unfold. Bohm (1996) on the other hand, states that suspension is paying full attention to the assumption or reaction rather than supressing it or acting on it. He adds that in doing so, one allows the assumption or reaction to unfold and reveal itself in order that it may be seen for what it is within the individual. This suggests that during the dialogic exchange, executive coaches are in the process of suspension as they are 'sifting' through the information and are separating what of how their feeling is a result of what the client is saying or their own 'issues'. Paying attention to their assumptions, thoughts and reactions instead of just resting them enables the recognition and clarification of destructive and misleading information (Bohm & Peat, 2010). This, Bohm and Peat (2010) argue implies a transformation in the manner in which the coach's mind operates.

4.2.4 *Critical moments as moments of 'awakening'*

The fourth theme that emerged from the data pertained to critical moments. In the literature, critical moments were described as breakthrough moments in which the coach's awareness was increased (De Haan, 2008b), or an incident that was meaningful for the practitioner (Savaya et al., 2011). This finding coincided with these definitions, as most of the participants believed a critical moment lead to an awareness of something within themselves. However, the participants understanding of critical moments also exceeded this definition, suggesting that critical moments were much more than occurrences that increased awareness. Two significant sub-themes emerged from this finding. The first is the executive coach coaches their own challenges during the dialogic exchange, and the second being that critical moments trigger a physiological reaction in coaches.

a) Coaches coach their own challenges

Although critical moments were described in a myriad of ways by the participants, the most common experience of them is when the client presents a challenge that they themselves have had to contend with, or are currently contending with:

> *Uhm, ja so, the critical moments can be almost when you feel like you have gone into your own story… Uhm, when something has hooked you and uhm, to be very very conscious of that lens and to be aware of the fact that you're being hooked that's important. (Participant 9, line 63)*

> *I was… I was… I almost stopped listening to the client… while she was talking, uhm, I think it's fair to say I lost her for a moment, I wasn't listening to her, I was processing my own sort of… I was in my own space, you know what I mean? And I was deep in self-reflection and I was saying, wow, could this be happening to me as well? [laughs] (Participant 11, line 213)*

> *I've also realised, almost each and every single client that I've had have come to me with a problem that I myself am challenged by*

and… I have to move out of my own hypocrisy around it; does that make sense? So maybe a powerlessness that I'm struggling with and I'll be sitting there and she'll be like describing a reality that I am confronted with… (Participant 6, line 355 and 359)

These participants explained how moments in their coaching engagement become critical when they are thrust into their own stories. Participant 9 describes this as being "hooked" and being aware of the fact that something in the client's story has deeply resonated with her and thus gripped her. While Participant 11 enters a space of deep self-reflection within that moment, and Participant 6 becomes more aware of her own hypocrisy around the challenge. Many of the participants described being taken back to their own stories while engaged in dialogue with their clients, and this has resulted in them thinking differently about that challenge.

According to the literature, critical incidents are unforeseen and unexpected and encourage transformational learning (Lean et al., 2014). Some of the participants experienced a critical incident when their stories were narrated to them by the client. The learning generated by this event encouraged transformation, as it not only led to an increase in awareness of their own story, but as Participant 6 indicated, it also challenged their current stance on the issue, as well as encouraged deep self-reflection. For some of the participants in the study, hearing their story being retold to them from a different perspective could be considered stage three (dilemmas encountered as a result of the incident) of the critical incident analysis framework proposed by (Lister & Crisp, 2007), as this prompts a line of questioning around the issue and where they as the coach stand in regard to it. As is stated in the literature, critical incidents promote critical reflection, which is a critique of the assumptions and preconceptions that underlie our belief system (Fook, 2015). Thus, being confronted with their own stories allowed these participants to examine how they were navigating their stories and consider what new insights could be gained.

In addition to being transformed through the experience of a critical incident, the participants are also transformed through the experience of undergoing coaching of their own challenges. According to Du Toit (2007), executive coaching plays a

catalytic role in helping people make sense of their changing environment. This process requires the individual to sieve, categorise and assimilate new occurrences into their existing mental models (Du Toit, 2007). Stelter (2009), on the other hand, believes that the coaching dialogue is essentially to facilitate meaning-making. He states that the meaning-making process is a co-creative one in which the coach and client "socially co-construct reality" (p. 213). In light of these findings, this means that these participants, through coaching their own challenges within the coaching dialogue, benefit from sense-making as well as meaning-making, which promotes the development of alternative stories (Stelter, 2009). Viewing their issues from different perspectives enables the participants to reframe how they think about these challenges and ultimately change how they approach them.

The literature indicates that critical moments were accompanied by doubt and anxiety; led to breakthroughs; were better for the coach and encouraged learning (De Haan, 2008b). However, the findings of this study suggest that critical moments are and achieve much more than that. The participants considered a moment to be critical when their clients narrated their version of the participants story. The unanticipated nature of that encouraged the participants to develop new insights and consider adopting new behaviours that would be effective under the conditions of the new environment (Cope, 2003 as cited in Lean et al., 2014).

b) Critical moments trigger physiological reactions

Apart from coaching their own challenges, the participants described how critical moments trigger physiological reactions within them:

> *I have a white Afrikaans male client and uhm, there are elements around that which is a… which is a hook for me… around aggression and unconscious biases. You know when you can just see it coming through and it's definitely a hook for me and so, to be aware of that. And uhm, what came up for me physically in the environment was a sense of tightness in my chest… (Participant 9, line 85)*

> *It's a, it's a sensation… It literally happens over here [hand gesture below chest] it's either my heartbeat goes faster… Or there's a, like there's a sensation in this area [points just below chest] just below my sternum where I can see I'm being triggered I can feel I'm being triggered and then I park it. (Participant 6, line 435)*

> *…you know, uhm, so always searching what stuff is going on for me why do I feel a constriction here [hand gesture to chest], you know, and as a coach you become aware of your body very quickly. Because you, you sense something that makes you uncomfortable and you need to, you know, make it right soon (Participant 3, line 86)*

For some participants, a moment became critical during their dialogic exchange with their client when they experienced an involuntarily physiological response that manifested in the tightening of the chest or a sensation in the same area. Although some expressed awareness of how certain aspects of their client's behaviour could result in tension and trigger a physiological reaction for them, other participants expressed an awareness of a trigger or some form of arousal and would need to identify what it was at a later stage.

LeDoux (2002) states that our thoughts, emotions and physical bodies are entwined (as cited in Boyatzis et al., 2013a; Jamieson, Mendes, & Nock, 2013), and we perceive something as either a threat or a challenge depending on whether our appraisal of the situation deems our resources sufficient or not (Jamieson et al., 2013).

A stressful situation activates the sympathetic nervous system (SNS), which then stimulates a physiological reaction causing the body to either fight, freeze or flee (Jamieson, Hangen, Lee, & Yeager, 2018; Jamieson et al., 2013). This physiological reaction is generally characterised as negative (Jamieson et al., 2018), hence the inclination to either fight back or avoid the stress-inducing situation completely.

Jamieson et al. (2013), psychologists as well as experts in the field of psychophysiology, believe that a physiological reaction in a stressful situation

does not necessarily have to be negative. They believe that when people appraise their physiological reactions differently, they are likely to experience a positive result from the situation (Jamieson et al., 2013). Figure 6 below is an illustration of how reframing the construal of the physiological reaction leads to more “adaptive physiological responses” (Jamieson et al., 2013, p. 52).

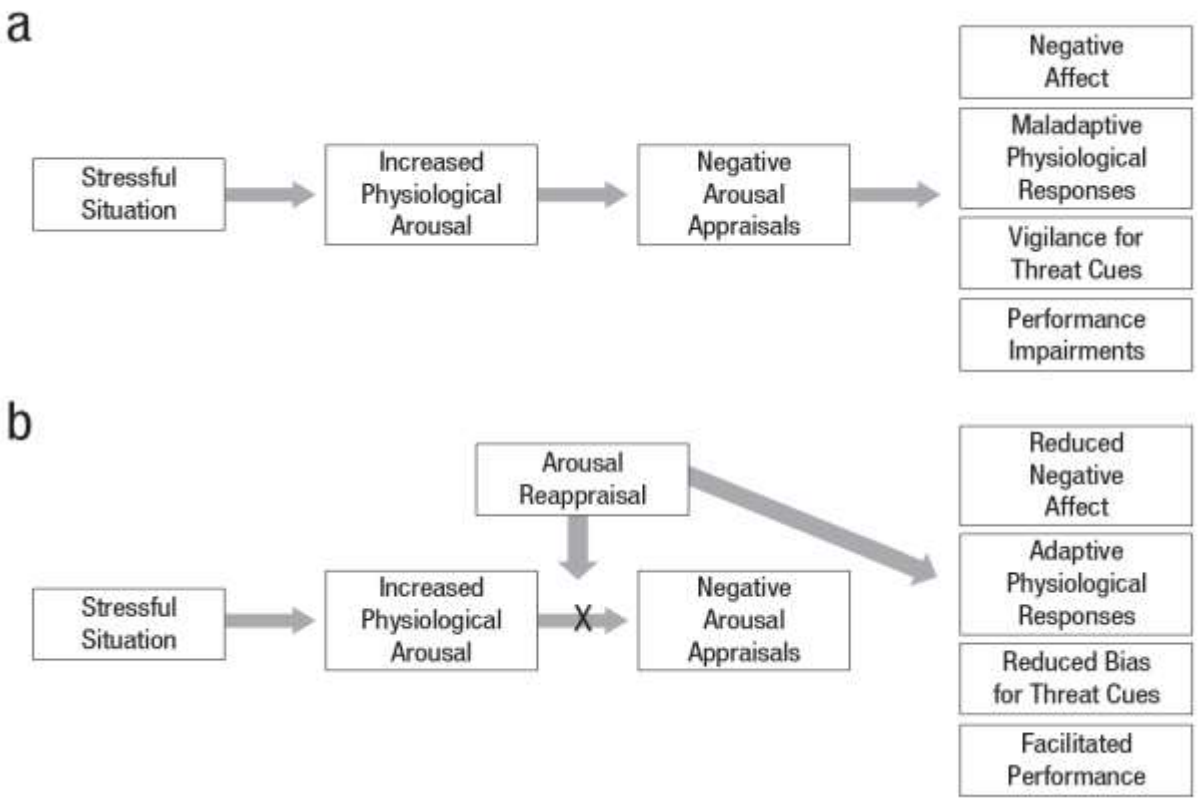

Figure 6: Reappraisal of physiological reactions, (Jamieson et al., 2013)

Panel (a) demonstrates how stressful situations arouse physiological reactions which are generally deemed negative, and due to their negative appraisal, generate negative results (Jamieson et al., 2018; Jamieson et al., 2013). Panel (b) on the other hand, demonstrates that reappraisal of the physiological arousal breaks the link between the stress-founded arousal and the negative appraisal, which then shifts the assessment of the situation from threat to challenge, enabling the generation of more positive outcomes (Jamieson et al., 2018; Jamieson et al., 2013).

When confronted with the stressful situation during the coaching session, the participants, by allowing themselves to take a step back and later assess their physiological arousal, break the link between the stress-founded situation and any negative appraisal, shifting their assessment of the situation from being a threat to a challenge. In reappraising their physiological reactions, coaches place themselves in a position to better understand their clients by being curious and desiring to understand their perspective rather than perceiving what is being shared by the client as an attack and taking offence. The literature states that critical incidents are unanticipated events that lead to critical reflection (Lean et al., 2014). This finding coincides with that as the reappraising of the physiological reaction shifts the perception of the situation from threat to challenge.

These findings suggest that critical moments are more than just breakthrough moments that are good for the coach and lead to learning (De Haan, 2008b). Instead, they are moments that incite deep reflection in coaches about their emotional triggers, how they understand these triggers and how they choose to manage them. All of these elements form part of a transformation process for the coach.

4.2.5 *Critical reflection is about exploring what needs to change*

Another theme that emerged from the data pertained to reflection. In the literature, critical refection was defined as a critique of the assumptions and preconceptions that underlie our belief systems (Fook, 2015). Most of the participants in the study tended to use the term ‘reflection’ synonymously with ‘critical reflection’. They did not distinguish between the two terms, nor place emphasis on one over the other. The literature indicates that there is a distinct difference between the two terms (Brookfield, 2009; Hickson, 2011). Whilst reflection is identifying fundamental assumptions and beliefs, critical reflection, on the other hand, is challenging them (Brookfield, 2009). This could have been a mere matter of semantics as the participants indicated that part of their reflection is to ask themselves questions about their experiences and explore what needed to change, which as is indicated by the literature, is an important aspect of critical reflection. Although the findings of the study suggest that

reflection occurs through PRS during the dialogic exchange, some of the participants indicated a preference to embark on this exploration post-sessions, which appeared to be the ideal time.

a) Self-questioning as a process of (critical) reflection

Some of the participants believed that critical reflection was an exploration of issues and peeling off all the lays that are associated with it:

> *So, for me its's reflecting on the issue that critically… going deeper and deeper and deeper to the rock bottom of all aspects of that thing. What I'm processing is, all the aspects, the different layers, the levels you know, peeling the onion… (Participant 10, line 106 and 108)*

Participant 10 believes that critical reflection is going into an issue deeper and deeper, uncovering the layers of the issue in order to get to the bottom of it. Critical reflection has been described as the unearthing of fundamental assumptions and beliefs, and questioning them in order that different perspectives may be revealed (Brookfield, 2000). This peeling of the onion that Participant 10 alludes to requires time and a conducive environment in order to be effective. Although, remaining in line with the literature, some participants stated that some of their reflection occurs during the session through a process of meta-questioning or self-questioning, most of the participants indicated that they tend to delay reflection until after the session:

> *…after the session and then I sit, and I really see, and then I start writing down. I feel, I'll use that word by itself, it becomes some form of reflection on critical moments (Participant 4, line 78)*

> *But I think something else more magical happens when you are away from that facilitated space. It's something that perhaps you facilitate by yourself in your mind, uhm, between, between sessions… (Participant 3, line 72)*

> *But after people have left or after the coaching session I sit and see what and think for myself what, what went well and what could I have done differently and what is the learning for me. (Participant 2, line 270)*

The participants indicate that most of their reflection happens post-sessions, where, as Participant 4 indicated, they are able to sit down and write about their experiences or like Participants 3 and 2 just process their experiences in their minds, asking themselves questions about what they have learnt. Some of the participants had a tendency to use the terms ‘reflection’ and ‘critical reflection’ interchangeably as stated earlier, and their form of reflection incorporated asking themselves questions to gain a deeper understanding. One participant indicated that the questions can help them transform:

> *I mean, coaching is about… it’s really about that, right? Exploring and also allowing you, exposing you to other worlds, views, so you can sit back and ask your own self questions, and uhm, some of those questions can also help you to transform. (Participant 11, line 285)*

As stated in the literature, Malthouse et al. (2015) state that self-questioning is a process that encourages practitioners to become conscious of their assumptions in order that they may reflect on them and identify erroneous thinking patterns. Self-questioning, however, is not necessarily the same as critiquing the assumptions on which our views and beliefs are founded, which is critical reflection in essence (Mezirow, 1990). Thus, the findings do not suggest that when the participants engage in a process of self-questioning they are critically reflecting; instead, the findings suggest that when the participants spend time away from from the ‘facilitated space’ as articulated by Participant 3, and ask themselves questions, they begin a process of deconstruction. Breaking down their experience in order to make better sense of it not only encourages them to make sense of what they do but it also encourages them to think about who they are (Rolfe, Jasper and Freshwater, 2011 as cited in Hickson, 2011). Self-questioning is an important part of the process of critical reflection as it enables the participants to become aware of their assumptions and beliefs.

4.2.6 *Coaching is transformative*

The final theme that emerged from the findings pertained to transformation. Many of the participants felt that engaging in the coaching process had been transformative for them. Henderson (2002) indicates that transformational learning begins with an unsettling incident that challenges a person's world view. Nerstrom (2014) agrees and adds that these unsettling incidents could occur suddenly, such as childbirth or death of a loved one. However over time, relatively ordinary events could also culminate in a major perspective change (Mezirow, 1991 as cited in Nerstrom, 2014).

As stated in the literature, the coaching dialogue is a medium for both critical moments and reflection. By entering into a dialogue with a client, the coaches place themselves in a position in which they are likely to experience unsettling events (as indicated from the findings of this study) that may lead to their transformation.

a) Coaching changes the way you see and behave in the world

Many of the participants indicated that being a coach and having engaged in coaching dialogues has led to a transformation in their life, one way or another. Many of them shared testaments of how their beliefs, thoughts actions and behaviour had been transformed as a result of coaching. Participant 1 stated how, through coaching, he re-examined his main values and motivations:

> *…through the coaching journey, I've re-evaluated what my primary values and motivations are in life, which has been useful to me and I think it's been useful to my clients (Participants 1, line 249)*

While Participant 2 indicated that she has learnt that assessments and opinions are not always the truth:

> *So, that's been a huge learning for me to realise that assessments or opinions and assumptions are not always facts and how do I test for them to see that. (Participant 2, line 94)*

Most of the participants felt that engaging in dialogue with their client changed even simple things, such as the manner in which they communicate:

> *…it has not only transformed my life… Career-wise but the kind of questions I would ask my kids the kind of questions I would ask my husband… it has changed the manner in which I engage with family members (Participant 5, line 126 and 128)*

> *Whether I'm coaching or not, so, it has been in a way life-changing simply because I converse totally differently. (Participant 1, line 113)*

These participants indicated that the process of coaching has led to a change in perspective in different areas of their lives. The findings suggest that coaches place themselves in a position to undergo learning that is transformational when they engage in the coaching process with their clients. Henderson (2002) derived the four phases of transformational learning from the work of Mezirow (1997), Brookfield (2000) and Freire (1972). He used the most common phases of transformational learning from each author and reduced them to four phases. Table 6 below is an adaptation of the four phases. It suggests how a transformational experience may have transpired for the participants as a result of engaging in the coaching process.

Table 6: The coaches' experience of transformation

Phases	Phases of transformational learning	Coach's transformation
1	Some disruptive event occurs in the learner's life that challenges his or her view of the world.	• The coach receiving education/ training • The coach experiencing critical moments through the dialogic exchange
2	The learner then critically reflects on beliefs, assumptions, and values that shape the current perspective.	The coach (critically) reflects in the PRS or post session
3	The learner develops a new perspective to deal with the discrepancies surfaced by the triggering event.	The coach considers alternate perspectives to explain the unsettling event
4	The learner integrates the new perspective into his or her life.	The coach adapts a more inclusive worldview

(Adapted from Henderson, 2002)

In the first phase, the unsettling event that the participants experienced that challenged their perspectives may have occurred from the time they received their education or training to become a coach. This unsettling event may have ensued from the self-reflective exercises and interaction with others that form part of the formal education or training programme (Crossan et al., 2013). These unsettling events could occur suddenly or could be ordinary events that culminate in a major perspective change over time (Mezirow, 1991 as cited in Nerstrom, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that the participants increased their self-awareness just by receiving coach education or training. The seemingly ordinary events that promoted an increase in their self-awareness could have culminated in an important perspective change over time, as they continued with their coaching journey that, as the findings have indicated, involves continuous learning. On the other hand, the unsettling events could have been sudden. The participants experienced critical moments which the findings suggest are: listening to their own stories and experiencing physiological reactions to something that emerged during the dialogic exchange. These critical moments were sudden unsettling events that challenged the participants' worldviews. In the second phase, the participants critically reflected on the assumptions and beliefs that moulded their worldview through a process of self-questioning, and even critiquing deeply held assumptions and beliefs, as Participant 4 (line 78) suggests. In phase three, the participants then considered alternative perspectives that would better explain the unsettling event that lead to their worldview being challenged; and then in phase four, they adapted a worldview that was more inclusive.

The findings suggest that the transformational experience for the coach could be incited at varying points of the coaching process. Although transformational learning was not the focus of the study, the findings reveal that the unsettling events that instigate transformational learning may occur from the time coaches receive their training and continue as they practice as coaches, or they could occur suddenly by means of a critical moment. This unsettling event challenges the coaches' worldviews so that they critically reflect on the assumptions their worldviews are based upon and consider alternative perspectives that could explain the unsettling event, and then finally adapt a more inclusive worldview.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude this study. It will begin by providing an outline of this study's contribution to understanding the coach's experience of the coaching process, and how this process fosters a transformational experience. It will then make recommendations for prospective coaches, coach training institutions, as well as the executives within the area of executive coaching. Lastly, this chapter will make suggestions for future research and conclude with some remarks.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore how the coaching process may foster a transformational experience for executive coaches based in South Africa. Research concerning the coaches experience of the coaching process and how it may lead to transformation appears limited, thus this study explored: how the coaches experience the coaching process and how it may translate into a transformational experience for them.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the qualitative data of the coaches' experiences. The findings suggest that transformation occurs from engaging in the coaching process which is facilitated by the dialogue with the client, and acts as a medium for critical moments and critical reflection to take place. The data was analysed through a process of thematic analysis, and from this process, six main themes emerged. The study endeavoured to contribute to understanding the coaching process from the coach's perspective and how a transformational experience could be fostered, as well as add to the growing body of knowledge pertaining to executive coaching.

The preceding chapters outline the findings and analysis of the study. The findings suggest the following:

- The transformational experience is instigated from the time the coaches receive education or training to become a coach. The collaborative, self-reflective exercises that formal coach education and training employ not only increase self-awareness but could also incite unsettling events. These could be sudden or happen over time, culminating in a significant perspective change.
- Coaches who approach the coaching process as the dialogic self, a partner in the dialogue, place themselves in a position to be mutually influenced and thus transformed by the coaching process along with the client.
- Similar to approaching the dialogue as the dialogic self, by virtue of engaging in genuine dialogue and employing the features of genuine dialogue as identified by (Kent & Taylor, 2002), the coach allows the dialogic exchange to shape and transform them.
- The literature states that critical moments are moments of doubt and anxiety, whilst at the same time breakthrough moments that lead to the coach's learning (De Haan, 2008b). The findings suggest that this description of critical moments was not adequate, as they were more profound and far deeper than the description implies. The coaches experienced moments to be critical when they coached their own challenges or experienced involuntary physiological reactions that were triggered by something during the dialogic exchange with the client.
- Although the coaches use PRS to critically reflect, they indicated a preference to (critically) reflect post-sessions. The coaches also seemed to view critical reflection and reflection synonymously.
- The coaches had experienced transformation from practicing as coaches. The findings suggest that transformation takes place at varying points of the coaching process, thus the unsettling events that instigate a transformational experience could be incited from the time coaches receive their coach education or through a critical moment that occurs as a result of the dialogic exchange.

To conclude, executive coaches who practice in a multicultural context such as Gauteng, South Africa may be confronted with a need to maintain an open mind

in order to engage fully with their diverse clientele. While Stout-Rostron (2014) argues that executive coaches should understand their client's cultural, ethnic and educational backgrounds in order to propose empowering interventions, the findings of the study imply that even without prior knowledge of this information, the coach is still able to learn about those aspects of the client and even have their views or beliefs challenged and changed as a result of engaging in the coaching process. The insights from this study have implications for coaches and coach education/training institutions and coaching bodies.

Existing literature on coach education and training suggests that there are many avenues to becoming an executive coach and while some are formal and have quality assurance measures, some are not, and the quality of some training programmes cannot be guaranteed. The findings of this study support the enforcement of formal coach education or training as a standard for all potential coaches, as this will lay a solid foundation for effective coaching.

5.3 Recommendations

This section will make recommendations for prospective coaches, coach training institutions including individuals involved in designing coach education/training programmes, as well as the executives themselves.

5.3.1 *Recommendation for prospective coaches*

This study focused on coaches, how they experience the coaching process and how it can translate into a transformational experience for them. Understanding the importance of formal coach education and training in becoming an executive coach may encourage prospective coaches to invest in an education or training opportunity that incorporates formal assessments and has quality assurance measures in place to ensure that coaches are well-equipped on completion of the programme. The expectation with these types of education or training opportunities is that coaches will have the opportunity to engage in various exercises that will lead to deep introspection and reflection in a safe and

controlled space so that when they begin practising, they have not only developed or increased their self-awareness, but have had their worldviews challenged during the process and as a result have adapted more inclusive worldviews.

5.3.2 *Recommendations for coach training institutions*

The findings of the study suggest that there is great value in collective learning and employing self-reflective exercises. These have the potential to become unsettling events that incite a transformational experience for coaches. Individuals involved in designing coach education/training programmes should not only consider self-reflective exercises such as journaling but should also consider exercises in which student coaches are removed from the classroom and placed in situations that immediately challenge their current worldviews, and through reflection, result in transformation. Such exercises can be practical and include volunteer work or shadowing an executive for a period of time in order to better understand the pressures they work under.

5.3.3 *Recommendations for executives*

The findings of the study suggest that dialogue can be transformational. Engaging in a dialogic exchange with another person can challenge our worldviews and ultimately change them. Dialogue is a vehicle to achieve transformation; however, as with any vehicle, one needs to know how to operate it first. From their engagements with their coaches, executives could gain an understanding of how to employ the features of genuine dialogue in order to effectively engage in dialogue with their peers, superiors and subordinates. Engaging in dialogue outside of the coaching dyad will enable worldviews to be challenged and thus allow transformational learning to take place. Executives who make use of dialogue as a way to engage with others are likely to encourage a culture of learning within their organisations, which ultimately will improve their productivity and develop their competitive advantage (Mujtaba & Sungkhawan, 2009).

5.4 Suggestions for future research

This study was focused on how coaches based in Gauteng, South Africa experienced the coaching process and how this fostered a transformational experience for them. Eleven executive coaches were interviewed, and these coaches provided some insight into how the coaching process incited a transformational experience for them. A number of areas for future research developed as a result of this exploration, and these suggestions are noted below:

- Exploring how formal coach education or training and informal coach education or training influence the coach's approach to the coaching process.
- Investigating how practical experience and inexperience of coaching impacts the coaching process.
- Replicating this study without the delimitation of internal coaches
- Replicating this study with international executive coaches.
- Exploring how the coaching process fosters a transformational experience for executives and comparing those findings with the findings of this study.
- Further investigating the process of reflection and critical reflection amongst coaches.

5.5 Concluding remarks

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that transformation for the coach is possible, and it can occur at any point of the coaching process. The researcher believes transformation is possible for coaches, as they appear to be learners at heart. Curiosity seems to be a genuine quality in many coaches; the desire to want to know more, more about ourselves, more about the people around us and the world we live in, seems to be a common theme in many executive coaches.

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Appendix A: Linkage of research questions to interview questions

Research sub-squestions	Key constructs	Interview question
a) Does the coach's practical experience influence their approach to the coaching process?	• What is the coach's practical experience? • What type of coaching training did they receive? • What has their journey been like.	**Section 1** 1. Where did you obtain your coaching qualification? 2. What type of a qualification is it? (certificate, degree etc.) 3. What was the duration of the course or programme? 4. Did you specialise in a specific coaching approach or where you taught a range of approaches? 5. How long have you been practicing as a coach? 6. How would you describe your coaching approach/style? **Section 2** 7. Please tell me about your coaching journey?
b) How is the coaching process facilitated by dialogue?	• What is dialogue? • Can it facilitate the coaching process?	8. What do you understand by dialogue? 9. Do you believe it enables the coaching process? 10. Please share what your experience has been like, engaging in dialogue with your clients.
c) How does dialogue cultivate critical moments and critical reflection which ultimately foster a transformational experience?	• What are critical moments and what is critical reflection? • What is transformation and can it be achieved through these occurences?	11. What do you understand critical moments to be during the coaching process? 12. Can you tell me about a time you experienced a critical moment during a coaching engagement? 13. What do you understand by critical reflection? 14. Do you critically reflect during your coaching engagements with your clients? 15. What prompts these moments of critical reflection? 16. Have your assumptions and beliefs ever been challenged during the coaching

		engagement? 17. Please tell me about that time. 18. Have any of your assumptions and beliefs changed as a result of any of your coaching engagements?

APPENDIX B: Research Instrument

Biographical information

Age		**Gender**	
Nationality		**Work experience (No. of years)**	

Section 1

1. Where did you obtain your coaching qualification?
2. What type of a qualification is it? (certificate, degree etc.)
3. What was the duration of the course or programme?
4. Did you specialise in a specific coaching approach or where you taught a range of approaches?
5. How long have you been practicing as a coach?
6. How would you describe your coaching approach/style?

Section 2

7. Please tell me about your coaching journey?
8. What do you understand by dialogue?
9. Do you believe it enables the coaching process?
10. Please share what your experience has been like, engaging in dialogue with your clients.
11. What do you understand critical moments to be during the coaching process?
12. Can you tell me about a time you experienced a critical moment during a coaching engagement?
13. What do you understand by critical reflection?
14. Do you critically reflect during your coaching engagements with your clients?
15. What prompts these moments of critical reflection?
16. Have your assumptions and beliefs ever been challenged during the coaching engagement?
17. Please tell me about that time.
18. Have any of your assumptions and beliefs changed as a result of any of your coaching engagements?

APPENDIX C: Covering Letter



Good day,

My name is Venessa Lopang Mogatusi. I am a student at the Wits Business School, currently conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Master of Management: Business and Executive Coaching degree. The study aims to explore how the coaching process may foster a transformational experience for executive coaches. The study will explore: a) how the coach's work experience (including education and training) influences their approach to the coaching process; b) how coaches experience the coaching process; and c) how the coaching process may translate into a transformational experience for them.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by myself at a time and place convenient for you. The interview should last approximately an hour. Please note, that participation in this interview is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. With your permission this interview will be audio-recorded in order to ensure accuracy. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you will be included in the research report. I will use a numeric coding system to match the participant with a response. The interview material (audio-recordings and transcripts) will be kept in a place only accessible to myself and will not be seen or heard by any person either than myself and my supervisor.

If you choose to participate in the study, please sign the two forms handed to you. The first form is one that requires your permission to participate in the study. The second form is one that requires your permission to have the interview audio-recorded and for the use of direct quotations without identifying you. The results of the study will be used in a final research report, which could potentially be published. A summary of the research will be provided for you on request. If you are interested in getting a summary of the results, you may contact me, my contact details are below, and I will ensure that you receive a copy.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to a larger body of knowledge on executive coaching.

Kind Regards

Venessa Mogatusi

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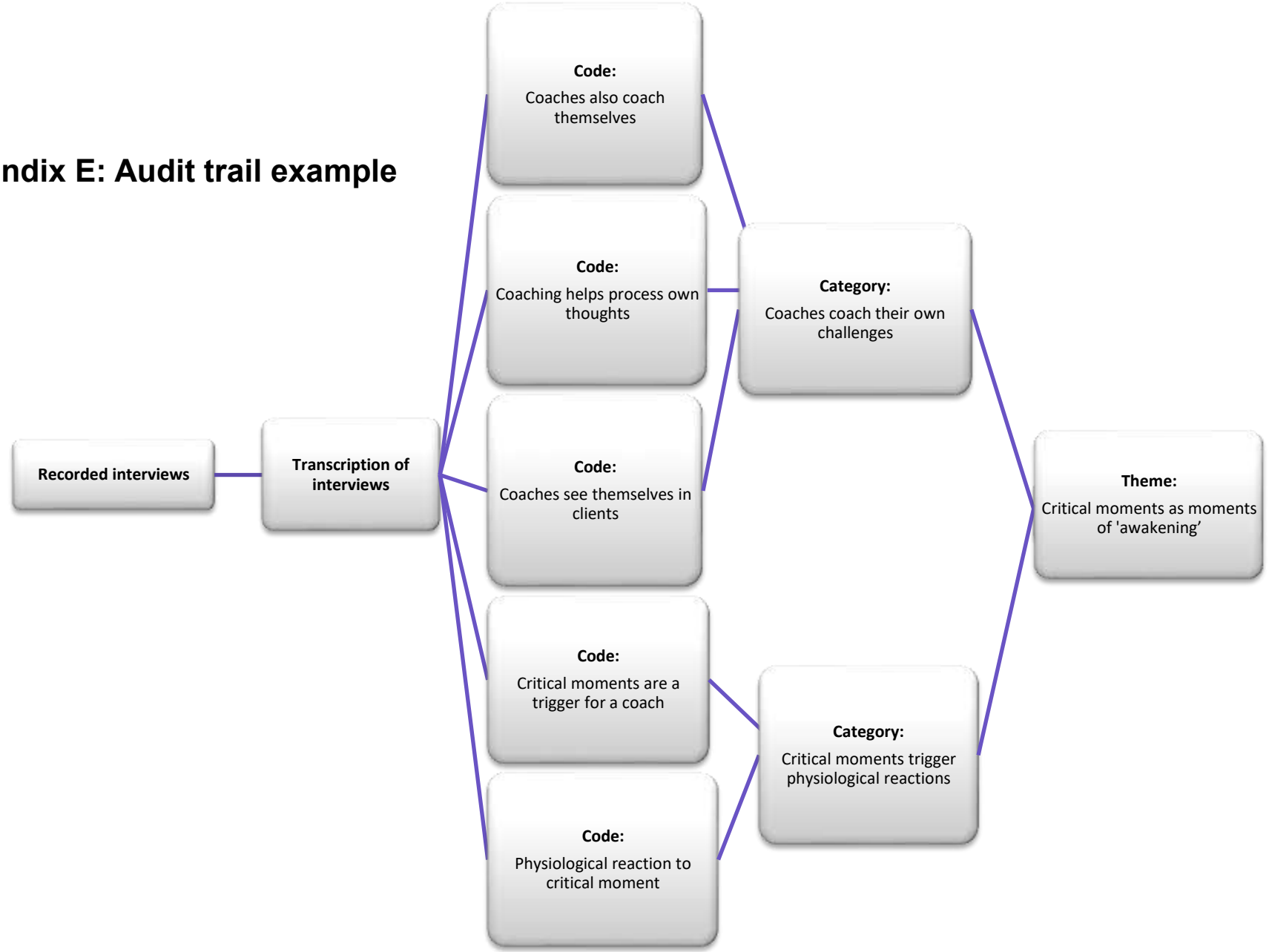
Appendix D: Summary of codes per theme (Page 1)

Coach's Qualifications and training	Coach's practical knowledge	Dialogue
Coaching qualification leading to self-awareness	Coach does not have all the answers	Each dialogue is distinct
Continuous training leading to unlearning what is learnt	Trusting the process	Openness to the things coming up
Credentialing leading to deeper-self-reflection and self-growth	Trusting your intuition	Clients also need to be invested
Coaching journey as a personal shift	Coach confidence takes time	Clients don't always understand privilege of receiving coaching
Journey of continuous learning	Confidence in using techniques	Coach needed to move from head to heart
As a coach you need to be learning continuously	Constant upskilling increases confidence	Being completely present
Coaching training leading to challenging own assumptions	Using the tools and techniques just for guidance	Being vulnerable shifts the conversation
Coaching as a calling	Uses tools in toolbox when stuck	Vulnerability opens up space for things to happen
Some people are coaches at heart	Importance of process	Without conditions for genuine dialogue, it becomes a superficial conversation
Coach values training that is rigorous	Coaching the whole person	Establishing a relationship
It's not about skill but intention	The relationship supersedes the process	Dialogue cannot happen without a connection
Coaching qualification leads to rebirth	It would not be fair to impose the process on someone	Dialogue is always asking questions
	Coaching across systems	Going deeper with questions helps client to come up with new things
	Preference to separate client's issues	
	Not being a subject matter expect allows for learning	

Appendix E: Audit trail example



Appendix F: Interview consent form

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Venessa Lopang Mogatusi for her study “The coaching process as a catalyst for transformation: perspectives of coaches in South Africa.”

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain confidential.

Signed _____

Thank you,

Venessa Lopang Mogatusi

0721821961

Venessa.mogatusi@gmail.com

Appendix G: Audio recording consent

I _____ consent to my interview with Venessa Lopang Mogatusi for her study “The coaching process as a catalyst for transformation: perspectives of coaches in South Africa.” Being audio-recorded.

I understand that:

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person other than the researcher and her supervisor.
- All audio-recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.
- Direct quotations may be used in the final research report but with no identifying information.

Signed _____

Thank you,

Venessa Lopang Mogatusi

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