Doctorate in Professional Studies

Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making in Coaching Psychology

A critical evaluation of the use of biographical inquiry in the exploration of meaning making in coaching psychology

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition for the purposes of my research
Attachment	Also referred to as relationship - the ability to create and sustain relationships with others.
Biographical Inquiry (BI)	The process of systematically exploring key areas in a client's background for deeper understanding of their meaning making systems.
Clients	The role of recipient of coaching services from coach.
Coach	The role of coach in the coaching relationship.
Code	Process of coding used in data analysis.
Context	A dimension of biographical inquiry that includes identity to aspects of culture, ethnicity, race, and socio-economic factors.
Dialogical inquiry	The uncovering, through conversation, deeper self-awareness and appreciation for multiple perspectives of meaning and truth.
Emotional Spectrum	The ability to connect with a full spectrum of emotions including but not limited to attachment based and escape based emotions.
Family of origin	The primary members of your early childhood care unit. Often includes parents (or primary care giver) and siblings.
HASIE	Hierarchy – Attachment – Siblings – Identity – Emotional Tapestry. A model created by Brown & Brown that was created in the applied neurosciences to understand how a client's brain operates.
Hierarchy	Hierarchy is a relationship between two or more people, in which one exerts an influence over the other as a consequence of social status (e.g. parents, teachers, mentors, bosses).
Identity	The stories one tells themselves about who they are and how those stories have evolved overtime.
Interviewee	The participants who were interviewed for the research.
Meaning Making	The process of exploring why one does what they do and where that sense of why comes from. Typically expressed in psychology as the process of how people construe, understand, or make sense of life events, relationships, and the self.

Narration	The ‘story’ of events that paints the teller in a certain role.
Node	Node is the field allocated in NVivo.
Non-conscious	Everything that sits outside the conscious. A psychologically agnostic term to include the pre-conscious and unconscious, sub-conscious and other or anything ‘below the surface’ of human conscious awareness.
Practitioner-Scholar	A professional, working in their field of expertise for several years and also pursing applied academic studies at a doctoral level.
Peers	The peer or ‘equal in power’ reference group of the client, often beginning with siblings.
Reflexivity	The examination of one's own beliefs, judgments and practices and how these may have influenced behaviours.
Survey Monkey	Online questionnaire tool used by over 16 million globally.
Zoom	Virtual conferencing tool used by over 45 millions globally.

Abstract

Coaching has shifted significantly in its definition, goals and outcomes over the past several decades, with contested perspectives on one unifying approach (Passmore and Sinclair, 2020). This shift has entered what some researchers are calling third-generation coaching that is focused on deeper meaning and identity work through higher-quality dialogue (Stelter, 2014; Grant, 2016). While there is research on coaching effectiveness, to date the research has not adequately addressed the complex issues that arise in the varying approaches used in coaching. Because third-generation coaching sits within the area of coaching psychology, a relatively new field that emerged in 2000, often theoretical frameworks are either inherited from psychology or used as an applied approach to practice. The vast majority of the research undertaken in coaching psychology is focused on cognitive-behavioural coaching and solutions-focused coaching (Lai and Palmer, 2019). The research in coaching psychology has yet to converge with the speed of the practice (Fillery-Travis and Corrie, 2019).

A literature review of both coaching and coaching psychology, as well as constructive-developmental and autobiographical perspectives from the psychology discipline, supported this project's research, which focused on progressing the knowledge, practice, research and practitioners' tools used in coaching psychology, particularly within the field of autobiographical dimensions of meaning making. This research contributes in three ways:

1. It creates the first coaching-centric and interdisciplinary framework to biographical inquiry that enables a shared understanding of the client and explores both conscious and non-conscious drivers to behaviours.
2. It expands the nature of third-generation coaching to include the exploration of meaning making through a dialogical process using and biographical inquiry.
3. It extends the exploration of the non-conscious in coaching by working with clients at the intersection of the past, present and future.

The research, originating from Asia and therefore considering cultural relativism perspectives, uses a constructivist grounded theory methodology through the use of 13 semi-structured qualitative interviews. The interviewees were selected based on a stringent criteria of minimum 10 years' coaching and psychology experience in cross-cultural environments, requirement of ongoing supervision, and membership of a regulatory body with ethical standards for practice. The interviewees represent over a hundred years of cumulative experience as coaches, are extensively trained in both psychology and coaching, have all worked and lived in non-native countries of origin, and have diverse multicultural

experience. Thematic analysis reveals the importance of biographical inquiry to the work of meaning making and creating a shared understanding of a client. In addition, the first-ever coaching model for biographical inquiry, called ‘Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making (BDMM)’, and its interpretation framework have been developed. Finally, through this deliberate exploration of the past, the working in the present, and the projection of future goals, a new form of working with the non-conscious is emerging.

Through the BDMM, this research, provides the first coaching-centric framework to biographical inquiry that creates a solid foundation of shared understanding in coaching. It explores both conscious and non-conscious drivers to behaviours, and also contributes to the expansion of third generation coaching within the field of coaching psychology.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this chapter it would be common place to find the overall project context, why this research is important, the main themes and why this research is uniquely positioned for myself as the researcher. While the former will be covered in section 1.3, I believe it is important to begin with why me and why now. The intention of this research is to share an approach to understanding why clients do what they do within the field of coaching, by exploring meaning making through biographical inquiry. As such, this is where this research will begin. An exploration of my why and my biographical history, as it is through this context that true understanding of the research outcomes can emerge.

Equally important is to highlight the nature of disciplinarity in this research. As will be explored in depth in later chapters, this research adopts an interdisciplinary approach by integrating knowledge and methods from different disciplines to synthesise a new approach to biographical inquiry in coaching psychology. The knowledge comes from the fields of coaching, coaching psychology, applied neuroscience, and psychology. Various methods within each of these fields comes together in this research to provide an expanded view of coaching within a third generation perspective, the first framework for biographical inquiry in coaching and a new approach to the non-conscious in coaching as the intersection of the past, present and future.

This chapter has three core areas of exploration:

1.1 A summary of the research journey.

1.2 A reflection on the researcher's journey.

1.3 The contribution to the field of coaching psychology.

1.1 A summary of the research journey

The past five and half years of this doctoral journey sits within the context of the past 12 years of my coaching career and my almost 25 years in the profession development space. With over 3,000 coaching hours, and having worked with over 250 organisations and contributed to the learning of thousands of leaders across the world, I am presenting this research with confidence in its relevance to our profession while also recognising how much further we have yet to go. As a practitioner-scholar, I stand assured of the relevance of my research: I am confident of its validity and reliability. It has been shared at ten global and regional conferences within various coaching communities and it has been presented at several peer coaching conferences (Hasanie, 2019; 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e). It delights and challenges, triggers sceptics and impassions advocates, but most importantly it and makes us think critically about the work we do as coaches, which is exactly what good research intends to do. Moreover, I am delighted to bring a much-needed diverse voice to the world of coaching research from the lens of a woman of colour, practising in Asia.

Yet, from another perspective, I believe my work has only just begun. This emerging field of practitioner-scholar has taught me that the field of coaching has moved light years in the past 20 years but we still has so much further to go. While my research offers a new and unique perspective on the field, the room for continued evidence-based research, control groups and case studies reminds me that my work in this field is just beginning. This shift from coach to partitioner-scholar has shifted how I coach, how I mentor and how I supervise others. Alongside this doctoral journey, I have studied and invested time in further new learning including multiple certifications in psychotherapy and psychodynamic approaches, a coaching supervision diploma, team coaching and team psychodynamics certifications, and my pending certification as a Master Certified Coach with the International Coaching Federation. With each step I moved deeper into the practitioner-scholar world, the more I wanted to know but also the more I wanted to say. It is this balance that I will take with me in the next steps of my journey – how to introduce thought leadership and challenge the boundaries of how and why coaches do what they do, while holding the humility to accept that there is more than one way; and how to hold the perspective that it is our job, as practitioner-scholars, not only to expand knowledge and learning but, most importantly, to bring different voices to the conversation to ensure that we are contributing to a field that fully appreciates the diversity of all whom it touches.

1.2 A reflection on the researcher's journey

My identity formation as a practitioner-scholar is a journey that began almost 42 years ago. The daughter of a first-generation immigrant to Canada, my father was an academic but found limited success due to his perceived poor English language skills. As a young person, I did not see the discrimination he faced, but the romanticism of being an academic, which included summers off, a classroom filled with adults who wanted to learn from you, and a life where my father was present for every sport, every dinner and every milestone of my life. Ultimately dissuaded by my father to pursue a life in academia, I embraced the world of business and found great success. However, the aspiration never ceased. Instead of being an academic, I became an avid consumer of its products. Armed with an undergraduate degree, a Master of Business Administration and over 20 certifications and diplomas, I temporarily quenched the pursuit of the doctorate for the pursuit of my own knowledge.

Having transitioned careers four times – from sales and marketing to human resources to management consulting and, finally, to coaching 12 years ago I felt I had at last found my professional home. In doing so, I had also discovered how my own narratives influenced how I worked. This idea was originally attributed to Robin Shohet and long-time collaborator of Peter Hawkins who suggested that those of us in the helping professions tend to approach our work from our own pathologies (Shohet and Hawkins, 2000). In my case, my multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural sense of identity has been the greatest source of both confusion and clarity in my life. Adding to the complexity was the choice to begin my coaching career in a country that was not my place of birth – Singapore. Hypersensitised to my own meaning-making narratives and personal conflicts with identity, I found myself continually trying to first understand the constructs of the client before doing the work of behaviour change.
In 2013, I began working with a framework, positioned in applied neuroscience, which was designed around the exploration of a client's life history in order to get a better appreciation for their client's mind formation, through life experiences. Created by a psychotherapist and academic Dr Paul Brown, the Hierarchy-Attachment-Sibling-Identity-Emotional Tapestry (herein HASIE) gained its theoretical foundations in the early 1970s when Dr Brown was Director of Psychological Services for an Executive Career Counselling Firm in the UK. HASIE was first published in *Neuropsychology for Coaches* (Brown and Brown, 2012) and has been taught since this time in a programme called the 'Science and the Art of Coaching in Applied Neuroscience'. HASIE sparked my curiosity of biographical inquiry, and it was through its application I began to get more structured data on the dimension of why we do what we do and where these patterns come from. I adopted this framework within my own practice and used it effectively with over 50 clients over a three-year period.

Given the positive feedback from clients on the value of this type of exploration, and my own insights of linking the past to non-conscious patterns of behaviours in the present, it felt imperative to explore the evidence base around the use of biographical inquiry. Furthermore, the framework was evolving and expanding as I became more insightful into the patterns that can emerge with clients. I strongly believed that there was value and an unmet need in the coaching field for an evidence-based model of this kind, and my goal was to explore those foundations.

As I began to identify the relevant bodies of knowledge related to this work, I realised its truly interdisciplinary nature. To understand all the critical components of this type of work required interdisciplinary engagement with psychology, applied neuroscience, coaching and coaching psychology. The 'why' was called 'meaning making' in psychology: it encompassed both conscious and non-conscious elements for the client, and it adopted a narrative process for exploration widely used in coaching psychology and psychotherapeutic interventions. Over a period of six years, I went on a professional journey to qualify myself in the fields of psychology and psychotherapy in order to engage with the knowledge as student, practitioner and scholar. I discovered that my aim and objectives sat at the intersection of applied neuroscience, psychology, psychotherapy and various coaching approaches. I also discovered that research simply did not exist around the subject I was exploring or in the way that I was exploring it. Most surprising was the lack of research into the use of biographical data in any meaningful way in coaching. It was only used in limited capacities such as with simplified timeline exercises, often linked to neurolinguistic programming (Grimley, 2013), or as part of the narrative approach to coaching, whereby some elements of a client's history merge in the discovery of their meaning-making structures (Kilburg, 2004a; Habernas, 2011; Graci and Fivush, 2017; McAdmans, 2018).

As will be explored in Chapter 2, biographical inquiry – as it applies to coaching – is often explored through narration but lacks any comprehensive view of how to do a full life exploration. There simply are no evidence-based frameworks in coaching regarding how to undertake a full biographical review with a client. Adding to the need for this type of research is a gap between leadership traits and tendencies as they relate to life experience. Much of the research related to this space was pulled from the field of psychology, not coaching. The relationship between leadership tendencies and life experience within coaching is almost exclusively drawn from a narrative perspective. Coaching explores life transitions and social context (Panchal et al., 2019) or how stress, resilience, coping and well-being, and the sequence of redemption and contamination have impacts on behaviour (McAdams et al., 2001) but there is limited research on the direct correlation between life events and leadership tendencies.

That being said, the importance of biographical data exploration is being considered in some ways through the movement in coaching psychology towards more systemic approaches. The consideration of the client as part of a system grows from the role they played in their original system – that of their family of origin. Whether considering the use of transactional analysis (Wilson, 2019), constellation (Whittington, 2012) or psychodynamic approaches in coaching (Roberts and Brunning, 2019), all have theoretical foundations related to the exploration of role within the family and how that influences current behaviours and perspectives. The idea is that as children, we are born free of beliefs and overtime, through the process of experiencing and interpreting the world, develop our unique view of it (Wilson, 2019). Yet again, there still lacked a comprehensive approach to understanding how the whole life's journey impacted behaviours in the present.

As I shifted into the data collection phase of this research, primed with interviewees who each had at least 13 years of professional experiences as coaches (the average was 17 years), I was struck by the consistency around the importance of doing some form of biographical inquiry with clients. All the interviewees used some form of biographical inquiry, in all cases going as far back as the family of origin. Despite the overwhelming consistency of this view, why then was there so little in the research to suggest its importance? Part of the challenge is the astronomical rate of growth of the coaching profession as a whole, which is evidenced in a 2006 study that found annual coaching revenues were in the realm of US$1.5 billion and had approximately 30,000 certified professional coaches globally (ICF, 2006). By 2016, the annual revenues were to the tune of under U$3 billion and over 53,000 certified professional coaches and growing year on year (ICF, 2016). With this unprecedented growth came an explosion of coaching philosophies, some backed by academic research but many backed by practitioners' experience. Adding to the complexity was the large number of professionals coming from the psychology field, bringing with them established ways of working with clients. While coaching psychology as a field has come a long way, there are clear gaps in its theoretical foundations and the lack of use of biographical data is a large one.

The emergence of coaching psychology leveraged the use of applied psychology to the practice of coaching by using evidence-based methods grounded in scientific research from this sister field of psychology (Allen, 2016). First offered by the University of Sydney in 2000, coaching psychology had originally positioned much of its research within the realms of positive psychology and social psychology. Where the field of coaching psychology has gone since 2000 has been significant. Several academic journals, dedicated university degrees and extensive programming has now given coaching psychology its own standing within the wider context of coaching. Beyond that, coaching psychology was also awarded with its own standing as a Division within the British Psychology Society in September 2021, giving it the significance and prominence, it rightly deserves. My belief is that this research will add to the growing body of research that informs this field.

1.3 The contribution to the field of coaching psychology

My research is focused on creating a framework whereby coaches have a shared understanding of *why* their clients do what they do. My perspective on this *why* is to focus on a client's meaning-making structures, both at a conscious and a non-conscious level, through the use of biographical inquiry. Explicitly, my aim is to create a new theoretical framework and preliminary tool for conscious and non-conscious meaning making within coaching. The objectives are to:

- bring an interdisciplinary approach to creating a framework that includes coaching and coaching psychology approaches, the field of psychology and applied neuroscience;
- use primary interviews with extensively qualified coaches and psychologists to gain a consensus on what meaning making is and how coaches can explore it with clients;
- develop a new model for meaning making and a preliminary tool for practitioners; and
- explore how the non-conscious is defined through the time dimensions of the past, present and future.

The outcomes of this research have resulted in the following contributions to the field of coaching:

- The first evidence-based interdisciplinary coaching framework for biographical inquiry called the 'Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making' (BDMM).
- An expansion of the nature of coaching within a third-generation perspective in coaching psychology.
- Working with the non-conscious through multiple time dimensions as the intersection of the past, present and future within coaching.

The positioning of this research is also critical to its contribution. Given its interdisciplinary perspective and strong alignment to various psychology and coaching psychology approaches, I have positioned it within the field of coaching psychology. While the hallmarks of progression of the coaching psychology field overall are debated (see Chapter 2), there is a view among some researchers that coaching has reached a third-generation perspective. This was originally proposed by Stelter in 2014 as a marked departure from the goal-oriented agenda of coaching to exploration that focused on deeper levels of identity through a narrative approach (Stelter, 2014). Grant (2016) also used the notion of third generation, although with a different perspective. He suggested that third-generation coaching was more expansive in that both the performance and the well-being of individuals and organisations were enhanced through higher-quality conversations (Grant, 2016). While neither researcher aligned with the other's perspective, the common characteristics of both perspectives focused on deeper and more expansive views of self through high-quality dialogue. These characteristics are embodied in the findings from this research and therefore build on the ongoing view of third-generation coaching.

Another critically defining aspect of this research is its focus on creating a clearly defined framework for pragmatic application within coaching. As the coaching profession has evolved, so too have the disciplines from which we learn, grow and borrow. To quote from the 18th-century French essayist, Joseph Joubert, 'It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.’ Certainly, coaching practitioners have been debating, as they rightly should, the role and application of coaching in this world. As more and more practitioners come to the field, so too do the disciplines from which we learn and extend our knowledge. There is a vast range of approaches to coaching to be explored. However, there is a noticeable lack of clearly defined, evidence-based tools and frameworks that match the speed with which we are conceptualising what we should or can be as a profession. It was therefore critical to the findings of this research to create an evidence-based framework for application within coaching.

Adding to the complexity is defining within this research which type of coaching this approach is best positioned. Within coaching, the distinction is often made between executive coaching and life coaching. Executive coaching focuses on helping clients improve their managerial responsibilities and performance within an organisational setting (Kilburg, 2000). Contrast that with life coaching, which is often focused on enhancements to our well-being in life (Douglas and McCauley, 1999) as well as on personal values to change and development in order to create a more fulfilling and purposeful life (Grant and Cavanagh, 2018). Yet, the merging of life coaching as part of the executive coaching process of improving performance has long existed (Sparrow, 2007). As all the coaching work I do is within an organisational context, contracted by the client organisation, this research will therefore contribute to the executive coaching sphere.

In addition, the methods of exploration of the non-conscious dimensions of a client are almost entirely borrowed from the field of applied psychology. However, working with the non-conscious has resulted in several approaches, particularly within coaching psychology, but has a narrow focus on somatic work, working with emotions and the more applied psychology perspectives. This research offers a coaching-based perspective on the non-conscious as the intersection of time dimensions of the past, present and future.

Finally, with this doctorate, my focus in discussing these research outcomes is on practitioners: they are my target audience. Whether psychologically trained or not, any coach having worked in the field of coaching for at least a few years will know that the complexity of human behaviour cannot be captured without some consideration of the past. What makes up the meaning-making structures of a client comes from the interplay between the past, present and future. Therefore, as coaches, it is essential to have frameworks to help us navigate these waters. Finally, this doctorate is targeted towards those who want to learn and are open to a process of biographical inquiry that can have long and sustaining impacts on not only the client but the coach as well. There is still more to do in continuing to explore the evidence base for the use of biographical inquiry in coaching.

Chapter 2 – Review of Literature

This research is focused on the creation of a framework for coaches that results in a shared understanding of *why* their clients do what they do. This *why* is explored through the meaning-making structures of the client, both at a conscious and a non-conscious level, primarily through the use of biographical inquiry (BI).

The key outcomes of the research led to the following insights:

- The expansion of the nature of coaching within a third-generation perspective.
- The use of BI in coaching.
- The intersection of the past, present and future in coaching to inform another perspective on the non-conscious.

These outcomes have been informed by this literature review and expanded as additional insights were discovered through the analysis and findings stages. Therefore, the structure of this literature review includes the following:

2.1 **Orientating the research** – given the interdisciplinary disciplinary orientation of this research, bounding its existence within the field of coaching and coaching psychology is important in order to define its contribution to the field.

2.2 **Meaning-making-related research** – this research, at its core, is about the exploration of meaning making, which has theoretical foundations in the field of coaching and the field of psychology, both of which will be explored in this chapter.

2.3 **Biographical inquiry-related research** – the use of BI has limited research foundations in the field of coaching and more depth in the field of psychology. However, each field relates to leadership tendencies and traits, and so this chapter explores both while also establishing the boundaries of areas considered unrelated to this research.

2.4 **Non-conscious-related research** – as the research findings emerged, the exploration of the non-conscious through various applied practice approaches in the fields of coaching and psychology were considered.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, this research takes an interdisciplinary approach. As such, each of the sub-headings above will include research from various fields including coaching, coaching psychology, applied neuroscience and psychology. The key criteria for inclusion in this literature review was the following:

- Research that explores meaning making structures in clients

- Research that explores the use of biographical data
- Research that includes the use of the non-conscious in the context of behaviour change

Equally critical to the inclusions, are the exclusions from this research. As this research is integrating knowledge from the field of psychology, particularly as it relates to biographical inquiry and the non-conscious, it was imperative to create boundaries in the literature. Firstly, any research related to the diagnosis and treatment of pathology was excluded due to the fundamental different nature of application and epistemology of the research. Secondly, the entire nature versus nurture debate. While considered, what is most relevant for the focus of this research is how nurture influences behaviours, not the epistemology of that debate. Consequently, while recognising that some of the drivers of adult behaviour are inevitably linked to nature, these have been excluded from the research. Thirdly, any approach that considers the past inevitably brings about the debate between therapy and coaching. As the starting proposition of this research is that biographical data influences adult behaviour, it is acknowledged that any inquiry into a client's past comes with much consideration of both the well-being of the client and the coach's capacity to undertake this type of work. However, the intent of the inquiry is neither therapeutic nor clinical but rather to draw correlations between events of the past and how these may have impacts on meaning making in adult life, as such, literature from the counselling and therapy fields has been excluded.

2.1 Orientating the Research

Coaching is, by its very nature, a multidisciplinary field that draws on a multitude of constructs and concepts from various disciplines (Cunningham, 2017). Given that it is a relatively new field and given the complexities of its multidisciplinary approach, tracing literature to one's own research and findings can be challenging. Adding to the complexity is that the positioning of one's research becomes less about its correct alignment to other contributions within the field and more about its alignment to one's own training and background (Cunningham, 2017).

For the purposes of this study, the researcher is contracted as an executive coach within an organisational context. While the content of the coaching can often be aligned to the discipline of business, the nature of the work is coaching and therefore this literature review is aligned to the field of coaching as opposed to business. Within coaching, the most relevant distinction to be made is between executive coaching and life coaching. Executive coaching focuses on helping clients improve their managerial responsibilities and performance within an organisational setting (Kilburg, 2000) in contrast to life coaching, which is often focused on enhancements to personal well-being (Douglas and McCauley, 1999) and on personal views about change and development in seeking a more fulfilling and purposeful life (Grant and Cavanagh, 2018). While there is compelling research suggesting that life coaching is part of the executive coaching process of improving performance (Sparrow, 2007), the key distinction to be made is the nature of the contract with the client(s) being studied in the research, and how this contributes to the phenomena being studied (Lai and Passmore, 2019). As the researcher and all the interviewees of this research work primarily as executive coaches, sponsored by the client organisation, this research contributes to the field of executive coaching.

This section will explore in more detail the philosophical alignment to the various approaches in executive coaching, coaching psychology, the discipline of psychology and other related applied-science approaches.

2.1.1 Orientation within Coaching-Related Research

As coaching has evolved, the injection of new ideas and techniques has led to confusion about its precise nature and what it is designed to achieve (Ives, 2008). The different schools of thought around the process and purpose of coaching have been widely debated, with no clear alignment on one unifying approach. One perspective is the strong belief that coaching aims to change behaviour through a goal-directed approach versus the counterview that it is a meaning-making process that may or may not result in behaviour change (Cunningham, 2017). Further complicating the dynamics are the varying approaches in which one describes the research undertaken in coaching to date. Currently, there are four compelling approaches to the portrayal of the research: a categorisation approach, a paradigm approach, an effectiveness approach, and a generational approach (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011; Ives, 2008; Theeboom, Beersma and van Vianen, 2014; Stelter 2014; Grant 2016).

The categorisation approach, offered by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) suggests that coaching research can be categorised into five areas: (1) the nature of coaching, (2) coach behaviour studies, (3) client behaviour studies, (4) relationship studies, and (5) impact studies. Within each of these categories exists variance on definition and the methodological approaches that were applied. The authors acknowledge that, as the research continues to evolve, so too do the skills of the researcher in exploring different paradigms, approaches and methodologies. Ultimately, they suggest that all research paradigms have a place but that the most important criteria should aim for research excellence. Based on this categorisation approach, this research study and its findings would sit within the two categories of the nature of coaching category, with its strong alignment to coaching psychology, and client behaviour studies.

First, the nature of coaching: the authors suggest that the full spectrum of the nature of coaching can be as simple as borrowing techniques from other disciplines to defining clear boundaries of coaching relative to other disciplines like counselling (Passmore et al., 2011). The research findings from this study expand on the nature of coaching, particularly as it relates to coaching psychology (see section 5.1). Second, the client behaviour studies: the focus of these are on defining a client's readiness for change. The findings suggest that BI can increase the effectiveness of coaching. The findings from this research study can be applied to multiple categories within this approach.

Ives (2008) offers an approach to exploring the knowledge base of coaching, termed here as a paradigm approach. He suggests that, by understanding the nature of the various research approaches, the appropriate coaching model can be better identified and applied. He also suggests that paradigms of coaching fall within three core dimensions: (1) directive or non-directive, (2) personal development or goal focused, (3) therapeutic or performance drivers. He strongly notes that the movement towards more personal development or therapeutic-type approaches can potentially increase the probability of more directive approaches and risks losing the distinctive goal-focused, self-directed character of coaching (Ives, 2008). While an interesting approach to classifying research, the classifications are not mutually exclusive and are now dated. Since Ives's publication, one could argue there has been a significant increase in the number of coaching approaches in the personal development paradigm that have had significant impact on performance drivers. The entire field of coaching psychology suggests the integration of well-being, life experience and work performance (Whybrow and Passmore, 2019). Specifically, the implications in this research study relate to both personal development and performance drivers. As such, Ives's approach is too dated and appears to be strongly biased towards goal-focused approaches.

Looking at the research from an effectiveness approach are Theeboomet al. (2014). These researchers applied a quantitative summary of coaching research and categorised the research outcomes into five key areas: (1) performance/skills, (2) well-being, (3) coping, (4) work attitudes, and (5) goal-directed self-regulation (Theeboom et al., 2014). While highly effective in applying a quantitative approach to the categorisation of research, many research articles may have been excluded because they did not meet the stringent criteria by including quantitative data on the effects of coaching. The challenge is that many research studies related to the nature of coaching and personal development may not include this quantitative data. To suggest that these non-quantitative approaches do not yield effective research is a limiting perspective, and ultimately does not support the findings and methodological approach used in this study.

Finally, the generational perspective as proposed by Stelter (2014) and Grant (2016). It is important to note that both these researchers take a very different perspective to the definition of the term third-generation coaching. First, Stelter describes this as putting a stronger emphasis on values and meaning-making work through the unfolding of people's identity through reflection and a narrative process (Stelter, 2014). This is in contrasted to Grant's exploration of the research, which suggests that third-generation coaching focuses on performance and well-being through high-quality conversations. Grant emphasises that this coaching should be assessable, personally meaningful and self-congruent (Grant, 2016). While the mechanism of attainment is dramatically different between these two researchers, they are both positioned within the realm of coaching psychology, with the end goal of high-quality conversations that are personally meaningful and a focus on a deeper reflections on identity and well-being. The end goal of this approach is strongly correlated with the findings of this research, which also suggests a focus on high-quality conversations and deep self-identity work (as will be explored in Chapter 6). The greatest criticism of this approach, however, is the limited adoption of the term 'third generation coaching', with only Grant and Stelter as its advocates, and their highly differentiated approaches to its use.

Examining the research from these four perspectives is beneficial in situating this research study. Insights from Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) suggested the usefulness of aligning the findings of this research to a specific coaching category, thereby helping to link this research to that of coaching psychology. While Ives had an interesting perceptive, the interdisciplinary disciplinary nature of this research makes classification by paradigm an ineffective approach because it yields too many overlaps within the classifications outlined. The Theeboom et al. (2014) study was skewed in favour of quantitative approaches, limiting the inclusion of a study such as this with its methodological approach. Therefore, it was this third-generation approach that allowed for the inclusion of deeper identity-related work through meaningful conversations in coaching that expand on the nature of coaching itself and its relevance to the outcomes of this study.

2.1.2 Orientating within Coaching Psychology

This research is closely aligned to the field of coaching psychology and, as suggested earlier, aims to build on the nature of coaching (Passmore et al., 2011). It expands on the third-generation approach to coaching, the move towards deeper sustainability, meaning making and identity work, all of which are well rooted in the field of coaching psychology. Also, in examining the trends in contemporary coaching research, a move towards more social–psychological perspectives is a defining aspect of coaching psychology (Passmore and Lai, 2020).

This literature review also revealed that most coaching-related research that held applicability to this type of study originated from the field of coaching psychology, including narrative inclusion (Drake, 2016; McAdmas, 2018; Stelter, 2007; Vogel 2012) and a constructivism approach to meaning making (Bachkirova and Cox, 2019; Laurence 2017). Therefore, an exploration specifically within the field of coaching psychology is critical. As suggested by Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011), psychological knowledge and practice are integral parts of coaching as they consider the behaviour and emotion of the client and how these relate to learning and change (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). Furthermore, in surveys by Palmer and Whybrow (2019), the number of psychological approaches used in coaching rose from 28 in 2007 to 38 in 2017. Currently, they argue that there are 41 core psychological approaches used in coaching, and that these often include hybrid approaches.

Adding to the complexity is the distinction between coaching and coaching psychology. Grant (2011) stressed the importance of a clear definition before the field could be truly developed and taught. However, defining this definition can be challenging to find agreement within the field. A prominent perspective is the inclusion of psychological approaches to coaching practice (Lai and McDowall, 2014), yet what actually constitutes a psychological approach? Passmore and Theeboom (2016) explore the idea that all coaching includes an element of psychological mindedness by the coach. Building on this idea, it has been suggested that a focus on psychological approaches is inadequate given the shift toward evidence-based approaches (Passmore et al.2018). Another perspective is that the distinction is irrelevant, as suggested by Palmer and Whybrow (2019) who consider coaching and coaching psychology to be more aligned then divergent. They acknowledge that a practitioner may have a preferred home, but one that is often related to their own core training versus a categorisation based on the nature of research. Ultimately, though, they suggest that this distinction between coaching and coaching psychology may inhibit how each learns from and is informed by the other (Palmer and Whybrow, 2019).

Definition aside, despite coaching psychology making tremendous progress over a relatively short period of time – beginning in 2000 at the University of Sydney (Grant, 2011) – there still remain gaps in its research foundations (Lai, 2014; Lai and Palmer, 2019). In a systematic review of all coaching psychology research in 2010 and 2016, Lai and Palmer found that the total number of external papers dropped from 141 in 2010 to 113 in 2016. The top two psychological approaches in both 2010 and 2016 were cognitive-behavioural coaching and solutions-focused coaching, with 2016 seeing a rise in strengths-based coaching. While this decrease in the number of studies is not the main implication, it is the growing requirement of evidence-based research. This evidence base, often defined as randomised controlled trials (RCTs), has been grandfathered from a psychology that considers this approach the gold standard for clinical research (Faraoni and Schaefer, 2016). However, there is a lack of research related to aims that cannot be explored through RCTs, such as meaning-related interventions (Lai and Palmer, 2019).

It is in this meaning-related space (Lai et al., 2019) that this research finds its home. A 2018 study suggests a severe lack of social contextual considerations in coaching research studies, despite their importance in coaching interventions. The need to explore why coaching clients do what they do, rather than a focus on the intervention used, is important to the future of coaching research (Athanasopoulou and Dobson, 2018).

Beyond coaching psychology, because the research aims of this study are related to elements of meaning-making, BI and non-conscious perspectives, a consideration of the research in the general field of psychology will also be relevant and important.

2.1.3 Orientation within Psychology-Based Research and Applied Psychology

The lagging pace of research, relative to the inclusion of coaching, has been explored by researchers Fillery-Travis and Corrie (2019). These researchers speak of the lack of collaboration between practitioners and academics, unlike in other professions such as psychology, medicine, chemistry and law. Compounding the issue is the divide between coaching and coaching psychology (Lai and McDowall, 2014; Passmore and Theeboom, 2016; Passmore et al., 2018) and the lack of social context considerations in coaching research efficacy studies (Athanasopoulou and Dobson, 2018). As such, research focused on meaning making, BI and the non-conscious has resulted in exploration of the field of psychology and its related applications.

Meaning making has some coaching psychology roots through constructive-developmental coaching and narrative coaching. The constructive-developmental approach (Backhirova and Cox, 2019; Lawrence, 2017) (see section 2.2.2) discusses meaning making as socially derived. From a narrative perspective, meaning making is explored via the storytelling of the client (Stelter, 2007; McAdams, 2018; Vogel 2021; Drake 2016). However, in both cases but particularly the constructive-development approach, its research foundations are pulled from the field of psychology and therefore some consideration of this field is essential (see section 2.2.3).

The area of BI is less pronounced in coaching psychology. While there is some research related to lifespan, personal event memory and narrative practice (Graci and Favush, 2017; Habermas, 2011; Kilburg, 2004b; Panchal et al., 2019), all these approaches look at elements of a client's life and the stories that stem from them, versus a deeply explorative process within focusing on the whole of a client's life. As such, a consideration of psychology-based approaches is essential, particularly around family of origin research, authority, attachment dynamics, peer-based relationships, identity and other context-related dimensions (see section 2.3). Finally, the exploration of the non-conscious has roots particularly in the psychodynamics of self-perspective In psychology (see section 2.4).

As the field of coaching and coaching psychology expands, so too does the adoption of approaches from the applied research field – most notably, applied neuroscience and applied psychology.

Applied Neuroscience

Because the brain is the basis of every thought, emotion, action and behaviour, and coaching involves changing some element of each of these, it is suggested that any work in coaching must also consider the brain (Riddell, 2019). The adoption of applied neuroscience into coaching is a growing approach, be it the consideration of the amygdala and its relationship to the flight or fight response, or the approaches that focus on brain-centric interventions to adjust automatic responses and other cognitive processes (Bosson et al.; Brann 2014; Dias,'et al., 2015). Also explored are how emotions and their relationship to neurochemistry and the non-conscious have an impact on behaviours (Brown and Dzendrowskyj, 2018; Krill and Platek, 2012). As explored in Chapter 1, the model of HASIE for BI, was originally inspired by and has its theoretical roots in the field of applied neuroscience. Therefore, there will be some consideration of how applied neuroscience relates to this research.

Applied Psychology

Another area of consideration for this research is the application of a formulation approach to coaching, which is an approach well established in applied psychology (Corrie and Kovacs, 2019). Lane and Corrie (2009) offered a definition that could be used in the field of coaching psychology – namely, 'an explanatory account of the issues with which a client is presenting (including predisposing, precipitating and maintaining factors) that can form the basis of a shared framework of understanding and which has implications for change' (p. 194). As further explored by Kovacs and Corrie (2021), formulation can be the means through which a coach can design and implement an intervention that has relevance. The research findings suggest that the use of BI as a formulation approach in coaching may be valuable , and therefore there will be some consideration of this, as it relates to further discussion of this research.

Areas Excluded from Psychology and Applied Research

There are many psychological approaches to executive coaching including solutions focused, cognitive–behavioural, positive psychology, neurolinguistic, strengths based, developmental and co-active (Whybrow and Palmer, 2019) and cognitive–behavioural, solution-focused and positive psychology tend to be the more frequently reported approaches in executive coaching research studies (Athanasopoulou and Dopson, 2018). While there is no denying the efficacy and importance of these approaches on the discovery of why clients do what they do – in other words, their meaning-making structures – this research’s primary focus is meaning making through BI. Because the anchoring approach stems from BI, it is only the literature related to approaches that consider the context and life journey of a client that is considered in scope for this literature review.

Another noteworthy exemption is the shift in the psychology of leadership away from the psychological uniqueness of an individual leader to the focus of leadership as the capacity to psychologically contract with several stakeholders in a system towards a shared endeavour (Haslam et al., 2020). Also, psychology has often focused on the importance of different traits or personal attributes of a leader, yet this is a limited view of leadership as a whole because the leader cannot exist without consideration of the social context and system in which they exist (Bass, 2008; Barker, 2001). For the purposes of this research, the examination of individual traits and their correlation with the impact of leadership, the social context of the leader/client system and personality, personal attribute driven theory is out of scope.

2.2 Meaning Making

Because this research is focused on better understanding of why clients do what they do, also known as ‘meaning making’, it is essential to first understand the theoretical foundation of meaning making, its various uses and approaches in coaching and coaching psychology, and the limitation in the research.

In psychology, the roots of meaning making can be traced back to the 1940s to psychiatrist Viktor Frankl when he posited that the primary motivation of a person is to discover meaning in life (Frankl, 1946). This shifted in the late 1960s when the idea of meaning making was explored in inquiry-based education and learning where Postman and Wiengartner (1969) were examining the role of the learner in the educational process. They explored meaning making as a personal epistemology to help make sense of the influences, relationships and sources of knowledge in the world. the idea was that learning the theory and the person who was learning it were in a mutually dependent process. By the late 1970s, meaning making was used in constructivist learning theory, originally attributed to Piaget (1971), whereby knowledge was something created by the individual as they experienced new things and integrated new information with their current knowledge (Von Glasersfeld, 1990). This eventually led to the constructivist approach to meaning making in psychology, which suggests that our reality is based on what we perceive, believe, and construct through life experience (Sexton, 1997). It is important to note that there is criticism of a constructivist approach, most notably the inconsistencies in interpretation (Liu and Matthews, 2005). Constructivist theory can also be applied in many ways including personal construct psychology, radical constructivism and social constructionism (Raskin and Debany, 2017). However, it is its application within developmental psychology that is most related to this research.

Robert Kegan, a developmental psychologist, explored meaning making as the activity of making sense of experience through discovering and resolving problems (Kegan, 1980). He brought together three different intellectual traditions in psychology: (1) the humanistic and existential-phenomenological tradition, (2) the neo-psychoanalytic tradition and (3) the constructive-developmental tradition, the latter coined by Kegan himself. This constructive-developmental area of psychology focuses on the ‘stage’ development of a person, which was originally designed as an alternative to the traditional lifespan exploration found in developmental psychology (White et al., 2016). This constructivist approach is the birthplace of adult development models and contemporary application of the model is found in both coaching psychology and mentoring (Lawrence, 2017).

In coaching psychology research, meaning making is explored primarily from a constructivist, also known as cognitive–developmental or structuralism, perspective (Bachkirova and Cox, 2019). Within this perspective are three primary anchors. First, often referred to as a constructivist perspective, is the individual’s experience and personal meaning making as a process of subjective reality, explored through perceptions and experiences of the client using narrative practice (Stelter, 2013). Second are the models of adult development that explore how individuals think and make meaning based on stages, schemas, or subject-object relations that change over a lifetime (Keagan,1982, 1994; Cook-Greuter, 2004; Bachkirova, 2014). Lastly are the applications of these theories to coaching psychology and mentoring (Berger et al., 2006, Berger, 2012; Chandler and Kram, 2005; Bachkirova, 2011).

All these approaches, at their core, are based on the premise that development is a lifelong process that has an impact on the way people think, feel and make meaning in the world (Laurence, 2017). Ultimately, people progress through different stages of meaning making, based on their response to the increasing complexity of their environment (McCauley et al., 2006). While there is criticism of this approach (Liu and Matthews, 2005) as it relates to the exploration and consideration of the client's biographical history, this is a significantly relevant area of consideration.

2.2.1 Meaning Making through Narration in Coaching Psychology

As explored by Stelter, the process of meaning making is how one attributes value to an experience and/or interactions with others. His view is that things become meaningful when the client is able to understand how they feel, think and act, by telling stories about the experience (Stelter, 2007). Meaning making through narration is an approach often used in coaching and coaching psychology. According to a study by Vogel, there are three broad approaches to the use of narrative practice: story as the task of coaching; story as the content of coaching; and story in the context of coaching (Vogel, 2012). The primary focus is on the unravelling of the meaning-making structures a client holds, based on the stories they tell themselves from a lifetime of experiences. Exploration of the life narratives, often regarded as an expression of the autobiographical self and an embodiment of personal identity, has been proven a valuable approach in coaching. These stories act as the individual's truth, logic and identity (McAdams, 2018).

In research by Drake (2016), it is suggested that there are four aspects that are central to the process of narration: (1) the structure of stories as a way to understand how people form and frame them, (2) the framework as a way to understand the phases of their narration, (3) the positioning as a way to understand the relationships and movements of character, and (4) the connections between narration and growth as a way to understand how to facilitate change. A long-time advocate of narrative practice, Drake suggests that, whenever a client shares a story, the simple act itself opens them up to new possibilities and the final meaning they gain from it (Drake, 2007).

Finally, building on the use of narrative is this idea of mutual meaning making that stems from dialogue and collaboration between coach and coachee. The client brings in a certain self-perceived reality while the coach can offer a new perspective that invites the coachee to see the world differently compared with their existing views (Stelter, 2014).

All these approaches to meaning making through narrative practice have demonstrated the invaluable process of having a client tell their stories. However, there is a serious lack of any structure or guidance around stages and how one measures progression through narrative practice. Drake (2010) would suggest that the very selection of story is, of itself, part of the meaning-making process, but how does this fit within a broader cycle of growth and progression? Where the research lacks insight is firstly how one can explore the process of autobiographical narrative with a more guided and structured approach (see section 2.3). The second is the lack of stage progression, which is where adult developmental approaches come in (see section 2.2.3).

2.2.2 The Emergence of Constructivism (Cognitive–Developmental) in Coaching

Constructivism, also referred to as cognitive–developmental or structuralism, is a paradigm originating in psychology that characterises learning as a process of actively creating meaning by selecting, organising and integrating information through social interactions– namely, that how individuals think and make meaning follow some kind of fundamental structure. While other traditions in psychology are exploring common features of change and how to facilitate it, constructivism is looking at key patterns in qualitative shifts, whereby an individual can acquire new skills and knowledge that can be a fundamental shift in the way they see their world and interpret experience (Bachkirova and Cox, 2019). Therefore, when considering the role of BI in coaching, it is this constructivism perspective that is relevant, whereby the developmental process is a combination of stimulation, challenge and support of both internal and external factors with a client (Lawrence, 2017).

Bachkirova (2019) posits that there are two main perspectives that are most applicable to the coaching process. The first is a cognitive–reflective perspective that emphasises reasoning and learning capacities (Kohlberg, 1969; King and Kitcher, 1994). The second is ego development (see section 2.2.3). The cognitive–reflective perspective, while useful in exploring how an individual's cognitive development occurs in stages, is a step beyond the scope of this research. It is not the exploration of the client's cognitive development of that is most relevant per se but how the client responds, given their stage of meaning making. As such, this perspective will not be considered in any depth: the focus on the perspective of ego development, as it sits within the field of adult development, is the more relevant and will also be explored in the next section.

2.2.3 Meaning Making from an Adult Development Approach

It was the psychological domains of human life, as explored in Erikson's psychosocial theory (1950) and Piaget's cognitive development approach (1971), that eventually gave birth to ego development theory. The idea that the ego matured and evolved through stages of the lifespan through the interaction between the inner self and the outer environment (Loevinger, 1979. Loevinger, originally inspired by the work of Piaget, created the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT), an assessment that examines how meaning is derived from within the individual. Loevinger's work was primarily for clinical use to measure distinct psychopathologies and to help in choosing treatment modalities used by clinical psychologists and psychiatrists (Weiss et al., 1989).

WUSCT is one of the few application-based tools available to explore meaning making and it forms the foundations of an adult development approach. Cook-Greuter used Loevinger's work as the foundations for more bodies of knowledge and tools, including William Torbert's Seven Action Logics (Merron et al., 1987) and Susanne Cook-Greuter's Leadership Maturity Framework (Cook-Greuter, 1985). Loevinger's work is foundational in projective testing around meaning making in psychology and psychotherapy. Popularised by Torbert, in partnership with Cook-Greuter was the article 'Seven Transformation of Leadership' published in *Harvard Business Review* (Torbert and Rooke, 2005), which remains on the top ten greatest leadership articles of all time.

However, some aspects of adult development and cognitive-development theory has gained criticism. The first was for being a highly labour-intensive process that required practitioners to become certified in tools and score profiles that may have variable reliability (Backirova, 2011, 2014). There is also a lack of evidence linking developmental level with leadership effectiveness (Lawrence, 2017). Many of the studies used to test the stage with leadership effectiveness show strong correlation between early stages and poor leadership, but can only infer later stages with leadership effectiveness (Lawrence, 2017; Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005; Strang and Kuhnert, 2009). There is also criticism of the preference of later stage development that is inherently judgmental (Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005), infers an easy-to- follow road map for coaches without consideration of context and need, is too directive an approach (Bachkirova, 2014) and is only a partial perspective of the development needs of the client (Cox and Jackson, 2014). Notably, there also exist significant gaps in the evidence-based research including its application beyond white, wealthy, educated Western-centric clients (Strang and Kuhnert, 2009; Bachkirova, 2011) and the factors that trigger the transition from one stage to another (Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005).

2.2.4 Meaning Making through Approaches in Coaching Psychology

There are three application-based approaches in coaching according to Bachkirova and Cox (2019). One defined by Berger who focused on a constructive–developmental coaching approach that used a qualitative interview (subject–object interview [SOI]) to identify how an interviewee makes sense of their world, and this corresponds to Kegan (1980)'s levels of development (Berger, 2012). Another was developed by Chandler and Kram (2007) who focused on the application of development theory to mentoring. Finally, Laske (2006) developed a framework focusing on changes in cognition and social–emotional capability for coach training (Bachkirova and Cox 2007b).

These cognitive–developmental approaches to coaching can be controversial (Wilbur, 1999) because the task of influencing the sequential stages of clients, beyond their naturally occurring meaning-making experiences, can be dangerous and only create the illusion of stretch and expansion, versus dealing with the more immediate concerns being presented by the clients. It is within this controversy that the limitation of this approach exists. With the lack of other data on their clients, coaches can make inappropriate choices on their developmental capacities (Bachkirova, 2014).

2.2.5 Limitations of Existing Research on Meaning Making

Whether exploring meaning making using a narrative process (Stelter, 2007; McAdams, 2018; Vogel, 2012; Drake, 2016) or adult development theory (Lawrence, 2017; Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005; Strang and Kuhnert, 2009; Bachkirova,2011, 2014), there are some significant limitations in the research. First, from a narrative perspective, the focus is on the structure of stories to understand the phases of a client's growth, the movements of character as a way of identifying how to facilitate change. However, this perspective assumes that the client has the capacity to effectively narrate and share full and complete stories. It also assumes an entirely linguistic and auditory form of expression, and there is limited evidence-based research on stages of growth and effective outcomes from a narrative process. Second, the interpretation of the narrative/story that the client has shared around specific aspects of their life may in fact be incomplete. Without some framework of the major areas of exploration from a full biographical perspective, the risk is that the story itself is only a slice of the overall experience of the client. While narrative practice does address some specific aspects of the BI process (see section 2.3.2), it is limited in its application. Finally, while movement of the character in the narrative process is a measurement of progression and growth, its measurement is a singular dimension that is within and from the perspective of the client themselves. What is missing is some systemic perspective of how that fits within a larger context of stage development and capacity for meaning making.

From a constructivist approach, the application in coaching is often entirely on stage progression rather than current stage understanding, which is what these theories were originally designed to do in psychology (Bachkirova, 2014). As such, this focus on moving forward and expanding one's meaning-making stage has resulted in a greater emphasis being placed on progression versus a true understanding and inquiry into what got the client There in the first place. There are no models or frameworks that help both client and coach facilitate a journey into the past to better understand how the client's current stage has been reached, and there is missing information on the triggers to moving from one stage to the next (Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005).

Another aspect of the limitations in the research around meaning making is that much of it has been focused on the complex development of theory versus empirical research that supports the theory, thereby forming a gap between theories and their empirical tests (Park, 2010). Park (2010) further examines the lack of exploration of the paradigms in which these frames of meaning making are explored, stating that the impact of one's life, philosophies or agendas has received almost no attention.

Adding to the complexity is an over-reliance on assessments, as used in the adult development approach. While this approach to meaning making using assessments to depict the transformation of meaning-making stages has been useful when applied to organisational leadership, it relies on a small group of highly trained interpreters of these sentence completion stems (Hoare, 2011). Also, it has supported contemporary thought leadership in areas of adaptive challenges and vertical development that can create predictive capacity (Yarborough, 2018), but there are limited control group studies to explore how an adult developmental approach compares with other approaches.

Finally, in both approaches, there is an overwhelming bias towards Western-centric thought development and communication. Be it the use of stories and character development or the sentence stems used in the adult development approach, the translation of these approaches within different cultures and different languages is almost non-existent. Both these approaches require interpretation of language nuances that could place non-native English- speaking clients at risk of misinterpretation.

2.3 Biographical Inquiry

The focus of this research is on the creation of a framework whereby coaches can use BI to have a shared understanding of *why* their clients do what they do. Therefore, in this section, BI will be explored in several different ways, including the specific dimensions within BI that are considered essential to its exploration.

BI is a term used to cover all concepts related to the exploration of a client's life events, lifespan or autobiographical inquiry. The link between biographical data and adult behaviour and leadership performance has been made in varying degrees. Rimmer et al. (1996) suggest that leadership effectiveness is seen as strongly influenced by the individual's biographical past, personal life and work environment. Another study suggests a clear link between adult behaviours and biographical data from childhood (Rothstein et al., 1990; Mumford et al., 2009). A study around biographical data collection during the selection of candidates and leadership predictability found a high correlation in ability to predict leadership tendencies based on life experiences (Rothstein et al., 1990). Another research study found a high correlation between childhood achievement and adulthood leadership tendencies (Mumford et al. 2009). While all these studies demonstrate strong correlation data between the past and present, the insights are dated and lack serious evidence-based methodology, and none effectively outline a clear approach or framework to do an effective exploration of biographical data with clients (Mumford et al., 2009).

Yet, the acknowledgement of a client's past having an impact and/or influence on how clients behave today, and their ability to learn and grow, is researched in various coaching psychology approaches (see section 2.3.1 – Graci and Fivush, 2017; Habernas, 2011; Kilbrug, 2004a, 2004b; McAdams, 2018); explored via family of origin and other dynamics in psychology (see section 2.3.2 – Hovestadt et al. 1985; Hemming et al., 2012); and examined through the lens of trauma (see section 2.4.5 – Felitti and Anda, 2009; Crandall et al., 2019). Another way to link the past in terms of current approaches is to consider the realm of applied theory – including the use of a formulation approach to coaching (Lane and Corrie, 2009; Corrie and Kovacs, 2021). While advocates of formulation do not explicitly name BI as an approach, they do offer a way to classify this type of work. Also, there is exploration of BI via the HASIE model within applied neuroscience (Brown and Brown, 2012). This model was part of the original inspiration for this research and is the only published model of BI that can be applied to coaching.

Overall, despite this acknowledgement of the role the past plays in behaviour and growth, there is limited research on the explicit link between the past, present and future from an approach perspective in coaching. Some may attribute this to the fact that the coaching psychology is still evolving as it practitioners evolve, whereby new models of coaching are an amalgam of different disciplines such counselling, consulting, training and mentoring (Bluckert, 2005). Others may say suggest the need to differentiate the boundaries between coaching and therapeutic approaches as placing a premium on approaches that work in the present- and future-orientated spaces; with clients that are change enabled and ready (versus needing integration from the past); and related to improving performance rather than unravelling the past (Price, 2009). Whatever the perceived rationale for the lack of evidence-based research on the explicit relationship between BI and leadership, this literature review will attempt to draw on the available information of the use of a client's past (including biographical data) within coaching and psychology.

Important to note are the exemptions. Biographical data exploration is used extensively in psychiatry, psychotherapy and other psychotherapeutic interventions. This research has been excluded from the scope, because the fundamental ontology and epistemology inferred that the patients required intervention and that pathology exploration was a part of the investigation process. The exploration for diagnosis is not the intended purpose of BI for coaching and therefore has been excluded. That being said, the inferred importance and prioritisation of the exploration of family of origin is accepted and discussed in this literature review.

2.3.1 Biographical Inquiry through Narrative Practice and a Systemic Approach in Coaching Psychology

It has been suggested that the act and exploration of storytelling, of an autobiographical nature, is valuable in coaching because it explores the relationship between higher narrative exploration and increased growth levels in adulthood (Graci and Fivush, 2017). Additionally, it is human nature to create narratives around the relationship between different parts of one's past, present and future, and therefore the exploration of those narratives is useful in coaching (Habermas, 2011). Kilburg (2004b), who compares coaching to the historical pathway created by psychotherapy, suggests that the exploration of a person's narrative way of knowing is a useful way of approaching executive coaching.

Therefore, to understand a client requires an understanding of the stories they recall over a lifetime, and any behaviour change needs to be first informed by these stories (McAdams, 2018). When exploring the use of narratives as they relate to biographical data, two critical explorations includes personal event memory and the temporal organisation of specific memories across the lifespan.

Personal event memory

Engaging in dialogue around the exploration of naturally occurring events in a person's life is often a useful way to uncover those events that represent the most material influences or impact on their life. Called 'personal event memory', those events that had the most significant role in the formation of a person's life have a degree of specificity that represents its materiality (Pillemer, 1998). The inference is that part of the gauge of materiality is the process of looking at the whole of one's life before its most influential parts can be uncovered.

The temporal organisation of specific memories across the lifespan

The other aspect of narrative is the organisation of memories. Often referred to as 'childhood amnesia', seldom do clients recall events before the age of three years old and events that happened in early adulthood, at approximately 20 years of age, are often over-represented (Pillemer, 2001). It is suggested that the most significant recall ages appear to be from 10 -30 years of age (Rubbin et al., 1998). Therefore, an important consideration when exploring biographical narration is the degree of detail provided and how degree of specificity does not necessarily correlate to significance (Pillemer, 2001). Also, transition points are often described as clusters of specific memories, vivid with description and detail, and frequently marked by major life changes that are central life events (Pillemer et al., 1991).

This focus on transitions is also important in the context of coaching psychology, where life transitions coaching has been explored. Built on the foundations of developmental theorists Erikson and Levinson, discussed earlier, areas of consideration include life transition points, social context and generational factors; and positive ageing (Panchal et al., 2019). Of particular interest is how stress, resilience, coping and well-being are explored by the client through these transitions. Also called 'categories of experience' or 'turning points', these events can hold significance in the sequence of redemption and contamination held in a client's life (McAdams et al., 2001).

The exploration of redemption and contamination often leads to a discussion of boundaries between coaching and therapy (Bachkirova and Baker, 2018; Hart et al., 2001, 2007; Maxwell, 2009). Yet, while the literature can describe the coaching/therapy boundary, practising coaches seem to consistently blend the two perspectives and how the past inevitably plays some role in the coaching intervention (Price, 2009). The inference is that the boundary between coaching and therapy is less relevant than the inclusion of therapeutic competencies for coaches (Price, 2009).

Adding to the importance of biographical data exploration is the movement in coaching psychology towards more systemic approaches (Wilson, 2019; Whittington, 2012; Roberts and Brunning, 2019). The consideration of the client as part of a system grows from the role they played in their original system – that of their family of origin. Whether considering the use of transactional analysis (Wilson, 2019), constellation (Whittington, 2012) or psychodynamic approaches in coaching (Roberts and Brunning, 2019), all have theoretical foundations related to the exploration of role within the family and how that influences current behaviours and perspectives. The idea is that, as children, we are born free from beliefs but, through the process of experiencing and interpreting the world, we develop our own unique view of it (Wilson, 2019).

The primary limitation of these approaches stems from their adoption from the therapeutic nature of their original theoretical roots. In each case, there is a presumption that limiting behaviours in the present stem from key experiences in childhood as part of their family systems. While not used as a diagnostic tool in coaching per se, there is a more deliberate cause and effect exploration that can be leading, and often blur the lines of therapeutic interventions.

2.3.2 Biographical Inquiry within Psychology via Family-of-Origin Research

Family-of-origin (FOO) research, as it relates to career development (Whiston and Keller, 2004), work satisfaction and success (Leifman, 2001) has been explored in limited ways. Most of the research related to FOO in psychology is related to the dynamics of attachment, autonomy, power structures and its implications on identity and personality trait formation (Hemming et al., 2012). As a result, it has formed the foundations of various therapeutic approaches including psychotherapy, psychodynamics, and Bowenian approaches (Hemming et al., 2012). As discussed earlier, approaches used for intervention or pathology diagnosis and exploration are out of scope for this literature review. Therefore, for the purposes of the review, the focus is not on the application of the FOO research but rather the various ways in which a coach can explore FOO data.

A well-used tool called the Family-of-Origin Scale (FOS), originally published in 1985, provides insight into the key dimensions of early life and their implications for adulthood. those dimensions include: clarity of expression, responsibility and respect for others, openness to others, acceptance of separation and loss, range of emotional expression, mood and tone, conflict resolution, empathy and trust (Hovestadt et al., 1985). Conceptually, the FOS approach suggests that there are key critical overarching constructs – autonomy, intimacy and emotional expression – that give important insights into how FOO experiences have an impact on adult behaviours (Hemming et al., 2012). Therefore, any exploration of FOO data would require the consideration of autonomy, intimacy and emotional expression.

2.3.3 Biographical Inquiry as a Formulation Approach From Applied Psychology

The application of a formulation approach to coaching is an emerging area of exploration, borrowed from applied psychology. Led by researchers such as Lane and Corrie (2009) and Corrie and Kovacs (2021), the use of formulation in coaching has been examined through the perspective of a shared understanding of the client. Specifically, Lane and Corrie have explored formulation as a conceptual framework of shared understanding. Used as an explanatory account of the issues of the client and can form the basis of a shared framework of understanding (Lane and Corrie, 2009). Further explored by Corrie and Kovacs, formulation is not meant to be used as a technique in coaching but as an approach through which one can design and implement an intervention (Kovacs and Corrie, 2021). Drake has also explored the notion of narrative practice as an approach to formulation that focuses on the process of discovering what is true in coaching conversations as a platform for change (Drake, 2010).

This need to create a shared understanding is compounded by the increasing culture differences between individuals, which have shifted dramatically over the decades. With increased use of remote coaching, it has become common to coach clients living in regions that the coach has never travelled to, let alone understood its geopolitical, cultural and ethnic traditions and how they can play into leadership and organisational dynamics. Adding to this complexity is the process of supporting clients who are equally experiencing that same dynamic within their own team's structure. As such, these complex cultural dynamics can cause the risk of compounding a multi-looped assumption cycle happening in real time (Passmore, 2010).

Further expanding the role of diversity in coaching, is a coaching practice in health and social care in the UK with multinational programmes involving African, Asian and European businesses, the Universal Integrated Framework (UIF) was developed. The original designer, Ho Law, updated this framework based on six years of use and application in multinational environments. He extended the discussion of learning beyond the framework to individual differences in how one can conduct relationships to stimulate mutual learning that includes cross-cultural emotional intelligence (Law, 2013). The focus is the idea of creating a shared understanding of the client to ensure mutuality, minimise misunderstanding or imposing judgement, and to appreciate the unique differences that invariably emerge. While the framework is not applied to a biographical application, the importance of this shared understanding is critical.

Because this research is aimed at a model for BI, to infer that this model can serve as part of a formulation approach to coaching is an interesting perspective and builds on the applications of this framework across several dimensions (see section 5.2).

2.3.4 Biographical Inquiry via Applied Neuroscience and HASIE

The brain models and remodels itself based on one's experiences of life, suggesting both the vast possibilities of neuroplasticity and the synaptic legacy of early life experience (Siegel and Sroufe, 2011), inferring that some consideration of the client's past is essential to their current behaviour patterning. Brown and Brown (2012) further suggest that the brain develops according to the experiences it encounters. As such, there is a consideration within applied neuroscience that, to truly engage in behavioural changes, one first must understand the experiences that have formed the brain and its response mechanisms to date.

Biographical Inquiry Using the HASIE Framework

BI via HASIE has been published in two books – *Neuropsychology for Coaching* (Brown and Brown, 2012) and *Coaching Supervision* (Birch and Welch, 2019). In the latter, the chapter related to neuro-behavioural supervision was co-authored by the researcher of the project. The chapter explores how this researcher has interpreted over 200 client cases related to the use of the HASIE model and its significance in application in executive coaching and organisational life (see Figure 1.1). These case studies have not been published (but are planned for 2022–23) and have therefore been excluded from this literature review.

HASIE is used as a model to explore how biographical data shapes the formation of the brain, its neurochemistry and its neural circuitry response mechanisms or auto-response. HASIE considers five key dimensions: hierarchy, attachment dynamics, siblings, identity and emotional tapestry. The key dimensions of HAISE (Brown, et al.,2019):

Figure 1.1 – Description and Organisational Significance of the HASIE Framework

Dimension	Description	Significance for executive coaching in an organisational setting
Hierarchy	Examines the authority-based relationship's in a coachee's life, beginning with parents	Template of leadership
Attachment	Attachment theory explains how adults create, sustain and manage relationships	Creation and maintenance of relationships
Sibling	Examining the role of peer groups (including siblings) have played in a coachee's life gives insight into how they approach and the importance they give to teamwork	Role in team based environments
Identity	Complex interaction between self, social identity and environmental context	Sense of self formation and non-conscious drivers
Emotional Tapestry	The neuroscientific basis of how coachees acknowledge and process emotional is critical to relationship between behaviors and meaning	Non-conscious patterning of behaviours

As discussed, HASIE was one of the original drivers for this research. However, it lacked significant evidence-based research to increase its wider acceptance in the field of coaching. Yet, it creates a framework in which to examine the most relevant areas of a client's life history. Based on the insights from the case studies as published in *Coaching Supervision* (Brown et al., 2019), the literature as it relates to hierarchy, attachment, siblings, identity and emotions will be further explored.

2.3.5 Hierarchy

Hierarchy is defined as a relationship between two or more people, in which one exerts an influence over the other as a consequence of social status. Therefore, the exploration of the dimension of hierarchy encompasses the varying and changing roles of authority figures throughout a client's life, the most significant being the role of their parents. Beyond family of origin (see section 2.3.2), this dimension considers the deeper nuances of authority relating to parents.

It has been found that parental traits have shown strong causation to implicit leadership traits in adults. The idealised leadership traits tend to mirror the descriptions of parental traits (Keller, 1999). Keller further expands that many leaders' own sense-making capacity and sense of identity are tied closely to parental experiences (Keller, 2003). Adding to the research perspectives, depending on the nature of the attachment relationship to the parents, the parent's traits become the idealised traits of a leader (Magomaeva, 2013). One aspect of parenting styles that has been explored more deeply is that of parental traits and their correlation with achievement in school (Aunola et al., 2000; Glasgow et al., 1997).

When expanding the research into other key figures of authority beyond the role of parents, the complexities around nomenclature, the relevant research field and fundamental epistemological approach, and the application of the research outcomes makes drawing general conclusions difficult. For example, in the social–psychological literature, there is no common definition of authority, let alone of the various authority classifications. Also, the concept of authority is based on many complex dynamics including power holding and brokering, sense of personal control and safety, social status, legitimising roles, one's own subordinate behavioural tendencies, and the larger context of societal influences on systemic power (Morselli and Passini, 2011). What does seem to permeate consistently from the research is the ongoing sense making that the client makes of the evolving structures of authority over a lifetime, following a social constructivist, psychodynamic and developmental perspective of the evolving sense of meaning making (Dodwell, 2020).

The overall implications are that any approach to BI will need to include a review of hierarchical structures from parents and other authority figures, and to specifically explore themes around power holding and brokering, sense of personal control and safety, and social status. However, it is important to note that this exploration of hierarchy and its relationship to such themes are not the only ways to explore these concepts in coaching.

2.3.6 Attachment

For the purposes of this research, attachment as a dimension is defined as the client's ability to create and sustain relationships with others. Theoretical foundations stem from attachment theory, which is an extensive and well-defined body of research (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2004). When therapeutic, diagnosis and pathology applications are removed, the leadership application is the most relevant (Drake, 2009). Clear links between secure attachment dynamics and effective leadership have been made (Mayseless, 2010). Individuals who demonstrate secure attachment tend to be nominated as leaders who adopt more empowering and effective leadership styles , and achieve outcomes (Mayseless, 2010). Furthermore, research suggests that the focus on technical competence and organisational experience are inadequate criteria to measure leadership effectiveness: the most crucial criteria being relationship competence (Manning, 2003).

It has been argued that the most effective measurement of relationship competence is derived from personal relationship tendencies in childhood (Manning, 2003) but the counter-perspective is also important to explore. Empathy development over adolescence is suggested to play a significant role in adult relationship development (Allemand et al., 2014).

Drake (2009) explores attachment theory via coaching. Building on Bowlby's seminal work on attachment dynamics (Bowlby, 1988), Drake argues that a person's degree of vulnerability to stressors is influenced by the development and current state of their intimate relationships. The working models used as adults come from the patterns developed as children. Another study suggests that exploring the childhood experiences of relationships of participants yields profound insights into leadership tendencies (Cooper et al., 2018). Finally, including attachment theory in the study of leadership could further extend general leadership theories (Bresnahan and Mitroff, 2007).

An interesting tool used to explore attachment dynamics through narrative is the Adult Attachment Interview (George et al., 1985). This discovered several distinctive styles of talking about early relationships with secure versus insecure attachment dynamics. Adults classified as secure provided coherent and well-organised memory narratives, whereas adults classified as insecure produced narratives that were inconsistent, fragmentary, disjointed, or too general. Also, secure adults often reported negative as well as positive early life events but were able to integrate those experiences effectively. Similarly, Oppenheim and Waters (1995) observed that supportive relationships later in life could help provide a re-frame to early insecure attachment dynamics, and therefore soften some of their negative effects and find new ways to be in relationship.

The implication for BI is that relationship dynamics and the evolving dynamics of secure relationships offer key insights into adult behaviour. However, other aspects like empathy development may also play a role in adult relationship dynamics so other aspects of a client's history need to be considered.

2.3.7 Peers

The peer dimension is defined for this research as the reference group of the client, over a lifetime, often beginning with siblings. Interestingly, peer-based dynamics was the most limited research topic of all the dimensions with little that has been explored around its role within psychology, let alone its influence on leadership styles (McHale et al., 2012). In this research study, exploring a comprehensive review of all literature related to sibling relationships from 1990 to 2011 in psychology and sociology, less than 2% of the research was on this topic compared with parents-based research (McHale et al., 2012). One study specifically explored the role of childhood relationships with peers and leadership styles (Engelbert and Wallgren, 2016) but the insights were more applicable to an attachment theory perspective than a peer-based model.

The most prominent research in the area of peer- or sibling-based dynamics is birth order and dates back to the 1800s (Galton, 1874). Contemporary research explored birth order in terms of role in sibling dynamics such as rivalry, differential treatment, or resource allocation but none fully accounted for influence on adult behaviour (Buhrmester and Furman, 1990). Weisner (1989) took an interesting approach in outlining how sibling dynamics create context in life by providing (a) a metric for comparison that has an impact on dynamics and beliefs; (b) common companions with a shared history; and (c) a source of meaning. Another research study explored how siblings can have direct effects on one another's development when they serve as social partners, role models and foils; and that siblings can influence one another indirectly by virtue of their impact on broader family dynamics (McHale et al., 2006). Conversely, it has been explored that birth order alone cannot account for all the developmental considerations that arise, because the broader context of a family systems has a significant impact on individuals (Eckstein and Kaufman, 2012).

Another aspect relevant to peer dynamics comes from organisational studies through the lens of social identity. This approach suggests that leadership does not operate in a vacuum but centres on a sense of shared group membership between leaders and followers within a given social context, such as a team, department or organisation. The more attuned the leader is in this social contract with followers and as a follower, the more influential and trusted they are likely to be (Dick et al., 2018).

The inference here is that there is limited literature on peers but that some that some correlation between sibling dynamics and adult behaviour may be worthy of further exploration.

2.3.8 Identity

Identity is defined for this research as the stories the client tells themselves about who they are and how those stories have evolved over time. The organisational identity (identity as it is viewed from a work perspective) has been excluded from this research because it is suggested that this is a sense-making exercise between self and organisational context and therefore less related to biographical exploration, which is therefore limited (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016).

Identity has been explored in coaching psychology more than other dimensions (Butcher, 2012; Bush et al., 2013; Stelter, 2014). This suggests that, at its heart, coaching requires a deeper recognition of the client's identity than the coaching literature might imply (Butcher, 2012). Building on this view, the exploration of identity is seen as fundamental to all coaching and inevitably an important topic at some point in all coaching (Bush et al. 2013). Stelter (2014) also explicitly names the importance of identity work in the practice of coaching, for it is through the stories we as humans construct for ourselves that we are helped to develop our identity. As with the other dimensions, it is the dynamic process of integrating and re-integrating, over the course of life experiences, that is important with regard to identity (Lawrence, 2017; Bachkirova, 2011).

Yet, it is imperative to put further boundaries around the work of self and identity in both psychology and coaching. There is disagreement around the formation of the self-concept and the ways in which this aspect may be activated in different contexts (Ashforth and Schinoff, 2016; Epitropaki et al., 2017; Skinner, 2020). As such, the consideration of identity will be limited to the biographical dimensions related to it and not about its manifestation in adult and organisational life.

When exploring identity through the social–constructivist, psychodynamic and developmental perspectives, we can see that the evolving self and its stages of transformation are of critical importance (Dodwell, 2020). Dodwell extrapolates the tension points in identity work's complexity – for example, that identity is not self-contained but created through continual flux with its social environment as viewed by Kegan's five orders of consciousness (Dodwell, 2020). Also, Loevinger's ten stages of ego development suggest that the psychodynamic view of the self may not be conscious but hidden in the unconscious (Loevinger, 1979). Finally, Bachkirova (2011) suggests that there are several developmental theories explaining how different aspects of our identity evolve over time.

Ultimately, the inferences are that identity work is crucial to the work of coaching because our identify develops and changes over time, and through our interactions with others. As such, the shear complexity of identity and related issues cannot simply be correlated to only biographical dimensions.

2.3.9 Emotional Spectrum

Emotions and working with emotional data are diverse topics in research, and often difficult to uncouple from their theoretical frameworks. Often, exploring emotions in coaching reflects a bio–psycho–social model informed by theory and research from neuroscience, interpersonal neurobiology, developmental psychology and attachment theory (Gus et al., 2015). To further illustrate this complexity, examining the use of emotions within various coaching approaches in the *Handbook of Coaching Psychology* (Palmer and Whybrow, 2019) resulted in exploration within the cognitive–behavioural (Palmer and Szymanska, 2019), applied neuroscience (Riddell, 2019), positive psychology (Grant, 2019), mindfulness (Spence, 2019), compassion-focused (Irons et al., 2019), and resilience and well-being (Williams et al., 2019). Thus, defining the theoretical boundaries in the use of emotions is challenging.

A different approach is therefore to examine the way in which emotions can be used in coaching. In a study by Bachirova and Cox (2007b), it is suggested that emotions are most often used in coaching for one of three reasons: to understand attitudes at work; to engage in and with the coaching process; and in the role of coach in helping the client's engagement with and expressions of emotions . Building on the view of engaging with emotions in the coaching process is the awareness of how a client progresses or is hindered by emotions, and how that has an impact on their ability to make sustainable change (O'Broin and Palmer, 2019). Adding to the view of how emotions are used in coaching is the research related to the critical moment in the coaching relationship. This research suggests that moments of intense emotion are often the hallmarks of pivotal shifts for the client in the coaching process (Day et al., 2008).

The other major area of consideration, then, is what emotions matter and whether so provide more important insights then others. One approach to the classification of emotions is the Positive Emotional

Attractor (PEA) and Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA). PEA triggers constructive cognitive responses that enhance motivation, effort, optimism, flexibility, creative thinking and resilience. The emotions most often described with PEA are happiness, joy, love and pride. Conversely, NEA triggers a different process by calling attention to current challenges and stressors that may compromise effectiveness. The emotions most often described in NEA are anger, anxiety, fear and sadness/depression (Howard, 2015). Another approach is through the London Protocol of Emotions that classifies emotions as attachment based (love, joy and trust) and escape based (sadness, fear, anger, shame and disgust) with a 'potentiator' of curiosity (startle or surprise) that arouses new cognitive development (Brown and Dzendrowskyj, 2018).

It is the link between emotions and executive function that keeps driving the discussion back to applied neuroscience. Although the brain has specialised regions of function, it is the quality of connectivity and thus the degree of integration (all driven by emotional regulation via the amygdala) that influences self-regulation and leadership capacity. The basic idea is that emotions like love, joy and happiness drive the capacity for greater complexity by more freely accessing the pre-frontal cortex versus emotions that trigger the amygdala like fear, anger or sadness and inhibit access to the pre-frontal cortex (Siegel, 2007). Quite logically, if the brain is the basis of every thought, emotion, action and behaviour that we experience, the essence of coaching that involves change will require a shift in networks of neurons in the brain (Riddell, 2019). Research has also suggested that emotions can have a significant impact on the regions responsible for analytic thinking, and that there is therefore an ethical dimension related to emotions and learning – that learning cannot exist without some consideration of emotions (Boyatzis and Jack, 2018).

To summarise, the research suggests the following:

- emotions are important indicators of inhibiting or enabling behavioural change;
- emotions can be categorised into different types;
- emotions drive key decision making in the brain; and
- emotions often identify pivotal moments for the client both in life and in coaching.

As such, many approaches to coaching include some consideration of emotions as key indicators to what the client is experiencing. However, linking those emotions to historical patterning and biographical data is missing.

2.3.10 Context-Related Factors

In considering the other elements, not covered by HASIE but likely to play a role in BI is one of context. Passmore (2010) suggests that effective coaching requires the consideration of the diversity of the client as a theme. Building on this, coaches have a responsibility to understand their own cultural heritage before assisting other people because a lack of such understanding could hinder effective intervention (Passmore, 2010). Specifically, aspects to consider in this diversity theme include both external cultural characteristics and internal characteristic such as values and basic assumptions/fundamental beliefs (Rosinski, 2011). Building on the view of exploration of culture and diversity in coaching is that coaching is there to raise awareness of cultural competence in both clients and the coaches working with them who are from other cultural backgrounds (Roth, 2017). While there are references in the coaching and coaching psychology literature about systemic race and ethnicity issues to borrow from the social sciences, common themes around negotiating identities, privilege and blind spots,; and systemic discrimination are often cited (Rankin-Wright et al., 2017).

Autobiographical considerations help uncover the cultural and gender assumptions a client has formed over a lifetime (Pillemer, 1998). Yet, what it clear from the literature is the (1) limited research related to this topic, (2) race orientation of the researchers who have studies this topic (often Caucasian doing work with other races), (3) limited evidence of effective models of inquiry.

2.3.11 Implications and Limitations of Existing Research

What the literature offers is an incomplete view on the use of BI in coaching. On the one hand, the use of narrative practice helps the coach understand how to interpret stories, but it does not outline the key areas of exploration required for a comprehensive view of the client's full history. On the other hand, in psychology, there are some clearly defined bodies of literature that explore individual dimensions of BI, such as family of origin and attachment theory, while other areas are less defined, such as peers and context. What is missing is any linking perspective between dimensions, how they relate to leadership behaviours, and an outline of how to interpret the data for non-clinical purposes. Also, there seems to be an opportunity to join the constructive-developmental approach to BI process, which currently has no research to support it.

An important implication for this type of work stems from the fact that recalled memory through a narrative process can be compromised: descriptions of originating events and the linkage to a purposeful story often misconstrues the event itself (Pillemer, 1998). As a result, a coach must be able to interpret the information they receive through BI, either through the form of narrative or questions, in order to understand what the implications are from a meaning-making perspective.

2.4 The Non-conscious

In psychology, the non-conscious would include the pre-conscious and unconscious, sub-conscious and other. For the purposes of this research, and to avoid the need to define at which level of consciousness an element may exist, the non-conscious is used as a psychologically agnostic term to assemble all states other than consciousness . Distinct from Freud's three levels of consciousness or Jung's four theories of consciousness, the exploration of this topic is exclusively related to its discovery through BI via the narrative process and how to effectively work with it in coaching.

It is also important to note the vastness of this topic of the non-conscious. Be it from a psychology, coaching and/or coaching psychology perspective, some decisions to limit the topic have to be made. In spite of the boundaries that have been defined, these boundaries do not infer the discounting of the other approaches; all insightful in their own ways. This research is focused on the exploration of the non-conscious as it relates to BI and therefore the inclusion of those research studies has been prioritised.

Explored by Oakley and Halligan (2017) is the concept that consciousness has two aspects– the experience of consciousness and the content of consciousness, which includes thoughts, beliefs, intentions, sense of agency, memories and emotions. It is this content of consciousness that is formed within the non-conscious brain systems in the form of a continuous self-referential personal narrative. Therefore, it is through the personal narrative via autobiographical memory that we gain the greatest insight into self and agency (Oakley and Halligan, 2017). The concept of the content of the non-conscious being the mental processes that are inaccessible to consciousness but that influence judgements, feelings, or behaviour is shared by others researchers as well, often through some form of autobiographical discovery (Wilson, 2004).

For the purposes of this research, the exploration of the content of the non-conscious will be explored through four key lenses: (1) emotion-centric approaches, (2) somatic experience, (3) narrative approach and (4) reflective practice. Also, for ethical reasons, any exploration of the non-conscious requires a consideration of the role of trauma and therapeutic interventions.

2.4.1 The Non-Conscious Through Emotions

As early as the 1990s, neuroscientists were providing detailed evidence that explained the interactions among perception, neural/mental patterns, emotions and sensory representations through changes in body state that made consciousness of certain non-conscious patterns possible (Damasio, 2000). Through the use of neurolinguistic programming, they further explored the process of people experiencing the world through their senses (consciously and non-consciously), activating the neurological system, then addressing the systematic patterns of response that re-enforce the link of emotions to the non-conscious (Linder-Pelz and Hall, 2007). However, it is important to note that the evidence base for neurolinguistic programming is doubted by some in the psychological research communities (Einspruch and Forman, 1985).

From a coaching psychology perspective, emotions and the non-conscious have long been linked. A psychodynamic perspective suggests that anxiety of non-conscious threat, containment of emotional expression as learned in childhood, and the transference/counter-transference of early life emotional pain into the present are all critical explorations of emotions as part of the work of coaching (Roberts and Brunning, 2019). Building on this view is the work from applied neuroscience within coaching psychology that tracing the activity of the amygdala and emotional response to threat over a lifetime (Ridell, 2019), and understanding how emotions create an energy flow that then creates movement and how this process has developed over a lifetime (Brown and Brown, 2012), are all critical aspects in the processing of what may be sitting below the surface, outside the immediate consciousness of the client.

In exploring the categorisation of emotions (see section 2.3.9), the two major approaches that emerged were PEA NEA (Howard, 2015) and the London Protocol of Emotions (Brown and Dzendrowskyj, 2018). From a practitioner standpoint, the latter was designed to simplify the spectrum of emotions in order to create a working (rather than a comprehensive) model reflecting the relevant types of automatic nervous system response (Brown and Dzendrowski, 2018). According to the authors, attachment emotions (love/trust, excitement/joy) versus escape emotions (sadness, shame, disgust, anger, fear) and the potentiator of startle/surprise provided a useful mapping system of emotions to non-conscious behavioural patterns (Brown and Brown, 2012). However, beyond these two references, this model has limited research applications. NEA is a far more extensively researched tool (Boyatzis et al., 2015).

2.4.2 The Non-Conscious Through Somatic Work

Based on original research, Werner and Kaplan (1963) illustrate how there is a deeply embodied, even visceral, aspect to meaning making that exists outside the linguistic mechanism of meaning-making measurements. Often referred to as 'somatic work' (relating to the body) in coaching, this is a process of accessing and uncovering the non-conscious (Aquilina and Strozzi-Heckler, 2019).

Drake (2007) also suggests that clients operate mainly at non-conscious and somatic levels but that these non-conscious elements can be made conscious through coaching. In focusing on the aspect of body work and coaching, this is often through the lens of neurolinguistic programming. Smith (2019) suggests that trauma is held in the body and that somatic coaching is a way for coaches to gain an understanding of the client's inner and outer worlds, which allows for deep transformation without working directly with the traumatised self. Related somatic work and body-oriented psychotherapy have long been linked. Strozzi-Heckler (2014) wrote a seminal book that brought somatic work to the coaching world in suggesting that sustainable behaviour change could not exist without engagement in some form of somatic work . Building on this perspective, somatic coaching focuses on the body as a fundamental source of learning and change that enables the body to understand emotions and narratives over a lifetime (Aquilina and Strozzi-Heckler, 2019).

This mind-body connection as part of one system is the core principle of somatic work. In coaching psychology, however, there is an additional layer that suggests that an important part of the coaching process is the ability of a coach to connect with their own body dialogue as it reflects any conscious or non-conscious insights that may be coming from the client (Grimley, 2019). The implication of this literature is that any model that relies on a verbal communication approach to discovery (such as BI), may run the risk of missing critical elements of discovery and integration with the client.

2.4.3 The Non-Conscious Through Narrative of Time and Experiences

There are three primary researchers in the field of narrative coaching – Drake (2009; Australia and United States); Stelter (2007; Denmark) and Law(2019; United Kingdom). Drake (2009) approaches narrative coaching as an embodiment of attachment theory, rooted in the psychodynamic tradition, whereas Law (2019) and Stelter (2007), following the late Michael White, approach it from a third-generation perspective as a meta-model for coaching psychology (Law, 2019). In all cases, there is a significant consideration that the narrative practices allows access to the non-conscious. However, as with any narrative approach, critics suggest that a narrative approach may be useful in understanding intentional action but fails to show much evidence-based research in cause-effect dynamics between narratives and the non-conscious, and that any reference to content within the narrative itself suggests consciousness at some fundamental level (Rutten and Flory, 2020). Further explored, the relationship between narrative and consciousness is effectively described by Vogel (2012) as the conscious sense of self that can be viewed as a continuous act of narration as it tries to create meaning out of experience.

While most of this meaning making is happening unconsciously, the conscious mind attempts to imbue all experiences with coherence and intent. As such, the implication from a narrative perspective is that the very act of narrating biographical data is itself suggesting an act of both conscious and non-conscious meaning making.

2.4.4 Reflective/Reflexive Practice in the Non-Conscious

As discussed in section 2.4, there are two aspects of the consciousness – the experience and the content. Thus far, the content of consciousness has been explored. This section will now explore the experience of consciousness, primarily through the lens of reflective/reflexive practices, which is the dialogical process of reflecting upon one's experience.

Often associated with reflexive leadership learning, Kempster and Iszatt-White (2013) describe the reflective process as one with three stages; (1) self-discovery, (2) discovery through life exploration or social milieu, and (3) discovery with a partner). It is this dynamic process of reflection on lived experience, probed by another thinking partner, that creates interpretive observations of what is really going on (Ellis et al., 2011). The relationship between reflective practice with another, through the exploration of narrative, is an interesting perspective on the value of eliciting the experience of consciousness through reflection (Wilson, 2004).

Also, central to many psychological schools of thought is the notion that self-reflection leads to self-insight that, in turn, leads to enhanced well-being. In research by Stein and Grant (2014), using data from 227 participants, two key findings were reported: (1) dysfunctional attitudes suppress the efficacy of self-insight and well-being; and (2) positive core self-evaluations improve the relationship between self-insight and well-being. Self-insight through self-reflection can also occur between two people. Stelter (2007) explores the dynamic relationship between coach and client as a consciously looping reflective process whereby, through the conversational process, there is ongoing reflection and renewed understanding of self. Building on this concept of relationship and reflective practice is the interaction between coach and client as the very essence of good coaching. Exploring the way the relationship develops between coach and client, and what it enables within and between both parties, is a critical factor in determining the coaching outcomes (Fillery-Travis and Corrie, 2019).

While the key implications of this research suggest that reflective practice is a critical dimension in the shifting of the non-conscious into consciousness, there are caveats to this approach. Fundamentally, reflective practice is meant to serve the process of untangling oneself from the ideology and stories to understand alternative interrelations (Cotton, 2001). Yet, so often, our reflective partners hold the same ideologies, thereby making this entanglement challenging (Cushion, 2015). It is essential to maintain a sceptical attitude about what is being narrated in order to understand its deeper meaning (Fendler, 2003), adding in the caution that self-reflection can lead to self-insight only when the client is not displaying a dysfunctional attitude (Stein and Grant, 2014).

Therefore, any approach to BI and its discovery to the non-conscious will require a reflective process to explore any assumptions that may have remained unchallenged or unexpressed.

2.4.5 Consideration of Counselling, Therapy, Psychodynamics and Trauma

The relationship between coaching and therapy, from both a research and practitioner perspective, has been widely explored and debated (Linley et al., 2001; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004; Maxwell, 2009; Theeboom et al., 2013). Some view coaching as similar, or at least related, to therapy, while others see distinct and material differences. The general view is that therapy or counselling is often used with clients who have some (significant or insignificant) mental health issues while coaching clients tend to be more goal directed and better mentally resourced (Hart et al., 2001). Building on this view, Grant (2006) suggests that coaching is to enhance the life experience, work performance and well-being individuals who do not have clinically significant mental health issues: the delineator being that coaching is for people who are doing well, are well resourced and express a desire to do even better. However, to simply state there is a clear delineation between coaching and counselling/therapy is not enough. As explored by Bluckert (2006), while coaching is not therapy, it is a psychologically minded approach and the overlaps of these highly correlated and yet distinct approaches should be considered as much as their differences.

Kempster and Iszatt-White (2013) identify the main difference between coaching and therapy as the mental arena in which they take place: that is, coaching is likely to be based around capacity building and skills development within a work-based context, whereas therapy often deals with more fundamental issues relating to the person concerned. Thus, the psychological contract is different for the two disciplines).

However, another perspective is that patterns that emerge in the present-day context often have long histories from the past and will likely continue into the future, if not explored and integrated. This is compounded in the organisational context, where pressures on effectiveness tend to elicit these non-conscious patterns. Suggested by researchers Kilburg and Donohue (2014), this non-conscious material is part of what contributes to ineffective leadership and consequently the decrease in organisational effectiveness, simply because it is non-conscious. As a result, these ineffective leaders are at a loss to completely explain, let alone change, their patterns of decision making. .

The main implication for this research then becomes the following: if a practitioner is using narrative practice and accessing aspects of the non-conscious, what are the ethical and professional boundaries that need to be considered? As suggested by Gray (2006), any approach that explores the autobiographical nature of a client's life requires consideration of appropriate techniques to access memories, an approach for providing support if traumatic incidences have occurred, and the ability to work with anxieties that can bring about healthy integration. Furthermore, there is data to suggest that working with trauma awareness enhances coaching practice with positive outcomes (Smith, 2019). Therefore, as the approaches in coaching become more psychologically minded, extending beyond merely care for the client, the resourcing of the coaches themselves becomes critical. As part of this consideration process, Corrie and Kovacs offer a Health Awareness Tool (HAT) as a four-quadrant model designed to assist coaches in identifying both the well-being needs of their clients and the self-care needs for themselves (Corrie and Kovacs In-Conference Workshop for the Sydney University Coaching Conference) and (Corrie and Kovacs, 2021).

2.4.5 Limitations of Existing Research

As coaching matures as a field, the more evidence-based research emerges around the role of the non-conscious in behavioural change. As such, the adoption of these more psychologically minded approaches will need to extend beyond simply building the case for this type of exploration and intervention, and into the development of coaching-centric approaches and models that are not just borrowed and adapted from psychology. The major limitation of this area of literature is that there are few, if any, evidence-based practitioner models of where, what and how a coach engages in this deep exploration into a client's non-conscious. While emotion-driven approaches, and somatic and narrative-based practices are access points, there is a lack of real evidence-based frameworks and specific areas of inquiry that can help coaches to explore this vast and complex area.

2.5 Overall Conclusions from the Literature

This research is focused on the exploration of clients' meaning-making systems through BI –specifically, the research connection to immensely large bodies of knowledge within coaching/coaching psychology and psychology as they relate to meaning making, BI and the non-conscious. The first step was how to orient the research within the field of coaching psychology, after considering many other approaches. The next was to explore the extensive and varied ways in which meaning making has been explored in coaching psychology and psychology. It was determined that meaning making has long existed as a tool but that there are very limited models for understanding how biographical data can uncover insights and shifts into the meaning making frameworks. The relationship between leadership traits, behaviours and BI are not strong in coaching or psychology, but has been considered in a what limited capacity there was. Finally, the notion of the non-conscious was examined using different approaches, and what was uncovered was the need to apply somatic, cognitive and emotional processes to make change sustainable.

It is essential to address the implication of exclusions in this literature review. First, because the primary mechanism of inquiry is biographical exploration, the nature versus nurture debate must be considered. However, what is most relevant for the focus of this research is how nurture influences behaviours, not the epistemology of that debate. Consequently, while recognising that some of the drivers of adult behaviour are inevitably linked to nature, these have been excluded from the research leaving a gap that is acknowledged.

A second area of exclusion is the debate between therapy and coaching and the fundamental need to refer to the past. The starting proposition of this research is that biographical data influences adult behaviour, yet there is little research on what to explore and how. It is acknowledged that any inquiry into a client's past comes with much consideration of both the well-being of the client and the coach's capacity to undertake this type of work. However, the intent of the inquiry is neither therapeutic nor clinical but rather to draw correlations between events of the past and how these may have impacts on meaning making in adult life.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This research is focused on the creation of a framework for coaches to have a shared understanding of *why* their clients did what they did. This *why* is to focus on the client's meaning-making structures, at both a conscious and non-conscious level, primarily through the use of biographical inquiry. The objectives were to:

- bring an interdisciplinary approach to the creation of a framework;
- use primary interviews with extensively qualified coaches and psychologists to gain practitioner insight;
- develop a new model for meaning making and a preliminary tool for practitioners; and
- explore how the non-conscious is defined through the time dimensions of the past, present and future.

The methodology and research approach to achieve these objectives will be explored in this chapter, which includes the following:

3.1 The pilot study.

3.2 Aims, objectives and primary research questions.

3.3 Iterative research design.

3.4 A constructivist grounded theory methodology.

3.5 Primary interviews as method for approach to data collection.

3.6 Final project plan.

This chapter includes some project activity via the pilot study, which was used to test the appropriateness of the originally selected methodological approach. The results of the study had a material impact on the final methodological approach selected, and is therefore an important consideration for this chapter. The outcomes of the pilot study also required a formal application for revision to the project plan by the University. Therefore, any discussion on methodology for the purposes of this project required consideration of this pivotal pilot study.

3.1 The pilot study

The original methodological approach

The original methodological approach selected for this research was the Delphi Panel to drive towards a consensus development technique. The Delphi Panel is viewed to be particularly applicable when there is limited information or consensus on the specific topic of interest (Vernon, 2009). A Policy Delphi approach was selected, as opposed to Classical Delphi (typically used for forecasting) or Decision-Making Delphi (typically used for better decision making), because the primary objective was to devise an approach to address a specific challenge, which in this case was meaning making (Avella, 2016). Also, the role of the researcher was to be that of a planner, and later that of a facilitator, as opposed to an instrument. It felt important, at the time, to be conscious of risk bias by the primary researcher and therefore an approach whereby this person was agnostic to the research was considered important.

This methodological approach was chosen as it was viewed as a highly data driven way to gain consensus on a specific topic, but more importantly, it limited the of the researcher as planner and facilitator which at the time, felt to be important to keep the researcher as agnostic to the data collection process as possible. However, this approach attracted criticism: first, from the academic supervisor of the University, who had questioned the use of this approach for phenomenological research; and, second, by an informal peer support group, which consisted of professional coaching colleagues who had also completed their doctorates. This peer support group had diverse backgrounds and varying specialisations, and – just like the supervisor – was unaware of Delphi's application within the field of coaching or coaching psychology. Many had suggested that keeping the role of researcher agnostic from the data would be highly limiting as the nature of this research was related to immensely complex areas such as meaning making and biographical data. It was suggested that very nature of the inquiry would be challenging and changing the perspectives that were emerging, so to limit the role of researcher felt to be an unnecessary and possibility detrimental to the research outcomes.

Additionally, as part of the research project planning, before the data collection phase, a project plan had been originally designed, as illustrated in Figure 3.1.

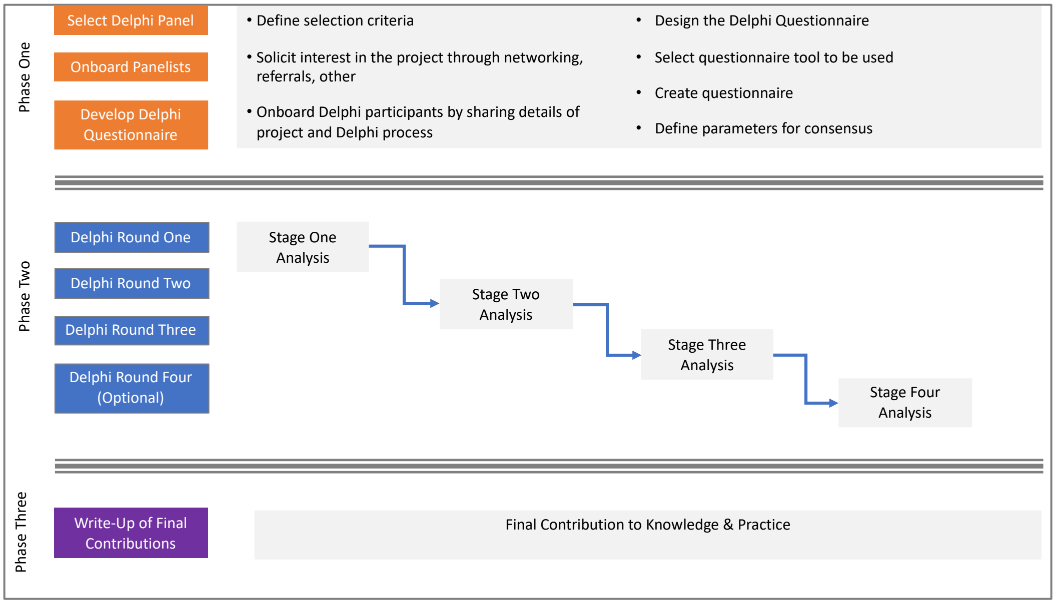


Figure 3.1 Original project plan pre-pilot study

At the time, there was some concern expressed by the advisory group about the simplicity of the design and the selection of the Delphi Panel as the methodological approach for this project. In response, the inclusion of a pilot study offered the most effective method to ascertain whether the design and selected methodological approach were appropriate. Specifically, the pilot study was designed to:

- explore the methodological appropriateness of the Delphi Panel and the design of the various research stages;
- validate the criteria established for the research participants; and
- begin to recruit research participants for the data collection phase.

The following sections will outline the key considerations and insights from the pilot study.

Conducting the pilot study

In December 2018, the pilot study was launched with a group of 14 professional colleagues who were not intended to be included in the actual Delphi Panel but had encountered situations similar to the experience that participants would undergo in the data collection phase. The software tool Survey Monkey was used, because it was the planned tool for the data collection as well. The intention was to simulate the experience of one round of the Delphi Panel.

The following insights were derived from the pilot study:

3.1.1 Challenges with nomenclature, understanding and communication.

3.1.2 Insights on processes and onboarding of interviewees.

3.1.3 Shifting perspectives on the role of the researcher.

3.1.4 Reinforcing research aims and objectives.

3.1.1 Challenges with nomenclature, understanding and communication

During the pilot study, the data collection approach was to:

- email the survey to participants;
- examine the responses submitted via Survey Monkey;
- debrief the experience with participants via Zoom, the virtual video conference platform, and
- collect relevant feedback.

In step 1, the process went effectively. All participants were comfortable with Survey Monkey as a tool and there was no expression of concerns or questioning regarding the research goals. During the examination of responses in step 2, responses seemed clear and in line with expectations, and there appeared to be no evidence of confusion regarding terms or concepts. In step 3, however, during the debrief Zoom calls there was significant confusion regarding nomenclature, inconsistency around terminology, and confusion about the Delphi approach to driving consensus. To illustrate the point, the term 'meaning making' was defined differently by each participant and they had varying views on how to access it in coaching. There also appeared to be much resistance to having to define terms too quickly, before having the time and space to explore them through dialogue with the researcher. However, despite the resistance articulated during these Zoom calls, there was no evidence of these concerns in the participants' original written responses. This incongruence was explored with one participant with interesting insights. Here is a quote from the interview:

> It's interesting to me that there is a difference between my written responses and what we are exploring here in real-time. I suppose when you asked me the original questions, I felt more clear of my own thinking, or more truthfully, I didn't think about it long enough to understand the complexity of it. Now, being in conversation with you, I feel I have given these ideas more space to flourish and therefore makes it feel different to how I was thinking about it before. I suppose that is why coaching is a dialogue-based activity, by just talking, we change things in ways we couldn't have predicted on our own. (Interviewee #4)

In step 4, it became apparent after aggregating the feedback, that any process of discovery would require a dialogue-based approach. Establishing common or shared understanding in a one-way format was difficult. Too many assumptions were being made, but not expressed. Also, given the nature of coaches to be in dialogue, an attempt to have them think through complex concepts and approaches in written format did not seem to suit most participants. Finally, there seemed to be a strong aversion by 57% of participants (8 out of 14) to define too quickly and not change their perspectives on issues. Given that the Delphi approach drives towards consensus, it seemed that most of the participants in the pilot study wanted to become more expansive in their exploration, not hindered by the need to define, align and agree.

3.1.2 Insights on processes and onboarding of interviewees

Beyond gaining valuable insights on how to streamline processes for the data collection phase of the main study, another goal of the pilot study was to begin recruitment for that data collection phase. Each participant was asked to refer at least one potential interviewee who could be included in the data collection process, based on clearly defined criteria. This process generated three key insights.

The first insight was that the established criteria for interviewees, while challenging to source, produced the right calibrations of experience to make the results of the research valid and reliable. This was validated through the referral process. Each participant referred at least one person (but there was some duplication in names), so there were a possible 12 referrals. In deeper exploration with each of the 12, it was discovered that some had less than the minimum ten years of experience required. In total, there were four referrals that had less experience. Among these four, the overall quality of the conversations, the desire to take part in volunteer qualitative research, and the nuanced perspectives were significantly lacking compared with those referrals who had ten years of experience or more. As such, there was objective data to suggest that the search criteria were sound. Through this process, the inclusion of the participant being actively engaged in supervision was also added to the criteria. Four of the referrals spoke of their exploration of their own views on meaning making and related topics coming out of their supervision work, and it was suggested that the reflective nature of my research would be more suited to those who had engaged in their own reflective practice.

The second insight that this recruitment process generated was the level of onboarding required to ensure that the right referrals made their way to inclusion as potential interviewees. Of the remaining eight referrals, 1-hour meetings were scheduled with each person. The first two meetings went well beyond the scheduled hour (1.5 hours and 2 hours, respectively), which suggested a good fit with the research. It was during this process that there were touchpoints with the research supervisor who cautioned against too elaborate a screening process. The risk of convening a panel with interviewees who either saw the world too similarly, or knew too much about the formulated hypotheses, could inadvertently skew the data. Conversely, the risk was that, with too little onboarding, the data collection phase may not yield the correct results, due to the misalignments seen in the pilot study.

The final insight was the significant streamlining of the administration requirements for participants. As part of the process in the pilot study, participants went through an onboarding process that the actual interviewees would take in the data collection phase. This entire process was streamlined through the use of Survey Monkey. Also, the pilot study served as an opportunity to test all the relevant tools required in the data collection phase. These included checking Zoom for consistency of experience and recording process, testing Otter.ai for accuracy of transcription, and learning to code transcriptions through NVivo. Key lessons were learned on how to use these tools most effectively in order to maximise efficacy in the data collection phase. Insights such as maximising audio quality on Zoom, the revision of transcriptions through Otter.ai, and the coding process through NVivo, will all be explored in section 3.6.4.

3.1.3 Shifting perspectives on the role of the researcher

The pilot study also highlighted the criticality of the role of primary researcher and shifted the existing perspective. Initially, it felt important for the role of the researcher to be agnostic, a facilitator and a neutral solicitor of data from leading experts – hence the selection of the Delphi approach. Yet, from the pilot study, surfaced the idea of compounding understanding and the central role the researcher can play in generating and interpretating the data. The pilot study demonstrated the dynamics between primary research and evidence, and that it was in fact the way the ideology, values and data all interacted to form evidence that was the most significant (Xu and Storr, 2012). As the dialogue emerged and evolved, so too did the opportunity for expansion and recognition of the ideology, values and biases that shifted the data collection along with the perspectives of the researcher. The very nature of the inquiry was shifting.

This new-found perspective on the role of the primary researcher welcomed the consideration of pluralism in qualitative research: how to explore the various benefits and creative tensions of diverse qualitative approaches with different epistemologies (Frost et al., 2010). Exploring the use of observational data, the implications of the selection process and how that influenced the interviews, and the trail of analytical decisions made in the analysis of the interviews all had an impact on the ultimate findings. The shift that was occurring was, in the view of the researcher not just about collecting data and providing a voice for the participants, but also to interrogate the data and provide informed commentary (Morse, 2003). This expansion in perspective triggered the re-evaluation of the epistemology and methodological approaches considered, as will be explored in section 3.3.

3.1.4 Reinforcing research aims and objectives

The pilot study provided a platform to test the research aim and objectives, and their resonance with coaches. The aim of creating a new theoretical model for conscious and non-conscious meaning making in coaching was met with much curiosity and interest. Beyond the already stated considerations of common nomenclature, there was strong alignment around the need to explore both the conscious and non-conscious in coaching, and the use of some form of biographical inquiry to explore meaning making. The pilot study also created the opportunity to expand the research literature review to include additional areas of consideration originally not explored. This included the use of somatic approaches, other thought leaders in the constructive-developmental area, and further considerations on the boundaries between coaching and therapy.

3.1.5 Approval for methodological change

The results of the pilot study suggested that the originally selected Delphi approach would not be appropriate for a research study of this kind. The rationale of a new approach will be explored in subsequent sections. Alongside this process, a formal application for revision of approach was submitted to the University and approval was granted in 2020 (Appendix 1).

3.2 Aims, objectives and primary research questions

This research is focused on the creation of a framework for coaches to have a shared understanding of *why* their clients do what they do. This *why* is focused on the client's meaning-making structures, at both a conscious and non-conscious level, primarily through the use of biographical inquiry. Explicitly, the aim, which was achieved, was to create a new theoretical framework for conscious and non-conscious meaning making using biographical inquiry within coaching.

The objectives were to:

- bring a interdisciplinary ciplinary approach to the creation of a framework to include coaching and coaching psychology practices, the field of psychology, and applied neuroscience;
- use primary interviews with extensively qualified coaches and psychologists to gain consensus on what is meaning making, and how coaches can access it with clients;
- develop a new framework for meaning making using biographical inquiry and a preliminary tool for practitioners.
- explore how the non-conscious is defined through the time dimensions of the past, present and future.

The pilot study reinforced the original aim but also expanded the research objectives. However, the new insights from the pilot study, generated from a changing methodological approach, required a re-examining of the research questions to test continued validity and applicability. What emerged was not a shift in the questions but rather a shift in the intended purpose and outcome. Table 3.1 explores this evolving nature of the research questions.

Table 3.1 The evolution of research questions post-pilot study

	Research question	**Intended purpose**	**Evolution post-study**
1	Does meaning making need to be identified to have an impact on quality and sustainability of behavioural change within a coaching context?	At the onset, it was hypothesised that meaning making (understanding why the client did what they did) was an integral place of inquiry for sustained behavioural change in coaching.	Meaning making is ongoing and evolving experience in real-time, based on the past, present and future. The client and their meaning-making systems cannot be decoupled from their actual existence, making it an inevitable and core aspect of coaching.
2	Is examining meaning making through biographical inquiry a useful approach?	biographical inquiry was a useful way of examining meaning making with clients. It provided a sort of source data for the meaning-making structures they apply in the present day.	Experienced coaches agree that a client's history and family of origin plays into their current challenges / goals in some way. Exploring the history of a client is a useful source of meaning making and provides deep insights for the client.
3	How does a client make meaning at a conscious and non-conscious level?	There exists a distinction between what is in the consciousness of the client and readily accessible, and what sits at every other level (non-conscious), that requires exploration in coaching to truly understand a client's full meaning-making structures.	Work with and in consciousness and non-consciousness is a constantly moving dance that happens simultaneously (not either/or). Therefore a coach could benefit from understanding how these two sides of the client can be used in coaching work simultaneously.
4	What are the core dimensions of consideration in a biographical inquiry process?	Based on the limited existing frameworks for biographical inquiry (HASIE)* and the limited literature on the topic, the core dimensions are likely to be related to family of origin, attachment-based dynamics, identity formation and emotional spectrum.	The dimensions originally defined remain valid and have been expanded to include more detailed exploration around hierarchy (stemming from family of origin), peers-based dynamics, identity formation and context dynamics that include socio-economic and race/spirituality factors, emotional spectrum and relationship dynamics.
5	What are you listening for within a biographical inquiry process?	The inference is that, through a biographical inquiry process, a coach can access deeper levels of meaning making to understand why clients do what they do. It includes non-conscious associations between narratives from the past and the meaning they bring to the present in the form of behaviours and non-conscious patterns.	Adopting the narrative literature and the constructive-developmental perspective, biographical inquiry narratives may exist in stages, with varying levels of agency, subject–object orientation and progression beyond the narrative.

* Hierarchy – Attachment – Siblings – Identity – Emotional Tapestry (Brown and Brown, 2012)

3.3 Iterative research design

In exploring a revision to the methodological approach to data collection and the shifting role of the researcher, an iterative design perspective emerged as the very paradigm of the research seemed to be shifting. Exploring this idea of iterative process in research, Finlay (2012, p.174) suggests that the essence of the phenomenological research, despite its numerous methodologies, has at its core five mutually dependent and dynamically iterative processes:

1. embracing the phenomenological attitude;
2. entering the lifeworld (through descriptions of experiences);
3. dwelling with horizons of implicit meanings;
4. explicating the phenomenon holistically; and
5. integrating frames of reference.

The first process, of embracing the phenomenological attitude, can be challenging for a practitioner-scholar, particularly because they often come into research with an already well-established career and extensive knowledge of the topic within which they are researching. This idea of remaining curious and pushing away any certainty of outcome or meaning was important to the iterative design aspect of this project (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Furthermore, the need to be open, slowing down the process in order to sets aside external frames of references, was pivotal (Finlay, 2012, p.178).

The second process of engaging with the experience of life was important to the data collection approach but also paralleled the experience of doing biographical inquiry work with clients. Finding a methodological approach that allowed for a 'living in an unfolding present with a determining past and yet-to-be determined future' (Finlay, 2012, p.180) was a good test for the biographical inquiry approach in general. If the researcher could truly stand-with the interviewee while they engaged in their own deeply descriptive process, this – in and of itself – would provide interesting data that the process of biographical inquiry could be materially relevant and effective. The marked exception with regards to data collection it that the experience of the interviewee is just as relevant as what the interviewee thinks or feels.

The next two processes were equally important iterative aspects of the design of the project. In dwelling with horizons of meaning, the key implication was to avoid imposing categories or thematic analysis too quickly or in generalised ways so that the researcher missed the opportunity to engage more deeply in the meaning. As such, at least a few stages of thematic analysis would be critical, relating to the fourth process of explicating the phenomenon holistically, which is focused on layered understanding. Finally, integrating frames of reference with literature from various interdisciplinary ciplinary perspectives was already planned and further reinforced.

A full project plan can be found in section 3.6, which incorporates all these iterative processes.

3.3.1 Paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodological considerations

Any discussion on methodological considerations must first explore the paradigm or the world view that guides the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspectives (Lincoln et al., 2011).

To begin, here is an exploration of the paradigm that drives this research. Coaching and coaching psychology research tends to sit in the paradigm of interpretivism and constructivism where the approach considers the dynamic and changing nature of understanding, and that there could be multiple interpretations of a given data point that is shaped by the individual's historical or social perspective (Cohen et al., 2011). The evolution of coaching research itself began with surveys and case studies and, by 2005, there was an emergence of grounded theory, interpretative phenomenological analysis and thematic analysis (Passmore and Theeboom, 2016). These methodologies tie closely to the constructivist paradigm and seem to fit within the context of the research topic and the iterative processes that will be incorporated in the research design.

While clarifying the paradigm of interpretivism and constructivism in coaching, it is important to acknowledge its disadvantages. As described by Pham (2018), it holds three core limitations. One, there is a gap in verifying its validity and usefulness to larger populations. Two, a bias of the researcher's own interpretation, belief system and ways of thinking is embedded in the research. Finally, an addressing of the social reality or context is generally overlooked (Pham, 2018). Increasingly, although still in its infancy (Kovacs and Corrie, 2017), critical realism is being applied to research in coaching in response to these limitations. There are also further ways to address these concerns through an iterative design approach to the data collection and analysis, as will be explored in sections 3.6.4 and 3.6.5.

Next is the consideration of the fundamental ontology and epistemology related to this research on meaning making, particularly the paradigm of inquiry around the social and historical constructs that inform a client's identity. The assumption in ontology, which guides this research, is that there is no single reality or truth: reality is created by the individual themselves. The epistemology is that reality needs to be interpreted in order to uncover the underlying meaning of behaviours. According to Pavlovic (2021), a central assumption underlying approaches that are labelled 'constructivist' is that human beings create systems for meaningfully understanding their world and experiences within it, and that this therefore implies that we are constantly imposing new levels of meaning. What is missing from this perspective, which then brings us back to the discussion of the paradigm, is the idea of reality being socially constructed and constantly renegotiated.

3.3.2 Theoretical perspectives and methodological considerations

The more complicated considerations were related to the theoretical and methodological approach or, fundamentally how data can be found, collected and analysed. The original choice of the Delphi Panel was in order to apply a more rigorous approach to qualitative research that attempted to remove the researcher's interpretation bias found in constructivist approaches. Looking at it from a phenomenological perspective, it was the subjective understanding of a client's own experiences that seemed important and to justify exploring meaning making as pathic understanding (the general mood, sensibility and felt sense of being in the world). The pilot study highlighted the challenge not only of the methodological approach outlined in section 3.1 but also the lack of unfolding through dialogue that is critical to the constructivist paradigm.

Revising the methodological approach

The search for what drives truth and knowledge is what guides researchers' thinking, beliefs and assumptions about society and themselves: it is the frame in which they view the world around them and it therefore drives the paradigm (Schwandt, 2001).

The truth that drives this research includes the following:

- Each client is unique and shaped by a lifelong journey of experience.
- The interpretation, through conversation, of their lifelong experiences is what creates meaning for the client and therefore informs how they appear, act, process and behave in the world.
- The interpretation of these experiences exists at both a conscious and a non-conscious level, and are constantly changing and moving the more one explores them.
- To change how one shows up, acts or behaves in the world (often the work of coaching), requires some mechanism to explore experiences from the past that throw light on why we do what we do.
- At any given time, the past, present and future are all influencing how a client creates meaning and exists simultaneously.
- There is a shift that occurs, simply by exploring experiences through dialogue, that both creates and changes meaning.

- Experienced coaches have within them inherent ways of working with clients to discover these meaning-making systems, often stemming from their extensive experience of working deeply with clients.
- These inherent approaches and places of inquiry used by coaches are in fact quite similar, but need more evidence-based frameworks to bring them to the wider coaching community.

This recognition that within the client there is this constantly evolving, non-static awareness of meaning making was an important design feature to consider in this research. It is also why doing in-depth primary interviews with coaches, rather than clients, was important. This evolving sense of knowing is a core truth for both client and coach. Knowing where to go with a client, in order to get to the heart of their meaning-making systems is critical. Equally critical is the need then to reflect this evolving sense of knowing in the research methodological approach,. As the knowledge of the researcher expands, so too does the quality of the exploration in subsequent interviews. It was this truth that led to the exploration of grounded theory as a methodological approach. Where the data collection and data analysis overlap to allow for flexibility in data collection procedures also reflects the dynamic occurrence within the coach–client relationship itself (Miles and Huberman, 1984). In this methodology, data collection, coding, integration of categories and construction of theory are guided by information as it emerges through interviews (Lawrence and Tar, 2013). In particular, the focus is on uncovering patterns that might not be in the immediate awareness of the interviewee (Engward, 2013). Grounded theory also offers the most relevant approach to the iterative design aspects, which were viewed as critical to this research project.

3.4 A constructivist grounded theory methodology

The final methodological approach used was constructivist grounded theory (CGT). As described by Charmaz (2006), CGT is used to develop a conceptual model or theory, a more nuanced and deeper understanding of a phenomenon called ‘theorising’. Table 3.2 outlines how key decisions were made during the research process that reflected key guiding principles of CGT.

Table 3.2 Constructivist grounded theory guiding principles compared with actual research process

Principle	Constructivist grounded theory principles	Research approach and process
Data collection	• Analysis proceeds alongside and informs future data collection in an iterative process whereby each interview elaborates and refines the evolving interpretations, and the interview guide often evolves to allow for probing of ideas or themes.	• Analysis was happening alongside all interviews. • Previous interviews were informing future interviews. • Research reflections were used as data for the research.
Analysis and coding	• Coding the interviews based on words and patterns in an ‘open coding’ format	• Coding was done in an open format where each new interview was coded

	whereby each new code is compared with existing codes to define and refine the characteristics of each category. • Next, axial coding takes place to explore the relationship between these codes and create categorisations of the patterns to a conceptual level.	against the existing nodes or if required, new codes were created. • Then, relationship between codes was explored.
Sufficiency	• Data collection and analysis proceed until theoretical sufficiency has been reached. This is not to imply that nothing new can be learned but that the current codes contain enough breadth and depth to ensure an adequate understanding of the topic.	• By interview eight, data sufficiency was reached but the relationship between nodes was still evolving.
Role of researcher	• The researcher is an important part of the process by being reflexive about their position in relation to the research questions, participants and process. • The process of writing memos throughout the data collection and analysis to capture reflections. • Revisiting memos throughout the data collection and analysis to facilitate interpretation of the data, ultimately in order to shape the theoretical framework.	• The researcher's reflections after each interview were used as part of the data collection. • Theorising after each interview was used extensively. • Returning to the researcher's reflection notes to anchor learning and insights frequently.
Generalisability	• Findings are discussed not in terms of generalisability but transferability to another context or setting. • Researchers need to provide sufficient description of the phenomenon, context and participants enrolled for the reader to be able to judge whether or not the findings might be transferable to their setting.	• The interviewees all exceeded the minimum criteria required for eligibility, which was a high bar. • The interviewees had extensively diverse experience both cross-culturally and cross-geographically. • The interviewees all engaged in their own development supervision and had well-informed views on their own practice approaches. • All interviewees had extensive coaching and psychology training.

3.5 Primary interviews as method for data collection

Feedback during the pilot study suggested that primary interviews would be the ideal data collection method. There is extensive research suggesting that interviews allow for the collection of in-depth information about a certain topic or subject through which a phenomenon can be interpreted (Kvale, 1996). Also, interviews are a valuable method for exploring the construction and negotiation of meanings in a natural and comfortable setting (Cohen et al., 2011). However, interviews for data collection is not without risk. As suggested by one researcher, although interviews are a prevalent research instrument, they should be cautiously used and reported. That is, they should not only be illustrative but also reflective and critical (Alshenqeeti, 2014). There is also significant consideration and concern regarding the volume of data interviews generate, and the potential 'overwhelm' that can have on the researcher (Dörnyei, 2007). The implication is that significant thought should be given to the type and structure of an interview as well as to the process of analysis and critical review (the latter is discussed in section 3.6.3.)

3.5.1 Criteria for interviewees

The criteria for interviewees were established before the pilot study and reinforced during the study as being an accurate reflection of the nature and tenure of the dialogue required. The only added element was the inclusion of supervision to ensure that each interviewee was engaging in the their own process of reflective practice so that the level of conversation would be markedly more insightful.
The criteria were as follows:

- At least ten years' experience in coaching and/or counselling of senior leaders within an organisational context (senior leaders to be defined as director and above with significant profit and loss responsibility, global/regional/country focus and direct reporting relationships). Of the total years of experience, at least ten years had to have been in coaching-related work.
- Specific training in at least two of the following: psychology, psychotherapy, adult/ego development theory, neuroscience, autobiographical narration, coaching or related fields.
- Experience of working across geographies, cultures, genders and various industries.
- Engagement in ongoing professional development and supervision to explore both the expansion of practice and ethical implications of client work and/or belonging to a professional coaching or regulatory body (e.g. International Coaching Federation, European Mentoring and Coaching Council, Association for Coaching or practice-specific associations relating to psychology, psychotherapy, etc.

3.5.2 Type and structure of interview

A good qualitative interview has two key features – it flows naturally and it is rich in detail (Dörnyei, 2007). In examining the options for the type of interview, structured, unstructured and semi-structured approaches were considered. The structured approach was eliminated immediately. The original methodological Delphi approach was, in essence, a structured format (via questionnaire) and considered ineffective for this type of research. Also, structured interviews lack the richness and limit the availability of in-depth data with limited variation in responses due to a strict format. There is also limited flexibility for the interviewer to interrupt and the interviewee to elaborate (Alsaawi, 2014).

The more integral debate was between unstructured and semi-structured formats. In the unstructured format, often the interview begins with a single question, allowing the interviewee complete freedom to pursue any line of consideration most important to them. This was an important consideration for the

research. The idea of giving complete autonomy to the interviewee to go wherever they chose was compelling. However, in unstructured interviews, there are minimum interruptions on the part of the interviewer (Bryman, 2008).
There was significantly more risk in pursuing an unstructured format and some question of its effectiveness with regards to a CGT approach. Given the lofty aim of creating a new theoretical model for conscious and non-conscious meaning making within coaching, there was risk that such a vast topic could go into far-off realms, some relevant and some less so. Also, the pilot study brought awareness of the need for common nomenclature and mutual agreement on the direction of the discussions. As such, a truly unstructured format was likely not feasible.

This left the semi-structured format, the most commonly used in the social sciences (Bryman, 2008) and often cited in coaching research as well. Semi-structured interviews present the opportunity to not only create slightly more structure but also to give the primary researcher a more engaged role of. This approach allows for depth by providing the opportunity the interviewer to probe and expand on the interviewee's responses (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). This was an important consideration for the iterative nature and design of the research as well as the role of the researcher in compounding understanding by.

In terms of structure and approach, the research suggested some design considerations. Piloting the open-ended questions in advance was one aspect (Dörnyei, 2007). A similar inference was made in the pilot study to ensure that there was more common footing around subject and nomenclature. The opportunity to give the interviewees some guidance for their reflections beforehand appeared to be a valuable process to help organise their thinking about the topic. It also allowed for a quicker deepening of this discussion earlier in the interview.

Another design consideration was around the close of the interview. Talmy (2010) stresses that interviewees should be given a chance, at the end of an interview, to bring up comments or ask questions. While the opportunity to add more details or ask questions was important, it also felt essential to create a space for reflection on the nature of the discussion between the researcher and the interviewee.

3.5.3 Number of interviewees

There are a number of considerations relating to sample size. These include the following:

1. Methodology of the research, sampling techniques and geographical limitations (Patton, 2002).
2. Significance of the claims (Charmaz, 2006).
3. Heterogeneity of the population (Ritchie et al. 2003).

In research conducted by Mason (2010), he looked at a number of studies based on a research approach to analyse the sampling numbers used. Most relevant was grounded theory research, which had 429 studies in total, with 87 interviewees as the highest number of the sample, a low of 4 and a mean of 32. Related, in phenomenology research, there was a high of 89 interviewees, a low of 7 and a mean of 25. Overall, in the study, the most common sample sizes were in the range of 20–30 (Mason, 2010). Ultimately, the view that resonated the most was that sampling continues until the researcher senses that they have reached a saturation of patterns and knowledge in the interviewees' experiences and are no longer finding significantly new information (Bertaux, 1981).

Based on the outcomes of the pilot study, which had similar criteria for the selection of interviewees, there was an extensive alignment across all interviewees. As such, the saturation benchmark was felt to be in the order of 6–8 interviewees. However, with the revised methodological approach and the element of practicality in securing interviewees, it was important to provide some kind of buffer. As such, the benchmark was set to secure at least ten interviewees. Thoughts on saturation of knowledge would be discussed, after each interview and, if there were a risk to attaining saturation,, more interviewees would be secured.

3.6 Final project plan

Figure 3.2 outlines a comprehensive view of the project plan and related activities. The plan reflects the iterative nature of the research and the major phases of work to be completed. Each phase of the project has been elaborated upon in this section.

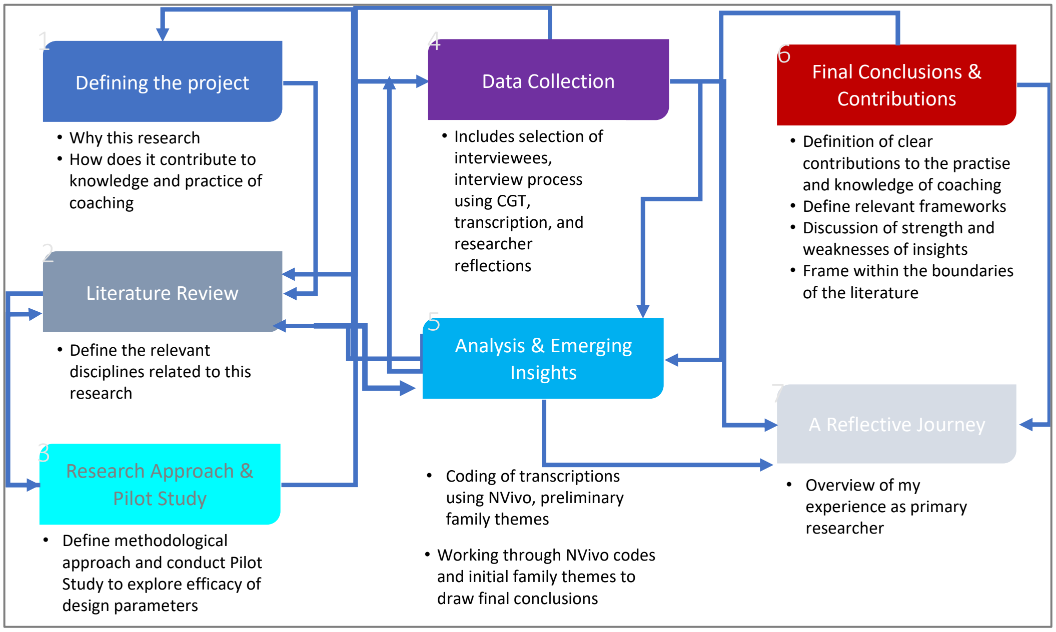


Figure 3.2 Project activity plan – a seven-phased process

3.6.1 Defining the project

This project plan was designed based on the insights from the pilot study, the desire to create an iterative design approach, the selection of a CGT methodological approach and the use of primary semi-structured interviews. All the choices outlined were designed with the aim of understanding the meaning-making structures of the client, both at a conscious and non-conscious level, through the use of biographical inquiry.

3.6.2 Literature review

The literature review process evolved in three distinct phases. In phase 1, the research was focused on meaning making from a psychological perspective, the dimensions of HASIE and the research related to each distinct dimension of biographical inquiry and, finally, the vast area of the non-conscious. As the project evolved and the data from the interviews was collected, the scope of the literature began to shift. More research into the third-generation coaching came to light and the various coaching psychology practices, like narrative practices, and related bodies of knowledge grew. Finally, as the data was deeply analysed and the building blocks for key findings defined, again, the literature evolved. Originally, reflective practice was not part of the scope of the project. Nor was the concept of the intersection of time dimensions from the past, present and future that created a renewed exploration on the topic of the non-conscious.

It was this continual iterative process of (1) what conclusions were emerging from the data, (2) what the literature revealed on these topics, (3) testing new insights with the interviewees, and finally (4) what were new, insightful and compelling findings that could be added to the field and practice of coaching that created a meaningful project design.

Overall, the literature review grew by almost 50% from the original scope. Also, the segmentation of the literature underwent four review cycles. Areas originally considered out of scope became in scope. Those originally considered relevant to the research became redundant. New findings were introducing additional topics to be explored . The need to be ruthlessly focused on outcomes became the design principle of the literature phase of the research. It is in the admission of this necessity that the limitations of this work can be found. To say that all possible literature has been considered would be an overstatement. But the CGT approach lent itself to the continuous redefining of the literature, which suggests that its materiality are sufficient to justify drawing effective conclusions from the findings.

3.6.3 Approach and pilot study

The pilot study, while methodologically significant, also created the opportunity to run a mini-research project within the larger project scope. As outlined in section 3.1, the modifications introduced were related to methodology and process.

Beyond the methodology and process changes, however, was this evolving project view, or what has been referred to as an 'iterative process design'. This mini-research project reflected the parallel process of the expanding perspectives of the researcher as well the nature of this kind of phenomenology perspective. With an original approach that was limited initially by what was naturally occurring in the structured interview format, CGT offered the opportunity to develop and test possible theoretical perspectives in real time during data collection, thereby making the insights significant and well informed.

Similarly, as the practitioner-scholar's capacity grew over the five and a half years of this project, her added knowledge could be introduced into the data collection through more insightful questioning. Her critical eye could identify what was materially relevant, with a perspective of what would be valuable to the profession and, most importantly, its practitioners.

3.6.4 Data collection

The data collection process explored in this section will include the:

- selection and touchpoints of interviewees
- data collection process to include pre-interview, interview and post-interview procedures; and

- researcher’s reflections.

3.6.4.1 Selection and touchpoints for interviewees

A full overview of selection and touchpoints for each interview is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

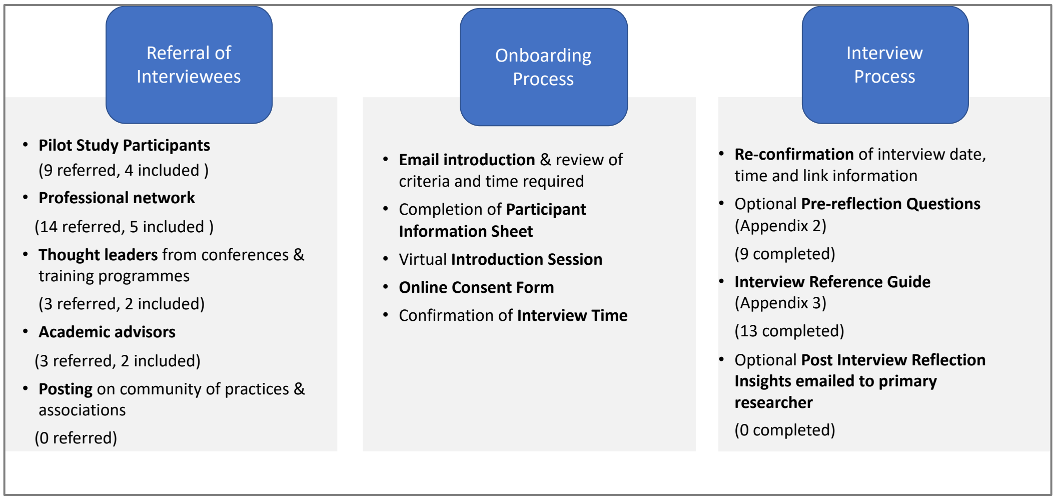


Figure 3.3 Summary of steps in securing panel members

Referral of interviewees

All interviewees were selected based on referral. The referrals came multiple sources including:

- the pilot study – nine referred, with four selected;
- the researcher’s professional network of peers based on their backgrounds and interest in the topic area – fourteen contacted and five selected.
- thought leaders from professional conferences and training programmes – three contacted and two included.
- referrals via the academic advisory team for this research project – three referred and two selected.
- posting on community or practice boards – zero referrals received.

In total, 13 interviewees were selected.

Onboarding process

The onboarding process was designed to maximise understanding of the project, ensure that interviewees were clear as to the outcomes and approach, and streamline the documentation requirements. After initial contact was made with a potential interviewee, a participant information sheet was provided to ensure that eligibility criteria were met and there was interest in the research topic. Then, a virtual introduction session was conducted to ensure language fit, further explore any questions or concerns about the criteria and topic, and explain the time commitments for the interviewee. If both parties were satisfied, the potential interviewee would then be sent the online consent form and confirmed for the research.

In total, 29 people were contacted as potential interviewees. Through the subsequent onboarding process, only 13 moved on to be confirmed interviewees, which was higher than the planned 10. The perspective was that more rather than fewer interviewees would be preferred.

Interview process

Interviewees were sent pre-reflection questions (Appendix 2) as suggested by Dörnyei (2007) to help familiarise them with the topic area and engage them in the interview process. Nine of the 13 interviewees submitted responses and all read the questions before arriving for their interview. The interviews were 2-hour time slots over the Zoom platform and recorded with videos off to maximise sound quality. A semi-structured format (Appendix 3) that opened with the aim and objectives of the research was introduced by the researcher, from which the interviewee selected their preferred starting point of exploration. Of the 13 interviews completed, the average time was 1 hour and 32 minutes. Further analysis of the results will be provided in Chapter 4.

3.6.4.2 Data collection process

Data was collected in two forms: the first collected from the interviewees and the second collected by the researcher, principally in the form of reflections. This process of data collection is consistent with a CGT approach. Figure 3.4 outlines what data was included and the stage in which the data was analysed.

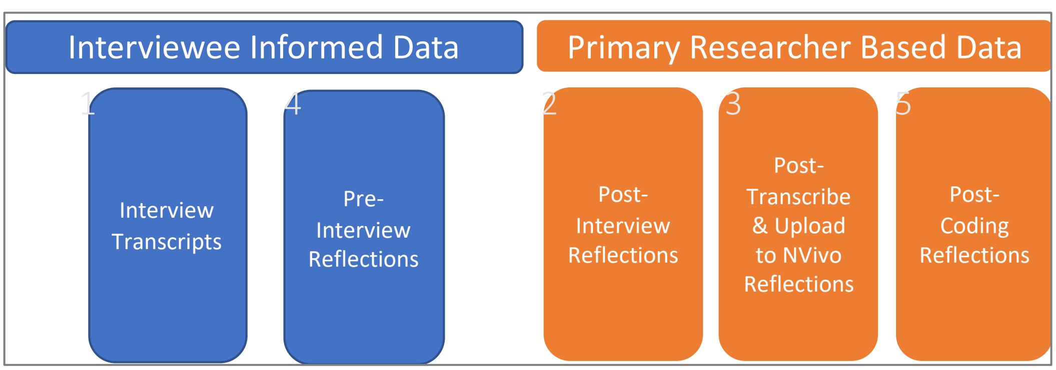


Figure 3.4 Data collection buckets and order of analysis

It is important to note that the order of the analysis was done by moving between interviewee data and researcher data. The rationale was that the experience of the interview (1) and the post-interview reflections (2) were, together, a reflection of the knowledge at that exact moment of the research. Depending on the time gaps between interviews, how many were completed in a single day, or even the state of the researcher, this level of insight was timebound and not reflective of the whole research period. Interviews were conducted over the months of February (two interviews), March (six interviews) and April (five interviews) in 2020.

The next stage of data collection came once the interviews were transcribed (3), which included listening to the full interview from start to finish and cross-referring to the Otter.ai transcripts, uploaded to NVivo. The pre-interview questionnaire (4) was then read for the first time and also uploaded to NVivo. Following this process, notes were taken on the researcher's reflections.

Interviews were conducted between February and April 2020. During this process, transcripts and post-interview reflections were becoming available. This second stage of data collection came from the analysis, which started in November 2020 and continued over an intense six-week period. Because there was a significant gap in time between collecting the data and listening to it again (over six months), the researcher's insights felt altogether new in many ways during this stage. The reflections took on an aggregated view, materially different from the individual reflections that had surfaced between February and April earlier that year.

The final stage of data collection took place once all the data was coded in NVivo (5) and the final researcher's reflections considered. This stage was completed repeatedly over several months from December 2020 to June 2021, and included as part of the final submission write-up.

3.6.4.3 Analysis and emerging insights

The analysis stage took place in four waves, the first being the ongoing analysis done between interviews to inform the subsequent ones. This is typical in a CGT approach. This level of analysis involved the original interview transcription and the researcher's notes and reflections. Typically, the analysis between interviews was structured around four component parts: what was learned about (1) meaning making, (2) biographical inquiry, (3) the non-conscious, and (4) 'other'. These reflections would be captured individually as well as in one cumulative document that would be reviewed briefly before beginning the next interview. This stage also included saturation analysis.

The second wave of analysis occurred once the full data had been uploaded into NVivo in November 2020. Each individual interview had identifiers removed and only participant ID numbers as references. At the time, the sequencing of interviews was thought to be important and so each interview was coded by a short-form participant ID number, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Files from NVivo

01 - 0100	17	45
02 - 0300	16	63
03 - 1300	16	53
04 - 0800	17	53
05 - 1200	19	66
06 - 0700	18	56
07 - 0200	26	81
08 - 1100	16	53
09 - 0900	13	40
10 - 0600	10	55
11 - 1400	22	55
12 - 1500	18	35
13 - 1600	31	68

Next, the files were coded in an open coding format, typical of CGT analysis. This meant that each group of statements was either given a new node or added to an existing node. Originally, the nodes were quite specific (e.g. parents, teachers, siblings). Over time, they were expanded to be wider (e.g. including family of origin or biographical inquiry information). It was observed that, if a break happened between the coding of interviews (more than a few days up to a week), the coding process was inconsistent. To highlight this with an example, in an interview where there was mention of exploring family of origin and the parental dynamic, this was coded to the node Parent in one interview but then coded to the node biographical inquiry in another interview. This inconsistency created considerable tension because the next layer of analysis involved axial coding across nodes to look for patterns. Inconsistent coding therefore threatened the quality of the analysis. As a result, a whole new file was created in NVivo and all interviews (from 1 to 13) were coded in one single stretch of time (12 consecutive days).

The other significant aspect was the node creation itself. In the first round of coding, there were 38 nodes. Later, the nodes were designed to be larger so that sub-nodes could be applied retroactively and deeper analysis undertaken. Ultimately, 14 macro nodes were created. This wave of analysis also included axial coding to look for patterns within each node. Each node was read independently and further sub-nodes were created to develop categorisations. The categorisations then informed the development of key family themes.

The third wave of analysis was taking the family themes and adding back the researcher's reflections, the pre-interview data and what the literature was saying in relation to the family themes, in order to identify the core areas of potential contribution to the knowledge and practice of coaching.

The fourth and final wave occurred during the editorial process and presentation of preliminary insights into the final contributions. The process of ongoing feedback from the advisory group, the measure of materiality and the positioning of these insights within the body of knowledge and literature had significant implications for the final contributions. The shift in thinking from analysis to defining the final contributions included both art and science – the intentional and deliberate analysis of the data, what it suggested and what it was missing was quantifiable science; the art part was the weaving of ideas and the intermingling of what was known and unknown in the sphere of literature, and what was instinctual in terms of what really needed to be said to expand the collective knowledge.

It is also material to note how the maturity of the researcher also evolved. Evolving into the practitioner-scholar permitted more critical engagement with the data, ultimately shifting the conclusions being drawn. At the time, the many methods of analysis and the time gaps between waves felt ineffective but, as time and waves progressed, the linking between the evolving maturity of the researcher and the research outcomes could not be understated.

It was in the final stage of analysis that the convergence and divergence of researcher and practitioner came to life. The ongoing dialogue between supervisor, advisor and informal supporters around what the data suggested was both challenging and confronting. During this process, there were also multiple presentations of the preliminary findings in four majors forums including the global Art & Science of Coaching Program, the Leadership Circle ASEAN Community, The Singapore Psychological Society, and the 4th Annual Coaches Conclave Conference in India.

3.6.4.5 A reflective journey

At every stage of the data collection, data analysis, and the writing and editorial process, the researcher kept detailed reflection notes that were considered part of the overall data collection process.

Chapter 4 – Project Activity and Analysis

This chapter will explore the key elements of project data collection and analysis. Included in the chapter are the following:

4.1 Data analysis of interviewees.

4.2 Data collection via pre-reflection questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and the researcher's reflective notes.

4.3 Data Analysis via Waves 1 to 4.

4.1 Data analysis of interviewees

To begin, here is a general overview of the key statistics as a result of the interviewee process:

- The researcher were contacted or referred 29 people.
- The researcher completed 13 interviews.
- All interviewees completed the online participation information sheet and consent forms via Survey Monkey.
- All interviewees met or exceeded the criteria of 10 years of experience in coaching with ranges between 13 and 25 years.
- All interviewees exceeded the minimum training requirements (6 held doctorate-level education.
- All interviewees had formal training in psychology and/or psychotherapy as well as coaching (all maintained ongoing education as part of their credentialisation processes).
- All interviewees observed some form of supervision.
- All interviewees were bound to a professional code of conduct within their practices (62% [8/13], belonged to either the Institute of Coaching Federation [ICF] or the European Mentoring and Coaching Council and the remaining to psychological societies).

The interviews were completed over the months of February, March and April 2020.

Demographic information of interviewees

The diversity of the interviewee pool was an important aspect of the recruitment process. Being based in Asia, and recognising the complexity of extensive cross-cultural dynamics, it was essential to ensure that the panel was equally versed in working in multicultural environments. Also, as Passmore's (2010) seminal work in this space reflects, subtle ethnocentric bias can lead to inaccurate inferences about a client's motivations and other personal attributes. In a context where the research is aimed at understanding meaning making, it was considered essential to have a diverse group of interviewees who represented a multiplicity of views. Furthermore, diversity of geographic experience served as a proxy for diversity of perspectives.

Key biographical data is summarised below. All interviewees self-reported this data and gave explicit consent to its use for reporting purposes in the research.

Gender of interviewees

Four of the 13 interviewees self-identified as men (31%). While this is not an equally represented view, it certainly reflects the proportionality of men versus women in the field of coaching globally, as researched in the 2016 ICF Global Coaching Study by the ICF and PwC. ICF states that 33% of coach practitioners are men in North America, Europe and Oceania.

Geographic focus of interviewees

All the interviewees self-identified as having cross-geographic experience (either through coaching clients based in other geographies or living in regions other than place or birth). In fact, 11 of the 13 interviewees self-disclosed that they had lived in countries other than their country of birth.

Ethnicity of interviewees

Left as an open field (e.g. no pre-populated drop-down list), 12 of the 13 interviewees self-declared on ethnicity: 30% self-identified as non-Caucasian, encompassing Asian and mixed-race backgrounds.

Areas of practice of interviewees

Again left as an open field, all the interviewees identified with coaching as their primary area of practice, in addition to the following areas 54% as coaching research (7 interviewee), 46% as supervision (6 interviewees) and 31% as therapy (4 interviewees). Please note, some interviewees selected multiple categories.

Areas of training and education of interviewees

There was deep knowledge and experience within this interviewee group. To highlight the major categories, all held at least Master's level education, had continuing education certificates in coaching and had specialised training in psychology, therapy and/or counselling; the areas highlighted were 54% (7 interviewees) were trained coaching supervisors, 46% (6 interviewees) had doctorate-level education and, finally, 31% (4 interviewees) had applied neuroscience training. Please note, some interviewees selected multiple categories.

4.2 Data collection via pre-reflection questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and the researcher's reflective notes.

As explored in Figure 3.4, data was collected in two respective 'buckets' via interviewee informed data and primary researcher based data – two for the former and three for the latter. This section will outline the key activities and analysis that were undertaken on all the data collected.

4.2.1 Interviewee data via pre-reflection questionnaires

As per Appendix 2, the pre-interview reflection questionnaire was given to each interviewee up to 48 hours before their interview. The data from the pre-interview questionnaire was not analysed until after the completion of all semi-structured interviews to avoid significantly influencing or directing the interview, or introducing researcher bias. Nine of the 13 interviewees (69%) completed the pre-reflection questionnaire.

The process undertaken to analyse this data began with the coding of the questionnaire responses. The nodes included biographical inquiry , training and knowledge areas, exploration of the conscious and non-conscious, coach–client dynamics and successful outcomes in coaching. As the transcriptions were re-read in the next wave of analysis with these pre-questionnaire nodes in mind, there came to light an interesting juxtaposition on the evolution of thinking from individual self-reflection to an emergent flow of conversation between two people. Many respondents of the pre-interview questionnaire made reference to this engagement of self-reflection, as shown in the following excerpt from one interview:

> I [want to] thank you for the questionnaire that you sent me yesterday because I became quite reflective around what I actually do, which I think I tend to take for granted a little bit. It started me on this process to flush that out and see the places I go. And then at the same time, and just feeling like having this conversation with you, in this present moment but with all the hints of the past and future here as well, has also been about honoring what that whole process is and thinking my goodness, that is beautiful and so different from where I started yesterday. (Interviewee 3).

It was in this process of comparing the stage of thinking from self-critical (pre-interview questionnaire responses) to emergent (transcripts from interviews), that the final node was created in this section, called 'evolving reflections'. There was consistent findings between all pre-interview questionnaires and the semi-structured interviews around this idea of reflection as essential to the work of evolving one's thinking. This process of being in one's own critical self-reflection via dialogical inquiry with another became a key finding of this research and is further explored in Chapter 5.

A missed opportunity was to waiting until after the interviews to read the pre-reflection surveys. Had this juxtaposition of shifting perspectives been held to observation during the interview itself, and more intentionally, how much deeper the reflections could have been. While it could be argued that the integrity of the semi-structured process was upheld by avoiding any deliberate action on the researcher's part to introduce ideas the interviewees had not directly commented upon themselves within the actual interview, the benefit of constructivist grounded theory (CGT) is that the researcher can reserve that right. The intention was not to use the pre-interview questionnaire as the starting source of discussion in the interview itself but rather to help position the thinking of the interviewee so that the dialogue could be more informed from the start.

4.2.2 Interviewee data via semi-structured interviews

In total, 13 interviews were conducted, transcribed, reviewed multiple times and coded (see Table 4.1 for interviewee dates). There were three critical elements from a project activity perspective that were important. The first was a consistent process for all interviewees; the second, an exhaustive and full account of the coding of the interviews and, finally, the notion of achieving saturation.

Table 4.1 ID numbers and dates

Interviewee Number	Date
Interviewee 1	25 Feb 2020
Interviewee 2	25 Feb 2020
Interviewee 3	27 Feb 2020
Interviewee 4	02 Mar 2020
Interviewee 5	02 Mar 2020

Interviewee 6	05 Mar 2020
Interviewee 7	06 Mar 2020
Interviewee 8	06 Mar 2020
Interviewee 9	09 Mar 2020
Interviewee 10	10 Mar 2020
Interviewee 11	14 Mar 2020
Interviewee 12	21 Apr 2020
Interviewee 13	23 Apr 2020

Consistency of process

Each interview was conducted over the Zoom platform and saved to a secure, password- protected cloud account. In all the interviews, the cameras were turned off to preserve integrity of the internet connection and to show the interviewee that body language interpretation was not going to be part of the analysis process.

All interviews began with a reading of the aims and objectives of the research, with the opening question from the research of 'What comes up for you as you hear these aims and objectives?' From there, the conversation emerged. The average time of all 13 interviews was 1 hour and 38 minutes, the shortest interview being 46 minutes and the longest being 1 hour 47 minutes. In 11 the 13 interviews, the 90-minute marker served as a natural inflection point. It was not necessarily that all topics had been explored, but there was a sense of completion and shifting energy that made it a natural closing point. Each interview was also closed in the same way by the primary researcher, which was 'Reflecting on the conversation we've had over the past xx minutes, what's coming up for you or anything you want to add?'

All interviews were conducted in February to April 2020 and then uploaded to Otter.ai to be transcribed. Each automated transcription from Otter.ai was then compared with the actually recording of the interview. In most cases, Otter.ai was a good and fairly accurate transcription of the interview. Most of the editing was around attributing comments to either the interviewer or interviewee and the technical concepts that were not easily identified in vernacular English. Where it struggled was when interviewees had non-American or non-British accents and minor editing was required. The aim was to do the interview and transcription in the same week but this only happened in 30% of the interviews: the rest were done during different intervals over the next six months.

4.2.3 Data collection via the researcher's reflective notes

The primary research reflections were an important source of data throughout the project, as is consistent with the CGT process. The researcher's reflections occurred at three stages as per Figure 3.4: post-interview, post-transcription and when uploading to NVivo, and post-coding. The evolving nature of reflections as a data source of information in itself was discovered in this stage of the data collection.

The process of engaging in the researcher's reflections was often stated as important in the literature as an instrumental part of the CGT approach –the process of reflexivity served as a kind of signpost as what was going on. Also such a reflexive exercise serves as ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal in locating and positioning findings (Koch and Harrington, 1998).

Initially, the role of reflections was viewed to serve two primary functions. The first was the analytical attention to the researcher's own beliefs, judgments and practices, and how these may influence the research. This was intended as a sort of quality assurance measure to ensure integrity of the semi-structured interview process. The second, as part of the CGT methodology, the reflections served as compounding understanding for the researcher to improve the quality and exploration of each interview. It was linear progression whereby the quality of the questioning, listening and exploration improved from interview to interview. In fact, the second to last interview was only 46 minutes long, yet the depth of exploration was as rich as in the much longer interviews.

However, the function of the reflections took on a much larger role than just a process-oriented activity. They served as a place of integration of thoughts and ideation and, as a result, became data themselves. However, this was not become apparent until after the coding process. The data from the reflections was coded separately from the interview data. Collating and analysing the data from the interview led to distinct family themes (see section 4.3.3). Then, the analysis of the reflections at their various stages took place and the family themes changed. As a metaphor, it was like starting from the bottom of the mountain, interview by interview, with what was said and how it was said leading to certain outcomes. However, starting from the top of the mountain, the primary interview reflections, created a journey that was altered and led to different outcomes, thereby creating this dynamic of the reflections as data in and of itself.

4.3 Data analysis Via Waves 1 - 4

As explored in section 3.6.4.3, the analysis took place in four waves. This section will outline the key project activities within each phase. In wave 1 and 2, the focus of was on gaining clarity and insights through analysis. In wave 3, the focus was to continue to refine the analysis but also include interpretation. Wave 4 was then focused on the refinement of the interpretation.

4.3.1 Wave 1 – ongoing researcher's reflections using constructivist grounded theory and saturation analysis

Researcher's reflections using constructivist grounded theory (CGT). The nature, style and approach to the reflections pre- and post- each interview evolved significantly over time. Initially being very focused on the process and key insights of the interviews, the reflections were not timebound and written in list form. In the first three interviews, it became cumbersome to engage in both the completion process post-interview and the preparatory process before the next interview. By interview four, the process took a different approach. Illustrated in Figure 4.1 below with the actual sample's reflections, the process moved from list-based and untimed, to mind mapping and restricted to under ten minutes.

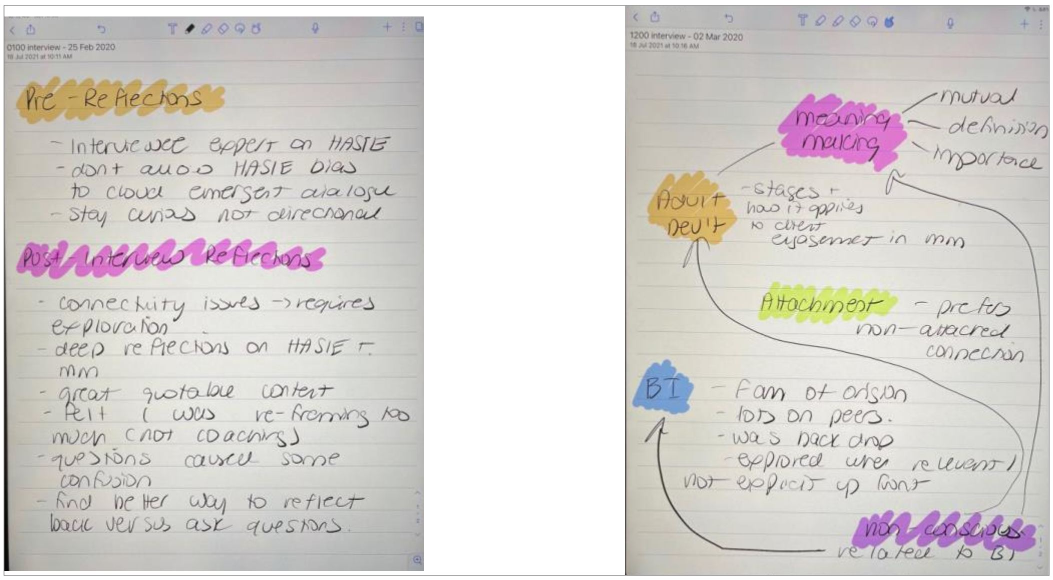


Figure 4.1 Illustration of evolving reflection process using constructivist grounded theory

This timebound mind map helped identify what was known from the previous interview (reviewed five minutes before) but was also kept open in the current interview. It became a useful tool for build knowledge, testing emerging insights and mapping how the data was flowing together.

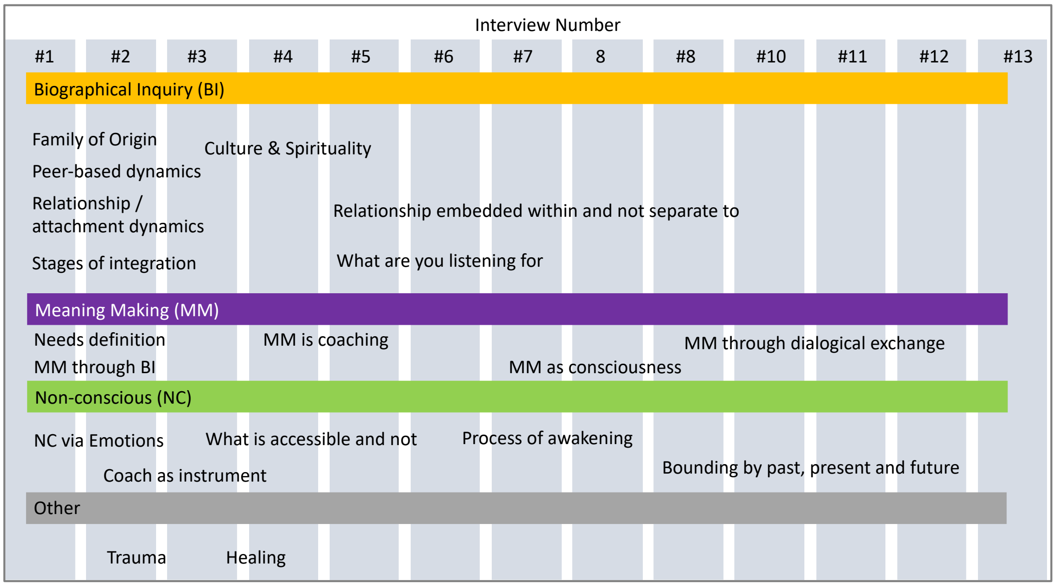
Saturation analysis

A critical aspect of CGT is the concept of saturation. In theory, interviews are to be conducted until the point of saturation is found. In this project, saturation was defined as:

- interviewees making comments on generally the same topics (coded as nodes);
- the net new or radically different perspectives becoming limited;
- a clear framework emerging from the data that encompassed most perspectives.

To explore saturation, the researcher's reflections are what revealed the stage progression of thinking, and the categorisation of what was known and not known. Table 4.2 summarises the illustration of this progression in saturation.

Table 4.2 Illustrative progression of what is known and unknown through reflections



As Table 4.2 illustrates, most elements within biographical inquiry were known, or had reached saturation by interviews six or seven. What was continuing to develop was the notion of what specifically the coach should be listening for. This the perfect relationship between compounding understanding and using reflective practice. As saturation was achieved on the dimensions, what was expanding was the ways in which these dimensions were explored and how to interpret the data emerging (see section 6.2).

The saturation around the link of meaning making to biographical inquiry by interview five, emerged later (again, see section 6.2). This linked meaning making to the larger context of coaching, consciousness non-conscious and even the exploration of it within the boundaries of dialogical inquiry,

Finally, the area of the non-conscious was also emerging not only part of the biographical inquiry and meaning-making process but also as the intersection of the time dimension of the past, present and future (see section 6.3).

Overall conclusions on saturation

Coming back to the aim of this project, a theoretical model for conscious and non-conscious meaning making seemed to have clearly emerged by using biographical inquiry. There was consistency around the dimensions and specific areas of exploration within them. However, there were much larger conceptual ideas, such as the definition of meaning making, its true role in the work of coaching, and other aspects of the non-conscious, that required much more analysis.

The next wave of analysis was treated as mutually exclusive to this wave. The intention was not to build upon the emerging insights but rather to look at the data from a completely fresh perspective. It was considered critical to allow the data to speak for itself, unencumbered by the researcher's earlier perspectives. Therefore, in Wave 3, all these insights and additional considerations were included.

4.3.2 Wave 2 – analysis of interviews and key themes

Coding of interviews

All the transcripts were uploaded to NVivo. Initially, the software was not intuitive in its application and significant training via online tutorials was required. Adding to the challenge, consistency in the actual coding of interviews varied. There were times when something could be related to biographical inquiry, times when it was related to the non-conscious and times when it could be coded as a new node. As referenced in section 3.6.4.3, the first stage of analysis resulted in 38 unique codes, whereas the intensive 12-day coding marathon resulted in 14. Figure 4.2 illustrates this shift.

	Node - WAVE (1)	Definition
1	**Adult Development**	Any data related to adult development theory, constructivist developmental theory, ego development, stages, etc
2	**Applied Neuroscience**	Any data related to neuroscience including brain, emotions and HASIE
3	**Assessments**	Any data related to the use of assessments in coaching
4	**Attachment**	Any data related to the creation, formation and development of relationships
5	**Authority / Hierarchy**	Any data related to power structures, parents, bosses, teachers, coaches, family or origin, etc
6	**Biographical Data**	Any data related to the exploration of biographical data with clients
7	**Body as source data**	Any data related to the use of the body to uncover what is really going on at a non-conscious level
8	**Coach - Client Relationship**	Any data related to the coach - client dynamic and relationship[
9	**Coach as instrument**	Any data related to the use of the coach as an instrument of discovery with the client - can be somatic or otherwise
10	**Coach Training**	Any data related to the training of coaches
11	**Coaching Profession**	Any data related to the coaching professional as a whole
12	**Coaching vs Therapy**	Any data related to the discuss of coaching versus therapy / counselling
13	**COVID**	Any data related to COVID
14	**Culture**	Any data related to culture, socioeconomic information, geographic ethnicity, etc
15	**Emotions**	Any data related to the use and exploration of emotions
16	**Ethics**	Any data related to ethics in coaching
17	**Gender roles**	Any data related to gender identity
18	**HAISE**	Any data related to the items within HAISE
19	**Identity**	Any data related to identity / self
20	**Knowledge areas**	Any data related to knowledge areas / bodies of knowledge / approaches / methodologies
21	**Meaning Making**	Any data related to meaning making / sense making
22	**Narration / Storytelling**	Any data related to narration or storytelling
23	**Non-conscious**	Any data related to the non-conscious
24	**Outside HASIE**	Any data related to areas outside the context of HASIE
25	**Perspectives on Methodology**	Any data related to reflections of methodology used here or in other research
26	**Process in coaching**	Any data related to reflections on processes used in coaching
27	**Psychodynamics**	Any data related to psychodynamics, psychotherapy
28	**Psychology**	Any data related to psychology
29	**Reflections on interviews**	Any data related to reflecting on the interview process in this research
30	**Reflections on research process**	Any data related to reflections on the research process used in this research
31	**Shadow work**	Any data related to shadow work
32	**Sibling / Peers**	Any data related to siblings / peers
33	**Success factors for coaching**	Any data related to success factors in coaching
34	**Supervision**	Any data related to supervisions for coaches
35	**Therapy and Counselling**	Any data related to therapy / counselling
36	**Trauma / healing**	Any data related to trauma / healing

Node - WAVE (2)	Node inclusions
Biographical Inquiry	6, 22, 18
Coach - Client Relationships	8
Coaching Profession	10, 11
Context	14, 17, 24
COVID	13
Developmental Stages	1, 3, 9, 10
Emotions	15
Ethics	16, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36
Hierarchy	5
Identity	19
Knowledge areas	1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 20, 21, 2225, 27, 28, 31,35, 36
Meaning Making	1, 21
Non-Conscious	2, 7, 9, 15, 23, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36
Peers/Siblings	32
Relationships	4, 8
The use of reflective practise	8, 9, 22, 25, 26, 29, 33

Figure 4.2 Shifting coding table from wave 1 to wave 2 analysis

This condensing process was valuable. While each node had significantly larger data within it, the analysis allowed for the unravelling of concepts more effectively. As experienced from the saturation analysis in Wave 1, looking node by node (in other words, interview by interview), there was something lost by not applying a wider perspective. The condensing of nodes was an attempt to keep more meta awareness in the analysis.

The researcher used various analysis options available in NVivo, as well as the traditional approach of simply printing each node and its related content, and placing them in categories. Based on frequency of node analysis, the non-conscious, meaning making, and biographical inquiry were explored in all interviews. In order to examine these meta-nodes one layer deeper, the number of references was considered, the rationale being that, while the topic may have been explored, its depth and relative importance would be reflected in the number of references made within each node. This would also help to distinguish the researcher-led insights versus the organically revealed insights of the interviewee.

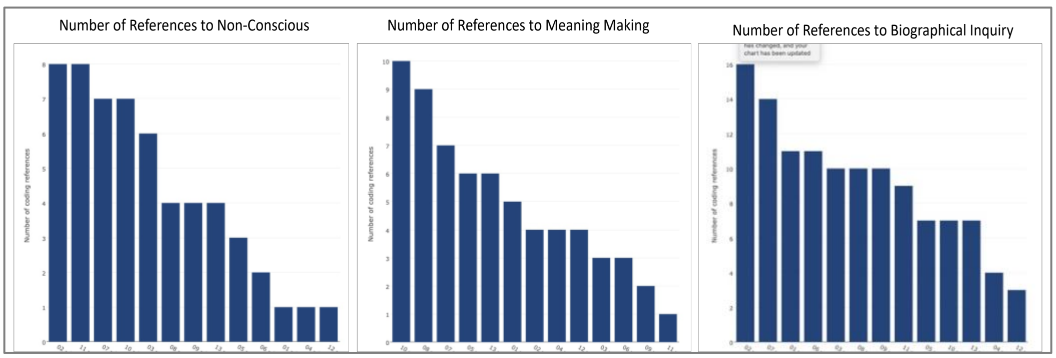


Figure 4.3 Frequency of references in top codes by interviewee

For the non-conscious, the average number of references (e.g. every time that topic was discussed for insight and exploration within the interview) was 4.3. For meaning making, it was 4.9 and for biographical inquiry it was 9.2. This suggested that, in every interview, there was on average at least four to nine distinct discussions related to the node topic. By inference, when there was only one reference made to the topic, the potential consideration was that the primary interviewer asked specifically about the concept: it was not an organic emergence in the flow of conversation.

When examining the non-conscious node, there were three interviews that were coded by this node only once. A return to the transcripts of those three interviews revealed that some aspects considered the non-conscious were actually coded within biographical inquiry through the node of emotions. Two inferences were drawn. First, it was not researcher-led bias but in fact a valid area of importance to the interviewee. Second, there was duality of function and insight that could not be clearly delineated between nodes. For example, non-conscious was part of the biographical inquiry process but there were elements of it that sat beyond the biographical inquiry node. This same analysis was applied to meaning making. In a similar dynamic, meaning-making elements were coded within biographical inquiry and independently. The inference, again, was that elements of meaning making were related to biographical inquiry but there was also other insights that were sitting outside the biographical inquiry realm.

The next analysis tool explored in NVivo was flow of conversation: examining the coding stripes of each interview file to see whether any patterns emerged. In 54% (7/13) interviews, the first place of exploration was meaning making, followed equally by either the non-conscious or biographical inquiry (see Table 4.3). The second topic of exploration was equal between biographical inquiry and the non-conscious, both at 46%. The inference was that the anchoring topic was meaning making for most interviewees. The discussion then led into the exploration of either the non-conscious or biographical inquiry as source data. It is important to note that the pre-interview questionnaire explored each topic equally, so that there was little possibility of influencing the outcome.

Table 4.3 Flow of conversation on meaning making, biographical inquiry and the non-conscious

Interview 1	MM, BI, Non	Interview 8	BI, MM, Non
Interview 2	Non, BI, MM	Interview 9	Non, BI, MM
Interview 3	Non, BI, MM	Interview 10	MM, BI, Non
Interview 4	MM, Non, BI	Interview 11	BI, Non, MM
Interview 5	MM, Non, BI	Interview 12	MM, BI, Non
Interview 6	MM., Non, BI	Interview 13	Bio, Non, MM
Interview 7	MM, Non, BI		

MM = Meaning Making
BI = Biographical Inquiry
Non = Non-Conscious

Other tools, such as word frequency through NVivo, were applied, but none netted any materially important or different results.

Axial coding and grouping by thematic patterns in the nodes

It was established that the non-conscious, meaning making and biographical inquiry were the most significant referenced nodes and therefore the first three family themes to emerge. This was evident in the remedial process of printing and grouping the transcripts into categories. A deeper exploration of the remaining 11 nodes and axial analysis were undertaken. This took the form of mind mapping. Each individual node was read (and printed) independently to consider the ideas, topics and themes that emerged within them. Explicit quotes from the interviews were mapped into categories. What emerged eventually were seven macro themes. To note, the nodes COVID (two references) and Quotes for Write-Up were removed from the original node classification process due to the limited significance of their references and applicability. Particularly around COVID, the interviews happened during the peak of the crisis from February to April 2020. When examining any discussions around COVID (which were very limited), none had any materiality to the findings. Also, as all interviews were originally designed in a virtual format, additional data collection considerations were not required.

Each theme was designed to be collectively exhaustive of all the nodes and data collected in the interviews but not mutually exclusive. There were many overlapping elements between themes and, therefore, additional analysis was required. Below is an overview of the core themes that emerged through this axial coding process:

- Theme 1 – Meaning making.
- Theme 2 – Non-conscious.
- Theme 3 – Biographical inquiry.
- Theme 4 – Coach–client relationship.
- Theme 5 – Reflective process.
- Theme 6 – Coaching profession.
- Theme 7 – Psychology.

As suggested, the themes represented a full and collectively exhaustive representation of the data. However, it was necessary to determine the materiality of the insights. The next point of analysis within this wave was therefore a deeper review of each theme highlighted.

Theme 1 – Meaning making

There were 13 files (interviews) associated with this theme and 72 unique references. The scope of the topics explored under this node included the exploration of definition, interpretation, its importance and relevance to the work of coaching and behaviour change, and the various access points with the client including biographical inquiry and/or narration, storytelling and adult development theory. The key findings from this analysis were the following:

- All interviewees agreed on the materiality of meaning making as essential work in coaching (e.g. the exploration of why clients do what they do).
- There was a lack of clarity on the clear definition of meaning making and how it is positioned in the field of coaching.

- The access point for meaning making in coaching comes from biographical inquiry (all the interviewees used this approach) and includes some additional approaches.
- Meaning making appears to have a multidimensionality time dimension existing in the past, present and future.
- There is an experiential and or/evolving dynamic to meaning making through conversation and dialogue that makes it a multi-looped process that is constantly changing and shifting.

Theme 2 – Non-conscious

The applied neuroscience node was included because all exploration coded under that node was related to the non-conscious. Also included were areas such as emotions as an access point, coach as an instrument, and other somatic-driven processes. For all interviewees, recognition of working with the non-conscious was seen as valuable to any coaching. Also, in all the interviews, the largest access point of the non-conscious was bibliographical inquiry (291 references) followed closely by emotions (237 references).

Exploring emotions a little deeper, they were often identified as the 'gatekeeper' to what may be happening non-consciously in the client. The most frequently explored were the following:

- Happy/happiness/joy (84% of interviewees).
- Love (62%).
- Curiosity (54%).
- Fear (39%).
- Sad/sadness/depression (39%).
- Anger/madness/fury/temper (31%).
- Shame/guilt/disgust (23%).

It was interesting to note that the exploration of emotions was often linked to biographical inquiry via the emotional mechanism associated with memories and experiences in childhood. This is from where the idea of the multidimensional timelines emerged. The idea that the past was informing a processing in the present and creating a projection onto the future was intriguing and shared by six different interviewees in varying forms.

While not as explicit as it was in the meaning-making node, definition also seemed to play an unintended role in this node. What was consciousness and 'other' was inferred in varying ways among all the interviews. Expanding on this idea, the notion of consciousness as an experience, rather than an outcome, emerged in nine interviews. Related to the notion of experience versus outcome was the use of somatic approaches to explore what was really going on, and the awareness of the mind and body connection for both the coach and client was seen in seven interviews.

Theme 3 – Biographical inquiry

Under this theme, the major dimensions explored included areas of identity, authority, family of origin, attachment/relationship and peers/siblings. A node classified as context included culture, gender roles and religion. As referenced earlier, emotion was also added under this theme because much of the work with emotions was related to experiences and/or narratives of the past, although there was a clear overlap with the non-conscious theme. Table 4.4 outlines a deeper exploration of each node.

Table 4.4 Dimensions of biographical inquiry explored

Dimension	Specific terms and references	Percentage of interviewees
Identity	Interchangeable terms of self (148 references) or identity (55 references)	100% (13/13)
Hierarchy/ authority	Family or origin (including family, families – 180 times) Extended family (including uncles, aunts – 111 times) Parents (including parent, parented, parenting, grandparents – 104 times)/Authority (25 times) Caregiver (including primary – 17 times) Boss/es (20 times) Previous generation (including ancestors – 15 times) Teacher (9 times)	100% (13/13)
Emotions	See non-conscious – 237 references	100% (13/13)
Attachment/relationship-dynamics	Embedded within each dimension was the exploration of how clients formed and sustained relationships, managed relationship-based dynamics, etc.	100% (13/13)
Context-related	Cross-cultural considerations (97 references) Family-of-origin-related culture (89 references) Spirituality (29 references) Socioeconomic considerations (17 references) Race, ethnicity and religious affiliations (15 references) Gender (9 references)	85% (11/13)
Sibling/peer dynamics	Siblings (35 references)/cousins (11 references) Peers (34 references)/friends/mates (30 references)/colleagues (10 references)/classmates (7 references) Note – five explicitly named this as a place of intentional inquiry, often related to birth order, and two were specially asked	54% (7/13)

Elements of the adult development node were explored in 6 of the 13 interviews related to biographical inquiry. It was the application of stages to the way narratives and experiences from the past were explored that was a compelling insight: the idea of 'what are you listening for?' in the biographical inquiry process (see section 5.4).

Theme 4 – Coach–client relationship

This node emerged as a catchall of discussions related to the relationship dynamics between coach and client. Most significant was the idea of parallel processing between coach and client (54% of interviewees and 9 references) and the dialogical dynamics of emerging insights (54% of interviewees and 12 references). The materiality of this node most strongly related to the idea of meaning making and will likely be merged together in subsequent analysis.

Theme 5 – Reflective process

In every interview, there was an acknowledgement of the process and opportunity that the interview provided to have a space for reflective processing, and how the coach was engaging with their own sense of why they do what they do. This node suggested a significant implication around expanding the view of reflective space through dialogical inquiry in coaching, which will be explored further when discussing the next wave of analysis.

Theme 6 – Coaching profession

This node included ethics, supervision, training, use of assessments, methodology, formulation in coaching, accountability and success factors. Interestingly, it was not an intentional place of inquiry within the interviews, yet a large number of interviewees invariably touched upon this topic due to ethics and the practice of coaching. Table 4.5 illustrates the topics covered.

Table 4.5 Topics explored under the node of coaching profession

Dimensions explored	Percentage of interviewees who made reference to node
Nature of coaching	100% (13/13)
Coach–client relationship	92% (12/13)
Coaching profession	77% (10/13)
Accountability to sponsor	54% (7/13)
Coach training	54% (7/13)
Success factors	38% (5/13)
Supervision	38% (5/13)
Ethics	23% (3/13)
Assessments	15% (2/13)

Most of the dimensions in this theme were not considered to have material impact on their own. Yet, several inferences within this node could be applied to the larger themes of biographical inquiry, meaning making and the non-conscious, the exception being the notion of the definition or nature of coaching. There were significant implications from the type of response the interviewee gave, which stemmed from an underlying assumption of what the work of coaching was. In all the references to the nature of coaching, the same data was coded in relation to another node. There was a materiality to this concept that required much deeper exploration in the subsequent analysis wave.

Theme 7 – Psychology

This final theme was generally classified as psychology but included trauma, healing, psychodynamics and knowledge areas. Table 4.6 outlines the key topics explored.

Table 4.6 Topics explored under the node of psychology

Dimensions	Number of interviewees who made reference to node
Knowledge/theory	12 (92%)
Coaching versus therapy (including shadow work)	8 (62%)
Psychology	8 (62%)
Trauma and healing	5 (38%)

Exploring this node, the data suggests that all the data from this node could be weaved into one of the three macro topics of biographical inquiry, meaning making or non-conscious.

4.3.3 Wave 3 – reformulation of themes

In Wave 1, an interview-by-interview analysis suggested that the meaning making was discoverable by biographical inquiry; that the non-conscious was a vast topic often related to issues in the past, emotions, and other psychology-based practices; and, finally, that reflective practice seemed to have a significant implication on the formation of meaning making.

In Wave 2, through the detailed analysis of transcripts, an expansion of these core findings emerged. The same inferences around meaning making and the link to biographical inquiry were made, but more significant nuances around the non-conscious emerged. The other aspect that emerged was around the practice and nature of the coaching profession and how those linked to these findings. It can be said that Wave 1 was a staged approach to analysis: as the researcher's knowledge grew (and the stages evolved), so too did the insights. Wave 2 was a bottom-up approach whereby the insights were aggregated over the whole data set. Wave 3 presented the opportunity to do a top-down approach: starting with the key themes from Wave 2 and further refining them based on the inclusion of other analyses. This next wave of analysis will include the integration of additional researcher's reflections, pre-interview data and the reformulation of themes. From there, the literature will be further explored to better ascertain the materiality of the findings. This wave of analysis also represents that stage in which interpretation begins.

Redefining themes

The analysis in Wave 2 suggested significant overlaps in the seven family themes. By 're-re-examining' the insights from the researcher's reflections and pre-interview questionnaire data, and creating mutually exclusive classifications, the following themes emerged:

- Theme 1 – Defining meaning making through dialogical inquiry and biographical inquiry.
- Theme 2 – A framework for meaning making through biographical inquiry and an interpretation model.
- Theme 3 – The exploration of the non-conscious as a multi-time dimension-based intersection of the past, present and future.

On defining these three new themes, each of the seven earlier themes and the relevant nodes and insights were mapped to them. The result was an equally exhaustive but more mutually exclusive categorisation of insights. However, essential to the formulation of the final findings was a review of the relevant literature. The integration of the literature will be further explored in Chapter 5.

4.3.4 Wave 4 – writing, editing, and presenting of insights for final formulation of insights

Iterative nature of the emerging insights

It cannot be overstated that the more times one looks at, reflects on and identifies key conclusions, the more likely those conclusions will evolve and deeper layers emerge. It is one of the outcomes of this research that, through dialogical inquiry (and, by extension, written work), the nature of knowing changes. This has been found in this project: each revision of a chapter, and each editing cycle has revealed something deeper or refined something existing. Much of this process has been captured through multiple phases of analysis, but equally important are the phases of writing and editing, discussed below.

The first phase of the writing revealed the complexity of the research project. There was so much data, continuously overlapping areas of insight and a lack of clarity on what was material. This phase of writing was focused on a presentation of the whole: documenting everything possible to ensure that the fullest picture of the data would be available. As the editorial stage began, the requirement for clarity in message and justifying materiality was critical. Just as the multiple phases of analysis drew different conclusions, the choices the researcher mad around what could be said and how it could be proven, positioned in the research and added to the growing body of knowledge were constantly evolving.

Through the various stages of writing and editing, what were also evolving were the confidence and the voice of the practitioner-scholar. As the data became more familiar and known, and as the practices and literature became more researched and understood, so too did the confidence in the conclusions being drawn. To illustrate this point was the inclusion of the nature of coaching to the discussion of the findings. In Wave 3, coaching was explored as defining meaning making through biographical inquiry. However, that theme felt incomplete and kept pointing back to how the field of coaching psychology defined certain aspects of work related to this research. To suggest that this research could possibly redefine a field of practice seemed too bold, yet also a possibility.

However, the more time spent on the research, and the more time the literature was explored, it was this very bold insight that held the scaffolding for the other insights. How can models be created for areas that have not been linked to the nature of the work being done in coaching? In fact, this was the very essence of the challenge of literature in coaching. The practice was growing faster than the profession could match, and therefore it considered essential to contribute to the definitions and nature of coaching as much as it was to present new frameworks for exploration with clients.

Materiality of findings

Another important part of the refinement of insights was through the presentations of outcomes and the writing of articles for the various coaching and coaching psychology journals. While working with my immediate advisory team and informal extended team of supporters, to test these ideas with practitioners in the field was a type of feedback and insight in and of itself. It also suggested the necessity of clearly defined frameworks to hold the complexity of insights in more accessible language and visual summaries.

In addition, multiple presentations had been made during the various phases of analysis, and these played a parallel process in the defining of the insights (Hasanie, 2019; 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e). In all cases, the audience of these conferences included coaching/coaching psychology practitioners and in-house corporate leadership professionals. Feedback was consistent that the areas being explored were important, and that more public exploration of the nature of coaching, the role of the non-conscious and the multidimensionality of the past, present and future were relevant. Above all else, however, was the appreciation of the model for biographical inquiry, which evolved over stages and will be further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

As a result of Wave 4, the major themes evolved slightly to become the following:

- Expanding the nature of coaching within a third-generation perspective.
- The use of biographical inquiry in coaching.
- Using the intersection of the past, present and future to explore the non-conscious in coaching.

These themes will all be explored in much more detail, along with the inclusion of the literature in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 – Project Findings and Discussion

As explored in Chapter 4, there were four waves of analysis that lead to this distillation of the research into three core findings. In this chapter, the researcher will explore those key findings from this research and discuss how the literature relates to each one:

5.1 Expanding the nature of coaching within a third-generation perspective.

5.2 Using biographical inquiry in coaching.

5.3 Using the intersection of the past, present and future to explore the non-conscious in coaching.

5.1 Expanding the nature of coaching within the third-generation perspective

As explored in Chapter 4, the various waves of analysis suggested that the nature of meaning making, biographical inquiry and the non-conscious was expanding the application of these dimensions within coaching. However, to form an approach in practice, without updating the very nature of the field itself, is part of the dilemma facing coaching today. The research in the field of coaching and coaching psychology has not merged with the speed and pace of the practice (Fillery-Travis and Corrie, 2019).

It was imperative to begin discussing the project findings with a renewed perspective on the very nature of coaching, as a result of the insights gained from this research. Aiming to create a new theoretical model for conscious and non-conscious meaning making was shifting the nature of the work done in coaching via the access points for meaning making and the ways in which non-consciousness is explored in coaching. Therefore, part of this research will expand the collective understanding of these dimensions and how this contributes to the growing nature of coaching.

As reflected in Chapter 2 (section 2.1), orientating this research is a significant part of defining its findings. First, this research is within the sphere of executive coaching, primarily based on the nature of the contract (Lai and Passmore, 2019). Second, all interviewees were chosen for their executive coaching experience within organisational environments. Finally, the researcher herself is an executive coach. Given coaching's multidisciplinary orientation (Cunningham, 2017), this research's interdisciplinary approach requires the a perspective on its alignment to the various fields of coaching, coaching psychology, applied neuroscience and psychology.

There are currently four compelling approaches to the delineation of the research:

1. A categorisation approach (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011).

2. A paradigm approach (Ives, 2008).
3. An effectiveness approach (Theeboom et al., 2014).
4. A generational approach (Stelter, 2014; Grant 2016).

Examining these four perspectives suggested that it would be useful to align the findings of this research to the nature of coaching category (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011) by linking it to coaching psychology. Also, the focus of third-generation coaching on meaning making (Stelter 2014) and higher-quality conversations (Grant 2016) is established in the field of coaching psychology.

Yet, even within the field of coaching psychology, there are varying definitions of what coaching is and how various approaches are evolving (Whybrow and Palmer, 2019). This diversity of definition creates space and opportunity for expansive exploration on the nature of coaching, and this research aims to continue to build on this ongoing dialogue.

This section will outline two key themes that have emerged from the data as it relates to the expansion of the nature of third-generation coaching:

- Expanding the view of coaching as a collaborative process of dialogical inquiry and reflective practice.
- Expanding the access points of meaning making in coaching.

5.1.1 Expanding the view of coaching as a collaborative process of dialogical inquiry and reflective process

> As a coach, you're totally focused on the coachee's situation, but you're not just inquiring into it. As a coach you have a broader, deeper, wider perspective in play and, therefore, both your inquiry but also your personally shared insight into the situation is the work of powerful coaching. (Interviewee 5)

The research yielded extensive data on the concept of coaching being a collaborative process between coach and client. Be it coach as insight generator (85%, 11/3), coach as catalyst (62%, 8/13), coach as reflective partner (54%, 7/13), or coach as explicit accelerator of the change process (69%, 9/13), all the interviewees named this collaborative process as an essential part of coaching. Terms such as 'catching the flow', 'being a participant', 'acting as catalyst', 'hearing potential', 'sensing before client', 'obligation to name', 'really seeing', 'reflective partner' are all concepts shared by the interviewees of what it means to be part of the collaborative process.

In the literature

This perspective of coach as collaborator is not new in the literature, although not significantly well researched. Grant (2016) suggests that coaching is not just focused on performance but also well-being through higher-quality conversations. However, a model or framework for these higher-quality conversations is missing from his research. Stelter (2014), on the other hand, takes the view that coaching is entirely a narrative collaborative approach related to four dimensions:

1. Coaching as a reflective space.
2. Coaching and meaning making.
3. Coaching as a post-modern space of learning and development.
4. Coaching in promoting dialogical and reflective leadership.

Yet, even within these dimensions, there are no frameworks around either the process of reflective space or the actual process of identifying meaning making.

Related, but not directly, is the perspective of the relationship between coach and client as highly correlated to coaching outcomes. Several studies have looked at the coaching relationship and outcomes, working alliance ratings and outcomes, and the relationship as a predictor of outcomes (O'Broin and Palmer, 2019). Yet, little of this research suggests an actual role or framework for how this relationship can be enhanced or structured.

Another aspect is the role of coaching as a reflective process. The literature divides research on reflective practice into three main areas: first, the reflective process for the coachee, which includes several studies on process, frameworks and control groups for coaching effectiveness and reflective practice (Côté and Gilbert, 2009; Gilbert and Côté, 2013). Second, the reflective process of the coach, which, like the first area, includes extensive evidence-based research (Gilbert and Trudel, 2001; Nelson and Cushion, 2006; Trudel and Gilbert, 2006; Cassidy et al., 2009). The third area considers the relationship dynamic between knowledge and power and the coaching relationship (Hébert, 2015). It is here, in this third perspective, that reflection can be used as an anchoring element to the dialogical process between coach and client, but minimal research exists. A critical analysis of the complexity of coaching as a series of reflective practices coming together to create unintended consequences has yet to be undertaken (Cushion, 2015). Also, before a coach can engage in reflection, they must first understand how their subjective experience and knowledge have been shaped by historical circumstances (Cushion, 2015). What seems to be missing from the research is a defined process or framework to explore these historical circumstances.

The research data from this study suggests there are two streams to this concept of coaching as a collaborative process: (1) through reflective meta-practice, and (2) through dialogical inquiry.

Reflective meta-practice

Within the category of reflective meta-practice, all interviewees used some form of reflective practice – 85% (11/13) used it for self-reflection while 62% (8/13) used it within the coaching work itself. The latter often includes an intellectual, emotional and/or somatic response to the client in order to elicit some insights. These responses were described in several ways including the following:

- ‘I find myself moving between a cognitive exploration to an intuition-based one.’ (Interviewee 5)
- ‘I use my fear and bravery in equal measure to push the conversation into deeper places.’ (Interviewee 6)
- ‘I am connected and vulnerable.’ (Interviewee 7)
- ‘When I see my own story coming out, I name it and hold it as observation for the coachee.’ (Interviewee 2)
- ‘It’s when I get emotional that magic really begins.’ (Interviewee 9)
- ‘When I feel my body reacting to the discussion, I use it as data for us both to explore deeper.’ (Interviewee 4)

This reflective meta-process was richly described by one interviewee as follows:

> I have always self-identified as an intuitive coach, but that left me wanting in terms of coherent practice. Through years of reflective practice, I see how my own journeying through different psychotherapeutic models as both patient and clinician, my own dysfunctional early life experiences from family of origin, my work as a consultant and coach and trainer – it all contributed to the messy palette of colour that informs my intuition. I used to hold that outside of my work with client[s], but now I bring it into the room, into the conversation as part of my coherent practice. (Interviewee 9)

Dialogical inquiry

The other aspects of this collaborative process are the flow and engagement within the conversation itself, herein called the ‘dialogical process’. This is more challenging to quantify because the terms used to describe the experience of it vary significantly from interviewee to interviewee. However, 54% of the interviewees (7/13) referred to some aspect of the process of being in conversation as being essential to the work. This quote helps to contextualise this:

> What I have discovered over time is that magical coaching experiences can't easily be replicated. There was something about where that client was in their journey, where I was in my own journey, and how we engaged in conversation for that period of time, that made the experience what it was. (Interviewee 4)

In examining the transcripts of these seven interviews, there were five core areas of exploration within this frame of dialogical inquiry – namely, what was happening in the:

1. client;
2. intent of the coaching and/or goals;
3. coaching relationship;
4. coach; and
5. coaching system.

These are best described in the following quotes:

> There is this interconnectedness of us with client and client with us, us with system, system with them and so on. I mean, I think you can make your head spin if you really wanted to think about all the different ways that we influence them and they influence us. (Interviewee 4)

> There's this almost a bubble that is created, a greater sense of trust between me and the client, where I can raise these more challenging issues because they feel safe, but I also feel safe to go there. It's in this bubble to the conversation that it becomes hard to tell who is coaching anymore. (Interviewee 2)

Then, in the second to last interview, this interviewee framed the whole process of dialogical inquiry so well:

> It's a cycle where you get alongside people and supporting them to go where they wish to go. So we co-create the helping environment to work with them. Now, that doesn't mean this is without challenge for the coach. It's true what Bill Tolbert has been speaking about for many years in action inquiry, you know, reaching out to test oneself, to inquire into and within, to test the environment, test the client, test the relationship and to bring that back to the self again, I mean, it's an ongoing loop. (Interviewee 12)

This concept of dialogical inquiry had begun to take shape as early as the second interview. In the researcher's reflections, this quote was noted:

> We're living in a space of paradoxical, you know, sense making. And that paradox is alive in us, every time we coach. What is mine, yours and ours. And is there a difference? And isn't even more special when we share that paradox with others? (Interviewee 2)

This quote was used as a reflection for why coaching supervision is so essential to the work of coaching and reflective practice. It was also noted that coaching supervision had many models, such as the Seven-Eyed Model of Supervision (Hawkins and Smith, 2007; Hawkins and Schwenk, 2011; Hawkins and Shohet, 2012) and the Full Spectrum Model (Murdoch and Arnold, 2013) that explore the multiple layers of the supervision dynamics between coach, client, supervisor and system. While these models are effective in a supervision context, what about a model that is helpful between coach and client that does not require supervision? While the field of coaching supervision does explore the use of reflective practice and dialogical process, it has been excluded from this research because of the very nature of its application. Coaching supervision and its related research requires extensive training to become a supervisor. This research is not interested in the supervisory development of coaches but rather the use of some of its tools in the actual coaching relationship.

5.1.2 Expanding the access points of meaning making in coaching

> In coaching we actually need to share a common starting point so that our frames of reference are clear. This research is an opportunity for the beginnings of a worldwide understanding of what the starting point could be as it relates to meaning making. (Interviewee 1)

As coaching psychology continues to mature, so too does the prominence of the use of psychological knowledge that explores the behaviour, cognition and emotions of the client (Passmore and Fillery-Travis, 2011). As part of this growing field is the view of third-generation coaching, which, as described by Grant (2016), emphasises being personally meaningful and self-congruent. Stelter (2014) adds that third-generation coaching should have a stronger emphasis on values and meaning-making work through a narrative process. This leads to the exploration of what exactly is meaning making and how it can be explored in coaching.

As explored in Chapter 2, meaning making in coaching psychology is most often explored through narration. Vogel (2012) suggests that, through the narrative perspective, a client raises awareness of the stories that shape their perception of reality and help them achieve a more nuanced understanding of their situation. There is also significant work in the area of constructive-developmental psychology, with researchers such as Loevinger (1979), Kegan (1980, 1982, 1994), and contemporaries like Cooke-Greuter (1985, 2004), Torbert (1991, 2005, 2020), Berger (2006, 2012), and Bachkirova (2007, 2011, 2014, 2016, 2019) who explore meaning making through a stage perspective of discovery and solving problems.

It is in this bifurcation between narrative practice, which considers lifespan experiences, and the constructive-developmental psychology movement away from traditional lifespan exploration into staged problem solving, that a gap in the research exists. Stories (or narrative practice) act as a window into the truth (McAdams, 1997) and Drake (2007) suggests that it is through narration that a client makes meaning from events and that narration is also the source of new meaning-making possibilities.

The expansion of meaning making in coaching

> We need to stop looking at meaning making as theoretical framework in the sense of Freud's theoretical framework or Jung, or Gestalt or anybody else. It's what we do in coaching the whole time, which is make meaning in everything we do, think and feel in life. (Interviewee 1)

In all the interviews, or 64 unique references, the exploration of meaning making, also known as 'sense making', was essential to the work of coaching. Furthermore, 62% of interviewees (8/13) were of the view that meaning making was ultimately the main purpose of coaching: 'Meaning making is essentially how clients are making sense of the worlds they're in or the dilemmas they're facing, which is ultimately the work of coaching' (Interviewee 10). Further building on this, 'For me, [meaning making] is the same as sense making, but no matter what we call it, it's the ultimate work of coaching' (Interviewee 2). Another example is 'When I think of meaning making, the thing that comes into my mind is simply what is really happening here, which is what we are constantly exploring in our coaching conversations' (Interviewee 3).

Building on the view of third-generation coaching is that coaching is a meaning-making process. With such strong evidence in the data that coaching is the work of meaning making, it seems that the implications for the nature of coaching are twofold. First, there should be more focus on meaning making in the definition of coaching and within the bodies of research related to coaching. Second, if meaning making is a sense-making exercise of all the events in one's life, a more deliberate exploration of life events should be considered as part of coaching. The question then becomes what is the source of meaning making and how can it be uncovered in coaching in a way that is different from the existing paradigms of narration or constructive-developmental approaches? The perspective shared by one interviewee beautifully captures the difference between narrative practice and a deliberate exploration of lifespan:

> Narrative is the vehicle that holds the [meaning] making. But we need to look at it a bit like doing core ice samples. Within the core sample, you can see the history of the earth. This is a bit like storytelling, through the little stories we hold about our lives, you get information from different layers of a core, but you need to test those layers through some form of deliberate lifespan exploration. (Interviewee 10)

Accessing meaning making from our biographical histories

The expansion of the access points of meaning making is the next area of consideration. In coaching psychology, meaning making is accessed through narration, although there is no clear delineation on which areas of a person's life story should be explored. While personal event memory, the organisation of specific memories across the lifespan and momentous events are all dimensions of the narrative process (Pillemer, 2001), the examination is often the evolution of the stories, in particular how the character evolves, rather than what the content of the stories infers about the client. In contrast, in coaching psychology, particularly the cognitive-developmental or constructive-developmental approaches, meaning is derived from the maturity of the ego or stage and the varying ability to accept oneself as the object rather than the subject of life events. Again, the life events per se are not the point of inquiry so little to no consideration is given to explicitly exploring them.

Yet, in the research data, all the interviewees explored some aspect of the client's biographical history. There were 242 distinct references made during the interviews to biographical exploration with clients. On average, each interviewee made reference to biographical inquiry (see section 4.3.2) at distinct moments throughout each interview. The coverage of this topic relative to the full coding of the overall interview ranged from as low as 11% of the interview to as high as 31% of the interview, with an average of 20%.

The following quote illustrates the importance of explicitly exploring life events in the coaching process in order to access meaning making:

> I'm sure somebody somewhere said we are our histories. And the world opens up. And we create daily new shapes. Those are our autobiographies. And it's also our developmental movements, you know, backwards, forwards, looping. And whether we call it narration or we call it storytelling, meaning making or action logics or stages. To me, it's the chapter headings that help us find a way to help us make choices. (Interviewee 12)

With incontestable evidence from this research of the value of exploring biographical dimensions of a client's background, why then is there such limited research on the application of this approach in the coaching literature? In part, it is discussed in Chapter 2 that, despite coaching psychology making tremendous progress over a relatively short timeline, there still remain gaps in its research foundations (Lai, 2014; Lai and Palmer, 2019). There is a lack of research related to aims that cannot be explored through randomised controlled trials, such as meaning-related interventions (Lai and Palmer, 2019). In addition, a 2018 study suggests a severe lack of social contextual considerations in coaching research studies, despite their importance in coaching interventions. The need to explore why coaching clients do what they do, rather than a focus on what intervention was used, is important to the future of coaching research (Athanasopoulou and Dobson, 2018):

> I think part of the biographical inquiry process is that it allows the person to stand in front of themselves, much like viewing a painting at a gallery, and begin to acquire levels of understanding that previously they haven't visited or contemplated that way before and haven't had a framework within which to think about themselves. And then I think that establishes a sense of meaning making of themselves in their life. That becomes hugely significant for them and very rewarding. (Interviewee 1)

Coaching is a meaning-making process that explores the past, present and future through dialogical and reflective inquiry in order to find a deeper sense of integration.

5.1.3 Overall summary of section

This section introduced four perspectives with which to align the findings of the research to the field of coaching psychology. It further discussed coaching as a collaborative process with the coach fulfilling through the process of dialogical inquiry. In conclusion, it explored meaning making in the coaching process and how this can be achieved through the narrative exploration of biographical data. A model for dialogical inquiry will be presented in Chapter 6.

5.2 The rationale for biographical inquiry in coaching

The value of exploring biographical data for the purposes of meaning making was outlined in the previous section. This next section is to explore the formation of a comprehensive model for biographical inquiry.

There was indisputable evidence that some form of biographical inquiry was part of the coaching process for all interviewees. Through the examination of the data, beyond the exploration as it relates to meaning making, there were four key themes that emerged as to why it is a useful process in coaching:

1. To create a shared understanding of the client.
2. To shift aspects of the non-conscious into consciousness.
3. To infer a formulation approach to coaching.
4. To create trust in coaching.

5.2.1 To create a shared understanding of the client

> When I am exploring with clients, I often say I want to explore what happened to you in the process of growing up, so to the best of my ability, I can share those experiences with you and learn to see the world as you do. (Interviewee 2)

Seventy-seven percent of the interviewees (10/13) for this research were living and/or working in a geographic context that was different from their place of birth and all were working with clients of different cultures, religions, race, gender self-identity and age. Adding to this complexity, the interviewees were often supporting clients through their own cross-cultural experience, leading teams consisting of people who looked, acted and behaved differently from themselves. This topic of diversity was expressed in 85% of the interviews (11/13) and references made to cross-cultural considerations (97), culture (89), spirituality (29) and race and/or ethnicity (1). Often, these references were made as an attempt by the interviewee to better understand the client and the context drivers that might be having an impact on their behaviour.

Particularly in Asia, a region consisting of 48 countries with 6 unique sub-regions, the way the Southeast Asian culture is expressed is very different from in Central Asia, for example. Even within the sub-regions, such as Southeast Asia, people in a country like the Philippines will express themselves very differently from those in Singapore, and so on. As such, the drivers to better understanding how these unique cultural dynamics have an impact on a client are important in creating a shared understanding of the client:

> Most of those approaches [biographical inquiry] invite a reflection on our beliefs, attitudes, and the things that drive our behaviour and value. It's raising self-awareness, examining how experiences have impacted us, and challenging some of those beliefs which come from early learning, culture and extended community. (Interviewee 8)

Also, it is important to note that assumptions cannot be made about a given culture. As described by this interviewee:

> Influences are now extending beyond the family and our geographic location because of the impact of digitisation on young people. This whole idea of culture becomes almost obsolete because there's an osmosis and a fluidity in the level of the way influences are coming in and from many directions. For example, that child who sits here in Singapore is watching American TV and watching how a family behaves there. So we see them emulating cultures they have never experienced first-hand. I am calling this a diffusion culture because knowing where someone grew up is not enough to know what cultures they most identify with. (Interviewee 2)

Moreover, even in the context of homogeneous culture dynamics between coach and client, interviewees suggested that sameness cannot be assumed because other influences are unknown and likely to be different. As such, the data suggests the importance of creating a shared understanding of the client – what drives them and is essential in help in coaching them. These drivers may exist on a conscious or a non-conscious level, and therefore shared understanding is best explored through biographical inquiry.

The risk in making assumptions was mentioned by 46% of interviewees (6/13):

> I may find a client that has been exposed to many different perspectives, cultures, experiences, life journeys and assume a certain basic developmental level. Then suddenly, you see that whatever you believed was the truth on one side, suddenly is not shown on the other. It will twist your brain and you will start asking questions, not knowing. Isn't that a brilliant thing for our own growth but also a warning to not make assumptions. (Interviewee 3)

Another interviewee described their experience of this from an academic perspective within their own doctorate. In studying the data about what made coaching successful, what the interviewee had assumed would be high affiliation responses, as are often expressed in Asian cultures, was in fact not the case: 'It was a good reminder that the perspective of the client, not our perception, is most important.' (Interviewee 7)

When considering the literature, this notion of shared understanding has been explored in two ways – through a formulation approach and a cultural perspective. Lane and Corrie (2009) have explored formulation as a conceptual framework of shared understanding, used as an explanatory account of the issues of the client. From a cultural perspective, as expressed by Passmore (2010), coaches need to understand their own cultural heritage and its implications before attempting to understand and assist clients. He refers to the subtle ethnocentric biases that could lead a coach to make inaccurate inferences about a client's motivations and other personal attributes.

While the deeper elements of context dynamics will be explored later in this chapter (see section 5.3.4), this idea of shared understanding is part of the rationale for using biographical inquiry in the first place.

5.2.2 To shift the non-conscious into consciousness

> Many people, particularly very senior leaders, haven't spent a lot of time in their lives, reflecting upon who they are, and why they have become the person that they are. By exploring this [biographical inquiry], the consequence is kind of outlining the beginnings, or to lift into consciousness, a person's awareness of themselves in a way that is often both a delight and a surprise to themselves. (Interviewee 11)

To explore what exists in the non-conscious is a difficult task. Yet, to see what is now conscious, that was once unknown, via biographical inquiry, seems to be something that happens often in coaching. Fifty-four percent of the interviewees (7/13) said the process of moving things into consciousness, from biographical inquiry work, was an important aspect of this type of exploration. One interviewee who explored this noted how, at the end of a coaching engagement, the client said to them that they had accomplished more through the coaching than through 20 years of therapy. When Interviewee 11 probed the client as to why they said that – for the first time – they felt partnered and supported by someone who actually looked at their life stories and how that shaped the current perspectives, rather than having to focus on healing the trauma, which often felt like heavy work. By looking at the various stages of their life, they could engage with their 'mature self' to see how they were still carrying wounds in their non-conscious and how they could choose to interact differently with them.

This concept of creating new insights and meaning for the client through biographical inquiry was described well by another interviewee:

> Often I may ask a question or share a perspective, and then the person would say I'd never thought of it like that before. And, you can actually sense that they've acquired a different layer of meaning about themselves in that instant moment. (Interviewee 9).

This type of awareness building or, rather, bringing into consciousness, via our biographical histories is somewhat under-explored in the literature. One interviewee expressed this lack of research in their own doctoral work. They mentioned how there is such a lack of substantial research on how upbringing, particularly in an Asian context, has an impact on leadership and yet they have found exploring upbringing was a key unlocking place for their clients: 'Being able to interact with those life stories somehow changed their meaning in the present. And yet, there is so little in coaching research that speaks to this phenomena.' (Interviewee 2).

In the coaching literature, Rothaizer and Hill (2009) offer quite a condemning view as to why the non-conscious is often overlooked. First, they suggest that coaching lacks a focus on the 'why' in favour of a focus on the 'what now'. Because of the lack of prioritisation on the 'why' , they infer that analysing the past seems less important than trying to figure out how to look towards the future and contemplate what to do next. They also suggest that the way in which coaching rationalises this perspective is in order to:

1. differentiate coaching from the field of psychology;
2. rationalise the minimal qualification requirements of coaches and the lack of regulation;
3. idealise clients as people who want to leap forward into a potentially new transformation; and
4. as a way for coaches to avoid dealing with their own maladaptive assumptions.

However, a future-orientated view in coaching is widely held. A recent study provides evidence that future orientation helps individuals cope with stress and protects people from depression (Zheng et al., 2019). In another study, future orientation was associated positively with work effort, proactive career behaviours and career adaptability (Praskova and Johnson, 2021). Yet, in another study, organisational coaches were surveyed to discover how they made decisions about the boundaries in their practice. Responses suggested that coaches viewed coaching as future-orientated, short-term, goal-orientated and appropriate for clients who were mentally healthy, yet much of their practice appeared to exist outside these parameters (Price, 2009).

Regardless of past or future orientation, the perspective of working with the non-conscious is changing in coaching, and is often explored from the perspective of inner self-identity work. Dodwell (2020) explored the idea of a lost sense of self within coaching. She described the use of the psychodynamic view of self and the developmental perspective of the evolving self as critical tools for recovering the lost sense of self. The idea was that clients may not be conscious of self in totality because much of it is hidden in the non-conscious.

In coaching psychology, however, the psychodynamic approach to coaching is borrowed from psychoanalytic theory. Areas such as unconscious mental life, and unconscious anxieties and defences (often explored through containment, transference and counter-transference), are often explored. The main access point to the non-conscious is feeling or emotion (Roberts and Brunning, 2019). What remains largely unexplored in the research is the link to biographical inquiry and the non-conscious.

5.2.3 To infer a formulation approach to coaching

> In England, if you set out to buy a house, you're well advised to have what's called 'a structural survey'. Experts come in and have a serious look at what the condition of the house is from the point of view of the way the whole thing is working. Find what the possible problems could be. I think a biographical inquiry is quite an interesting way of conducting a structural survey of the person in order that you both [coach and client] have got some sense of who this person has become over the course of their life.' (Interviewee 1)

This was the first interview where this idea of biographical inquiry as a sort of 'structural test' came into consideration. As the interviews carried on, the notion of biographical inquiry having a predictive power began to emerge. Fifty-four percent of the interviewees (7/13) felt that biographical data provided some form of predictive modelling of how the client would likely behave under certain circumstances: 'Biographical inquiry carries the implication of being able to predict how is this person likely to be in a variety of situations' (Interviewee 7).

In interview seven, the idea of formulation was introduced. This perspective held a much more appropriate approach than the predictive one. This view of using biographical inquiry as a formulation approach to understanding the client was insightful:

> I look at biographical data as a process of formulation, which comes from applied psychology. Through this approach, I can really see someone. And equally, they feel seen right through, which can be very confronting. But this developing of hypotheses about what might be going on for them through an examination of their life and family relationships, can be quite informative and useful. (Interviewee 7)

Another interviewee expressed it as a way to understand where normative behaviours come from. By knowing this, we are likely to be able to predict how a client will behave in the future and therefore have more conscious choices as to how we want to shift their behaviour (Interviewee 2). While the interviewee acknowledged the potential risks of getting these predictions wrong, using this formulation approach as a guide seems to have the power to be immensely useful.

This idea of using a formulation approach to coaching was discussed in the literature review. Lane and Corrie (2009) offered a definition that could be used in the field of coaching psychology: this resonated deeply with 'an explanatory account of the issues with which a client is presenting (including predisposing, precipitating and maintaining factors) that can form the basis of a shared framework of understanding and which has implications for change' (p. 194). Further explored by Kovacs and Corrie (2021), formulation can be the means through which a coach can design and implement an intervention that has relevance. However, it is important to note that using biographical inquiry as a formulation approach versus a working hypothesis may be contested by some. In the same research article, Kovacs and Corrie offered a perspective on the similarities and differences between a working hypothesis and the formulation approach. Inferring from the authors' perspectives on shared understanding, biographical inquiry could be used to create a descriptive understanding of the client, evolves with additional understanding and has some power to predict, all suggesting that it could be used effectively as a formulation approach.

5.2.4 Source of trust creation within coaching

> There [starting with biographical inquiry] is a greater sense of trust and it means that you can raise more challenging issues because they feel safe, they are more likely to share with you some of the things that they may not share otherwise. So it gets you below the surface, away from transactional conversations, to talking about meaning and how they make sense of the world and what might be driving that so you can learn more easily, I think. Move into more developmental coaching work. (Interviewee 4)

Data analysis showed that 85% of the interviewees (11/13) specifically named trust, attachment and/or relationship between coach and client as being markedly improved through the sharing of biographical data. There was only one interviewee (5) who suggested the opposite to be true: that all trust in coaching is based on competence alone.

The idea of trust creating a feeling of being understood, through biographical inquiry, as a key differentiator to successful coaching was intriguing:

> I have a really great client that I've worked with for a few years, but I don't talk to her very often now because she's high flying and she's doing super well. She has had many coaches but sees our work together as the most successful. One of the reasons why she thinks our coaching was effective is that I spent our first session focused on getting to know her and her history. To really see her created trust in her and our partnership. She claims that trust with me is why we were set on the path for success. (Interviewee 7)

In the literature, there is a general consensus that trust must be established in order to achieve positive coaching outcomes. In fact, the International Coaching Federation (2019) has listed it as a core competency: 'Cultivates Trust and Safety'. What is more debated is how one establishes trust. In a recent study, there were three factors considered as essential – ability, benevolence and integrity. The study suggested that more experienced coaches felt the demonstration of benevolence (well meaning, kind and of service to the client) was the most critical factor in establishing trust. Part of the benevolence factor was how much the coach tried to really understand and get to know the client (Shiemann et al., 2019). While there are several ways in which trust can be established in a coaching relationship, the data from this research suggests that biographical inquiry is one effective approach.

5.2.5 Overall summary of section

Figure 5.1 summarises an overall framework that encapsulates the four key drivers of the use of biographical inquiry: shared understanding, shifting consciousness, a formulation approach and trust creation.

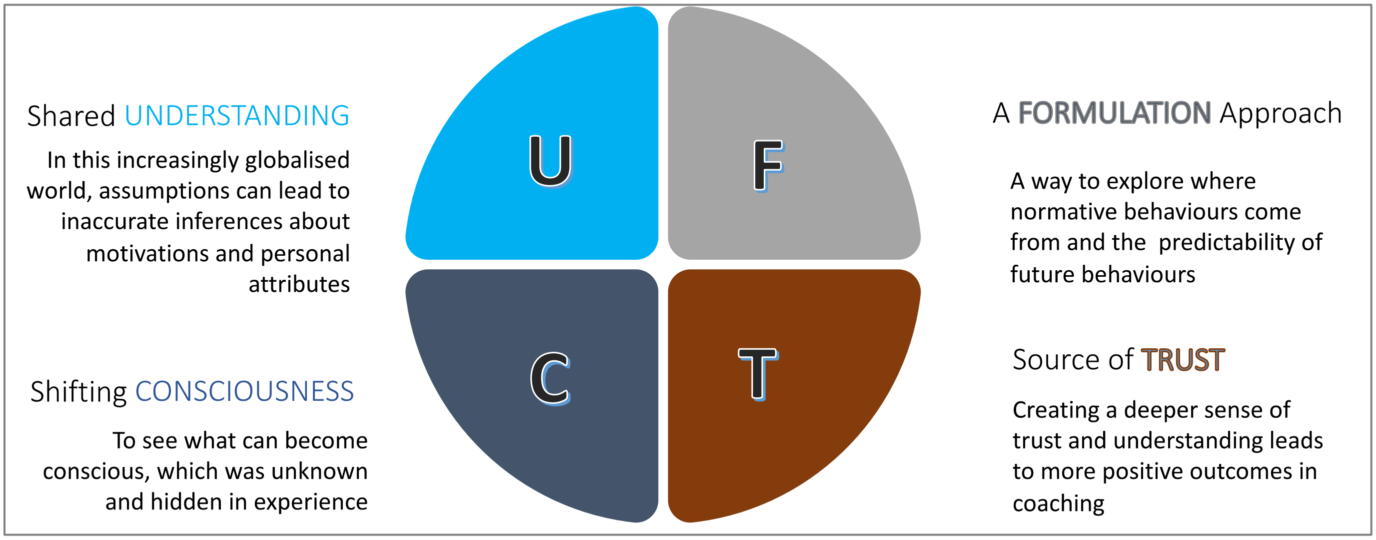


Figure 5.1 The four drivers for conducting biographical inquiry in coaching

5.3 The dimensions explored in biographical inquiry

Table 5.1 summarises the core areas of exploration by the interviewees when doing biographical inquiry.

Table 5.1 Overview of topics covered in biographical inquiry in the research findings

Dimension	**Number of interviewees who explore the area organically**
Family of origin (parents, siblings, extended family)	100%
Identity	100%
Authority structures (including parents, teachers, bosses)	100%
Emotions (emotional expression, emotional dynamism)	100%
Relationship/attachment dynamics	100%
Culture, religion, race, spirituality, cross-cultural influencing factors	85% (11/13)
Socioeconomic factors	80% (10/13)
Sibling/peer dynamics	69% (9/13)
Traumas (including health issues)	54% (7/14)
Generational drivers	46% (6/13)
Others (birthing story, ancestry exploration)	15% (2/13)
Affiliated culture (social media impact)	8% (1/13)

The 12 drivers in Table 5.1 represent a comprehensive view of the core areas of exploration by the interviewees. The list was then revised based on overlaps of inquiry (e.g. family of origin research included siblings but was also a standalone area of inquiry). Anything explored by only one or two interviewees was excluded from this list. In the end, there were six remaining drivers, which included hierarchy, peers, identity, context, emotional spectrum and relationship.

Figure 5.2 summarises these six dimensions, each of which will be further explored in this section.

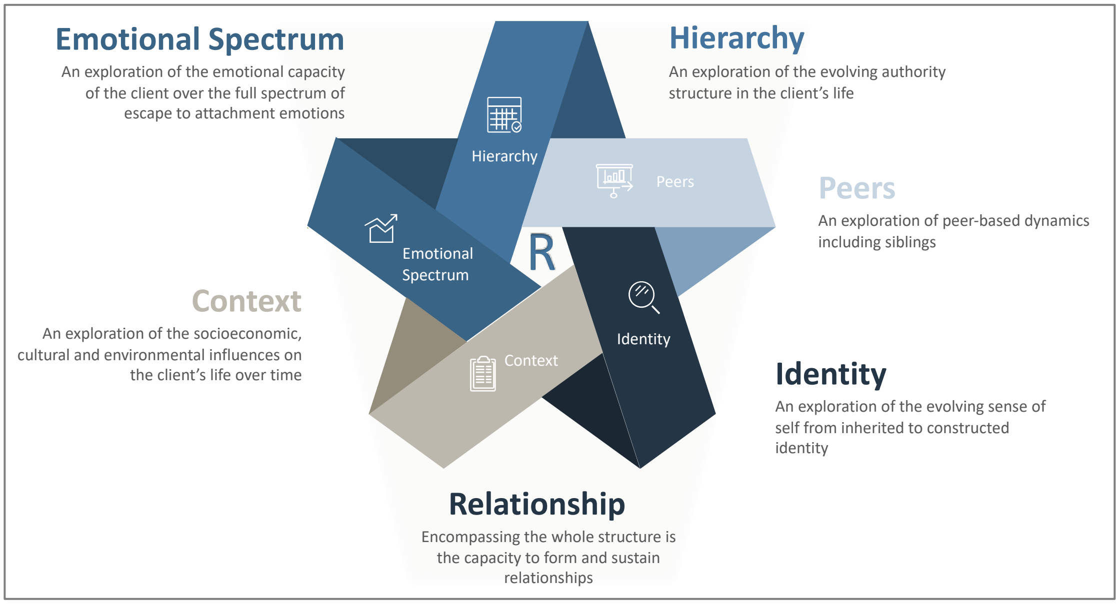


Figure 5.2. Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making

In the literature, from a psychology point of view, the most relevant content in biographical inquiry was family of origin research, which encompasses many dimensions including parents, siblings, attachment dynamics, normative behaviour, identity and emotional processing (Hovestadt et al., 1985; Leifman, 2001; Hemming et al., 2012). When considering the application of biographical inquiry in coaching, there is the HASIE model (Brown and Brown, 2012), which is adapted from the applied neurosciences and explores hierarchy, attachment dynamics, peer-based dynamics, identity and emotional tapestry. In coaching psychology, the approach used is often from a narrative perspective: less based on actual life events but the meaning encapsulated in the stories or narratives of those events. The way the client tells the story of what happened is more meaningful than the actual recalled itself.

Looking at the family of origin research in psychology, the HASIE research and narrative practice research, combined with the central themes covered in the interviews, the following six areas represent a comprehensive list of the core dimensions required for exploration in biographical inquiry.

5.3.1 Hierarchy

It is important to delineate the terms that were included in this dimension: family of origin (including family, families) – 180 times, extended family (including uncles, aunts) – 111 times, parents (including parent, parented, parenting, grandparents) – 104 times, authority (25 times), caregiver (including primary) – 17 times), boss (including bosses) – 20 times, previous generation (including ancestors) – 15 times, teacher (9 times).

In all the interviews, there was some form of exploration around the role of hierarchy (as outlined by the terms listed). Most often referred to as 'family of origin', looking at the core family unit was the most common place of inquiry.

Within Hierarchy, six core themes were explored:

- Traits of parents including occupation, personality and engagement with household.
- Power structure dynamics within the family including reward and punishment.
- 'Isms' of the family that created the normative views on behaviours within the household.
- 'Echoes' from previous generations informing the way the family interacted.
- Reinforcing experiences with authority structures.
- Expression in organisational life.

5.3.1.1 Traits of parents including occupation, personality and engagement with household

> I find the easiest was to get into the power dynamics, family normative behaviours, etc is start by simply asking, tell me about your parents. I am amazed at how much I can infer based on things like personalities of the parents, their occupations, etc that continue to have echoes into the lives of clients today. (Interviewee 9)

All the interviewees explored parental dynamics with their clients in one form or another. Often seen as the easiest entrance point to learn more about the context of family life for the client, the request to 'Tell me more about your parents' was often used. Sixty-two percent of the interviewees (8/13) used some form of this to begin their exploration via biographical inquiry.

In considering the research on parental traits, there is strong causation to implicit leadership traits in adults when idealised leadership images mirror descriptions of parental traits (Keller, 1999). Furthermore, depending on the nature of the attachment relationship to parents, the parents' traits become the idealised traits of a leader (Magomaeva, 2013). Also, it is suggested that parents play a pivotal role in shaping implicit leadership behaviours in their children because it is this initial experience with a leader that shapes expectations for future interactions with authority figures (Stark, 1992).

It is acknowledged that much of the research on parental traits and their links to leadership is dated, and that parental traits are not the sole influencers of leadership traits in adulthood. Other factors include personality (Digman, 1990; John, 1990), idealised leadership perception (Hall and Lord, 1998), and similarity hypothesis of leader–member relationships (Bauer and Green, 1999) to name a few. However, what is not disputed is the consistency among interviewees in starting with parental traits to better understand how their clients may approach/view authority in their current context.

5.3.1.2 Power dynamics including reward and punishment and conflict management

> Our first bosses were our parents. From them, we learned our first model of leadership, even before we knew what leadership meant. From then on, we refined our view as we gained experience, but it all starts from parents. (Interviewee 11).

Distinct from parental traits, which the research suggests are correlated to leadership traits in adulthood, is the idea of creating templates from power dynamics. While traits can be inferred to be non-conscious drivers of behaviour, the idea of looking at parents as templates for managing power dynamics in adulthood is a different perspective. The power dynamic was explored in some form by 62% of the interviewees (8/13). In one interview (Interviewee 9), power brokering, how power was used, who had it and how it was distributed were core areas of focus.

It is interesting to note, however, that the exploration of power, as described by various interviewees, was seldom addressed as such in their biographical inquiry with clients. Often it was an inferred dynamic through stories of how family members were rewarded or punished. The parent responsible for delivering rewards or punishment, in turn, often held the power. Another aspect of power was its democratisation, or lack thereof. Was it held by one parent or shared? Did the parents encourage challenge or shut it down? How did this dynamic change when dealing with multi-generational families, as is often the case in Asian families? One interviewee explored this additional complication in multi-generational households:

> I worked with a client who once told me you never have just one boss. He grew up in a household where there were multiple tiers of authority, and depending on the nature of the request, you went

> to the relevant person. Having a sweetie after school was grandmother, getting a bad mark on a test went to dad. (Interviewee 6)

Another interesting link to power was how conflict was managed and resolved in families. One interviewee made reference to how the client's relationship to their nominal bosses 'can have echoes of relationship with one or both parents'. The concept of how their parents dealt with conflict remains with clients into their present lives: 'I see present-day conflict resolution models that were inherited from family of origin play out a lot. I mean, a lot!' (Interviewee 9).

Also related to power appeared to be a link to followership. While this was a minority view (only 15% of the interviewees, 2/13) it was suggested that, depending on the various family structures that may have existed in the family of origin (e.g. head of the household with ultimate power versus follower with no power), some element of that seemed to play out in some form in adult life. Explored by one interviewee was the idea that a person's ability to lead and be led by others is directly related to how power was brokered in the family household. This interviewee referenced a female client who grew up with a mother who had no power, no money and no say in the decisions of the family. As a result, she herself struggles immensely with followership, particularly when working for a male leader (Interviewee 1).

In the literature, hierarchy is often linked to family-of-origin research in psychology, where dynamics of attachment, autonomy, power structures and intimacy, and their implications for identity and personality trait formation occur (Hemming et al., 2012). The research on charismatic leadership also suggests that followers' self-concepts (often informed from their histories) may also be relevant in determining their motivations to follow certain leaders (Howell and Shamir, 2005).

It is acknowledged that there are many drivers, not simply power dynamics and brokering, that influence the manifestation of these behaviours in adult life, yet the data here suggests that the family is a powerful place of exploration for insight into behavioural tendencies.

5.3.1.3 Isms of your family that created the normative views on behaviours

> I am [in my] second marriage and realise the quality of my relationship is so different because my husband in my second marriage comes from a family of origin which have completely different isms around how they deal with conflict. And I can see it, I can see it in three generations. There's a flavour to it. And each of us learns this flavour of what we think is normal. (Interviewee 9)

The idea of isms came up in the comments of one participant (11) during their interview. While as a theoretical notion of what was considered ‘normal’, isms were identified frequently, though they were rarely referred to in this way. Going back through the interviews, this indication around what was considered ‘normal’ behaviour within the family, and how that influences adult behaviour and perspectives, was a theme apparent in 67% of the interviews (6/9) that had taken place up to that point. When all interviews were included, that number rose to 69% (9/13).

Originally, ‘ism’ was felt to be a colloquial term used in Western-centric languages and cultures. However, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* in fact has a definition for it – ‘manner of action or behaviour characteristic of a (specified) person or thing’. ‘Ism’ as a scholarly research topic was non-existent in the literature. However, the term is extensively used in mainstream blogs, non-academic articles and editorial content. The closest literature on the topic would be normative behaviours or, more specially, as it is explored in social psychology, the influence of other people that leads one to conform in order to be liked and accepted. Exploring the literature in this area became a vast and complex exercise. However, returning back to the original literature on family of origin, the brokering of power structures and conflict resolution influences how adult behaviours (Hovestadt et al., 1985; Glasgow et al., 1997; Aunola et al., 2000; Keller 2003; Hemming et al., 2012) and the quality of the intimacy, openness to others, responsibility and respect for others (Hovestadt et al., 1985; Manning, 2003; Mayseless, 2010; Hemming et al., 2012) are all part of the formation of the isms of a family and how those isms can influence adult behaviour.

Another area the research can be linked to is that of cognitive distortions and schemas in psychology. While a potentially relevant and interesting place of exploration, the scope and depth of exploration required are beyond the scope of consideration for this research.

5.3.1.4 ‘Echoes’ from previous generations

> As much as we look to parents and going into their patterns, it has a lot to do with what their own parents were going through as well. That's something that I see is not necessarily about what happened to us, it's also what happened to them. It’s the exploration of the reinforcing factor. (Interviewee 11).

Five interviewees (38%) brought up the structure of previous generations in the hierarchy discussion. Expanded upon by one interviewee from their own doctoral research was how ‘prevalent past generational philosophies can be in the choices people make today', adding 'my experience has been it's often two to three generations at most' (Interviewee 2). Another interviewee explored this idea from a slightly different perspective by considering the traumas of the parent and the parent's parents, and how clients can inherit these legacy traumas (Interviewee 13).

This notion of previous generations is particularly important within the context of multi-generational homes, which are quite common in Asia. Interestingly, however, is the rise of multi-generational homes across the USA. In a 2016 survey by the PEW Research Centre, 20% of American homes were multi-generational. In research based in Asia, while the numbers were on a slight decline, at least 47% of households were multi-generational (PEW Research Study 2018).

5.3.1.5 Reinforcing experiences outside the home

> What happens at home in our early years, then those school years begin to form their sense of what I know versus what else is possible. This dynamic then begins to unfold the next level of maturity with authority. How the client learns to see and interact with other adults, beyond their own caregivers. (Interviewee 13)

The data suggests that the family of origin offers significant insights into adult tendencies and behaviours. However, looking beyond the family of origin, rest-of-life experiences appear to either reinforce or challenge the original view of 'normal' from those early years. This was a topic explored by 77% of interviewees (10/13). Described in different ways, it was the reference to life experiences beyond the family of origin that reinforced the clients' sense of self and how they should behave. One interviewee described the stages of life progression as challenging the models of what adulthood could be. As one enters school, one has new templates for what adulthood could be, then secondary and post-secondary, and finally within the workforce. Each life progression serves as a nuancing mechanism to the client of their own models and behaviours (Interviewee 1).

An attempt to delineate the various stages that make up these reinforcing structures was also undertaken with data from 54% of interviewees (7/13). One interviewee proposed the view that between 11 and 13 was the best place to begin biographical inquiry because that is when clients begin to challenge the constructs of 'normal' within the home and their own sense of whom or what they want to become (Interviewee 7). Expanded upon by another interviewee, the process of adolescence is about expanding the perspectives of what is possible, while adulthood was about finding one's own definition of what it can and should be (Interviewee 13). The inference is that an exploration of family of origin alone will not suffice because much of what influences adult behaviour stems from reinforcing experiences outside the home. What the data is suggesting is a staged approach to development: that to examine only one stage of life would not create a complete picture. The view is that the journey from childhood to adulthood is non-static, a constantly moving sense of self. It was summarised well by this interviewee:

> Exploring life experiences is ultimately about understanding the different parts of them. It is about acknowledging that some of those elements are a part of them and some of those elements may not be of service anymore. So it’s not just about finding the source, but about how that source changes over time. (Interviewee 11)

When exploring the literature, it was the exploration of stage theory that reflected this notion of changing maturity with progress of life experiences: the fact that people matured and evolved through stages across the lifespan as a result of a dynamic interaction between the inner self and the outer environment (Loevinger, 1979). Therefore, it was no surprise to find that interviewees looked for these moments of enforcing or challenging one’s world view. In all the interviews, there was an acknowledgment that perspective and ways of being were non-static, constantly evolving processes. This was the rationale for including other stakeholders in the dimension of Hierarchy, beyond parents. This included extended family, teachers, employers, and other authority figures.

5.3.1.6 Expression in organisational life

> Leadership is a complex concept. What are the norms for leadership in the client’s organisation versus the client’s life and how do they relate? So you can start inquiring down that route explicitly, but that's really deep, what I call deep domain stuff. Some of it they may know, but much of it is unconscious, so as a coach the inquiry into hierarchy and power in early life is an approach to that type of exploration. (Interviewee 7)

There were 47 references made to the term ‘leadership’. In examining these references, the correlation was that most discussions of leadership style eventually lead back to some form of biographical inquiry, often relating styles of leadership to family-of-origin dynamics or, more specifically, how authority operated within the household. This is an important distinction to be made because often narrative practices or any research related to biographical inquiry and coaching sit outside the executive leadership realm and are often linked to life coaching. In fact, all interviewees thought that early childhood experiences with parents or primary caregivers, in particular, have a direct correlation with leadership behaviours demonstrated in adult life.

This dynamic was expressed well by one interviewee. He was describing a client who had done his undergraduate degree at Cambridge University, UK, and a Master's degree at MIT and had just completed an MBA at INSEAD, and yet he acted as though life was terrible and just so hard. This was reinforced by the 360 feedback data that the client was never happy and that, no matter what the team did, it was never enough. The interviewee described how he reflected this back to the client after learning more about his father in early childhood:

> You're an amazingly bright person, who has accomplished a lot in a short period of time. Yet, your perception of everything that's happened to up to this point seems to you to be a disaster? Does that remind you of somebody? The client paused, teared up and said, wow, I've turned into my father! (Interviewee 6)

The other aspects included in Hierarchy, particularly as it relates to organisational life, are leadership expressions towards subordinates (65 references to direct reports/subordinates):

> 'In some families, dad knows best and discussions of diverse ideas wasn't permitted. It was a sense of there is a right and there's a wrong and it's about arriving at the single truth. I often find I am looking to unpack these dynamics from their early childhood experiences, to see how this plays out in their leadership, particularly when they're working in team based organisations.' (Interviewee 11)

Another perspective was as follows:

> Some clients have terrible histories that made them feel unsafe with people and so they split off and they keep their distance as leaders. I just really love to see these very intelligent senior leaders go down that pathway to understand why, often related to a parent. I think increasingly, we are in a position where we can act as a bridge to them to go off and do some of that work. (Interviewee 9)

Ultimately, the data suggests that hierarchy is a rich source of data that provides strong insight into the client and how they view, choose to use, and interact with their 'power' in organisational life. However, the link between biographical data, adult behaviour and leadership performance has been made in varying degrees. Rimmer et al. (1996) suggest that leadership effectiveness is seen as strongly influenced by the individual's biographical past, personal life and work environment. A study of biographical data collection during the selection of candidates and leadership predictability found a high correlation in ability to predict leadership tendencies based on life experiences (Rothstein et al., 1990). Another research study found a high correlation between childhood achievement and adulthood leadership tendencies (Mumford et al., 2009). While all these studies demonstrate strong correlation data between the past and present, the insights are dated and lack serious evidence-based methodology. Moreover, none effectively outline a clear approach or framework with which to do an effective exploration of biographical data with clients (Mumford et al., 2009).

The research on parental traits has shown strong causation to implicit leadership traits in adults. The idealised leadership traits tend to mirror the descriptions of parental traits (Keller, 1999). Keller (2003) expands on this by saying that many leaders' own sense-making capacity and sense of identity are tied closely to parental experiences. Adding to the research perspectives, depending on the nature of the attachment relationship to parents, the parents' traits become the idealised traits of a leader (Magomaeva, 2013). One aspect of parenting style that has been explored more deeply is that of parental traits and their correlation with achievement in school (Glasgow et al., 1997; Aunola et al., 2000).

5.3.1.7 Overall summary of section

In summarising the data that existed within the dimension of Hierarchy, there were two clear and distinct insights. The first was the influence of the family of origin, in particular the parents and the exploration of four key dimensions that included traits of parents, power dynamics, isms and echoes from previous generations. The second insight was the evolution of those dynamics as the client went out into the world. That evolution goes through further stages of family of origin; challenge or reinforcement through adolescence and early adulthood; the developmental stages of professional life; and then a constant sense of adjustment back to the original sense of self from family of origin. This overall dimension of Hierarchy is outlined in Figure 5.3.

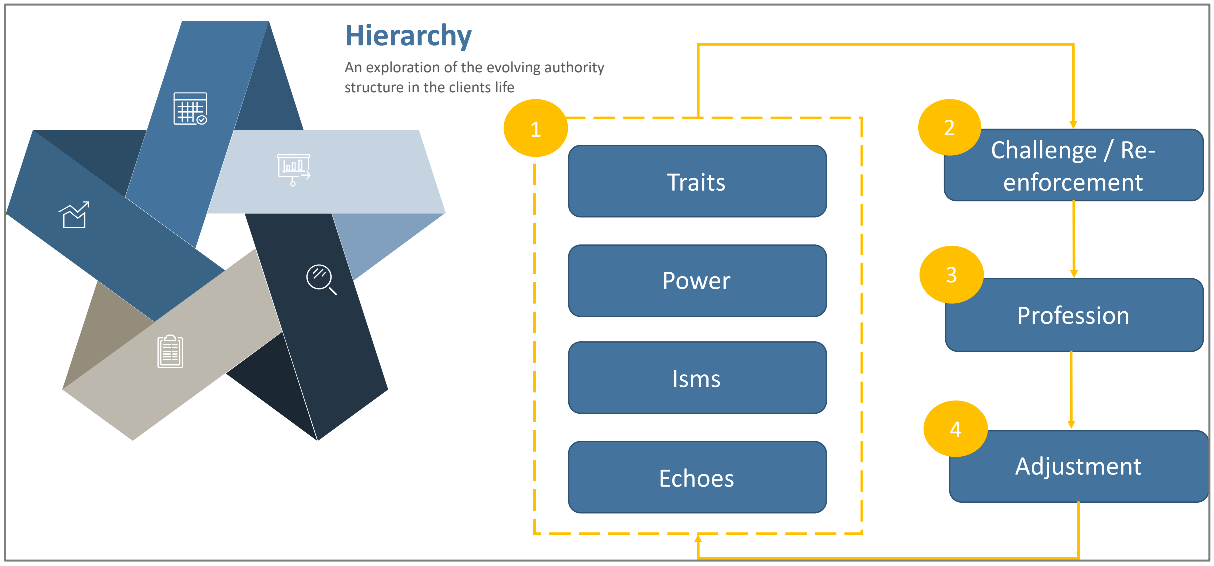


Figure 5.3 Four quadrants of exploration in Hierarchy

As the data was collected, key questions that interviewees would use to explore a certain aspect of Hierarchy with their clients are summarised in Appendix 4.

5.3.2 Peers

In 69% of the interviews (9/13), there were some references to siblings (35 references), peers (34), and friends/mates (30) cousins (11), colleagues (10) classmates (7). Five interviewees explicitly named this dimension as a place of intentional inquiry, often related to birth order, and four were specially asked during the interview. This is the one dimension where the primary interviewer explicitly asked questions related to the dimension, despite it not emerging naturally during the interview.

There appeared two major considerations when exploring the peer dynamics:

1. What peer groups are and how they are presented at various life stages.
2. How we transition within those groups.

5.3.2.1 What are peer groups?

> So much about how a person shows up in life is about how they are in relationships with others. These relationships are best demonstrated by how they are with their peers groups and friends, and we often find quite echoing the relationships they held with their own siblings. (Interviewee 9)

In family of origin, this dimension was often expressed as siblings and/or cousins. In school years it was classmates, peers and friends. During early stages of life, the consideration was often who is considered the reference group, the measurements of comparison and the yardstick with which one's own life was often compared.   In adulthood, or professional life, it often included colleagues and other co-workers at similar levels. Particular to note, though: it was not who are my equals? Particularly within family of origin, siblings were not always treated as equal. One interviewee described how a client had been raised as a twin and so they instinctively responded with a comment about them likely having instinctive team-oriented skills. The client claimed the opposite and said that he and his twin, despite being biologically equal in every way, were treated as anything but equals. The parents had their 'favourite' twin and that was reflected in their perceived power and authority in the family (Interviewee 4).

This was one dimension that was explicitly asked by the researcher, if not arising naturally during the interview. This insight emerged in Interview 5 where the researcher discovered that the preceding two interviews made no reference to peer-based dynamics at all. Yet, in Interviews 1and 2, it seemed to be a major dimension of consideration in biographical inquiry. During one of these explicit explorations, the response of the interviewee was intriguing:

> It's funny now that you ask, it's like thinking as a child, how did my bowl arrive at the table? Of course someone brought it there, but my experience begins with it just being there. I feel like that's what it is with siblings, they are there all time, very noisy, always in the conversation, yet I don't even mention them. It's funny and fascinating how I am seeing this. Of course they are the basis of conditioning, because without them, it wouldn't be such a societal condition. (Interviewee 8)

This sense of peer-based dynamics as being important, and yet not always explicitly named, was mentioned by another interviewee as well. They shared that this constant comparison with other children, siblings, classmates or teammates was always in the background, but somehow it did not make it into the foreground unless some trauma occurred. There was this sense of it always being there and yet also some kind of unspoken code that often did not come into the discussion until adulthood (Interviewee 11).

This lack of explicit intentionality around peer groups was also noted in the literature: The idea that, despite their significant potential for influence, sibling relationships have been relatively neglected by researchers studying close relationships (McHale et al., 2012). Why does this dimension seem relevant in the exploration of the client through biographical inquiry, yet seem undervalued as an intentional place of inquiry in research? The inference is based on the argument t that, if this sense of sameness were not a pivotal challenge to the client, there would often be little explicit consideration of it. To illustrate, all clients would have either parents or primary caregivers but having them does not make them materially important. What does makes them important is the dynamism in the relationship: the struggle for power, the challenges created. In the case of siblings, one possible explanation for the lack of deliberate consideration could be correlated with the degree of conflict those relationships created. This idea seems to be reinforced in some child development research that suggests that general deviancy can be measured based on the dynamics of the peer groups as pressuring, controlling or rejecting (Ryan 2001; Mikami et al., 2010; Dumas et al., 2012).

Overall, there seemed to emerge this notion of three distinct peer groups. While the terms referenced in the interviews were variable, those used here will be:

1. inherited peers;
2. assumed peers; and
3. chosen peers.

These peer groups seemed to be defined and delineated by both external and internal factors. External factors were the more easily identifiable traits to those outside the family such as age, socio-economic factors, and perceived intelligence or capability. Then there were internal factors such as connectedness and sense of competition, that tended to influence behaviour.

Inherited peers

Referenced by 69% of the interviewees (9/13), inherited peers were those who were included in the family of origin. In many ways, they were presumed to be similar on external factors like socio-economics and, unfairly, intelligence and competence. The idea was explored by one interviewee who claimed to inquire into the classification of a client's siblings by different measures: 'I am always curious to know if there was a distinguishing factor of intelligence or capability between siblings – who was the smart one, who was the athletic one and so on.' (Interviewee 8). More often than not, the client felt some kind of societal pressure of expectation to be as good as the others.

In terms of internal factors, connectedness was assumed to be similar within the family (although, again, perhaps an unfair label applied to some members of the family) but competition could be variable, depending on the relationship dynamics and isms of the family.

Assumed peers

Although not labelled as such, this general category was often described as those peers from school, sports and other extra-curricular activities that a child may be involved with, and it was referenced by 69% of the interviewees (9/13). With external factors, there was similarity of age at school, but variable dynamics within extra-curricular and sports activities where one could have peers at multiple age and socio-economic levels. However, there seemed to be an inference of a similar sense of intelligence and capability. With internal factors, there was a sense of similar connectedness but variable competition, depending on how the client defined their orientation towards perceived equals.

Chosen peers

Also known as the family you choose, these were the very close peers also referenced as best friends, romantic partnerships, etc. by 54% of interviewees (7/13). On external factors, there seemed to be variability of age but similarity in socio-economic factors and intelligence and capability. In terms of internal factors, there was a sense of similar connectedness (because it was the family the client chose) and, again, variable degrees of competition.

5.2.2.1 How we explore transition within peer groups

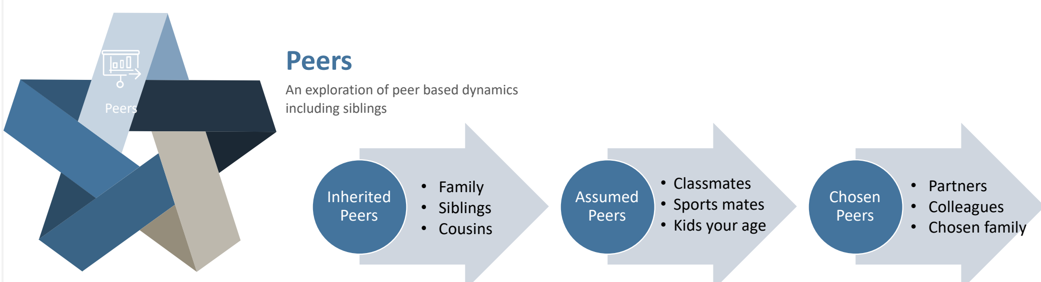
> I'll check the relational aspect and how they shift. From siblings, to neighbours, then school mates, and eventually adult relationships. These transitions, you know, moving from the home to how you relate and create relationships with the other kids, and each culture has a different transitional path. So, I will check what are the transitions that are in the culture that they come from. Eventually, the marital choices become fascinating. Who do they pick as their equal or not? (Interviewee 13).

A very interesting perspective offered by the above interviewee was the idea of transitions and the insights those offered from a peer-based perspective. This move from family to school to chosen tribe implies various stages of peer formation. Combining this insight with the patterning seen in the exploration of Hierarchy and family-of-origin dynamics, the inference could be made that the maturity stages of the client could be seen, in some way, to be explored through the lens of the peer group. The exploration of peer influence on cognitive development can be extrapolated from research on the cognitive-developmental lens, which suggests that an individual develops in context with society and peers (Vygotsky, 1978; Tudge and Rogoff, 1999).

The other aspect for consideration is that the peer-based dynamic is about attachment: our ability to create, form and sustain relationships. It was this second dynamic that shifted the way the relationship or attachment dimension would be explored (see section 5.2.2.6).

5.2.2.2 Overall summary of section

There are three fundamental aspects of peer exploration. First is the classification of peers as inherited, assumed or chosen peers. Then, within each group, appeared both external and internal factors that could be associated to the meaning making the client created as a result of those dynamics. Figure 5.4 outlines the overall dimension of peers.



External Factors			
Age	Variable	Variable	Variable
Socio-economic	Similar	Variable	Similar
Intelligence / capability	Similar	Similar	Similar
Internal Factors			
Connectedness	Similar	Similar	Similar
Competition	Variable	Variable	Variable

Figure 5.4 Who are our peers and what factors contribute to their definition?

Questions explored in this area have been included in Appendix 5.

5.3.3 Identity

> There is the aspect of the stories that one says about who they are and their place and their role in this world. Things like the unconscious rules about how the world works and therefore how I need to be within it. There is safety in knowing what I need to be but there is also the transition process, when the family identity is challenged and the opportunity to define a new sense of self, emerges. It can be inherently and existentially terrifying. (Interviewee 9)

In all the interviews, there was some form of exploration about identity. While the terminology was often interchangeable between self (148 references) and identity (55 references), what was common across all the interviews was the definition – the stories we tell ourselves about who we are. Identity was the one of the most explored dimensions, preceded by hierarchy and then emotions. What emerged from the research was that identity seemed to have three component elements or stages.

- The first was termed 'inherited': these were the elements that had little choice in being attached to one's sense of self and were often described as parts of 'who I am supposed to be'. Some of the elements attributed to this inherited self are religion, race expectations and socio-economic expectations –what 'being good' was inferred in the family of origin.
- The other end of the identity stage was termed 'constructed' identity. These are the elements of identity that the client has actively chosen and included as a part of their being. These are much harder to classify into common themes, yet seem to have a distinct segregation of choice for the client; often explored as 'who I have chosen to be'.
- The third, positioned in between the inherited and constructed identities, is the transitional stage where sense making seems to actively adjust as life events emerge.

5.3.3.1 Inherited identity

> There is something critical about being consciously aware of what it was like to be in the various structures of the past. What is what like to be in your family, what it was like to be in school – these are the insights into true identity formation. (Interviewee 7)

Explored by another interviewee:

> I think it's important to know how identity was formed [for the client], and it often goes back to the family, early relationships, cultural perspective, rooted in the past about who they should be. (Interviewee 13)

Inherited identity is the sense of identity that was established in the early years, often through family of origin. Often, the components of this inherited identity can sit within the non-conscious. One interviewee referenced how religion can play a role in inherited identity and that Catholic guilt, Muslim guilt or other religious doctrine can carry a lifetime of shame in one's sense of 'am I good as a person or not?' (Interviewee 2). Another interviewee spoke about the dynamics, particularly here in Asia where children are often streamed into groups based on their academic performance, and how the labels stay with one well into one's professional career (Interviewee 8), building on the notion of, non-consciously, retaining labels that were ascribed to one. Another interviewee further elaborated on how a client shared a story about their nine-year old son and how he'd just gone through quite an intense maths examination with a result of 96%. The client had tears in his eyes as he expressed his first reaction as 'Why not 100?' and how, in that moment, he became the nine-year-old playing out his own history (Interviewee 6).

Expanding on the view of inherited identity, as defined by family of origin, is the idea of how these family-inherited norms interact with the greater socio-economic and culture dynamics outside the home. Part of inherited identity is not only what the family told us to be, but the greater relationship that relates to wealth and culture. One interviewee spoke about this dynamic, referencing how growing up poor made them obsessed with money as adults. Who we are told we are, and then how that plays out in adult life, can have significant materiality to adult behaviours (Interviewee 6).

Overall, inherited identity seemed to have several drivers:

- System-driven identifiers – race, culture, religion, language, country of birth and socio-economic factors.
- Behaviour-driven drivers – the acceptable forms of behaviour in the family. Gender and sexuality roles often stemmed from this driver.
- Responsibility-driven drivers – role in family and the correlating responsibilities (including for elders) and expectations for achievement.

5.3.3.2 Constructed identity

> We always start with how identity was formed, over time, that goes back to the family or to those early relationships. But what is interesting, is how one considers what one should be versus what one wants to be, and the not always positive implications that come with that. Identity is a journey over time. (Interviewee 13)

Constructed identity is reconstructed identity, based on the client's interactions and experiences in life during adolescence and adulthood. 'Adolescence is a fascinating as it's in around this time we begin to challenge the notion of who our families taught us to be, and begin to create our own identities' (Interviewee 4). These identities are often the renegotiation and reconstruction of the self that the client is choosing to be, rather than the self that they were told to be via their family of origin. However, this reconstruction can sometimes feel so compelling that the behaviours our clients exhibit become polarised. This was outlined well by one interviewee:

> I worked with a lady who was a regional vice-president of a large software company. I asked her who would you be if you weren't regional vice-president. She looked at me and said, nobody. She was someone who created a world where she had power and used that power to broker how others should treat her, ultimately how she deemed her own identity and self-worth. (Interviewee 6).

Related to this notion is the seduction of these constructed identities, which can be so compelling that often we do not see their power over us. The way we want to be perceived overtakes our own internal narrative and becomes the way we want to perceive ourselves (Interviewee 13).

The importance of this dimension is also supported in the literature, where the link between identity and the work of coaching is explicit: the notion that meaning and identity are foundational to all coaching, and that these topics invariably become part of all coaching (Bush et al., 2013). While indistinguishable in these research findings, the literature does sometimes segregate self from identity. The idea is that self is a process and organisation born of self-reflection versus identity as a tool or stratagem by which individuals categorise and present themselves to the world (Owens, 2006). Supporting the view of constructed identity is the social constructivist view suggesting that identity is not self-contained but created through continual flux with its social environment, as viewed by Kegan's five orders of consciousness (Kegan, 1982).

5.3.3.3 The transition of identity

> There is how they see their ideal self, often some form based in the now. And then there is the self that steamed from their beliefs, the expectations of their families, what they were supposed to be. So this vicious cycle of immature love where the ego looks at the self that was constructed in early childhood years, and as it matures, it looks to be judgmental, critical, and re-define what self ought to be. (Interviewee 2)

The transitioning of identity between inherited and constructed can take many forms and hold within it deep emotional resonance. Sixty-two percent of the interviewees (8/13) spoke specifically of this transition state being critical. When a client is in the stage of critical awareness, judgement or re-construction, their behaviours will exhibit reflections of this often non-conscious process. As coaches, it is important to understand the impact of these processing stages, including the roles of polarities and trauma.

The view was expressed that often the constructed identities were direct polarities of our inherited identities. One interviewee spoke of having been raised in a very religious household to now having a complete disgust for anything religious or spiritual but that, as they incorporated and integrated the pain from the past, their own spirituality journey was finally beginning (Interviewee 7). Another interviewee spoke about being raised in civil conflict, which had created an almost obsession in the present about needing to create harmony within herself, her relationships and within society (Interviewee 3).

Finally, there is the role of trauma in the transition of identity: in other words, the exploring of perceived 'traumas' can relate to the exploring of the transition from inherited to constructed identity.

> There are always the pain points, the trauma, the drama, everyone has in their lives. So it's going back to the trauma and the drama, even someone who's raised in a very privileged, beautiful family, there's trauma. All of us experience some sort of trauma on some sort of scale. It's about stepping into a field of emotional trauma that runs deep and feels painful, so we can heal. Those traumas can define who we are and the identity we hold of ourselves, often at a unconscious level. (Interviewee 5)

5.3.3.4 Overall summary of section

The importance of this dimension was explored by all the interviewees. What emerged was that identity appeared to flow through perceived stages between the stories we tell ourselves about whom we should be versus whom we choose to be. These stages have been identified as:

1. inherited identity;
2. transitional identity; and
3. constructed identity.

The driver through the three stages seem to be some cycle of awareness, judgement and re-construction. This has been summarised in Figure 5.5.

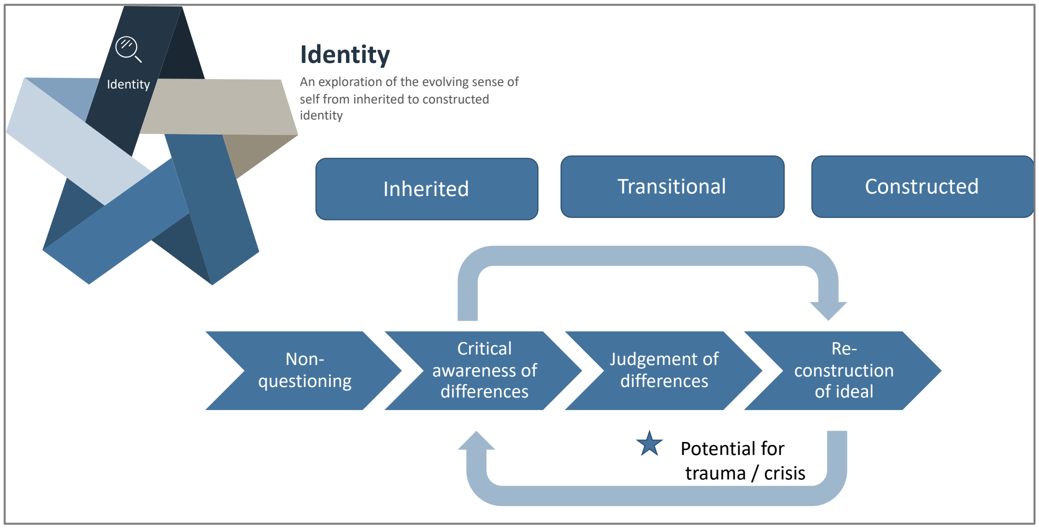


Figure 5.5 The progression of identity

The other element of note is the actual transition through the stages of inherited and constructed identity. This has been outlined in Figure 5.6.

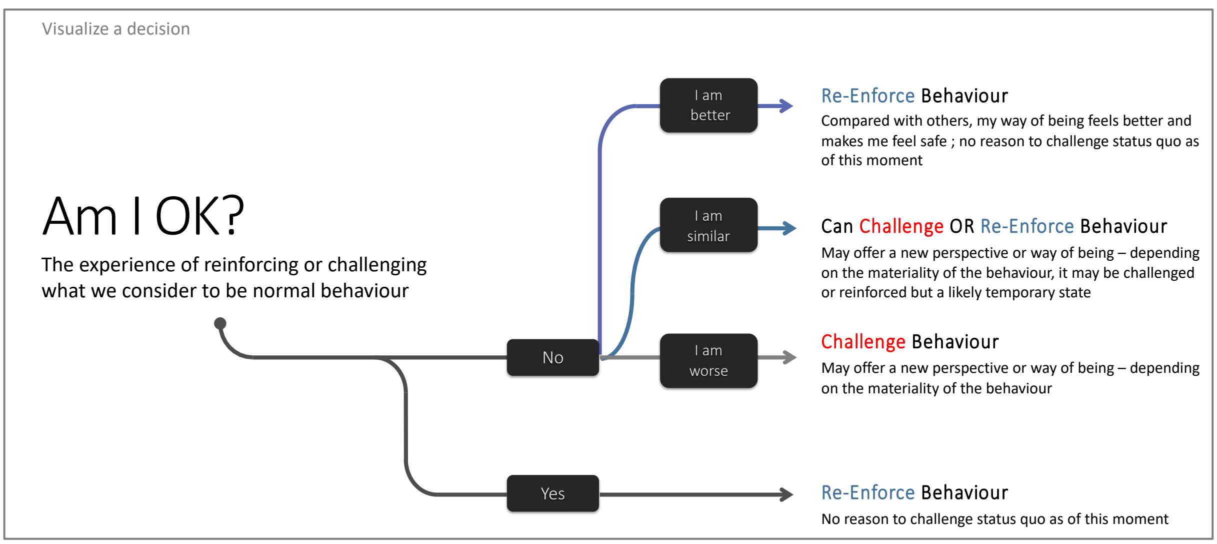


Figure 5.6 Evolution of normative behaviours

Often a non-conscious process, the client is experiencing real-time challenges or reinforcement of their behavioural patterns, driven by their sense of identity. Feeling safe (e.g. normal) non-consciously reinforces the behaviour and sense of identity. However, when the feeling of safety (or normality) is challenged, depending on the internal sense of power the client may feel, the behaviours can be reinforced or challenged.

Questions related to Identity dimension can be found in Appendix 6

5.3.4 Context

> I think it's very important to consider the social realm [context] because people don't exist in a vacuum. Anything they do is going to have an impact on the systems that they sit in and has been informed by the systems from which they came. So I think, one of the things that I, particularly think about when working with clients is that you cannot ignore the broader context of their lives. (Interviewee 2)

As explored in section 5.2.1, the rationale for creating a shared understanding of the client is critical. Given the vast diversity of experience between coach and client requires deliberate consideration as part of the biographical inquiry process. Eighty-five percent of the interviewees (11/13) mentioned cross-cultural dynamics, culture, spirituality, socio-economic considerations and religion as key areas of exploration.

In this increasingly globalised world, our differing contexts play a larger role than before. Based on the data, four key drivers to the dimensions of context emerged. These were:

1. culture and race drivers;
2. socio-economic drivers;
3. spiritual drivers; and, finally,
4. age and generational drivers.

Within each of these drivers are explicit and implicit elements.

Culture and race drivers

> There will always be the added complexity of how well does the family attune to the culture that exists outside the four walls of the family of origin. Are 'we' the majority, minority or something in between? Our sense of belonging or 'outsidership' is prevalent whether its explicit or not. (Interviewee 3)

The exploration of culture and race can be a subject fraught with complexity. Adding to its complexity is the sense of inclusion the client may feel around the predominate culture in their childhood and how they rationalised the relative differences between their home culture and that of the greater society in which they lived. As indicated in Chapter 4 (section 4.1), 77% (10/13) of the interviewees for this research are living and/or working in a geographic context that is different from their place of birth. As a result, they have learned through years of practise and experience in coaching, that context dynamics matter. Beyond the need to create shared understanding, the role religion, culture, societal pressures and expectations plays om the client are incredibly important criteria and considerations for any coaching work.

While there was limited literature in the coaching and coaching psychology literature about systemic race and ethnicity issues, to borrow from the social sciences, common themes around negotiating identities; privilege and blind spots; and systemic discrimination are often cited (Rankin-Wright et al., 2017). Some of the ways in which this was explored by interviewees was by understanding for example, what a Malaysian Muslim would consider strength in leadership as compared to a Filipino Catholic. They will both have a sense of right in their approach, and it will be hard to pinpoint where that sense came from when examining their life alone. The threads of what a person should be are often held as non-conscious projections from the race and culture in which we were raised (Interviewee 3).

Socio-economic drivers

> As children, we don't necessarily have a sense of enough? So it's delineated from what our parents tell us is enough or not. Eventually, over time, we develop greater self-awareness, based on social normative behaviour in our reference groups. Whether that's family, our school system or socio-economic status – there is a different philosophy for each level and over time, we decide if that is fair, enough and just. (Interviewee 3)

The socio-economic dynamics from childhood can play a role in adulthood. Fifty-four percent of the interviewees (7/13) said they explicitly explored this issue, while others either implicitly checked for understanding or did not explore this area. The primary driver for consideration is to understand how much of a role it plays within the context of current dynamics and goals, as explored in coaching. As one interviewee suggested, to talk about job satisfaction and engagement will inevitably include a discussion about financial goals. Those financial goals – for example, how much savings (or lack thereof) – often go back to some context from childhood related to money and security (Interviewee 8).

Most of the literature on socioeconomic factors and coaching relates to accessibility, whereby coaching is often reserved for those who can afford it or are rewarded with it due to their white-collar professions.. However, this is not relevant to this research because the socioeconomic factors are being considered in the context of a client's life and the implications of that for their meaning making.

Spiritual drivers

> It's about working with the client's faith, philosophies and values that inform their unconscious systems. It is their customs, their religions and their inherent philosophy on life. (Interviewee 3).

Sixty-two percent (8/13) of interviewees said they explicitly explore this area by asking the question, 'Are you a spiritual person?' or 'Does spirituality play a role in your life?' It is important to note, though, that spirituality is being used as an agnostic exploration into both religion and any other related doctrine that a client may observe. As one interviewee described, asking someone about their religious affiliations can be considered inappropriate, but asking if spirituality plays a role allows the client to choose how much or little they choose to declare (Interviewee 6). Interestingly, this was also brought up as an important consideration, particularly in Asia. The idea of aligning with majority or minority religious groups can influence perspectives (e.g. being raised as Christian in a Muslim country like Indonesia or raised as a born-again Christian in a predominantly Buddhist home and culture).

As discussed in the literature, this can be an complex area to explore. Elliott and Tuohy (2006) reference the at-times contradictory nature of religious tradition with philosophical and ideological traditions that can become challenging in social discourse. Spirituality has been described as the inner self but it can also have an outer orientation that can serve to define and locate the self (de Vries, 2007). It appears, too, that more recently there has been a renewed focus on spirituality in the West as part of a quest for personal self-transcendence (Elliott, 2010). The most relevant way in which spirituality is often explored in coaching is through a greater understanding of the beliefs that drive the coachee (Elliot, 2010). Elliott proposes a six-pronged inquiry that explores beliefs though rituals, experience, social structure, texts, stories and myths, ethics and symbols. He suggests that this is fundamentally important in coaching in order 'to draw out awareness of any salient relationship with religious beliefs, values and personal spirituality with beliefs that impact the leadership held by the coachee.' (p. 100).

Age and generational drivers

> There are certain milestone ages, usually around 12 or 13 where some interesting things happen. But beyond the client's age, is the client's generational context and how that impacts the way they see the world. Baby boomers see the world in a different context to say Gen Y [millennials]. (Interviewee 7)

Only 31% of interviewees (4/13) explored the roles of age and generation. In doing so, they made inferences based on their own assumptions of materiality. As the above quote explores, certain implicit implications are drawn when dealing with a client who is part of Generation Y and others. Seldom does the question of age get explicitly asked, but understanding the context of the geopolitical and social landscape helps. For example, one interviewee does significant work with the Singapore government. He referenced how the generation that grew up with Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew still governing (he led Singapore's independence and governance for over 30 years) have a very different perspective on leadership than the newer generation of leaders (Interviewee 6).

One of the generational drivers is the notion of extension drivers as also being important to context. As described by one interviewee:

> Influence goes beyond the family of origin, beyond the world that we live in. If you were a child in the past 20 years, you grew up in an age of digitisation and online social media. There was never really the segregation between you and the bubble of where you grew up versus the outside world. As a child, you watched families on TV in America and borrowed some of those cultural norms. I see kids born and raised in Singapore with American accents. We can no longer think in the geographical bounded terms we once did. (Interviewee 2)

Implicit and explicit drivers

As part of the data that emerged in this section was the notion of implicit and explicit drivers, driven by family and societal expectations. There also seems to be a range that emerges within these family and societal expectations that moves from ascribed – what it means to be a person of colour in a given country, or to be part of a minority religious sect in a highly religious country – to fluidity, whereby the client makes their own sense of materiality and meaning based on their personal version of reality.. These two aspects combine to create what is being referred to as 'context spectrum': the internal sense of responsibility and/or expectations a client feels, given their background.

In the literature, the concept of a multi-generational workforce has been explored through   diversity of behaviours, values, perceptions; communication, working and leadership styles; and change management (Ansaah, 2020) as well as effects on the work environment due to altered workplace demographics (Burke and Ng, 2006). One application of generational drivers in organisations is the use of coaching for knowledge transfer between generations, suggesting that it is the most neutral and age-agnostic approach that empowers both the learner and teacher (Smetana et al., 2019). However, there is some evidence that the notion of generational cohorts differing significantly in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation may be false, and that they are in fact much more aligned than previously believed – the one notable difference being the degree of satisfaction in autonomy between Generation Y and Generation X (Heyns and Kerr, 2018). Therefore, what seems to be material in the research is the idea of recognising the differences between coach and client in the inferences they may be making about each other, based on generational similarities and/or differences.

Summary

The four context drivers are summarised in Figure 5.7, along with the context spectrum that seems to emerge within each area.

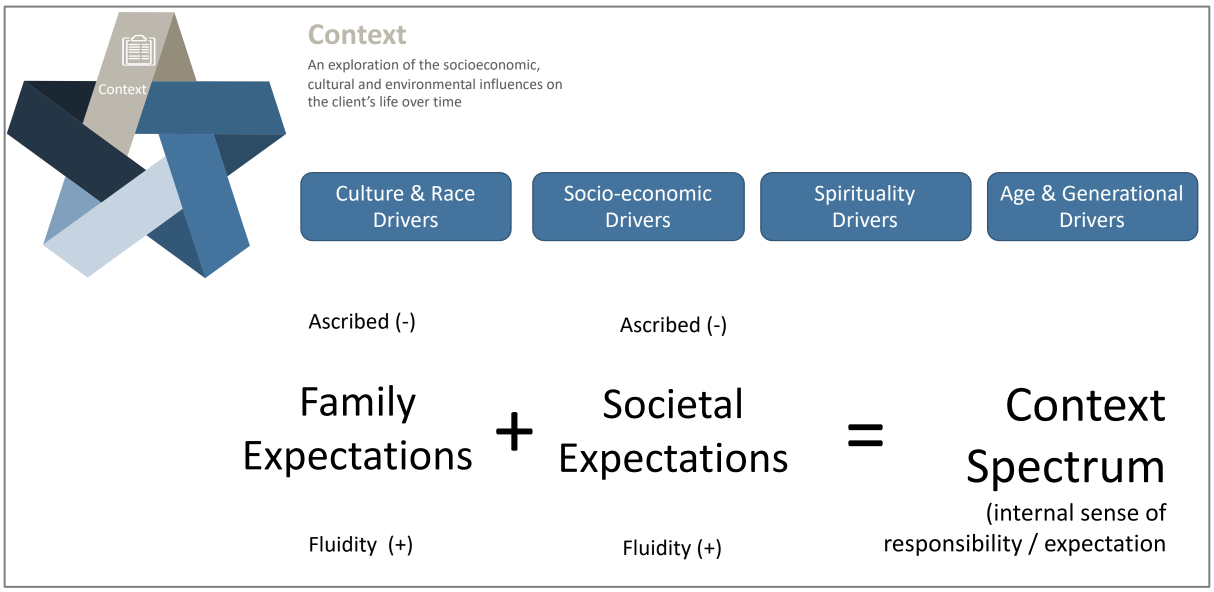


Figure 5.7 Context drivers

Questions explored in the context driver have been included in Appendix 7.

5.3.5 Emotional spectrum

In all the interviews, reference to emotions and working with them were explored. The word 'emotions' was often used interchangeably with the word 'feelings' (237 references) and was the largest area of exploration overall.

A perspective that is relevant in the vast literature is to examine the role in which emotions play in coaching. It is suggested that emotions are most often used in coaching for one of three reasons(Bachirova and Cox, 2007b):

- to understand attitudes at work;
- to engage in and with the coaching process; and

- for the coach to help the client engage with and express emotions

Building on the view of engaging with emotions in the coaching process is the awareness of how a client progresses or is hindered by emotions, and how that has an impact on their ability to achieve sustainable change (O'Broin and Palmer, 2019). The research related to the critical moment in the coaching relationship adds to the view of how emotions are used in coaching. It suggests that moments of intense emotion are often the hallmark of pivotal shifts for the client in the coaching (Day et al., 2008). Linking emotions to a biographical inquiry process suggests an exploration of personal narrative via autobiographical memory that gives the greatest insight into self and agency (Oakley and Halligan, 2017) and the concept that, through some form of autobiographical discovery, mental processes influence judgements, feelings or behaviour, is useful in coaching (Wilson, 2004).

Analysis of the data related to emotions revealed three core areas:

- Which emotions matter?
- Emotions as the 'gatekeeper' to what may be happening non-consciously.
- The driver of action and/or behaviour.

5.3.5.1 Which emotions matter?

> I will often use the word experience as a generic word for wanting to talk about emotion. Easier to let emotions begin to be apparent, rather than start naming them up front. Also important to reflect this is the kind of range of emotions that we're going to be talking about, and how emotions mixed together to create feelings. (Interviewee 1)

It is this link between emotions and executive function that is often explored in applied neuroscience. Although the brain has specialised regions of function, it is the quality of connectivity and thus the degree of integration (all driven by the emotional regulator called the amygdala) that influence self-regulation and leadership capacity. The basic idea is that emotions like love, joy and happiness drive towards greater for complexity by more freely accessing the pre-frontal cortex versus emotions that trigger the amygdala like fear, anger or sadness and inhibit access to the prefrontal cortex (Siegel, 2007). Therefore, it was interesting to compare which emotions were most often explored versus those that were less so. Brown and Dzendrowskyj (2018) explore emotions as attachment-based (love/trust, excitement/joy) or escape-based (sadness, shame, disgust, anger, fear) and startle/surprise (what it is being called 'curiosity' in this research.

From the data, in considering attachment-based emotions, one interviewee described it as the prevalence of open expressions of love and joy in early life that often links with the benefit of a sense of safety in adult life. But one can also find that it can lead to an avoidance or fear of pain (Interviewee 9). Another interviewee said that the 'spirit is innately grateful and joyful and loving. So, if wounds are never released, never liberated or healed, then we get sick, we get dis-ease' (Interviewee 5). The idea is that the soul strives for attachment-based emotions and that a greater move towards this is desirable. We often see this type of sentiment in constructive-developmental stages as well, whereby the later stages often bring with them the notion of love, empathy and greater connectedness with others.

For 56% of the interviewees (7/13), the emotion or feeling of curiosity often came up as a place of exploration for the coach. They would see themselves as instruments and say that, if they felt curious about something, they would go deeper into that line of inquiry, which often resulted in interesting insights. Coaches also used curiosity as a tool for clients themselves to go deeper. What are you curious about in that person, or their action, or your own actions? Curiosity gives both the coach and the coachee the capacity to explore and unearth things that they may not have otherwise, a realisation that resonated with the literature by Brown and Dzendrowskyj (2018) in which this emotion was the great provoker.

Escape emotions were explored most frequently, with all the interviewees exploring some form of these emotions with clients. The exploration was usually done in one of three ways:

1. by the unlocking of pain from the past and/or family of origin;
2. by tracing the root cause in the present; or
3. as a stand-in for discussions on issues that were difficult to explore.

Interviewees described elements such as 'slow it down enough so we can see what sits underneath it' (Interviewee 8), or used them as a tracer: 'When sadness comes into the room, tracing that back to the past and where sadness came from helps us see why it's here today' (Interviewee 9). There was also an acknowledgement that easy-to-express emotions are often those the client has well integrated, whereas when they have trouble expressing certain emotions, it may be that some level of pain sits in the non-conscious and requires addressing: 'The more clients learn to be patience, the more practice, the more they can facilitate the emergence of upper appearance of what's really driving us. We need to have the capacity to be in contact with it' (Interviewee 4).

Another interesting perspective that emerged from the data was the difference between inferred and expressed emotions. Given the higher orientation towards coaches working in Asia, emotions became an interesting inquiry. Some interviewees believed that emotions were deeply suppressed, while others said escape emotions were often more expressed in family of origin than attachment. This dichotomy in perspectives was shared with one interviewee who suggested that the difference is likely the sense of inferred versus expressed feelings. For example, you know you are loved, even if it is not said or expressed in a hug or kiss. Likewise. the inferred sense of shame, anger or guilt can be felt, even if no one yells or disciplines (Interviewee 8).

5.3.5.2 Emotions as the 'gatekeeper' to what may be happening non-consciously

> When we explore what is really happening in the client, it is not a thinking system. Thinking it's just telling us a post hoc story of what the brain already knows. It's the story house of experience. What we want to uncover is what does the brain already know? This inquiry is attributed to emotions. (Interviewee 1)

In all the interviews, the relationship between emotions and the non-conscious was evident Called 'truth' by one interviewee, when we begin to explore the emotions, , we begin to get down, layer by layer, into what's really going on–the client's ultimate truth (Interviewee 6). Another interviewee further expanded that the non-conscious in coaching was the process of exploring through emotions to what sits under the surface that can slowly be brought into consciousness through emotional language and somatic experience (Interviewee 3). Similarly, 'Emotions can represent something pre-conscious' (Interviewee 10); 'Emotions symbolise importance' (Interviewee 13).

In the literature, Oakley and Halligan (2017) describes consciousness as having two aspects: the e*xperience* of and the *contents* of consciousness through thoughts, beliefs, sensations, precepts, intentions, sense of agency, memories and emotions, and that it's the process of using contents to access the experience, or order to ultimately make meaning of it. As such, part of the exploration of emotions as gatekeepers into the non-conscious was the idea of expression and stability of emotions over a lifetime. The template of emotional expression or suppression is often formed from the family of origin and carried throughout a lifetime. Explored by one interviewee was the idea that, at an early age, we learn what is acceptable and what must be kept hidden away. In some families, joy and love are openly expressed and, in some, not. In others, anger and sadness are openly expressed and, in others, not. What is sure to be found is that the template from which the client expresses their emotions was formed in some part by what was considered normal and safe in their early childhood days (Interviewee 2).

Another important aspect of emotions as gatekeepers to the non-conscious is the somatic experience of emotions. Emotional expression requires accessing language that may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some clients. Therefore, by paying attention to their somatic expression, described by one interviewee as 'getting them out of their head and into their bodies to access their emotional state' (Interviewee 3). Described by another interviewee, the conditioning that society (or family of origin) places on the appropriateness of expressing certain emotions like anger make us often unaware that we are feeling it, so connecting to the body and what is happening in the body is useful (Interviewee 4). Finally, this process of shifting somatic experience to conscious awareness was described as a journey from body–to historical context–to awareness where 'the unconscious becomes conscious by going through a little journey, starting in the body, walking past the our history and pain, to something new' (Interviewee 8).

These somatic expressions have some grounding in the literature. Often, exploring emotions in coaching reflects a bio-psycho-social model informed by theory and research from neuroscience, interpersonal neurobiology, developmental psychology and attachment theory (Gus et al., 2015).

5.3.5.3 Emotions as the driver of action or behaviour change

> Science is telling us all behaviour is the result of the way emotions got connected to experience, and then we happen to attach words to them. So what I'm directing people's attention to all the time is to try and track the emotional flow and what the underlying emotions are. I'm very keen on hyphenating the word emotions into E-motions to keep reminding us that emotions are the drivers to behaviours. (Interviewee 1)

This idea of emotions being the driver of behaviour change or creating new behaviours was shared by a minority of the interviewees, only 46% (6/13), the idea being that 'by re-connecting with the emotions, experientially re-experiencing a moment can start to shake and repattern, and create new meaning and behaviours' (Interviewee 3). As one interviewee suggested, nothing can in fact sustainably change without some form of non-conscious access: 'It's not possible to create sustainable behavioural change without accessing some degree of the non-conscious therefore the best way in and out are emotions' (Interviewee 7). An additional perspective includes 'tears symbolise an opportunity for new meaning making' (Interviewee 1).

Expanding on the notion of the non-conscious as the driver of action:

> I don't think it’s my place to do anything other than to help someone to experience. To experience is to make something conscious, which means it’s already changed. I really believe that. That’s my mantra, if we are able to bring consciousness, we’re already in the spiral of change.’ (Interviewee 2)

One interviewee expressed emotions as the source of healing required in order to shift into new behaviours: that everything is about healing a past emotional wound and that emotions invite the ‘shadow to appear, shine light on it and ultimately heal it so that those emotional triggers go away and we can give light to something new’ (Interviewee 5).

This idea of a source code to behaviour was further expanded upon from a stage perspective to suggest that we cannot alter our capacity without shifting our emotions around it:

> It’s [emotion] like a bit of the map we hold of how we understand ourselves, others and the sense we make of the connections between those things. When we explore that map, we also introduce the possibility of shifting or changing that map to make something new. (Interviewee 10)

5.3.5.4 Summary of section

There are two distinct implications from the data on the use of emotions in coaching. One is the link between the type of emotion and the client’s ability to be able to operate at an optimal leadership capacity. Therefore, in coaching, some consideration around the historical imprints that certain emotions hold in the client’s history can be very revealing around behavioural patterns in the present.

The other insight is the use of emotions as the anchoring element to what exists in the non-conscious, which has been termed ‘Emotions into Consciousness Journey’, as illustrated in Figure 5.8.

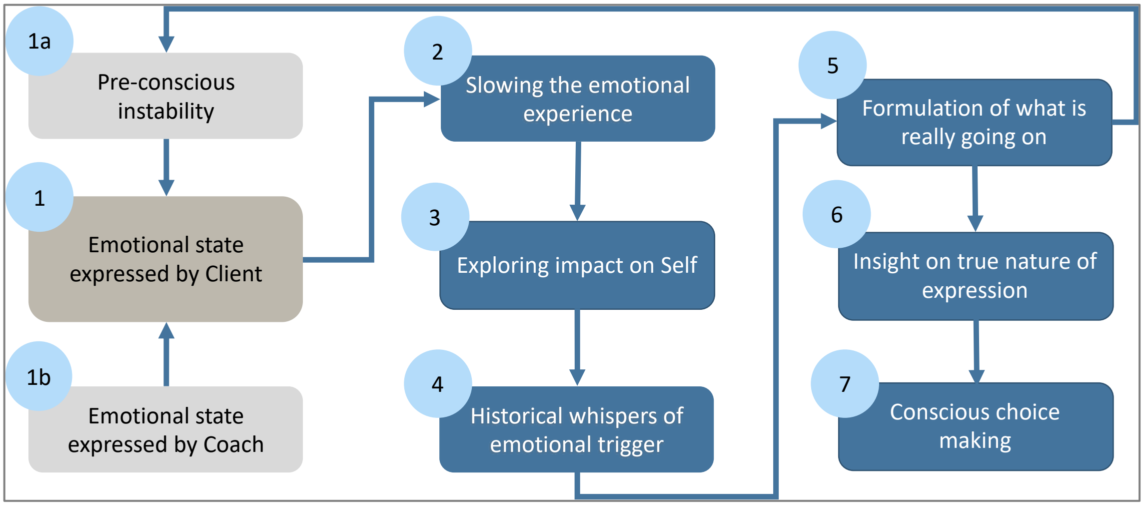


Figure 5.8 Emotions into Consciousness Journey

Emotions into Consciousness Journey

The process of exploring emotions begins at step 1 in Figure 5.8. Important to note is that the coach may also play a role in recognising the emotion, even before the client, whose awareness begins in 1b. The exploration in step 1 is to name the state being expressed and what may have sparked that state.

In step 2, the process is to slow the state down by naming the experience of it. Often linked to a somatic expression within the body, it is about having the client fully embody the emotional state, what it feels like and where they feel it in the body and bringing into consciousness the experience of the state.

Step 3 then explores the impact of the emotional state. For some, sitting with the discomfort of the emotional state can be quite triggering. Often, step 3 links very quickly to step 4, where the coach helps the client explore the historical context of the emotional state. To illustrate the point, a client may be feeling anger or sadness, but the complex act of feeling the emotional state needs to be decoupled from the story the client makes around the appropriateness to feel the emotion, passed on from the templates of the past. Once the historical whispers of the past are decoupled from the context of why the client is feeling that state in the present, we have access to what may genuinely be going on.

Step 5 then moves back to the present – to help formulate an approach or understanding of what is really triggering the client. This can bifurcate into two steps. One step is moving into step 1a whereby the entire process begins again to identify the core driver. The alternative is to move the discussion into step 6, which is the insight into the true nature of the emotional expression.

Step 6 then focuses on the distinction between the act of feeling the trigger and what can be done to resolve it. Again, anchored in the present, it is about moving the client into active decision making around choice, moving them into the final step 7.

Step 7 is active choice making, moving from being subject to the emotion to being able to make conscious choices.

Questions related to this dimension can be explored in Appendix 8.

5.3.6 Relationship as the anchoring element across all dimensions

In all the interviews, the concept of attachment and/or relationships (166 references) was explored. What was discovered was that relationship was at the heart of each and every dimension, yet also merited its own explicit extraction as a standalone dimension. Analysing the data, there was implicit exploration of the relationship dynamics based on safety, agency and expression. Yet, it was difficult to identify direct quotes because they were often part of a discussion about something else. But then there were times when there was explicit exploration of relationships, particularly around topics of adolescence and the choosing of friendships and lovers.

The core driver of insights come from the following areas:

- authority (where others have more power than self) – all the interviews;
- How to create and be in relationship with equals – 85% of the interviews (11/13);
- How to create and be in relationship with self – all the interviews;
- How to create and be in relationship with those will less power including subordinates and children – 46% of interviews (6/13); and
- How to create and be in relationship with a greater system context such as family, marriage/partnership, society, parenthood, etc. – 38% of interviews (5/13).

Table 5.2, a summary of the inferences from the data collected that relates to relationship, summarises how relationship is explicitly or implicitly explored within each dimension.

Table 5.2 Explicit and implicit drivers with biographical dimensions of meaning making

Dimension		**Nature of exploration**

Hierarchy	Explicit	Relationship with parents, teachers and other hierarchal figures, and the degree of closeness and comfort within authority and higher power structures
	Implicit	The amount of safety, agency and self-expression expressed by the client within those relationships
Peers	Explicit	Relationship with peers through various stages of life from siblings (if applicable), into friendships, romantic partnerships and professional colleagues; the shift in the relationship between inherited and chosen family
	Implicit	The amount of safety, agency and self-expression felt by the client within these relationships
Identity	Explicit	The sense of self-love, self-confidence and self-acceptance
	Implicit	How the client felt accepted by others, which led to acceptance of self
Context	Explicit	Sense of community, extended connection into a greater system of belonging beyond the family
	Implicit	Relationship to status and classification (Does the client truly belong anywhere or self-identify with a larger sense of society?)
Emotional Spectrum	Explicit	The ease with which the client can communicate and express felt emotions
	Implicit	The amount of safety and agency felt by the client within the expression of the emotions (Is it safe to be sad, mad, shameful, happy?)

The importance of a client's ability to create and sustain relationships with others has strong theoretical foundations that stem from attachment theory, which is an extensive and well-defined body of research (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2004). When therapeutic, diagnosis and pathology applications are removed, the application to leadership is the most relevant (Drake, 2009). Clear links between secure attachment dynamics and effective leadership have been made (Mayseless, 2010). Individuals who demonstrate secure attachment tend to be nominated as leaders and to adopt more empowering leadership styles and leadership effectiveness, as well as achieving positive outcomes (Mayseless, 2010). Furthermore, research suggests the focus on technical competence and organisational experience is an inadequate criterion with which to measure leadership effectiveness: the most crucial criterion being relationship competence (Manning, 2003).

Therefore, some consideration of the client's ability to form and sustain relationships is important. Questions related to this area can be explored in Appendix 9.

5.4 What are you listening for in biographical inquiry

In 92% of interviews (12/13), what mattered was not just the stories from the biographical inquiry but also the interpretation of them and the insights they offered for the purposes of coaching. The way the client interacted with those stories, how they made meaning from them and how the stories informed who they are now and how they deal with their current challenges was a key part of the biographical inquiry process. In this section, the following themes will be explored:

- What the dimensions infer about leadership behaviours.
- How to interpret the data from biographical inquiry.
- Does stage of coach matter?

5.4.1 What the dimensions infer about leadership behaviours

As the interviews evolved, there seemed to be a type of classification system that was emerging related to each dimension, and the insights they offered with regards to leadership behaviours and tendencies. Often, these were inferred behaviours, based on the topics explored in each interview. The process used to capture these thoughts were in the post-interview reflections where a list began to emerge around explicit or inferred themes. Table5.3 summarises these themes.

Table 5.3 Emerging leadership behaviours based on dimensions within biographical inquiry

Dimension	Leadership behaviours related to the dimension
Hierarchy	• Leadership styles as they relate to templates clients have been exposed to (often parents, teachers, mentors, bosses) • How a client relates and is in relationship with authority and other power structures • Ease in use and degree of power used with those who have more perceived power • Tendencies to power over/under • Highly controlled versus distributed leadership dynamics
Peers	• Collaboration style with others of equal power dynamics • Preferred role in teams • Degree of inclusion/acceptance desired by others • Degree of acceptance desired by others • Sense of competitiveness versus collegial dynamics with others
Identity	• Self-confidence/self-belief • Executive presence • Mindset and resiliency
Context	• Acceptance and appreciation of diversity • Interaction styles with perceived 'outsiders/others' • Sense of belonging to a larger system/dynamics • Curiosity about unknown
Emotional Spectrum	• Degree of integration as a leader • Emotional maturity/intelligence • Emotional expressiveness and vulnerability • Resilience
Relationship	• Engagements, nature and style of interaction with others • Ability to create trust and psychological safety • How to relate to others

It is important to note that these themes are not intended to be predictive of behaviour, rather that insights from the biographical inquiry process can possibly inform certain aspects of the behaviours being exhibited by the client in the present. In some ways, the themes can be seen as a sort of navigational mapping of areas explored in biographical inquiry and leadership tendencies.

Also, as has been explored in the literature, the links between biographical data, adult behaviour and leadership performance leave much to be desired, with limited studies including leadership effectiveness and biographical past (Rimmer et al., 1996); linking between adult behaviours and biographical data from childhood (Rothstein et al., 1990; Mumford et al., 2009); biographical data and leadership predictability in recruitment (Rothstein et al., 1990); finally, correlation between childhood achievement with adulthood leadership tendencies (Mumford et al., 2009). While all these studies demonstrate strong correlation data between the past and present, the insights are dated and lack serious evidence-based methodology. Also, none effectively outline a clear approach or framework with which to effectively explore biographical data with clients (Mumford et al, 2009). This research provides the first framework for how specific aspects of biographical inquiry can link to leadership behaviours. However, it is important to note that more research, particularly case studies, are required before the evidence base can be considered complete enough to make such an assessment.

5.4.2 How to interpret the data from biographical inquiry

> The exploration of the stories is where it all begins, but its only one part. Holding the experiences as objects to explore becomes an almost real-time meaning making exercise where the client moves from re-living the story to being in a dance with it. Some stories will still hurt, some stories flow through like energy, and others get caught up on one thing or another. You begin to see a picture form of what elements of the past are still playing out. (Interviewee 7)

In 54% of the interviews (7/13), there was reference made to the stages or phases of the biographical inquiry process – specifically the sense that clients gain an increasing amount of agency with regards to the story, and then move beyond it when the self-narrative no longer holds power or acts as an anchor but rather as a reference point.

Borrowing from Kegan's work (1985), meaning making is about understanding the subject–object perspective that the client is taking in this experience of telling the stories from their biographical inquiry. Is the client subject to the experience (e.g. reliving trauma over and over again non-consciously), or are they able to 'hold it to object'? (Interviewee 6). Other ways to describe the phenomena was 'can they see it?' (Interviewee 3), 'able to recognise the pain of it but not be subject to it anymore' (Interviewee 5). An additional benefit of this process of being able to hold the experience as object was the good sign that the client was resourced enough to go into the past (particularly trauma) and not require counselling or therapy (Interviewee 7).

What was emerging from the data suggested that there were two or three stages, or shifts, that happened in the telling of biographical data and therefore the meaning making the client was extracting from that event. The first stage, which all the interviewees referred to, was around the idea of being subject to a narrative or story. This was described as:

> It’s important to understand what I'm subject to. What I can't see. I haven't got perspective on it. It’s not known to me. I might see the outcomes or the ramifications of a pattern of thinking or an assumption or whatever. But I can’t, I can’t see the cause-ology. I just know what I am experiencing takes hold of me. (Interviewee 9)

The next stage, referred to by 46% of interviewees (6/13), was that of being able to hold the experience as an observation or reflection, escribed well by this interviewee:

> Important to see if they can differentiate within their experiences, from what they had agency over, what systems and structures existed which they may not have any control over, but that affect them anyway. How do they make sense of their experiences now? And how might that affect what they do today and in the future? (Interviewee 7).

The third and final stage, which was alluded to by only 23% of interviewees (3/13) was this transcendence stage, described as follows:

> The experience becomes a root for expression. A root for having conversations and a scaffold to help myself and others understand and find a way through a problem they're struggling with. The experience becomes a language that one could work with. Not to constrain, but to expand. A subtle self-development theory or approach for enabling us to consider what matters in this experience, what still needs exploring and what elicits surprise. (Interviewee 12).

In the literature (Loevinger, 1979; Cook-Grueter, 1985; Merron et al., 1987), all explore the idea of projective testing around meaning making in psychology and psychotherapy and, in the case of Torbert and Cook-Grueter, adapted into leadership. These approaches have gained criticism as labour intensive and with variable reliability (Backirova, 2011, 2014). There is also lack of evidence linking developmental level with leadership effectiveness (Lawrence, 2017). However, some studies have found that have there is a strong correlation between early stages and poor leadership (Lawrence, 2017; Eigel and Kuhnert, 2005; Strang and Kuhnert, 2009).

However, what is most relevant for this research is the specific application in coaching as described by Bachkirova and Cox (2019), from Berger (2012) who focuses on a constructive-developmental coaching approach that uses qualitative interviews (subject–object interview or SOI) to measure levels of development. The idea is that, through the exchange between coach and client, a coach is able to gauge the stage the client may be in and propose provocation within the client to engage in stage development.

As a result, by listening to the detail and level of description of the story itself, a vivid picture is formed of the stage in which the story was described and the inference that could have on leadership behaviours. By blending the leadership traits explored in each dimension with the emerging stages, the following levels were defined within each dimension, as outlined in Figure 5.9.

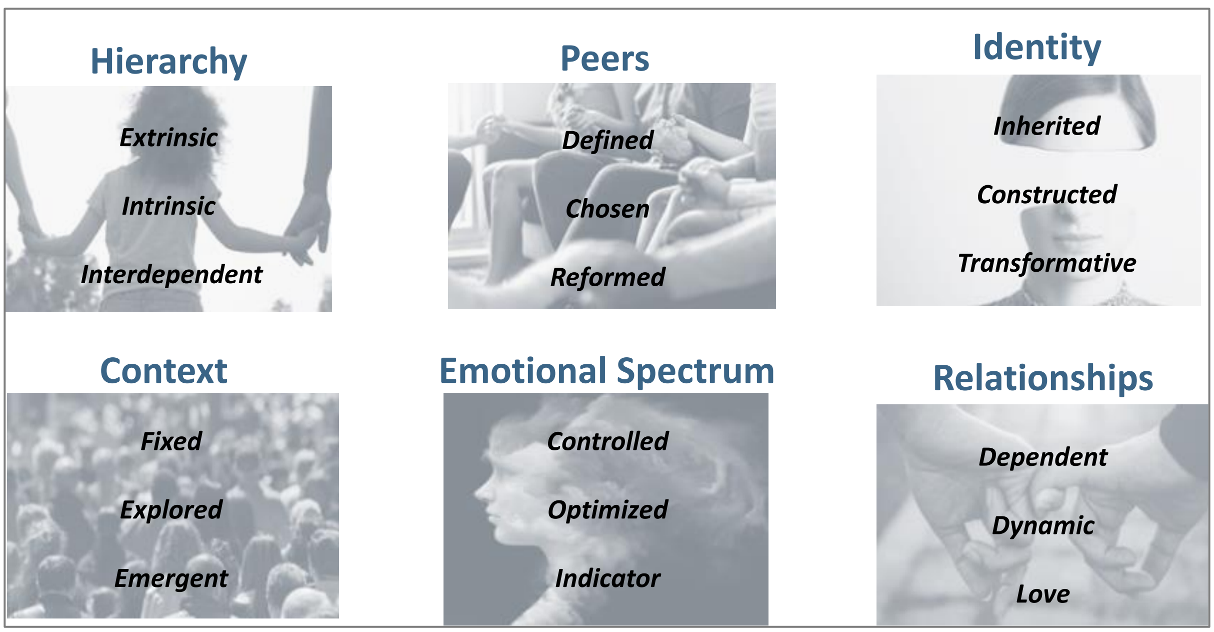


Figure 5.9 The journey of stages within biographical dimensions of meaning making ??caps

Hierarchy

The three key stages within this dimension are extrinsic, intrinsic and interdependent. At the extrinsic stage, leadership behaviours and tendencies are extrinsically anchored. The common themes that emerge are of a more reactionary nature to the external environment, suggesting that decision making comes from a sense of responding to dynamics that are not controllable. The move into the intrinsic stage suggests the client's increasing power to have and retain agency on what is happening. It is the act of taking the external dynamics and bringing them into and/or within one self to make meaning and more informed decisions on what is next. The final stage is interdependent, whereby the role the client plays in both the creation of the dynamics and the outcomes are seen in equal measure and considered dynamically. It becomes less about what is external and what is internal, and more a recognition of the role they play in the circumstances as they are. If the circumstances need to be different, so does the meaning making they have applied to get there.

Peers

The three key stages within this dimension are defined, chosen and re-formed. The defined stage suggests that the client has a very limited perspective on who are considered peers and tends to play a similar role in all the groups they work in or belong to. There is a sense that peer groups exist without much control over their selection, the role they are required to play and how to interact within them. In the next stage of ‘chosen’, there is an increased sense of agency and choice. The client has designed their own chosen peer groups and likely feels a deeper sense of belonging within them. There is also increased dynamism in terms of the role the client can play within different peer systems and a higher degree of coping mechanisms within peers group that they don’t identify and/or enjoy associating with. The final stage is re-formed, which suggests a constantly moving dynamic of association with, association to and the role within groups that responds to the needs of the context in which the client finds themselves. The need to define or associate becomes less fixed and is always moving, depending on the need of the client at the time. They can play with the need to belong, to stand independently and to transcend beyond. However, this stage often tends to see less well-formed peer groups because there is a sense of no longer needing the support and connection of peers.

Identity

The three key stages within this dimension are inherited, constructed and transformative. ‘Inherited’ is the sense that identity has been imposed upon the client – who they are supposed to be has been defined by extrinsic forces beyond themselves. As clients move into stage 2, there is a greater sense of choice about who the client wants to be and how they want to define themselves. There is more room for experimentation of identity and a willingness to play with varying structures of self. In the final stage, identity becomes an unnecessary label. The sense of self becomes more of an energy than an identity and there is constant movement within it.

Context

The three key stages within this dimension are fixed, explored and emergent. In stage 1 (fixed), there is a sense that the circumstances in which the client was raised are the defining characteristics of their life: that they are maintaining the status quo either because it is familiar and there is no desire to change, or because it is not possible to change. There is also a strong sense that the circumstances under which the client was born and raised control how they see the world and themselves within it. In stage 2 (explored), there is more curiosity and desire to experience contexts different the one in which the client was raised. There is more choice and desire to want to shift context to reflect the values the client has created for themselves in adult life. Finally, stage 3 (emergent) suggests a fluidity in context whereby the client no longer feels the need to classify or self-identify with a category or group because they have no bounds to their exploration and identity. A lack of socioeconomic, religious, or cultural identity is often felt in this stage. Even race becomes an access point for reflection but not an anchor for self-identity. The shadow of stage 3 can be almost oblivious to the need to connect to a community outside the client themselves.

Emotional spectrum

The three key stages within this dimension are controlled, optimised and indicator. In stage 1 (controlled), there is a sense within the client that emotions are parts of oneself that can feel uncontrollable or are meant to be controlled. Clients who find emotional self-management difficult often indulge or suppress their emotions because they are too much to deal with – often after having been raised in households where emotional expression were in the extremes, either unsafely expressed or completely suppressed. Escape emotions, such as anger and fear, are often easier to feel and express, whereas attachment-based emotions, such as love and joy, can often feel inaccessible. As clients move into stage 2, there is a sense of awareness that emotions are indicators to something deeper and non-conscious within themselves. Emotions are used as indicators to explore the deeper meaning within oneself. Attachment- based emotions, such as love and joy, become more prevalent in their systems and there is a desire to create more of them in their lives. There is also a sense of responsibility to self-manage emotions effectively to ensure that there is no impact on others, and therefore that there can be some avoidant behaviour around the expression of escape emotions like anger and sadness. In stage 3, there is an overwhelming sense of attachment emotions: that love and joy often permeate through every experience, action and reaction to others. There is also a greater comfort and ease in accessing the deeper escape emotions of sadness, shame and fear to better understand what may be sitting within the non-conscious. Emotions become a barometer rather than an expression.

Relationship

The three key stages within this dimension are dependent, dynamic and love. In stage 1 (dependent), the separation between self and the relationship is hard to distinguish. Often described as an insecure attachment in psychology, these clients often have fear in their relationships of being abandoned or bound by certain conditions. They have often had some form of trauma in their childhood years and struggle to form healthy levels of autonomy in their relationship with others. There often exist strong patterns of dependency to certain types of people or types of relationships. In stage 2 (dynamic), clients have a greater sense of awareness of their role within relationships and can form healthy boundaries. They also find themselves stretching the boundaries of the types of people and the forms of relationship that can exist. They have a range of behaviours that can span the spectrum of insecure to secure, but have greater awareness of their patterns and look to move more relationships into secured attachment. In stage 3 (love), there is an overwhelming desire for love in all relationships. The materiality of any single relationship becomes less important, but a general sense of connection and love for all emerges. The irony is that those closest to the client in this stage may often feel isolated, because even a healthy degree of dependency is often not required of a client at this stage : a friend to all but a lover to none!

5.4.3 Does the coach stage matter?

One of the principles of a constructive-developmental approach is that, if a client is in a later stage of development than a coach, the coach is likely to be less effective in providing a reflective partnership (Backirova, 2014). This also seems to be true for biographical inquiry. While not explicitly expressed by each interviewee, 31% of the interviewees (4/13) made reference to the notion of doing 'our own work' before setting out to do work with others (Interviewee 7). If there are significant traumas in your own biographical history, it is unlikely you will be able to hold the space for your client: 'We have to start on ourselves. If we haven't done the work, processed and healed, we cannot partner with our clients to do a version of the same. It will be too dangerous for us both.' (Interviewee 2)

5.5 The non-conscious as the intersection of the past, present and future

The final finding of this research is the concept of the intersection of the past, present and future time horizons. Whether through an exploration of the past in the present, 54% of the interviewees (7/13), or the notion of the past, present and future existing simultaneously 31% of the interviewees (4/13), the following is a good encapsulation of the concept of time and coaching:

> We're trying to integrate data in different time dimensions. I'm using it [biographical inquiry] as a gateway to get them to access a deeper reflections from the past, creating intentional dialogue around what's meaningful about that for them today, and how this all fits in a bigger perspective of future versions of themselves. (Interviewee 4)

Another interviewee said, 'We are accessing, the past, present and future all the time. A whisper from the future, the echoes from the past interact with this growing edge in a number of different ways in today' (Interviewee 10). And, finally, 'I think there's also a time factor to it to say how do I make sense of the past, how it informs my current situation, but also what I want to do in the future and what's meaningful?' (Interviewee 7).

This concept emerged first after the fourth interview. The researcher's noted reflection was 'Can we as coaches work in a single time horizon?' Exploring this idea in the literature brought her back to the work of Stelter who suggested that integrating events from the past and present within the perspective of the future offers direction that appears uplifting (Stelter, 2014). But this does not capture the interlocking nature of all three time horizons simultaneously.

In this section, the following will be explored:

- The past cannot exist without the present.
- The present is a construct of the past and a projection of the future.

5.5.1 The past cannot exist without the present

> It's like looking into their past is able to give the client an understanding of where 'it' comes from, there is a sense of excitement already being able to feel into this new space, and then the need for action just comes. That is where the dance of coaching really begins. (Interviewee 3)

Over half the interviewees (54%, 7/13) acknowledged that the interaction of the present self in narrating stories from the past already changes the experience of it. In other words, the past –as the coach is listening to it –has already changed from the actual experience the client had of it. The very act of looking at the past, through the eyes of the present, makes our history change in some ways. This concept of changing the past through storytelling is well explored in the literature around narrative practice (Pillemer et al., 1991; Pillemer, 1998, 2001; Rubbin et al., 1998; Habermas, 2011; Graci and Fivush, 2017).

This phenomenon was well described by one interviewee who said a client was relaying some information as part of their biographical inquiry and began to tear up. The interviewee said nothing and waited for the client who then said that they had known that story for 40 years but, for some reason, their soul was touched differently this time. The interviewee described it as ‘it was like a doorway into something a little bit deeper than she has ever seen before was opened, and it could have only been opened in this present moment’ (Interviewee 11). This interviewee has well personified that the essence of the past cannot exist without the present. If this moment between client and coach had not taken place, exactly as it did in that present moment, the insight that client experienced about the past could never have materialised.

This subtle yet substantial shift has been described differently throughout the research: ‘reprocessing of old narratives’ (Interviewee 9), ‘seeing the past for the first time’ (Interviewee 12), ‘new insights just click’ (Interviewee 8), ‘something has changed in the room’ (Interviewee 3). But all the comments suggests that the past materially shifts when examined through the eyes of the present.

5.5.2 The present is a construct of the past and a projection of the future

> I feel that when a person crosses an edge from a present state to another state, past or future, there is a delicate touch that they need to be left alone to do work between states, to truly cross that edge to something new. (Interviewee 11)

A small group of interviewees (31%, 4/13) made reference to the concept of the intersection of the past, present and future: ‘By examining our historical imprints, it's like we used the past to inform a more whole future’ (Interviewee 10). Described in different ways, it is the intersection of awareness, ideas and subject–object orientation that all become integrated and – all of a sudden – the future seems different (Interviewee 6). Another interviewee expanded on this: ‘Our body knows, you can feel it like guideposts that somethings has changed in the way they think about the past and future’ (Interviewee 3).

One interviewee even suggested that she begins in the future, before heading into the past:

> I invite visualisations of the future. What resources does the client need to enable confidence in going into the past. That's where the magic starts to happen, many call it really spiritual. This is awakening the non-consciousness of multiple time dimensions. (Interviewee 2).

5.5.3 Summary of section

The act of doing a biographical inquiry, while based in the past, is invariably being seen through the lens of the present. Also, the act of setting goals is a future-oriented action but seen through the lens of both the past and the present. The past cannot exist without the present; the present cannot exist without the past and future; the future cannot exist without the present and the past.

A small group of interviewees, 31% (4/13), made reference to the concept of simultaneous intersection of the past, present and future: that the past, present and future can only be accessed by the client though some form of intersection of all time dimensions. Figure 5.10 outlines these views called the intersection of past, present and future.

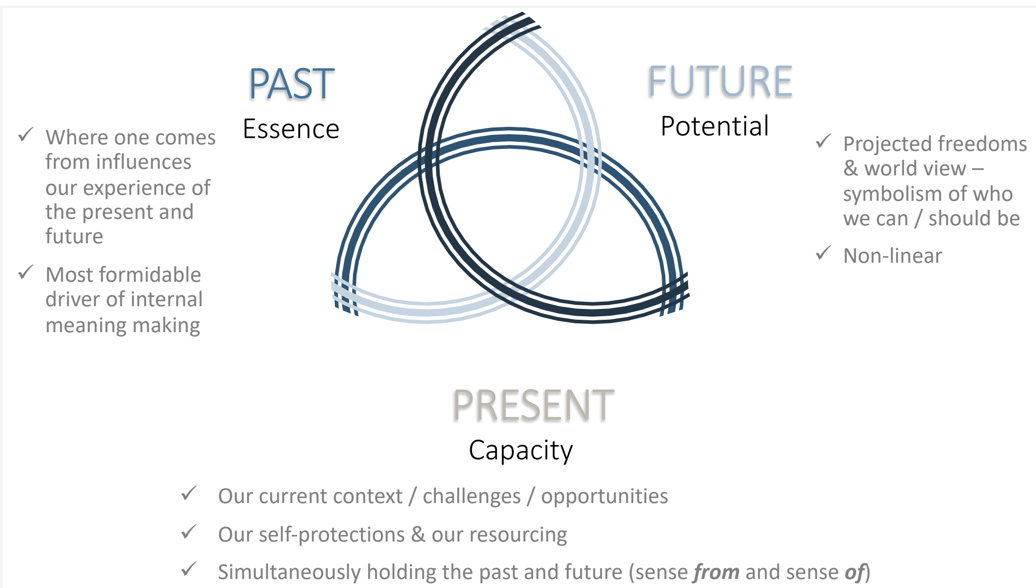


Figure 5.10 The intersection of past, present and future (IPPF)

The implications for coaching are twofold. First, the coach cannot work with a client without some consideration of all three horizons. Second, changing the meaning making at one time level will invariable shift the meaning making from another time horizon.

Working with three time horizons

Coaching is often linked to goals and activities that have a future orientation (Bluckert, 2005; Grant, 2006; Bachkirova, 2007; Spnelli, 2008). However, this research suggests that true meaning making is discovered through biographical inquiry from the past. And, in the very process of being in dialogue with a client, the present is weaving meaning between the present, past and future at all times. As such, it is important for the coach to recognise moments of shifting meaning: when a client has reflected into some element of their past that has brought new awareness to the present and could inform their future perspective as well.

The past is the essence of the client – it informs the key influencers of our experience and the most formidable drivers of our internal meaning making. The future represents a projected view of freedom and symbolism of *who* one could be and the potential of *what* could be. Then, the present links the client's current context: both challenges and opportunities as well as self-protection mechanisms and an overall sense of internal resourcing. It is also the integrating mechanism between the past and future sense of self.

Questions related to the intersection of the past, present and future can be explored in Appendix 10.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions & Recommendations

This chapter will explore the following areas

- 6.1 - the overall contribution to the field of coaching psychology.
- 6.2 - how the conclusions address the aims and objectives.
- 6.3 - a perspective on materiality and confidence of findings.
- 6.4 - where the research has yet to go.
- 6.5 - recommendations for coaches.

6.1 Overall contributions to the field of coaching psychology

This research began to answer the fundamental question of why clients do what they do. The researcher's perspective on this *why* is to focus on the client's meaning-making structures, both at a conscious and non-conscious level, as discovered through biographical inquiry. It is this use of biographical inquiry that became the first consequential outcome of this research. By intentionally incorporating the past as a methodological approach in coaching, the researcher was actually expanding both the nature of coaching and the access points of meaning making with clients. Also, as an unintended but welcomed outcome, the research also expanded the view of coaching as a process of dialogical inquiry and reflective practice. This will be further explored in section 6.1.1.

The most significant contribution of this research is the creation of the first evidence-based coaching framework for biographical inquiry called the 'Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making' (BDMM). As explored in Chapter 2, there is a clear gap in the evidence-based research on the use of biographical inquiry in coaching, and therefore this framework offers the possibility of creating a whole new body of knowledge within the field of coaching psychology. Also, the BDMM framework explores the key dimensions of a biographical inquiry approach, how these can be traced over a lifetime of experiences with the client, and how they are linked to leadership behaviours in the present. This will be further explored in section 6.1.2.

Finally, using a biographical inquiry process highlighted how the consciousness to non-consciousness scale could be examined as a time dimension through the intersection of the past, present and future (IPPF) within coaching as explored in section 6.1.3.

6.1.1 Expanding the nature of coaching

The use of the past in coaching is a highly debated topic. Often, the moment the past is highlighted as important to the work of coaching, the debate between coaching and therapy is cited. While many researchers have explored this topic at length (Hart et al., 2001; Grant and Cavanagh, 2004; Linley, 2006; Maxwell, 2009; Theeboom et al., 2013), this perspective is less relevant to this research.

The use of the past is not explored with the intent to heal, integrate or challenge but rather as a way to explore how historical experiences may influence behaviours in the present. The perspective that patterns that emerge in the present-day context often have long histories of patterning from the past, and will likely continue into the future and contribute to ineffective leadership, is one already offered in coaching (Kilburg and Donohue, 2014). Also, the trend in contemporary coaching research is a move towards more social-psychological perspectives (Passmore and Lai, 2020). As such, to write off an exploration of the past as being irrelevant or unrelated to coaching is simply ineffective.

However, to say that no historical perspectives are considered in coaching is also inaccurate. As explored in Chapter 2, the use of narrative practice (Graci and Fivush, 2017; Drake, 2016; McAdmas, 2018; Stelter, 2007; Vogel 2012) and a constructivism approach to meaning making (Bachkirova and Cox, 2019; Laurence 2017) does either directly or indirectly consider the movement of the client from the past to the present. But the emphasis is on the journey from the past to the present versus an exploration of the past from the lens of the present. This subtle yet important distinction is why the nature of coaching is being expanded through this research.

First, the exploration of the past suggests expanding the view of coaching as a process of dialogical inquiry and reflective practice. As examined in section 5.1.1, interviewees suggested that, by exploring the past, the client, with the aid of the coach, is able to engage in new meaning making and meta reflective practice that can lead to new insights on how to change or shift behaviours. This resulted in the creation of a new model called ‘The Six Nodes of Higher-Quality Conversations in coaching’ (6-HQC).

Figure 6.1 offers an overview of a coaching model for dialogical inquiry that adopts reflective practise to have higher quality conversation, gain deeper insights, and create deeper levels of integration for the client. It integrates all the elements of the findings.

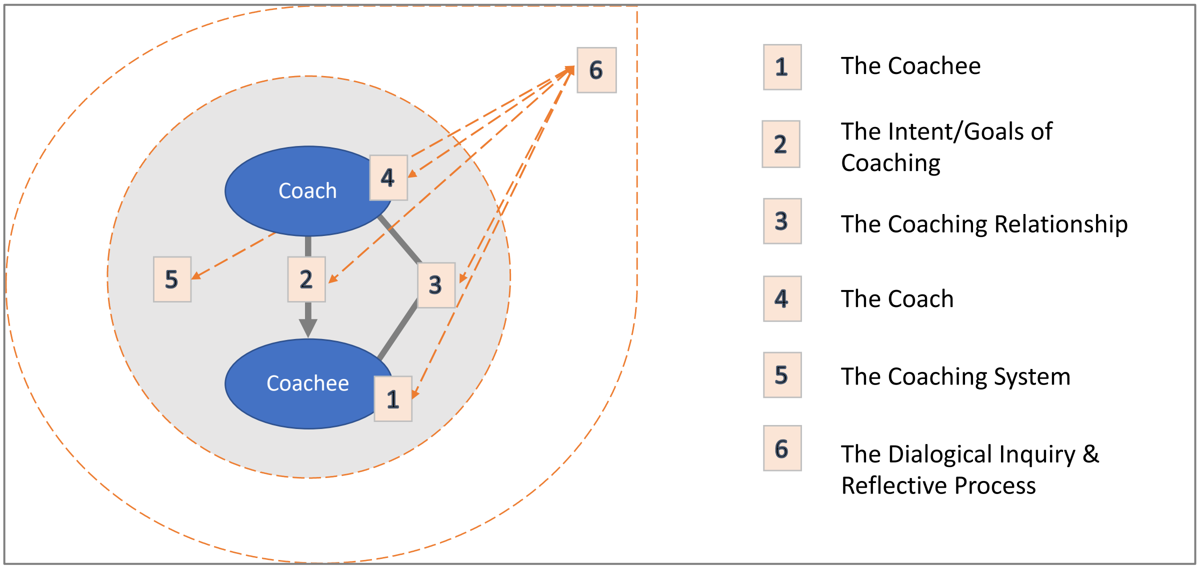


Figure 6.1 - Six Nodes of Higher Quality Conversations in Coaching (6-HQC)

The model identifies six core nodes to the coaching conversation.

1 – The Coachee

The first node of consideration is the meaning making system of the coachee. The coachee is extracting meaning from the past, making meaning in the present and projecting meaning into the future. To explore this essential work of a shared understand of the coachee is foundational to all coaching. While the coachee exists as its own entity (e.g. node) in the cycle, it is its movement to node 6 (the space of dialogical inquiry and reflective process) that helps shift the meaning making held in node 1. Re-circulating back to node 1 helps the coachee explore their sense of agency over the topics explored and creates the opportunity for integration.

2 – The Intent/Goals of the Coaching

Why the relationship exists and the core objectives and goals are an important frame for the work done in coaching. This is also an essential place to contract on going into the past. As a coach begins any intervention, holding the intent of the work together, while also contracting on its expansion is important. This is an important place to draw out any risk of trauma from past history, explore the considerations for therapy and/or counselling that would sit outside the coaching, and share any formulation the coach may have around the coachee's goals, explaining the need to go into the past. This node is re-visited several times throughout the course of the coaching engagement.

3 – The Coaching Relationship

As 85 percent of interviewees felt the coach as partner to the coachee is an important aspect to the work of coaching. Be it as a catalyst (62 percent), a reflective partner (54 percent), or as an accelerator for change (70 percent), the actual relationship between coach and coachee is an critical area for reflection. To hold the relationship to node 6 by exploring what is happening in the relationship, reflect on what works and what may not, the patterns emerging in the role each person is taking can be a powerful and important inflection place for not only the coachee, but the coach as well. It is through the re-integration of insights from node 6 that this relationship dynamic keeps evolving.

4 - The Coach

As the research suggests, the coaches intuition and reading of emotional data is an important place of exploration to really see into the non-conscious patterns that may be emerging for both coach and in relation to the coachee. Moving this intelligence and/or interpretation to node 6 to reflect and explore what the coach is seeing as their own patterns or insights emerge can be powerful for the coach and offer a place of insight or integration for the coachee.

5 – The Coaching System

The system that exists around the client and coach, while not expressly related to this research, is important. Who are the sponsors of the coaching, who are the primary stakeholders and how do their needs impact the work done in coaching? What is the culture of the organization and inferred privileges or judgments that exist around those who get coaching? Taking these inferred and/or explicit assumptions into node 6 and then back can be an important insight generator for the coachee.

6 – The Dialogical Inquiry & Reflective Process

Interviewees spoke to concepts such as *'catching the flow', 'being a participant', 'acting as catalyst', 'hearing potential', 'sensing before client', 'obligation to name', 'really seeing', 'reflective partner'* as critical parts to the collaborative process of coaching. Yet in most coaching models, this area for insight is either exclusively held within the coach, or inferred as part of the process. Explicitly holding space for conversation and reflection about what is really going is an essential part of exploring the meaning making happening with the coachee and as a result of being in dialogic inquiry with their coach.

This node is also very useful for the coach to catch what is happening within themselves. When interviewees made reference to concepts such as '*I find myself moving between a cognitive exploration to an intuition based one, 'I use my fear and bravery, I am connected and vulnerable'*, '*when I see my own* *story coming out, 'it's when I get emotional that magic really begins'*, and *'when I feel my body reacting to the discussion* – this work needs to be captured as a process of coaching, which is what node 6 creates.

Second, this research also expanded the access points of meaning making. Traditionally, meaning making in coaching psychology is most often explored through narration. There is also significant work in the area of constructive-developmental psychology that explores meaning making through a stage perspective of discovery and solving problems. Interestingly, it is in this bifurcation between narrative practice, which considers lifespan experiences, and the constructive-developmental psychology movement away from traditional lifespan exploration into staged problem solving, that a gap in the research exists. Through the BDMM framework, the researcher believes that she has created an integration between narrative practice and constructive-developmental psychology approach that has led to a new approach to coaching: ***Coaching is a meaning-making process that explores the past, present and future through dialogical and reflective inquiry to find a deeper sense of integration.***

6.1.2 The first evidence-based model for biographical inquiry

There are three significant contributions in the use of biographical inquiry in coaching. The first, as explored in Chapter 5, section 5.2, is the rationale for biographical inquiry in coaching that has been outlined in Figure 5.1 and is called 'The four drivers for conducting biographical inquiry in coaching'. These drivers have been created through the research findings and highlight the value of using biographical inquiry.

The second contribution in this section is the first evidence-based biographical inquiry framework in coaching, BDMM, outlined in Figure 5.2. In addition, this framework's individual dimensions have been explored in Figures 5.3–5.8. The complexity and richness of the data are vast, as outlined in section 5.3, so the model offers a way to consider it comprehensively.

The third contribution is what biographical inquiry can infer about leadership behaviours in Table 5.3 (section 5.4.1) and how to interpret data from biographical inquiry in Figure 5.9 (section 5.4.2), the latter being the bridge between narrative practice and constructive-developmental psychology.

6.1.3 Expanding the use of the non-conscious in coaching as the intersection of time dimensions

The final contribution of this research is the concept of the intersection of the past, present and future (IPPF) time horizons. What biographical inquiry was able to uncover was the notion that insights into the conscious and non-conscious were constantly moving interactions happening in real time. While the realm of non-consciousness is vast, biographical inquiry offers a perspective on how the non-conscious can be explored in coaching. IPPF (Figure 5.10) further presents the idea that the non-conscious exists through the intersection of time from the past, present and future.

6.2 Revisiting the research aim and objectives

This research was focused on the creation of a framework for coaches to have a shared understanding of *why* their clients do what they do. This *why* is focused on the meaning-making structures of the client, both at a conscious and a non-conscious level, primarily through the use of biographical inquiry. Explicitly, the aim was to create a new evidence-based framework in coaching for conscious and non-conscious meaning making using biographical inquiry. The outcome of this research achieved this aim through the creation of the BDMM framework. This framework has been outlined in Figure 5.2 and the individual dimensions are explored in Figures 5.3–5.8.

In exploring the specific objectives as originally laid out in the research, Table 6.1 outlines how these objectives were achieved

Table 6.1 Obtainment of objectives

1	Bring a multidisciplinary approach to the creation of a framework to include coaching and coaching psychology approaches, the field of psychology and other related applied-science fields.	From a literature review perspective, coaching, coaching psychology, psychology and applied neuroscience research were incorporated and considered within the research.
		The interviewees for the research also applied multidisciplinary approaches to coaching and held multidisciplinary qualifications.
2	Use primary interviews with extensively qualified coaches and psychologists.	All interviewees held Master's level education, had education certificates in coaching and had some or extensive training in psychology, therapy and counselling; 54% were trained coaching supervisors, 46% had doctorate-level education and 31% had applied neuroscience training.
3	Gain consensus on what is meaning making and how coaches can access it with clients.	After the pilot study, the research evolved away from consensus on meaning making to finding access points of meaning making through biographical inquiry. Meaning making was discovered to be a highly complex process with varying perspectives on definitions but, ultimately, it was the uncovering of the *why* for clients.

		What was achieved was understanding how coaches are able to help clients access meaning making through biographical inquiry.
4	Develop a new framework for meaning making using biographical inquiry and a preliminary tool for practitioners.	The Biographical Dimensions of Meaning Making (BDMM) framework was created. As part of this framework, exploration of each of the six dimensions within it was undertaken, and an interpretation guide and questions to ask clients were created.
5	Explore how the non-conscious is defined through the time dimensions of the past, present and future.	A model called 'The Intersection of the Past, Present and Future (IPPF)' was created to explore how the non-conscious is represented through multiple dimensions and how this has an impact on work in coaching.
		The specific dimensions within the BDMM framework demonstrate how the past is viewed from the lens of the present, and how the work towards a future state (the goals of coaching) have an impact on the interpretation of these experiences. The recalled past by the client is filtered by their present state and the interpretation of these past experiences is often linked to where they want to go in the future. Nothing exists purely as is but through IPPF, simultaneously. Examining any one element of a time dimension may access non-consciousness in the client, but exploring the intersection of the past with the present and in the service of the future helps make the non-conscious move towards consciousness.

6.2.1 Research questions

The research questions went through two major stages of evolution. The first was after the pilot study, as explored in section 3.1). The second stage is from the researcher's current perspective as a practitioner-scholar, reflecting on the over five years of research, as reflected below.

Research question 1 – Does meaning making need to be identified to have an impact on quality and sustainability of behavioural change within a coaching context?

As the data was being collected through primary interviews, and as more research related to meaning making was being discovered and understood, what was emerging was a sense that meaning-making systems could not be decoupled from the core work of coaching. Why a client does what they do (e.g. meaning making) is always, in some part, an aspect of coaching. In order to change or enhance behaviour, helping the client understand why they choose (or non-consciously yield to) a certain tendency is an important prerequisite to the work of coaching.

The notion of quality and sustainability of change is a subjective concept, held by coach, client and sponsoring entity (often an organisation). For this research, the sponsor of the executive coaching was out of scope, as was the perspective of the client. How the coach felt was the primary focus and, for all interviewees, the only measure was their perspective of materiality. While the research discovered that all interviewees felt that some form of discovery around meaning making was important in coaching, does it matter? The perspective of the coach is ultimately a judgement by them about the quality of the coaching engagement. Throughout most of the interviews, the overarching perspective was the deeper the work went, the more the feeling of quality and materiality increased. Yet, when asked of any sort of measurement beyond anecdotal feedback from the client, no interviewee was able to produce any kind of quality measure – although these were experienced coaches with commercially successful businesses. Therefore, their perspective of materiality must hold some relevance to this question. Ultimately, this question is difficult to answer without the inclusion of data from the clients and the sponsoring organisations.

Research question 2 – Is examining meaning making through biographical inquiry a useful approach?

The data from all the interviewees suggested that they unequivocally agreed that a client's history and family of origin played into their current challenges and goals in some way, and that exploring the various aspects of a client's past is a useful source of meaning making and often provides deep insights for the client. What was missing was a comprehensive framework of which areas of a client's past required examination and how that linked to current leadership behaviours. Each interviewee had reasons for why they went into certain areas of the past but, most often, these were based on some kind of intuition of the coach based on their years of experience.

While there is no doubt, based on the research, that biographical inquiry is useful in examining meaning making, what makes the use of biographical inquiry tricky is that there are multiple layers of processing happening all at once. While BDMM provides a framework with which to link how experiences from the past relate to current leadership behaviours, and a good measure of how these behaviours can be tracked over a lifetime, it is the actual integration of the experiences that makes using biographical inquiry complex. As explored in section 5.4, interpretation of these experiences is where science and intuition collide. Figure 5.9 offers a stage perspective on each dimension of the BDMM framework, based on how the interviewees interpreted meaning from their clients. It borrows from the constructive-developmental body of knowledge, which suggests that it is not the story that matters but the way the client engages with and makes meaning from it that holds materiality in the present.

As such, while biographical inquiry is undoubtedly useful in examining meaning making, what this research is not able to fully explore is how these stages map to clients' experiences. Therefore, to fully respond to this research question requires continued exploration of the client's perspective.

Research question 3 – How does a client make meaning at a conscious and a non-conscious level?

As the data was collected, insights into the conscious and non-conscious were constantly moving interactions happening simultaneously in real time (not an either/or measure as this research question infers). Interviewees did not expressly label what happened at conscious and non-conscious levels per se, but there was inference that working in the past through biographical inquiry involved some degree of non-consciousness.

While the realm of non-consciousness is vast and, by virtue of its very nature, difficult to define through a singular approach, this research does suggest that biographical inquiry offers a perspective on how the non-conscious can be explored in coaching. Through IPPF (Figure 5.10), the idea that the non-conscious exists on a time dimension of the past, present and future is a contribution to how coaches can work with non-consciousness. While it is not the only or the fullest exploration of the non-conscious in coaching, it does contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

Research question 4 –- What are the core dimensions of consideration in a biographical inquiry process?

As the data was collected, the various dimensions of biographical inquiry flexed between five and seven. There was significant alignment between most interviewees on most of the dimensions.

The comprehensiveness of the dimensions considered for biographical inquiry is well defined and clear. The dimensions include hierarchy (stemming from family of origin), peers, identity, context dynamics, emotional spectrum and relationship dynamics. What is yet to be revealed is the materiality of each dimension – namely, is one more important than the others? – and more evidence from a client perspective on the alignment of leadership behaviours to each dimension, as explored in the next section.

Research question 5 – What are you listening for within the biographical inquiry process?

As the data and literature were being reviewed and analysed, the content of biographical inquiry was around understanding how the perspectives gained from family of origin evolved over time for the client. However, there was a sense that, beyond the story or narrative that was told, it was the stage of integration within that story that mattered in terms of leadership behaviours in the present.

The BDMM framework serves as the first step in what could be a materially large body of work. The framework was required to hold the structure of where a coach can go in their biographical inquiry with a client. However, what the narrative tells us about the client's stage of integration has only been touched upon in this research. As explored in section 5.4, the initial perspective around leadership behaviours as they relate to the dimensions and the stages of integration of stories has yet to be well explored.

6.3 Materiality and confidence in findings

Given the gap in the literature regarding biographical inquiry as an approach to coaching, the materiality of this research is significant. It expands the nature of coaching overall; it offers the first evidence-based framework for biographical inquiry in coaching psychology and the critical dimensions of a biographical inquiry process; and it offers a perspective on the vast topic of the non-consciousness in coaching as a time-based intersection between the past, present and future.

The quality and confidence in the research findings are high. Beginning with the quality of the interviewees, the credentials and experience of the coaches are difficult to challenge. The quality and depth of analysis are also held to a good standard. While there was a significant learning curve for the researcher as a first-time practitioner-scholar, there was a period of over two years in which the researcher analysed and nuanced the data collected and defined the key findings.

Another indication of the significance of these findings can also be inferred by the fact the original author of the HASIE model (Dr. Paul Brown) whom originally inspired this work, has now made the researcher part of the permanent faculty of this Science of the Art of Coaching programme that will now be accepting its 15th cohort of participants. The researcher was invited to be a guest lecture for two consecutive years, then in 2021 was added to the permanent faculty and has replaced the HASIE module for the BDMM module.

Finally, these findings have been shared within the larger coaching and psychological communities (Hasanie, 2019; 2020a, 2020b, 2020c; 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e) with overwhelming positive feedback. As part of this feedback, the researcher was asked to create a coaching training programme on the use of biographical inquiry in coaching. This was done through the BDMM framework and the first event took place in February 2022 with 10 participants with a waiting list of over 20 coaches for future runs.

6.3.1 Limitations of the research

With any consideration of confidence in the research, it is important to also note its limitations. The starting supposition was that the past has a high correlation to leadership behaviours and tendencies in adults. While there is some research in the literature to link biographical data and adult behaviour and leadership performance (Rothstein et al., 1990; Rimmer et al., 1996; Mumford et al., 2009), these studies are dated and lack serious evidence-based methodology. The link between parental traits and implicit leadership traits in adults is stronger (Glasgow et al., 1997; Keller, 1999, 2003; Aunola et al., 2000; Magomaeva, 2013). However, the link between past and present leadership tendencies still lacks irrefutable evidence.

What is clear through this research is that senior practitioners are using the past often and in great depth with clients, which, according to the interviewees, is yielding significant insights for the clients that would normally have remained uncovered if it had not been for some form of biographical inquiry. This research begins to touch on a renewed correlation between the past and leadership tendencies, but there is significant work still to be done in this space. In the researcher's opinion, an industry-wide effort to better understand the explicit role of the past within coaching needs to take place, and specifically within the context of executive coaching in organisational settings.

Another limitation of this research is that the current BDMM model relies entirely on a linguistic-based approach to data collection. How language translates across different cultures and how that language is interpreted are significant limitations within this model. Also, the skills and capabilities of the coach interpreting the data pose significant risk. Similar limitations and/or criticism are made of the constructive-developmental approaches that rely on a small group of highly trained interpreters of the sentence completion stems (Hoare, 2011) and the true predictive capacity of these approaches (Yarborough, 2018) is limited. This research presents the first phase of linking biographical inquiry with leadership behaviours but there is extensive work still to be done.

Another consideration of any approach that relates to the past is the training of the coaches who undertake these types of exploration. As explored in the ethical considerations (section 3.8), according to the

International Coaching Federation (ICF), the largest governing body in coaching, coaches are not required to have psychological training. This research has been entirely constructed based on the view of senior practitioners, all of whom have had some form of psychological training. Therefore, do the findings of this research truly benefit the coaching community at large or only a small subset of psychologically trained coaches? Or, does the research suggest that some form of psychological training is important to any coaching work? Some attempt to address this issue was to link it to the field of coaching psychology, where many coaches who self-identify as coaching psychologists will have the right training to hold the necessary conversations. The risks of this type of approach cannot be ignored, nor can the materiality of the findings that the past really does matter. Therefore, it is essential to consider guidelines and elicit suggestions from professional coaching organisations to support coaches in this work.

Finally, while this research is based on a culturally diverse groups of interviewees (see section 4.1), they all have high exposure to – or come from – Western-centric backgrounds. While the interviewees did discuss how biographical inquiry exploration translates well in a non-Western context, there is significant room for continued exploration of this work. The subtle ethno-centric biases that could lead to inaccurate inferences about a client's motivations and other personal attributes (Passmore, 2010) are at high risk in this entirely linguistic and inference-based model. While the field of research is growing, females, people of colour and research studies taking place in a non-Western context are significantly under-represented. Compounded by the immense rise of coaching, particularly in Asia, the application of Western-centric models within this cultural context is of great importance and requires further exploration through case studies. While this research does address some dimensions of this, more is required.

6.4 Where the research can go from here

This research has only begun to explore the full potential of what and how biographical inquiry can be used in coaching. Because this research has been designed entirely from the point of view of the coach (e.g. based on interviews of senior coaches), what now needs to emerge is the perspective of the client. While a coach has verified the value of the biographical inquiry process, does the client feel the same way? What are the key outcomes and insights from the client's point of view of doing a biographical inquiry? Answers to these questions would be best found through some form of case study documentation and analysis. Another perspective would be to use randomised control groups within a larger leadership development programme – for example, having some participants exposed to the BDMM model as part of their coaching while a control group are not. Do outcomes differ between groups? And, if so, based on what dimensions?

As part of a case study approach, another important area of exploration is a more comprehensive list or mapping of leadership behaviours and tendencies to each dimension of BDMM. In the current research, defining the major area of exploration for a biographical inquiry was the main focus. However, through a large case study approach using biographical inquiry, a more expansive list with higher correlation data between dimensions and leadership behaviours could emerge. Materiality of each dimension relative to the other could also emerge: is one dimension more important than the others? The dimensions themselves may even change over time. Regardless of outcome, the point of view of the client's experience is essential to the continued development of this research.

Another interpretation of the narrative process of biographical inquiry (as explored in Figure 5.9) has only been touched upon in this research. Its main focus was to delineate the core dimensions of biographical inquiry, but a deeper exploration of what can emerge within each dimension requires closer attention. Just as tools used in the constructive-developmental approach – like the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) – have grown over time and use, so too can the interpretation of the BDMM model of stage progression in a biographical inquiry process.

Finally, and related to this idea of stage progression, how does a coach expand or move a client into deeper levels of integration within each dimension? This idea is much more complex to explore because it then moves much closer to the space of therapy and/or counselling. Can one truly gain deeper levels of integration without therapeutic intervention? While this will not be an immediate area of exploration, long-term case studies over several years may bring light to the topic of stage advancement and what drives the deeper levels of integration.

6.5 How this research will be disseminated to the coaching community and beyond

Because this research is both challenging and expanding the use of the past within executive coaching engagements, continuing to share this information within the various coaching communities is essential. While significant efforts have already been made to share the insights from this research (Hasanie, 2019; 2020a, 2020b, 2020; 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e), there is still so much yet to come.

The researcher is planning to do the following in order to expand the reseach of this work:

- The researcher has been invited to the Forbes Coach Council (a global invitation-only forum that has a readership of over 5millions reader) where she will write a monthly piece targeted to leaders about the biography of leadership.
- Write at least one article for a peer-reviewed coaching journal.

- Continue to present the findings from this study at various coaching conferences globally – specifically, the various coaching psychology conferences.
- Continue the roll-out of the BDMM training programme. The first cohort launched in February 2022 with a waiting list of over 20 coaches. It has already informed the expansion of the BDMM framework and wants to continue to build on those insights.
- Create an advanced practitioner coaching community of like-minded coaches who are interested in the various ways the past can be used in coaching.
- Explore the possibility of teaching in a coaching programme at a university – following an approach by different schools to offer a programme on working with narrative and the past in coaching.
- Continue to co-author articles and/or books, and to build on the growing of use of biographical inquiry in coaching.

6.6 Recommendations for coaching communities

Fillery-Travis and Corrie (2019) suggest consideration of the following:

1. For what purpose was your research conducted?
2. For whom is your evidence good news?
3. For whom is your evidence bad news?

These questions were essential to the researcher in considering her recommendations to the coaching community at large.

The first, for what purpose was her research being conducted? One of the most divisive questions in coaching is the explicit inclusion of the past as a valid place of inquiry. There are three camps that often emerge:

1. Unequivocally yes: we much consider the past in any behavioural change process.
2. Unequivocally no: the past is meant for therapy and counselling only.
3. It depends.

This research tends to resonate with camps 1 and 3 but the researcher has found that those in camp 2 are often unwilling to explore the possibility of expanding their perspectives. As such, her intended purpose is not to convert the non-believers but to offer those who agree that there is a place (or possibility) for the past in coaching a framework to which they can apply some form of exploration. Therefore, she does not plan to challenge the ICF's core competencies, nor to expect BDMM or any process that explores the past to become part of the core coaching curriculum for new coaches. However, she does feel that coaches who have been working in that role for over five years, or who have at least 750–1,000 hours of coaching, should constantly challenge their own operating models. It is important to explore theory and knowledge that exist beyond one's usual places of practice to constantly ensure that one is updating and challenging one's own existing models of coaching.

In exploring the notion of for whom this research is good news, the researcher suggests it is for those coaches who sit within the mid-stage of their coaching careers (as defined in the paragraph above), who are still grounding their practice and who are open to different types of exploration. She has found that such coaches are most intrigued and open to exploring the past in coaching. However, more senior coaches, who often operate from a place of wisdom and intuition, also often find a connection to BDMM because it links comfortably with areas that they would intuitively explore anyway.

Where this research is bad news is for coaching bodies and practitioners who want to clearly delineate the playing fields between coaching and psychology. As explored in Chapter 2, this research found commonality with coaching psychology approaches. However, what the emergence of coaching psychology has also done is to add complexity to the sphere of coaching – specifically, its regulation and requirements for gaining coaching credentials. Coaching psychologists often have core training in psychological theory already (Palmer and Whybrow, 2019). However, what about those coaches (the researcher herself included) who develop an interest in coaching psychology without training to be a psychologist? Currently, to register as a coaching psychologist with the Division of Coaching Psychology (DoCP) under the British Psychological Society, full membership is only offered to those who are already qualified psychologists and eligible for charter status. What is yet to be outlined is the pathway for new members who are not traditionally trained psychologists. The researcher's entire coaching doctorate is in the field of coaching psychology, yet, according to the rules of the DoCP, she would not be eligible for full membership, despite her extensive training in various psychological certifications, psychotherapeutic approaches and other related subjects. Therefore, her next recommendation is to have more open criteria for eligibility to join coaching psychology communities of practice.

Related to this idea of more open requirements is the degree of acceptance of practitioner-scholars within academic journals and communities. While significant efforts have been made by universities to create professional doctorate pathways for practitioners, there still seems to be a large barrier to entry for practitioner-scholars to be considered for academic journal publications and conference participation. The researcher's personal experience has shown that she was refused consideration by the University of Sydney Coaching Psychology annual conference and rejected by two coaching journals, with no indication as to why. Anecdotal feedback from other practitioner-scholars is that, without endorsement and co-writing credit with more experienced members of faculties within academia, they do not have a chance of having their work considered. Therefore, the researcher's next recommendation is to find ways of having more open criteria for these new practitioner-scholars, new to the field and doing good work, but who may not have the professional network in the right areas to gain credibility in the way that this has traditionally been done.

Another recommendation is to build more diversity into coaching research. Most, if not all, the major post-graduate coaching programmes are in English, and based and delivered almost entirely in a Western context. Involving more practitioners, particularly from Asia, is so important. As alluded to earlier, the barriers to entry into the field of academic writing are high for most. Without the endorsement of more seasoned academics, most voices go unheard. The recommendation is that a more concerted effort by academics, practitioner-scholars and universities to support these often non-English speakers to be part of the collective consciousness of our field is of paramount importance in this increasingly globalised world. Also, potentially launching some sort of affiliate university coaching programme in an Asian country, partnered by an Asian university, would be a significant step in increasing diversity.

The researcher's final recommendations are directly related to the data that has surfaced from this research:

- An industry-wide effort needs to be made to better identify and define the use of biographical data in executive coaching. From the outset of this research, finding the relevant bodies of knowledge was an exhaustive and challenging process. Coaching begins with a person who has a history, so why then do we not have more coaching research related to working with those histories in the actual coaching engagement? Working with a client's history should not be limited to psychological approaches and therefore reflecting only certain aspects of coaching psychology rather than the large body of coaching knowledge that is available.
- Finding a collective way to define the work of coaching is still a work in progress. Even within the coaching psychology communities, Grant (2011) suggested that it was essential to have a clear definition before the field could be fully developed and properly taught. However, this unifying definition has yet to emerge (Lai and McDowall, 2014; Passmore and Theeboom, 2016; Passmore et al., 2018). Some effort needs to be placed on unifying perspective versus differing ones to help move the collective field forward.

- There needs to be more research on the relational aspects of coaching. Some of the outcomes of this research suggest that the relational dimensions of coaching are just as important to outcomes as the process used. This has been explored by other researchers but is still in its infancy (Fillery-Travis and Corrie, 2019; Cox, 2013). Coaching can be viewed as a relational contract as much as it is a process, yet the relational elements are vastly under-represented in the research.
- It would be helpful to have more explicit guidelines and suggestions by professional coaching organisations on the transitions between stages and/or coaching credentials. While the competencies required at the various stages are well laid out, a more defined learning pathway for mid-to-senior coaches is missing. Often coaches find their professional 'homes' and don't have explicit ways of venturing beyond their fields of knowledge. A clearer pathway by the coaching bodies about stages of development for coaching, and how to integrate and expand knowledge, should be considered.
- The creation of more advanced programmes for mid-to-senior tenured coaches is required. Bachkirova and Borrington (2018) have stated that attention to the many levels and variations in coaching is essential and yet there remain significantly fewer programmes for practitioners to achieve top-level qualifications.

This chapter has emphasised the wide-ranging contributions that the research has made to the field of coaching psychology. It has discussed in detail the significance of biographical inquiry, and how this is leading to a rapid expansion in the approach and focus of coaching, but in many ways, the work has only just begun. The researcher hopes her work can spark a flame in other practitioner-scholars to continue to build on the work of biographical work in coaching.

'I feel I have outlined the beginnings of a new language. As the users of this language grow and evolve, so too will the language itself. My hope is that this language grows well beyond any hopes I had for it. But most of all, I hope anyone who comes across it is will feel challenged, delighted and curious about what can be inferred.' (Saba Hasanie 2022)

Chapter 7 – The Role of a Researcher

The journey over the past five and a half years has been a considerable learning platform. At each step, within each stage, the reflections of the researcher have been documented and the insights are vast and can be aggregated into two key areas:

- The subjectivity of a practitioner's research study.
- Evolving as a practitioner-scholar informs one's evolution as a coach.

7.1 The subjectivity of a practitioner research study

With any practitioner research study, there is a fundamental controversy about the subjectivity of results and researcher's own stance in relation to the production of work-based knowledge (Costley and Armsby, 2007). Adding to the challenge of this kind of research is the relative maturity of the researchers themselves. Borrowing from the learnings of early career academics (ECAs), the tension of researching while also producing results can be challenging. This tension is even more pronounced within professional doctorates (Hemmings, 2012). As practitioners, there is a premium placed on sharing insights based on lived experience. Yet, as researchers, the deeper and longer one stays in the analysis stage, the more refined the researching skills become, which ultimately has well-warranted impact on the findings and outcomes.

This practitioner-scholar- dilemma and how it influences both the choices of research approach and the results is an important consideration (Wasserman and Kram, 2009). Within coaching, much of the field has been led by practitioners, and even practitioner research has come under scrutiny for statements that exceed the evidence available to support the claims (Briner, 2012). So, the questions remains, can practitioners truly engage in objective research that results in uncompromised evidence-based insights?

Returning to the essential questions offered to practitioner-scholars by Fillery-Travis and Corrie (2019), the exploration of the for whom is your evidence good news and bad continues to intrigue. The key finding of this research suggests that true exploration of a client's meaning making, which is the source code for behaviour change, can only happen after deep exploration of the client's past. The good news is that this research offers the first evidence-based framework for this type of exploration, which is deeply important and needed in the practice of coaching. The bad news is that any exploration of a client's past requires essential training and support that is often not required (and certainly not mandated) of all coaches. In the interest of getting into more profound behavioural change opportunities, is the researcher causing more harm by giving these tools to practitioners who are not effectively trained to engage in this type of work? The essence of this dilemma was summarised with insight by one interviewee:

> I think everything can be taught, but it's how you use that knowledge, when you use it, and to what degree that things gets complicated. A surgeon can learn to do complex medical procedures, but the true wisdom comes from knowing when to use it and when not to. (Interviewee 12)

The researcher profoundly believes that these important dilemmas can only be truly confronted by practitioners who engage with the academic world to produce the essential research required in this field. Knowledge is important but it is the application of this knowledge within the practitioner arena (with its commercial liabilities and the pains and gains of clients life experiences) that brings about the truly important issues facing this field. While the subjectivity of practitioner research will always remain, the dialogue needs to shift from practitioner versus scholar to the embracing of a truly practitioner-scholar model, where one cannot exist without the other.

7.2 Evolving as a practitioner-scholar, evolution as a coach

The idea of research self-efficacy (or confidence) is a prominent construct consideration not only with ECAs but also professional doctorate researchers (Hemmings, 2012). Learning to develop the critical thinking skills required of an academic, the burden of proof on evidence-based outcomes, and the ability to embrace interdisciplinary ciplinary perspectives not only heightened the researcher's academic authority but also her impact as a coach. The researcher spectrum profoundly shifted her overall mental models (see Figure 7.1).

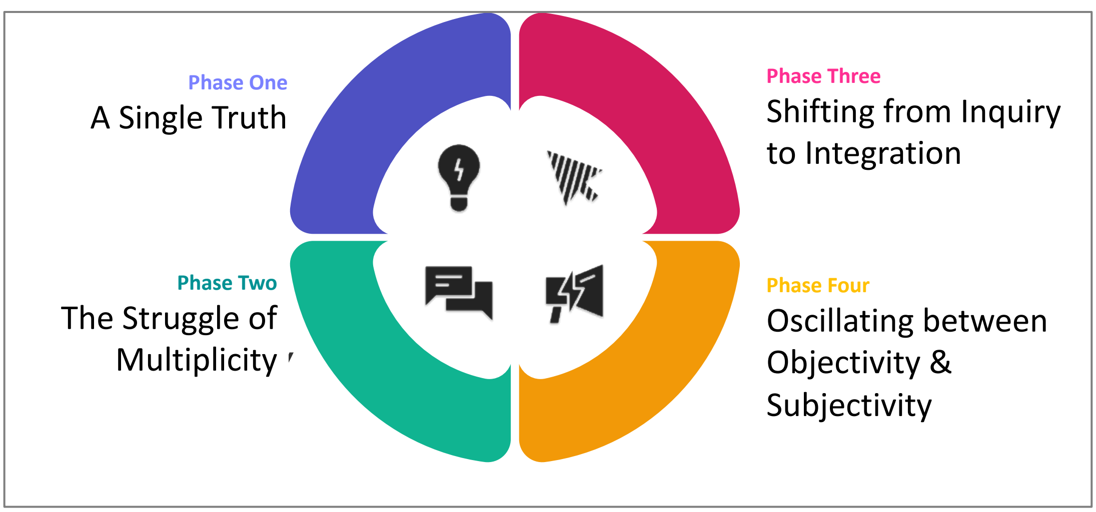


Figure 7.1 The researcher spectrum

A single truth

In the early stages ,the researcher often approached her research objectives as closed, looped questions, searching for a single truth to validate or disprove a starting position or hypothesis. The search for a mutually exclusive approach to the varying dimensions and complexities was important. Yet, the strain of finding a collectively exhaustive approach felt cumbersome and almost impossible.

As the researcher explored her own shifting mental models as a coach, she closely empathised with this perspective. She began her doctoral journey seven years into her coaching profession. At the time, she felt that she had explored, expanded and evolved her approach into a more profound and informed perspective. However, innately within this perspective was a desire to prove that her approach was the right one. She was grounded in a perspective of proving a singularity of truth, which was proving more and more difficult, the more she learned.

The struggle for multiplicity

Deepening knowledge of a topic and data collection trends led to the revelation that a single truth does not exist. Multiple truths existed simultaneously with varying definitions, relationships and engagement with knowledge. The need to stay steeped in inquiry, expansion and openness to other perspectives was paramount. The inevitable self-questioning of the researcher's own truth began. Did she still fundamentally believe her own perspectives? Was what she was saying profoundly new and insightful? Was her research – and ultimately her worth – as significant as she believed?

The relationship of the self-questioning and expansion of multiple perspectives also emerged in the researcher's own practice. She had moved from being a learner to a teacher, a mentee to a mentor, and yet she was beginning to question her own perspectives – again. It was as though she was adopting a beginner's mindset but knew too much to come from a perspective of purity in her curiosity. It was from this place that her own professional development as a certified coaching supervisor began: holding the multiplicity of perspectives with a fresh curiosity rather than dependable answers derived from experience. Examining her own relationship with truth, validation, and an acceptance of what is right and what is wrong. This expansion made her more effective as a coach, but left her feeling anchorless as a researcher.

Shifting from inquiry to integration

The very dynamic approach of a constructivist grounded theory method to data collection, analysis, integration and discussion of findings resulted in a constantly shifting goalpost on conclusions. Defining a figurative line in the sand – suggesting that she had reached the end of what could be reasonably included, deducted and analysed from what she had – took over two years. While she recognised that knowledge was not meant to be static, the continuously evolving nature of it made defining the conclusion difficult. She had long since abandoned the need to be right for the opportunity to be proven wrong, but that did not mean there was no ego left behind. It was the fine balance between holding her perspectives and integrating the challenges that made it a tricky space to be in.

This also contributed to the enhancement of her own coaching practice. She was inquiring deeply into the truths of others to from which to learn and grow. Such an act of integration can only happen if we truly inquire. She noticed her own surprise and the surprise of others in the loosening of her perspectives to a more open dialogue of what could be.

Oscillating between objectivity and subjectivity

The integration of the self as researcher into the process of data collection, knowledge formation and re-creation was pivotal to the researcher's own internal mental model shifts. This tension between subjectivity and objectivity in research, or between practitioner and scholar, felt like moot points. It is through the subjective experience of being a practitioner that the fundamental research questions that are being answered today emerge. One cannot exist without the other and each must support the simultaneous expansion of the other. The researcher's subjectivity of experience was not meant to be removed from the research – instead, compartmentalised during phases. She had to learn to let go, open and expand in order to bring herself back to the conclusions of the research. She does not apologise for the subjective nature of some of her outcomes, because it is here very experience that brought her here.

The researcher's hope is that her work will continue to challenge and expand the overall knowledge of coaching, and that the subjective experiences of others will build on the objective knowledge of the field of coaching as a whole.

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Appendix 1

Trans Disciplinary DProf REC

The Burroughs
Hendon
London NW4 4BT

Main Switchboard: 0208 411 5000

13/02/2020

APPLICATION NUMBER: 4091

Dear Saba Hasanie and all collaborators/co-investigators

Re your application title: Meaning Making in Coaching

Supervisor:

Co-investigators/collaborators: DR Pauline Armsby

Thank you for submitting your application. I can confirm that your application has been given APPROVAL from the date of this letter by the Trans Disciplinary DProf REC.

The following documents have been reviewed and approved as part of this research ethics application:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Amendments	Final Approval Letter	31/10/2018	FINAL
Amendments	Request to Change Methodology-FINAL	02/02/2020	version 1

Although your application has been approved, the reviewers of your application may have made some useful comments on your application. Please look at your online application again to check whether the reviewers have added any comments for you to look at.

Also, please note the following:

1. Please ensure that you contact your supervisor/research ethics committee (REC) if any changes are made to the research project which could affect your ethics approval. There is an Amendment sub-form on MORE that can be completed and submitted to your REC for further review.

2. You must notify your supervisor/REC if there is a breach in data protection management or any issues that arise that may lead to a health and safety concern or conflict of interests.

3. If you require more time to complete your research, i.e., beyond the date specified in your application, please complete the Extension sub-form on MORE and submit it your REC for review.

4. Please quote the application number in any correspondence.

5. It is important that you retain this document as evidence of research ethics approval, as it may be required for submission to external bodies (e.g., NHS, grant awarding bodies) or as part of your research report, dissemination (e.g., journal articles) and data management plan.

6. Also, please forward any other information that would be helpful in enhancing our application form and procedures - please contact MOREsupport@mdx.ac.uk to provide feedback.

Good luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Chair Dr Kate Maguire

Trans Disciplinary DProf REC

Appendix 2

Pre-Interview Reflection Questions

Thank you for being a part of my research.

To help facilitate our upcoming interview, I have outlined my core aim and objectives of my research for your information, and have included some questions based on those objectives.

Completion of this survey is optional, but I have found it helpful in ensuring we are able to maximize our time together during your interview.

Research Aim: To create a new theoretical model and preliminary tool for conscious and non- conscious meaning making within coaching

Research Objectives:

1. **Explore how the areas of narration, autobiographical inquiry, adult development theory, psychology and applied neuroscience are used by coaches within coaching engagements**
2. **Explore how coaches explore the concept of meaning making with clients**
3. **Reflect on key areas of biographical inquiry used by coaches and why**

1. Please indicate your Participant ID Code as per your Participant Consent Form

2. I undertake some form of biographical inquiry in my coaching engagements with clients (exploration of the client's life experiences beyond their professional context)?

- Yes
- No

3. Please elaborate on why this is or is not important to your work with coaching clients?

4. What specific areas do you explore in your autobiographical inquiry and how do you explore this with clients?

5. Have you invested in training to support you in the process of biographical inquiry with a client? If so, please expand on your training and the bodies of knowledge you find relevant / important to this work?

Y

N

Comments (please specify)

6. How (if at all) do you differentiate between conscious and non-conscious awareness and its role in the work you do in coaching?

7. What tools / approaches do you use to help distinguish between conscious and non-conscious behavioral patterns in the client?

8. Do you explore the notion of meaning making with clients? What does this mean to you? How do you explore this topic with clients?

9. Do you believe the attachment relationship between you as the coach and client is important to the work you do? Why or why not?

10. In your experience, what are the key drivers for long term behavioural change in clients post coaching?

11. What criteria do you personally use to measure a successful coaching engagement?

Appendix 3

Preliminary Sharing / Opening

- Re-enforce recording and confidentiality
- Balance between emergent discussion and directed questions used to explore the research aim and objectives

Research Aim:
To create a new theoretical model and preliminary tool for conscious and non-conscious meaning making within coaching

Research Objectives:

1. Explore how the areas of narration, autobiographical inquiry, adult development theory, psychology and applied neuroscience are used by coaches within coaching engagements
2. Explore how coaches explore the concept of meaning making with clients
3. Reflect on key areas of biographical inquiry used by coaches and why

Suggested Question

1. What emerges for you as you hear this aim and objectives?

Subsequent questions used only if conversation does not organically reflect these areas

2. Do you explore autobiographies with clients?
    a. Why or why not
    b. What do you explore
    c. How do you explore it
    d. When do you explore these topics
    e. Have you been formally trained to do so?

3. How (if at all) do you differentiate between conscious and non-conscious awareness and its role in the work you do in coaching?
    a. Why or why not
    b. How do you do this
    c. What are key access points
    d. What is difference between behavioral patterns versus awareness

4. Do you explore the notion of meaning making with clients?
    a. Why or why not
    b. What does this mean to you?
    c. How do you explore this topic with clients?

5. Do you consider the nature of the attachment relationship formed through coach and client?
    a. Why or why not
    b. How do you do this

6. What are key drivers of behavioral change in coaching?

7. What criteria do you personally use to measure a successful coaching engagement?

8. Skill level required of a coach/client
    a. What is skills level required of the coach in this kind of exploration?
    b. What is the nature of the client required / apply to all kinds of coaching?
    c. Should it be structured up front or evolve as the relationship evolves?

Appendix 4

Questions related to the overall Hierarchy dimension

Questions related to the traits of parents

- How would you describe your parent(s)?
- What did your parent(s) do for a living?
- Tell me about the personality of your parent(s)?
- Who did you prefer? Who made you feel safe? Who made you feel loved?
- How did you family interact with each other?

Questions related to Power in Family Of Origin (FOO)

- Who was the ultimate boss of the family?
- Was power shared by both parents?
- Did children have any power?
- What was the difference in roles between mother and father?
- Who were you afraid of?
- Who managed punishment in the household?
- Who managed rewards in the family?
- How were mistakes dealt with?
- How were successes celebrated?

Questions related to 'Isms' in FOO

- How were responsibilities divided and managed within the household?
- What were the various roles in the family?
- What were behaviours that were rewarded/desired?
- What were behaviours that were punished/avoided?
- Was there safety in the household? What behaviours were safe / unsafe?

Questions related to Echoes from previous generations

- Did you parents share much about their childhoods with you?
- What were the expectations on your parents / grandparents?
- Do your parents / grandparents feel they fulfilled their potential?
- Do you feel the echoes from your parents or grandparents generation?

- What are the expectations placed on you from family members who are no longer here?

The next area of exploration is the stage shifts outside of FOO to other life experiences.

Questions related to challenge / re-enforcement

- How did school impact your opinion on what an adult should/could be like?
- Did you find yourself surprised by your interactions with the teachers?
- Did you feel your family was the same as others?
- Did you find yourself challenging your parents more based on what you were seeing at school?
- Did you have judgement of your parents, as you met more and more adults?

Questions related to profession

- How old were you when you had your first boss?
- What has been the best template of leadership you've experienced and why?
- What has been the worst template of leadership and why?
- How would you describe your leadership style and the pros and cons that accompany it?
- Who does your style of leadership remind you of?
- Who was your best boss and why?
- Who was your worst boss and why?
- What struck you about the way leaders showed up in professional life that surprised you? Scared you? Made you happy?

Questions related to adjustment

- How has your leadership style changed over the years?
- Who has had the greatest impact on your leadership style?
- What are some of the greatest leadership lessons you've learned the hard way?
- What is still missing for you and why?

Appendix 5

Questions often explored within the dimension of Peers.

- How were the siblings/cousins compared to each other in your family of origin?
- Did you feel a sense of belonging in your early school years (ages 5 – 12)?
- Did you feel a sense of belonging in your adolescent years (12 – 18)?
- Did you feel you found a tribe? How did that tribe change over time? How old were you when your found them?
- Do you rely / need relationships outside your immediate family? How has that evolved over time?
- Do you tend to compare yourself to others?
- How do you describe your level of connectedness with others?
- How did you choose your key relationships in adulthood?
- Tell me about your sexual / romantic partners?
- Tell me how your relationship with your current partner?

Appendix 6

Questions related to Identity Dimension

Questions explored within inherited identity:

- How would you describe yourself at the age of 6 or 7?
- What was important to your family regarding the kind of person they expected you to be?
- What did it mean to be a good person in your family?
- What were the most important drivers of what was expected from you in terms of behaviours and responsibilities?

Questions explored within transitional identity:

- Did you feel the same or different when you compared yourself to your classmates in primary school?
- What did you learn about yourself when you started school?
- Did you find yourself challenging the expectations of your family or re-enforcing their expectations?
- How did you change over the years of your primary and secondary education?
- Where there any pivotal moments of self-realisation for you in school?

Questions explored within constructed identity:

- How do you define your identity today and how has this shifted over time?
- Does the identity you hold today feel different from what was expected of you in childhood?
- What are some important parts of your identity? Where did they come from?
- How has your identity changed/evolved over time?

Appendix 7

Questions explored in Context dimension:

- Did you feel your race and/or culture played a role in your life? How?
- Was there a sense of larger community as a result of your parent's affiliations that you felt a part of?
- Was there generational expectations on you (grandparents, great grandparents, etc)?
- Do you identity with the culture of your country of origin/current place of residence?
- What were the financial means of your family?
- Did you feel the socio-economic standing of your family played a role in your life? How?
- What does spirituality mean to you? Does it play a role in your life?
- Do you identity with others of your generation? Why or why not?

Appendix 8

Questions explored in Emotional Spectrum dimensions include:

- How were emotions expressed in the household when you were a child?
- Tell me what memories come to mind when I say list the following emotions: anger, fear, shame, sadness, disgust, love, joy, excitement, curiosity?
- Describe the emotional culture of your family?
- List and describe the emotions most present for you in your childhood?
- List and describe the emotions most present for your in your adolescence?
- List and describe the emotions most present for you in adulthood?
- List and describe the emotions most present for you today?
- How comfortable are you in expressing emotions? Which come easier and which are harder

Appendix 9

Questions explored in the relationship dimension include:

- What were the relationship dynamics between parent and child in your household growing up?
- What were the relationship dynamics between siblings in your household growing up?
- How easy or hard did you find creating and sustaining relationships as a child?
- How has the way you choose to form and sustain relationships changed over the years?
- Have you experienced great pain and love in life?
- Have you felt true safety and loyalty in relationships?
- Have you experience pain, mistrust or abuse in relationships?
- How has your current partner shifted the way you view relationships?
- Do you feel you have different kind of relationships with different groups of people?
- Do you feel you have to be different with different people?
- How has becoming a parent shifted the way you view relationships?
- How did becoming a manager with direct reports shifted the way you view relationships?

Appendix 10

Questions explored in this intersection of the past, present and future include:

- What new insights have you discovered through this process of biographical inquiry?
- Do you see links between the past and what you are seeing as patterns today?
- How do your future goals serve/what does it give you today?
- Does the goal(s) change in anyway given what has emerged from the past?
- Do you feel different about today, given these new insights?
- How can the future be different with this new insight?