

**Evidence-based and Reflective Practice Approaches to
Executive Coaching:
An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

by

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Management Science**

Macquarie University
Sydney, Australia

February, 2017

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Abstract

The late 1990s and early 2000s were exciting times for executive coaching, a field of practice full of promise but lacking disciplinary boundaries. An emerging research focus is developing theories to support the practice and unify its diverse elements, by working towards shared agreement across different practices. But both research and practice share the problem of a plurality of approaches that are not necessarily commensurable. Aligning the different approaches to both coaching and research about coaching, so as to establish a shared understanding, remains an ongoing challenge.

Theorising about coaching falls into two camps: evidence-based and reflective practice-based. Evidence-based approaches tend to be based on the principles of science. In contrast, reflective practitioner-based approaches tend to believe that theories are generated through reflection in the context of experience.

Coaching can develop as a field only if research and practice are aligned and if these two contrasting theoretical approaches have a relationship to each other. To investigate this potential relationship, this study returned to the historical origins of evidence-based coaching, exploring how the focus in medical, nursing and psychological research has shifted from evidence-based research (EBR) to practice-based evidence (PBE).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was then used to undertake an empirical investigation of this transition. The aim is not to argue for or against any one approach but to determine the feasibility of establishing a shared understanding that could accommodate a range of approaches to theorising about coaching. The thesis contributes towards a framework for shared understanding, which is essential for the development of executive coaching as a discipline.

Certification

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of PhD in the Macquarie Graduate School of Management (MGSM), Macquarie University. This represents the original work and contribution of the author, except as acknowledged by general and specific references.

I hereby certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

I further certify that the research conducted for this thesis has received ethics approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. Ethics application ref: 5201200373 received final approval on 20/12/2012 and ethics application ref: 5201400644 received final approval on 15/07/2014 for both pilot and main studies, respectively.

Signed:

Sabiha Sultana

17 February 2017

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor, Dr Steven Segal, who provided the support, critique and valuable feedback that have guided me through this PhD. I would like to give special recognition to his role for his calm, concerned and professional guidance through the peaks and troughs. His approach to research, his ideas and expertise remain an important source of inspiration to me.

I wish to acknowledge and thank to the wonderful executive coaches who agreed to be interviewed for this research and who took time out from their hectic schedules to reflect on their career journeys, and more importantly, to share the intimacies of their executive coaching experiences; I thank you. You were all willing, enthusiastic participants who were generous with your time, experience and knowledge, providing me with very rich substantial data.

The completion of this dissertation was made possible by the guidance and support of many people. My research office staff is always there to help me out, I sincerely thanks Kerry, Stef and Asal for their consistent support throughout this journey. Thanks also to my editor, Alison Basden, who helped me greatly through the last stages of this project.

Finally, I am most grateful to my adorable husband, Ghazanfar and my three children, Zainab, Ali and Aisha. My family had to live with me every day; to suffer my preoccupation, my unavailability, and my tiredness. Somehow, they have forgiven me all this and each of them has cheered me along every step of the way. My heartfelt thanks to Ghazanfar for his encouragement and enduring support along the way.

Thank you to my family for always being there for me.

Abbreviations used in thesis

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CBC	Cognitive behavioural coaching
CBT	Cognitive behavioural therapy
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
DA	Discourse Analysis
EBM	Evidence-based medicine
EBP	Evidence Based Practice
EBR	Evidence-based research
ELT	Experiential learning theory
GAS	Goal attainment scaling
GCC	Global Convention on Coaching
HRD	Human Resource Development
ICF	International Coach Federation
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
NNT	Number needed to treat
PBE	Practice-based evidence
PETS	Performance-enhancing thoughts
PITS	Performance-interfering thoughts
RCT	Randomised controlled trial
SF	Solution-focused

Autobiographical introduction

During the research and writing of my thesis, the research underwent a transformation triggered by a series of disruptive events beyond my control.

The initial intention was to develop a quantitative scale through which to assess the efficacy of ontological forms of executive coaching. In line with Bandura's notion of efficacy, in collaboration with my supervisors I developed a scale appropriate to the language of ontological coaching in order to assess its efficacy (Appendix 6).

As is always the case this scale took much time to develop. Once it was developed, Albert Bandura was invited to comment to ensure that I had achieved his conditions for measuring efficiency. In an email to me, he agreed that the scale did meet the conditions of efficacy and that it was appropriate to ontological forms of executive coaching (Appendix 7).

Once Bandura had agreed to the scale for measuring efficacy, I undertook a pilot test of the scale. The context of the pilot test was a MBA unit in which executive coaching skills were taught to a cohort of MBA students. The pilot test enabled me to refine the scale even further.

The original aim of the thesis was to test the value of the ontological forms of coaching by using the Bandura efficacy scale that had been developed. The test would consist of a pre-intervention test, an ontological coaching intervention and a post-intervention test. Two senior management groups would be used: a control group and an experimental group. The control group would not undertake the coaching intervention while the experimental group would receive training in ontological forms of coaching. I planned to use the pre- and post-tests, as well as the comparison between the two groups, to highlight the significance of ontological coaching for executives in terms of a scale of efficacy based on the work of Bandura.

While developing the scale, I approached a number of organisations to participate in the study. A major corporation saw the value of ontological coaching for their executives and so agreed to provide a group of senior managers for the study. However, two weeks before the study was to begin, the company withdrew its offer to participate. My supervisor and I began scrambling for alternative companies through which to trial the efficacy of ontological coaching. None could be found.

Given that my doctoral candidature was in the latter stages, I decided to make a change of direction. Instead of focusing on the assessment of executive coaching, I chose instead to examine the forms of research underpinning executive forms of coaching. I reasoned that the dominant form of research was evidenced-based forms of coaching, but I identified that other forms of research and reflection were also used in executive coaching. These different forms of research were simply incompatible with each other. Some were scientifically based while others eschewed science in favour of reflection in practice and qualitative forms of research.

I wanted to determine if there was a basis for shared understanding across the different forms of research in coaching. Based on the work of Thomas Kuhn (1962), I understood that a field reaches maturity when a shared understanding exists amongst its proponents. Given that coaching takes on so many forms and there are so many forms of research into executive coaching, shared understanding and maturity of the field were and still is not an issue that can be taken for granted.

I now began to develop a set of research questions through which to assess the possibility of shared understanding across a range of approaches to coaching, including cognitive behavioural, psychodynamic, positive, ontological, systems and adult education-based forms of coaching. The methodology for developing the questions was drawn from the work of Crotty (1998, 2003), who provided a taxonomy for comparing different kinds of research methods – this enabled me to articulate questions that represented different research epistemologies and different forms of coaching.

By this stage I needed to apply for an extension of time to complete my research. However, as the deadline of the extension was approaching, I panicked, hurriedly completed the thesis and submitted it prematurely. The examiners, rightfully, agreed that the degree not be awarded and that the thesis needed to be re-written.

The above narrative contains at least two lived experiences of disruption which opened up the opportunity for reflection and created a new pathway for me to think about my thesis. The first disruption was the withdrawal of the participating company in the original design of the research, and the second disruption was the rejection of the thesis.

While I had read about the role of disruption in reflection, I now experienced it. This experience provided me with a new and embodied understanding of the role of reflection in practice. Because of the disruptions, I came to reflect on the lived experience of writing a

thesis. In reflecting on the lived experience of writing a thesis, I came to see that there was a difference between the ideal image of a thesis and the real time experience of writing a thesis. While the ideal image of a thesis may be articulated in a textbook as identifying a question, developing and writing a literature review, identifying a methodology and method, developing a set of questions, analysing the data generated through the interviews and providing a discussion and conclusion, in practice there are many unforeseen and surprising contingencies that get in the way of what, on paper, looks like a smooth process.

My experience taught me that my thesis was shaped by the way in which I responded to the contingencies of practice. While I was challenged to change track in the middle of the research, I could have dealt with my panic in different ways. This is where I came to see the importance of reflection in practice. No amount of theorising about research could have prepared me for responding to the contingencies of research. A well-developed sense of reflection in practice could have prepared me to think very differently about the way in which I dealt with disruptions.

Through the lived experience of the thesis, I came to see the importance of the distinction between theory in abstraction from practice and reflection in the context of the lived experience of practice. Translated into the terms of research characteristic of different forms of executive coaching, I came to see that, while scientific forms of evidence-based research is important for examining coaching, it provides information in the abstract, as does scientific research in general. I came to see that scientifically developed evidence-based research is not a sufficient condition for flow or excellence in coaching practice.

However, I did not want to dismiss scientific research. I believed that scientific evidence and reflective practice could complement one another, that research that is scientific and evidence based need to go hand in glove with forms of reflective practice based in situation learning about coaching. The question is: How can one bring them together such that they work jointly to develop a shared understanding that is the basis of maturity of a field?

As will be seen in the following chapters, I lived the distinction that is the basis for my research: the distinction between evidence-based and reflective practice-based forms of theorising. The thesis that follows is an exploration, for the benefit of executive coaching, of the potential fit between scientific forms of evidence and reflective practice.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

In an increasingly competitive and dynamic corporate world, organisations are recognising the correlation between managers' skills and the company's success. Executive coaching¹ can identify strategies that facilitate managers' personal and professional growth and subsequently enhance the organisation's overall business performance.

Sherman and Freas (2004), in their article 'The Wild West of Executive Coaching' published in the *Harvard Business Review*, described executive coaching as '[l]ike the Wild West of yesteryear, the frontier [executive coaching] is chaotic, largely unexplored, and fraught with risk, yet immensely promising' (pp. 82–83). More specifically, they believe that the practice of executive coaching preceded both research into and theorising about executive coaching. Although both research and theorising of executive coaching has made many strides in the last two decades, the question as to whether the 'Wild West' of executive coaching has been disciplined and turned into disciplinary-based knowledge remains unanswered. Executive coaching still occurs in the absence of a community-wide

¹ Definitions of terms used in this chapter are given below:

Coaching in business contexts can generally be defined as an informed dialogue whose purpose is the facilitation of new skills, possibilities and insights in the interest of individual learning and organizational advancement (Bacon and Spear, 2003).

During the past decade, consultation focused on managers and senior leaders in organizations has increasingly been referred to as executive coaching (Kilburg, 1996 by Joo, 2005).

Executive coaching involves a series of one-on-one interactions between a manager or executive and an external coach to in order to further the professional development of the manager (McCauley & Hezlett, 2001).

shared set of standards that defines good coaching in general and executive coaching in particular, and thus there is no agreement for assessing what counts as coaching.

It is through research and theorising about coaching that we can develop shared theories and thus standards for what counts as executive coaching, good executive coaching and executive coaching education. Therefore, it is of vital significance that research into coaching be established on a sound and strong footing. However, even in the context of research and theory about coaching, the ‘Wild West’ of executive coaching is illustrated by the many approaches to both research and theorising. For example, some practitioners articulate an evidence-based notion of coaching, while others are either sceptical of such a perspective or do not even see the need to engage in evidence-based research into executive coaching. Many practitioners believe that reflecting on their own practice is a sufficient basis for developing their theories of coaching. In fact, some believe that theory itself is generated through practice rather than by scientific research into practice.

1.2 Research problem

Given that not only coaching but research and theorising about coaching are challenged by the ‘Wild West’, how can not only coaching, but also research into coaching, be examined? This research demonstrates that theorising about coaching can be divided into two camps: evidence-based and reflective practice-based theorising about executive coaching. Evidence-based approaches tend to be scientifically based on an objective ‘outsider’s’ point of view, with theories of coaching developed on scientific grounds. Reflective practitioner-based approaches tend to believe that theories are generated from the inside, and appeal to reflection in the context of experience as the basis for generating theories. Many of these latter approaches are not evidence based and are also sceptical of evidence-based research in the context of coaching; on the other hand, evidence-based

researchers may charge the reflective theoriser with being unable to move beyond the bias of subjectivity.

It is in the space between evidence-based research and reflective practice-based searching and re-search that this thesis is situated. The ultimate aim is not to argue for or against one approach but to determine the feasibility of establishing a shared understanding that could accommodate a range of approaches to theorising of coaching.

To address this concern, the thesis returns to the historical origins of evidence-based coaching. In medical, nursing and psychological research there has been a movement beyond evidence-based research (EBR) to what is called practice-based evidence (PBE). This thesis demonstrates in detail that the phenomenon of PBE allows for an integration of evidence-based research and reflective practice in medical, psychological and nursing practice. It recognises that empirical evidence allows for objective standards to be developed, but does not necessarily address the question of applying evidence-based methods to practice. Furthermore, empirical evidence does not on its own provide opportunities for the practitioner to integrate their own insights developed at the coal face of practice. In contrast, reflective-based methods focus squarely on theorising in the context of specific practices, but are not necessarily generalisable to a range of practices.

PBE allows for an iterative movement between evidence and practice, between theory and particular situation. It allows for backwards and forwards movement between the two, thereby integrating evidence-based approaches with reflective practice-based approaches. It is situationally sensitive and allows for evidence that can be generalised across practices.

This thesis aims at exploring the implications of the transition from Evidence Based Research (EBR) to Practice Based Evidence (PBE) for executive coaching. It is aimed at studying if there are sufficient reasons to suggest that, just as in the case of medicine,

psychology and nursing, so in the case of executive coaching, is there a need to move beyond the dominance of EBR to a more inclusive PBE?”

Furthermore, because PBE includes both evidence-based and reflective practice-based theorising, it provides a framework for going beyond the ‘Wild West’ of research focused on executive coaching. In this way the thesis contributes towards a framework for shared understanding which is essential to the development of executive coaching as a discipline.

1.3 Methodology

The literature review situates coaching and research into coaching in a historical context. It articulates different forms of coaching and different forms of research into coaching, exploring the relationship between these two and outlining the different research methodologies that have been used to explore coaching. It relies heavily on the works of Grant and Cavanagh (2004, 2007a) to develop the case for EBR, as these practitioners have been at the forefront of the development of this approach to research in coaching.

The thesis goes beyond a literature review when it situates EBR in the context of the transition from EBR to PBE in medicine, psychology and nursing. In this context, the research uses literature from the latter disciplines to critique EBR. This critique aims not to negate EBR but to limit its dominance by situating it in the broader context allowed by PBE, adopting an inclusive approach to the range of research approaches to coaching.

Having situated EBR in the context of PBE through a critique, the thesis turns to an empirical investigation of this transition. Using the method of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith & Osborn, 2003), the researcher interviewed a range of coaching practitioners to explore the relationship between evidence-based and reflective-based research into coaching and to investigate questions of meaning across both

scientific and reflective forms of research. Underlying the IPA-based exploration is the question as to whether, in coaching practice, there is a move from EBR to PBE. And if there is, what are some of the main dimensions of this movement in the context of coaching?

1.4 Contributions

The originality of the thesis lies in its introduction of PBE into discussions of research in executive coaching, and the argument that, as in medicine, PBE can serve the purposes of integrating different research methods in the field in the case of executive coaching. In line with its hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, the thesis does not aim to be conclusive but to open a new horizon of possibility for further research and exploration. As Spinoza, Flores and Dreyfus (1997) have argued, the role of a Heideggerian hermeneutic approach to knowledge is not one of either verifying or refuting a hypothesis, but one of disclosing new possibilities. Both hermeneutics and phenomenology involve bringing out that which is implicit or immanent in a phenomenon. In line with this methodology, this thesis aims to disclose and bring out PBE as a phenomenon that is already inherent in the field of research into coaching. For PBE overcomes a cleavage that is present in the field: the tension between evidence-based and reflective practice-based research. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows the two approaches to coaching research to be brought into a greater whole.

This thesis is also original in its introduction of the IPA method; while this method has been used in the fields of psychology and education, it has been used only once in the context of coaching. It is an exciting development as it provides a method for operationalising hermeneutic phenomenology at the concrete level of research. The thesis thus contributes to the introduction of IPA to research in the context of coaching as it

explores the relationship between objectivist and experiential forms of research. Although not directly addressed in this thesis, the philosophical foundation for bringing empirical research and research based on lived experience into an integrated whole is to be found in Martin Heidegger²'s 'Being and Time', where he demonstrates that scientific research is concerned with objects (present-at-hand) and that hermeneutic research is concerned with meaning in general and the meaning of objects in particular (Heidegger, 1985).

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis consists of eight chapters.

Chapter 2 provides a general overview of central themes in the history of the development of coaching, and it begins to problematise the notion of evidence in the context of coaching. Part 1 of the chapter culminates with a discussion on the training of coaches. This sets up the link to Part 2, which discusses problematising the notion of evidence. There are those who believe that training needs to be based on scientific evidence, which can be applied by the practitioner at their own discretion. In contrast, others believe that training requires more than scientific evidence. It is by reflecting on the practice of coaching that coaching know-how and knowledge are developed. This tension is reflected in the contrast between the work of Grant and Cavanagh (2004, 2007a) on the one hand and Gelso (2006) on the other. Grant and Cavanagh maintain that coach training needs to be informed by a scientist practitioner model, whereas Gelso proposes that practitioners should be trained to get their research questions through practice.

² The work of philosophers like, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Rorty is cited in this thesis in the context of their contribution in the development of IPA.

Chapter 3 provides a systematic literature review on the concept of evidence in executive coaching. This chapter describes how medicine evolved from EBR to different forms of research. It traces the historical evolution of EBR in medicine, showing how it started with an exclusive focus on evidence-based research, then came to see the limitations of evidence-based research and, as a consequence, eventually began to include qualitative forms of research such as phenomenology and feminist forms of critique.

Chapter 4 discusses the relationship between theory of coaching and the choice of research methods used for researching a particular concept of coaching. This chapter develops a distinction between evidence-based coaching approaches and reflective practice-based approaches. Such a distinction is an expression of the practitioners' belief in scientific evidence (theory) or in reflection (practice). The danger of not aligning evidence-based and reflective practice-based research creates an unhealthy tension that leads to division in the emerging discipline of coaching. It therefore hinders paradigm maturity in the field of coaching.

Chapter 5 returns to the discipline of medical research in order to outline the grounds for transition from evidence-based practice (EBR) to practice-based evidence (PBE). By discussing the limitations of EBR in other fields (medicine, nursing and psychology), the concept of PBE is proposed. While the concept of PBE is built on the shortcomings of EBR, it is not in opposition with EBR; rather, it embraces all forms of evidence and is proposed as an attempt to hold together the field of research in coaching.

Chapter 6 describes the theory and design of the research methodology: IPA. It explains the relevance and implementation of the methodology in the context of the present study. It discusses the sampling strategy and sample characteristics, and outlines the data collection and analysis methodologies, including the criteria to demonstrate the validity of qualitative IPA data.

Chapter 7 presents an empirical analysis of practicing coaches' and researchers' lived experience of the relationship between evidence-based research and reflective practice research. It demonstrates through empirical research how the shift from EBR to PBE allows for a holistic approach to research in coaching.

Finally, Chapter 8 synthesises the findings and presents the final conclusion, highlighting the implications of the study and suggesting potential directions for future research.

Chapter 2

Introduction to executive coaching

The chapter presents a historical overview of the emergence of coaching and examines the notion of evidence in executive coaching. The chapter is divided into two parts. Part 1 focusses on the evolution of coaching practice, examining objectives and outcomes of coaching, executive development, evolutionary stages of the field of coaching, coaches' knowledge, and coach training.

Part 2 discusses evidence in coaching. This part also discusses coach training, but whereas Part 1 draws on the coach training literature in general, Part 2 examines evidence-based coach training. Part 2 describes in depth the work of Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) in understanding the coaching practitioners' perception of evidence, the cognitive behavioural view of evidence, evidence versus business case, evidence effectiveness, evidence-based coach training, the future of evidence-based coaching, and Grant and Cavanagh's model of disciplinary-based inquiry. Part 2 also contrasts reflective practice-based approaches and evidence-based approaches. This discussion is significant because it is through evidence that coaching can move beyond being viewed as a fad and develop its own methodological rigour. However, there are many types of evidence; the question of what counts as evidence is still contentious and is the theme of this thesis.

Part 1: An overview of the evolution of coaching practice

2.1 Objectives and outcomes of coaching

One purpose of executive coaching is to produce learning, behavioural change, and growth in the coachee for the economic benefit of the client that employs the coachee (Sherman & Freas, 2004). The common purpose of executive coaching can be defined in terms of behavioural change, self-awareness, learning, and ultimately career success and organisational performance, and can produce both proximal (immediate) and distal (long-term) outcomes (Joo, 2005).

2.1.1 Proximal outcomes

Practitioners might focus more on self-awareness (counselling) or on learning (consulting), depending on their coaching approach (Joo, 2005). However, the destination is the same – behavioural changes in executives as shown by immediate or proximal outcomes (Joo, 2005).

Self-awareness

Executive coaching has been in the spotlight in the business arena for the past 10 years or so, mainly because of the importance of increasing self-awareness (Sherman & Freas, 2004). It is remarkable how many smart, highly motivated, and apparently responsible people rarely pause to contemplate their own behaviours. Often more inclined to move on than to reflect deeply, executives may reach the top ranks without addressing their limitations. Coaching encourages them to slow down, gain awareness, and notice the effects of their words and actions. Coachees can then make choices rather than simply

react to events; ultimately, coaching can empower them to assume responsibility for their impact on the world (Sherman & Freas, 2004).

Those who use the counselling approach tend to emphasise self-awareness and self-reflection in executive coaching (Kilburg, 1997; Orenstein, 2002). Using the metaphor of a window and mirror (Sherman & Freas, 2004), the purpose of executive coaching is to provide coachees with more time to look into the mirror instead of looking through the window.

Increased self-awareness that leads to behavioural change will have a positive impact on individual success, especially on psychological satisfaction (Joo, 2005).

Learning

However, coaching does not end with self-awareness, and executive coaching can also be a strategic learning tool for organisations (Joo, 2005). Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett (2003) focussed their mentoring study on the learning outcomes that stem from training intervention and, using the classification developed by Kraiger, Ford and Salas (1993), they suggested three areas of protégé change: cognitive, skill-based and affective learning. Among these, learning in executive coaching focuses on cognitive and affective learning. Cognitive learning represents enhancements in declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, strategic or tacit knowledge, knowledge organisation, or cognitive strategies that may occur as a result of the coaching relationship. Affective learning is attitudinal (e.g., changes in values, improved tolerance for diversity, or reconciliation of work-life balance issues) or motivational (e.g., changes in the coachee's motivational disposition, self-efficacy or goal-setting) (Wanberg et al., 2003).

It is the active learning that transfers essential leadership and managerial skills such as visioning, communication, interpersonal relationships and action planning skills (Sherman & Freas, 2004). Executive coaching, especially using a consulting approach, aims to help leaders adapt to new responsibilities, reduce destructive behaviours, enhance teamwork, align individuals to collective goals and support organisational changes (Joo, 2005). For those taking a consulting approach, therefore, learning could be an immediate outcome of executive coaching. Learning that leads to behavioural change will have a positive impact on individual success, especially on performance and career satisfaction (Joo, 2005).

2.1.2 Distal outcomes

Joo (2005) has differentiated distal outcomes into individual success and organisational success. Individual success includes individual performance, compensation, promotion, job satisfaction and commitment, and psychological wellness, whereas organisational success includes organisational performance, talent retention and organisational transformation.

Individual success

Individual benefits from executive coaching may be enhanced problem solving, managerial and interpersonal skills and ability, better relationships, greater confidence, adaptability to change, work-life balance and reduced stress levels (Jarvis, 2004). Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas and Kucine (2003) found that executives who worked with coaches (compared with those who did not) set more specific goals, were more likely to share their feedback and solicit ideas from supervisors (but not peers or subordinates), and had improved performance ratings (based on multisource feedback).

Career success can serve as a proxy for individual success. A descriptive study by Wasylyshyn (2003) found that the vast majority of executive coaching engagements focused on behaviour changes that executives wished to make for continued career success. Career success can be defined as the real or perceived achievements individuals have accumulated as a result of their work experiences (Boudreau, Boswell & Judge, 2001; Judge, Higgins, Thoreson & Barrick, 1999; Siebert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001). Career success reflects the accumulated interaction between a variety of individual, organisational and societal norms, behaviours and work practices (Wanberg et al., 2003). The career success literature differentiates between objective or extrinsic career success (represented by more observable career achievement indices, such as promotions and compensation level) and subjective or intrinsic career success (represented by reports of job satisfaction, career satisfaction and commitment, and work-life balance) (Wanberg et al., 2003). Joo (2005) proposed that those who feel subjective and objective success will contribute to organisational success, while objective (extrinsic) and subjective (intrinsic) individual success will have a positive impact on organisational success.

Organisational success

Proximal and distal outcomes can be expected to generate organisational success (Wanberg et al., 2003). For instance, executive coaching as a follow-up to a training program was shown to increase productivity by 88% in public-sector managers, which was a significantly greater gain than training alone (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997). These organisational outcomes can be as diverse as improved productivity, quality, customer service and shareholder value, increased commitment and satisfaction (retention), better transfer, and support for training and development efforts (Jarvis, 2004).

Companies depend on the effective performance of their leaders, who are responsible for the productive work done by others and who face frustrating challenges as the tolerance for lapses in performance decreases (Kilburg, 2000). Executive coaching has been proposed as an intervention to help executives improve their performance and ultimately the performance of the overall organisation (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Kilburg, 1996).

Kilburg (2000: 65) has defined the role of executive coach as being knowledgeable about the coaching process in terms of coaching skills and techniques to achieve the expected coaching outcomes:

... a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organisation, and a consultant who uses a wide variety of behavioural techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and personal satisfaction and, consequently, to improve the effectiveness of the client's organisation within a formally defined coaching agreement.

2.2 Executive development

Coaching can help new managers. Indeed, four out of five managers in Britain are what the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) calls 'accidental managers' – people who have been promoted to more senior positions because they are excellent at their jobs (Sabatier, 2016). Most of these managers will have to come to the role without any training, many didn't set out to become managers, they may not relish their new status and they have little knowledge and experience of how to lead and manage a team effectively. They may have proved themselves in a technical area such as accountancy or engineering and, because

they have done well, they are then asked to run bigger projects and manage teams, without realising that a completely new set of skills is required (Sabatier, 2016).

Periera (2015), in his discussion of the ‘accidental manager’, quoted CMI chief executive Ann Francke: ‘the principles of management are stunningly simple, yet so few get it right’. Periera further stated: ‘Being a good manager is about training and practice. A natural runner may have a talent for running, but they won’t win a race or complete a marathon without practice and training. The same is true for a good manager’. He noted the CMI study which found that 75% of people rate their own manager as the chief influence on their career. Sabatier (2016) subsequently noted that if managers get it wrong, the career prospects of the people they manage might suffer. She further argued that, while we are not all born managers or have natural leadership abilities, the core skills needed for managers can be learned with the help of training and coaching (Sabatier, 2016).

The above review reveals a clear need to offer coaching for professional training and development of managers, and the demand for coaching has been increasing globally in the last two decades. In 2002 there were more than 10,000 professional coaches in the US (Berglas, 2002), and this figure was expected to exceed 50,000 over the subsequent five years. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), the largest professional body in the management and development of people in the UK, was noting similar growth in executive coaching in the UK (Jarvis, 2004). By 2015, 75% of UK companies were offering coaching or mentoring to address skill gaps at a senior level, and a further 13% planned to offer this in 2016 (Sabatier, 2016). Indeed this expansion in coaching is a global phenomenon (Berglas, 2002).

Good leaders today need to be emotionally intelligent, self-aware and aware of others. They need to be able to build rapport, influence colleagues at all levels and have the gravitas to succeed at a senior level. Stepping into a more visible role also requires

excellent communication skills and the ability to elicit the best from a team. There is a great deal to learn but these new skills can be developed effectively using executive coaching (Sabatier, 2016).

The rapid growth of executive coaching has been well documented (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Diedrich, 2001; Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Kilburg, 1996). Executive coaching is an increasingly popular response to workplace demands (Joo, 2005), and executives tend to expect emotional intelligence and soft skills from managers and colleagues (Joo, 2005). Similarly, executives of flatter, leaner, faster moving organisations are recognising a subtler set of competencies: the communication and interpersonal skills necessary for influencing employees, adaptability to rapid change and respect for people of diverse backgrounds (Sherman & Freas, 2004).

2.3 Evolutionary stages in the field of coaching

It has been 15 years since Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson's (2001) seminal review of coaching research revealed weaknesses in the methodology of many earlier studies. These weaknesses included limitations in the descriptions of the research methods, inadequate sample sizes for statistical significance and studies where the claims made were not fully supported by the data. Such research problems, however, are not uncommon for new domains, of which coaching in 2001 was certainly one (Passmore & Gibbes, 2007).

Based on insights from the work by Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001), Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) discussed the evolutionary process of theoretical developments of executive coaching. They argued that we can draw lessons on how knowledge evolves by considering the evolution of other disciplines, such as counselling. New areas evolve by passing through several phases. Initially the emphasis is on defining the focus of study.

This phase includes exploring the phenomena and a sharing practices between practitioners, using experience to help shape and identify what is understood of the field, and to define the limits of the field of enquiry. An example of this phase is a focus of debate on definitions and boundaries: asking, for example, where is the boundary between coaching and counselling, or what is the difference between coaching and mentoring? (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

After the exploration phase, attention shifts to theory building methods and measures, with researchers often developing and testing new interventions, products or protocols (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). The initial part of this phase is often marked with case studies and small qualitative research, incorporating the use of unique models and adaptations of existing models drawn from parallel domains. The focus then gradually shifts from theory building to randomised controlled trials (RCTs) with large sample sizes, and finally to meta-analyses which review the results from multiple RCT studies to offer an insight on the efficacy of the intervention across populations, organisations and methods (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Once theories are established and recognised, the third phase is characterised by concern for exceptions and variance to the established theories (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011), questioning, for example, which groups or issues benefit most from which approach.

Each phase requires different methodologies and instruments. In the first phase, the approach is experiential and theoretical, as individuals share examples of practice and debate boundaries. In the second phase, the case study and survey are popular tools for exploring the phenomena, and quantitative techniques – including the use of effect size to demonstrate impact, and theory-building techniques such as Grounded Theory – are used to help build the theoretical framework for the domain. In the final phase, exploring

difference quantitative techniques continues alongside such techniques as IPA to explore individual experiences (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) analysed the expansion of executive coaching research in diverse directions. While no research development pathway perfectly fits the model, they suggested that coaching occurs in the later stages of phase 2, and many organisational interventions such as training occur in phase 3. There are a growing number of RCTs (see, for example, Grant, Passmore, Cavanagh & Parker, 2010), the first meta-study (DeMeuse, Dai & Lee, 2009) and some initial attempts to use theory-building tools (see, for example, Duff & Passmore, 2010; Passmore, 2010; Passmore & McGoldrick, 2009). Many research claims remain unsubstantiated by other studies, and this may reflect local conditions or populations, although this situation changes as multiple studies are published reviewing the same or similar question and with similar results (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

With only seven impact studies in the psychological literature, there appears a distinct lack of research into coaching, although coaching research can be traced back much earlier (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001). For example, Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) shared the database of coaching literature before 2007, highlighting that PsycINFO has journal records on coaching dating back to the 1930s. The earliest papers are the Gorby (1937) report of senior staff coaching junior employees on how to save waste, and the Bigelow (1938) article on how best to implement a sales coaching program. Indeed, PsycINFO listed a total of 355 published scholarly papers or dissertations on coaching up until July 2007 (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). This figure includes life (or personal coaching) and workplace and executive coaching, and specifically excludes papers on sports coaching, therapeutic work with clinical populations, educational coaching or coaching for psychometric or educational tests. Papers from *International Coaching Psychology Review*, a joint APS and British Psychological Society publication, are also included in this

overview. The number of published papers has escalated in recent years: in the 62 years between 1937 and 1999 only 93 papers were published, eclipsed by 262 papers in the 6½ years between 2000 and July 2007 (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

However, quantity does not necessarily ensure quality (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Of the 355 published papers to date 167 have been articles, opinion papers, descriptive articles or theoretical discussions, and there have been 60 PhDs and 128 empirical studies. Many of the published empirical papers are surveys (e.g., Fanasheh, 2003) or descriptive studies into the nature of executive coaching (e.g., Schnell, 2005), investigating organisations' use of coaching (e.g., Douglas & McCauley, 1999; Vloeberghs, Pepermans & Thielemans, 2005), or examining perceptions of coaching (e.g., Garman, Whiston & Zlatoper, 2000; Olsen, 2006). That is to say, most of the empirical literature is contextual or survey-based research about coaching as a professional activity or about the characteristics of coaches and coachees, rather than outcome research in to the effectiveness of coaching as a methodology for creating and sustaining human change (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Based on the seminal work of Kampa-Kokesch and Anderson (2001), Passmore and Fillery-Travis (2011) concluded that 10 years of coaching research have provided significant insights into coaching practice. Over this period there has been a growing shift to formal qualitative methods such as IPA and Grounded Theory, and a growth in RCT studies. It is hoped that in the decade 2011–2020 researchers and practitioners will further increase the number of studies, deepen the standing of coaching as a force for good in organisational and individual wellbeing, as well as strengthening the partnership between researchers and practitioners (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

2.4 Coaches' knowledge

The profile of coaches in the industry appears to be changing, with individuals whose primary training is in evidence-based organisational and human change, stepping forward as professional coaches (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). These include psychologists, psychiatrists, adult education specialists and organisational change experts with postgraduate qualifications in business, human resources and other professions. Aside from a range of domain-specific knowledge, these people often bring with them a set of practice standards and ethical understanding derived from their previous professional training (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

Concurrently, the consumers of coaching services have grown progressively more sophisticated (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Human Resource professionals who employ coaches for their organisations are increasingly well informed, and coach assessment and interview processes for corporate coaching assignments have grown more demanding. Indeed, HR professionals often have a more detailed understanding of the range of coaching services on offer, and their applicability to various organisational needs and challenges, than do many coach service providers. HR professionals are increasingly wary of what they perceive to be pseudo-coach credentialing mills, and increasingly they are asking searching questions about the theoretical foundations of the coach training and the validating empirical evidence. Private clients are also requesting facts and data about the effectiveness of coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

Kempster and Iszatt-White (2012) examined the dynamics of coaching interaction between the coach and client. They found that, whilst the scope and purpose of the coaching intervention varies with context, the desired outcomes are inherently skewed. There is also considerable debate surrounding the manner in which coaching interventions tend to be conducted. For example, while Gallwey (2000: 177) views the coach's role as 'unlock[ing]

a person's potential to maximise their own performance by helping them to learn rather than teaching them', Feldman (2001) has more prescriptively framed the anticipated format of coaching interventions in terms of work-related counselling that relies on specific feedback to improve performance. Gray (2006: 476) suggested that 'in terms of relationship, the coach is not necessarily an "expert" or "authority", but someone who relates to the client in a spirit of partnership and collaboration', with the coach fostering in the coachee that deeper critical awareness of personal and organisational assumptions which is required for transformative learning. Inherent in these differing models of coaching are varying degrees of directiveness exercised by the coach, from the behaviourist-centred approach, where the coachee may be given specific tasks to perform or frameworks within which to work, to the person-centred approach where there is almost no direct intervention by the coach and the coachee is merely supported in arriving at their own self-understanding. Thus coaching outcomes are tilted towards the objectives and the context of coaching engagement (Gray, 2006).

Notwithstanding that 'cooperation occurs between client and coach that permits and requires both to contribute in directing the development experience' (Ely et al., 2010: 587), it is the client's or coachee's development that is focus of attention. Underlying the coaching relationship is a commercial exchange, explicitly involving the intended outcomes of learning for the coachee and financial reward for the coach (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012). The coach is likely to learn from the encounter, either in terms of developing their own coaching skills or in relation to a better understanding of business contexts for subsequent coaching interventions. However, the coach's learning is an adjunct outcome rather than an explicit goal of the coaching (Kempster & Iszatt-White (2012).

2.4.1 Process vs content skills of coach

The executive coach's knowledge determines the effectiveness of the coaching. Kempster & Iszatt-White (2012) discussed two broad perspectives on coaches' expertise: whether they are 'process experts' or 'content experts'. Some authors (e.g., Diedrich & Kilburg, 2001) have emphasised the importance of coaches being knowledgeable in the business context in which the coachee operates – that is, 'content experts'. Core competencies for effective executive coaches in this perspective are an understanding of management principles and business issues, together with abilities in leadership and organisational politics (Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Levinson, 1996). The use of coaching interventions in executive education contexts, and particularly MBAs, would tend to reinforce this perspective (see, for example, Blackler & Kennedy, 2004).

Many other scholars view psychological training and an understanding of adult learning – that is, process skills – as being more important (Kilburg, 1996). Levinson (1996: 115) has suggested that a coach must be 'authoritative with respect to the psychological and coaching processes and also authoritative in his or her knowledge of the business world'. However, the emphasis on process skills reflects, perhaps, the heritage of coaching being derived from the therapeutic disciplines, and the tendency for those seeking to establish coaching as a professional discipline to draw on approaches derived from this heritage as the basis for accreditation (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012).

Kempster and Iszatt-White (2012) discussed the findings of a review of executive coaching conducted by Coutu and Kauffman (2009), where 65% of the surveyed executives rated 'experience coaching in a similar setting' as their most important criterion for selecting a coach, whilst only 27% felt that it was important for coaches to have experience of actually

working in a similar role. Clear methodology (61%) and a quality client list (50%) were also clear indicators of credibility, whilst experience in a psychological discipline such as therapy (13%) was not viewed as essential. In essence, the contribution anticipated by both sides does not place emphasis on business knowledge or personal business experience – that is, content expertise – but rather experience and credibility of past coaching cases with clear methodology (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012).

2.5 Coach training

The majority of coaches have no training in psychological science (Grant & Jackson, 2004) and, if they do have training in coaching, they tend to be trained in theoretical, proprietary models of coaching. In contrast, coaching psychologists are formally trained in psychology, and draw upon this knowledge base as a primary foundation for practice (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Yet not all psychologists are equally familiar with all areas of psychology (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Applied psychologists should be able to draw from a wide area of psychology. However, of particular importance to the practice of coaching psychology are the elements of goal-setting, change dynamics, wellbeing and self-regulation (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Overall, the purpose of executive coaching is to produce learning, behavioural change and growth in the coachee (Sherman & Freas, 2004). An effective coach with an HRD background should help a coachee achieve agreed-upon goals, while also transferring the knowledge and skills needed to sustain ongoing development. Coaches do not have to be licensed psychologists, therefore, but they need to be trained and certified in coaching (Bacon & Spear, 2003). However, executive coaches must be aware of ethical issues and the warning signs when deeper psychological issues exist, such as chronic depression, and should be able to refer their clients to competent professionals when they cannot provide

help themselves (Bacon & Spear, 2003; Sherman & Freas, 2004). In particular, HRD scholars should pay more attention to executive coaching as an area for further research, and HRD practitioners need to focus more on developmental purpose, while understanding ethical and psychological issues (Joo, 2005).

Grant and Zackson (2004) investigated coaches' professional training using a sample of coaches who were members of the International Coach Federation (ICF). The ICF has three categories of certification: Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential (completion of 60 hours of coach-specific training and 750 hours of client coaching); Professional Certified Coach (PCC) (125 hours of coach-specific training and 750 hours of client coaching); and Master Certified Coach (MCC) (200 hours of coach-specific training and 2500 hours of client coaching) (Grant & Zackson, 2004).

Grant and Zackson identified six key areas of interest: (i) coaching professionalism (credentialing, training); (ii) respondents' coaching career (prior professions, length of time working as a coach); (iii) coaching processes used (telephone vs. face-to-face coaching, length of session); (iv) coaching practice (number of clients, techniques for generating new clients, fees); (v) client profiles (life coaching or executive coaching); and (vi) demographics (gender, age, education).

Members of the Research and Development Committee of the ICF and the Coaching Psychology Unit at the University of Sydney initially developed 76 multiple-choice and qualitative short answer questions which reflected the above six categories and were selected for the 15–20-minute survey. The total of 2,529 respondents represented a response rate of 41.1% and, of these, 89.4% completed the entire survey. The sample comprised primarily professional coaches ($N = 2,314$; 92.3%) with 192 (7.7%) declaring that they were not professional coaches; 23 respondents did not answer this question (Grant & Zackson, 2004).

There is little agreement about which executive coaching approach should be followed, with wide disagreement about necessary or desired professional qualifications for coaches (Joo, 2005). The problem is not the practice per se, but the lack of research and theory to advance the field (Joo, 2005), with little balance in the proportion of literature dealing with research into different approaches to coaching. Reports on the scientist-practitioner model are more abundant because these researchers look for evidence. In contrast, reflective practice approaches do not seek or discuss evidence; rather, reflective practitioners tend to believe that theories are generated in the context of practice and not in a scientific way outside of practice.

The resulting literature gap needs to be addressed, focussing on differences in the concept of evidence between these two approaches to coaching. Evidence-based coach training is discussed in Part 2.

Part 2: Problematising the phenomenon of evidence in Executive Coaching

The second part of this chapter summarises problematising the phenomenon of evidence (as outlined by Cavanagh, Grant & Kemp, 2005) in the context of industry's attempt to standardise coaching practice. It discusses the tension between two views about evidence in the context of executive coaching: (i) the evidence-based approach and (ii) the reflective practice-based approach, which uses qualitative methods. The broad distinction between these two kinds of approaches is briefly discussed here, but more detailed discussion is provided in Chapter 4. In particular, this section examines Grant and Cavanagh's understanding of the coaching practitioner's perception of evidence, cognitive behavioural view of evidence, evidence versus business case, evidence effectiveness, evidence-based

coach training, the future of evidence-based coaching, and Grant and Cavanagh's model of discipline-based inquiry.

2.6 Managerial skill development and the emergence of executive coaching

Organisations are aware of the importance of educating managers in the development of managerial skills to effectively perform the tasks of business management (Rekalde, Landeta & Albizu, 2015). Many scholars maintain that companies and managers accept that there is a positive relationship between managers' skill levels and their contribution to company success, and these same scholars maintain that managers are conscious of the need for continuous management training as a medium for permanent development and capacity building, especially within the framework of a highly dynamic and competitive environment (Castanias & Helfat, 1991, 2001; Landeta, Barrutia & Hoyos, 2009; Pickett, 1998). In this regard, coaching is a process with the aim of contributing to and assisting in the development of strategies that favour the personal and professional growth of managers, providing them with permanent transformative learning in one or more of their visible behaviours, which in turn affects the behaviour and performance of their direct collaborators (Rekalde et al., 2015).

Grant (2013a) described the application of coaching in the managerial environment as both novel and historical; yet in spite of an extensive and informative professional bibliography, scientific research remains relatively scant, although it is still accumulating. The different points of view about the scientific origin of coaching have arisen because this practice has obtained insight from the knowledge produced throughout the history of the development of human potential (Grant, 2013a). Accordingly, the theoretical foundation of coaching

rests on knowledge and concepts from a range of disciplines including the sciences, medicine, philosophy, education, psychology and sports (Grant, 2013a).

The origins of coaching as a practice for the development of managers are imprecise (Judge & Cowell, 1997; Kilburg, 1996; Tobias, 1996). Although some authors have dated the beginnings of executive coaching to the 1930s, with works such as those by Gorby (1937) and Bigelow (1938), the great majority agree that its expansion into the organisational world began in the 1980s, and that it finally received generalised acceptance in the 1990s (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Kilburg, 1996). The practice of executive coaching first appeared in the literature at the start of the 1990s, coinciding with its generalisation as an intervention addressed toward changing the behaviour of mid- and senior-level managers. At that time, executive coaching was considered to be a different practice from other interventions, although it was still poorly defined and regulated (Brotman, Liberi & Wasylshyn, 1998; Kilburg, 1996; Passmore, Peterson & Freire, 2013; Tobias, 1996).

At the end of the 1990s, researchers developed several definitions of coaching and fundamentally circumscribed the coaching concept within the framework of leadership development – that is, within the executive coaching framework (Joo, 2005). These researchers include Feldman and Lankau (2005), Judge and Cowell (1997), Kiel, Rimmer, Williams and Doyle (1996), Kombarakaran, Yang, Baker and Fernandes (2008), Levinson (1996), Peterson and Hicks (1996), Richard (1999), Saporito (1996), Sperry (1993, 1997), Tobias (1996) and Witherspoon and White (1996a, 1996b, 1997). The professional literature adds the personal dimension to the perspective suggested by the academic literature, noting that executive coaching can help clients deepen their learning and improve their performance in the organisational area, while also enhancing the quality of their personal life. Accordingly, executive coaching is deemed to help people produce

extraordinary results in both their personal and professional lives (International Coach Federation, 2014; Lewis-Duarte & Bligh, 2012).

Swanson and Holton (2009: 4) suggested that human resource development (HRD) can be defined as ‘a process of developing and unleashing expertise for the purpose of improving individual, team, work process, and organizational system performance’. Executive coaching focuses on improving individual performance, falling squarely within the purview of HRD. Accordingly, scholars and practitioners have an un-mandated responsibility to nurture understanding of executive coaching in both scholarly inquiry and practical application (Bartlett, Boylan & Hale, 2014). Tompson et al. (2008) reported that 50% of companies studied currently self-identify as employing executive coaching, and one third of those companies who were not currently engaging executive coaching expressed interest in adding the practice in the future.

The distinction made by Bartlett et al. (2014) between scholars and practitioners explains the variation among coaching literature from both these sources. This distinction was also elaborated by Grant (2016) when discussing the relationship between practitioner expertise and empirical research (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 illustrates the joint contributions of professional practitioner expertise and empirical evidence. Professional wisdom consists of individual experience about what works in one’s coaching practice with one’s clients. The individual coach’s perspective is important because coaching is typically an idiosyncratic intervention, not least because the coach-coachee relationship is a major factor in coaching outcomes, and that relationship is by its very nature idiosyncratic (Grant, 2016).



Figure 2.1: The contributions of practice and research to evidence-based coaching

(from Grant, 2016, figure 2, p. 78)

Although individual views are important, relying solely on them may result in a myopic perspective (Grant, 2016). Hence the practitioner group consensus, which allows for multiple perspectives about what works, is also important. This is not to say that practitioner group experience can present an unbiased or objective view on what works. Within any group or subgroup of professionals there are political and social forces at play which will shape the emerging narrative or consensus about what is the best or right way. Nevertheless, and regardless of its limitations, it is clear that practitioner wisdom has a vital role in shaping understandings of evidence-based coaching (Grant, 2016).

The right-hand side of Figure 2.1 represents the role of empirical evidence gathered from research. Grant (2016) noted the importance of the boundaries between practitioner experience and formal research. There is a sense in which practitioner experience gained as a result of professional coaching practice can be rightly considered to be research (or

evidence). However, following the rationale outlined by a number of eminent authors in the action learning sphere (e.g., Argyris & Schön, 1992; Revans, 1982), Grant has argued that there is an important distinction between information gained in one's professional practice and information gained through formal research initiatives. In the context of professional practice, the primary purpose is the improvement of practice. The emphasis is on practical significance, and this information tends to be shared through contacts with one's colleagues, professional or industry associations. In contrast, the aim of formal research is to produce more generalisable knowledge that contributes to the broader knowledge base. The emphasis is often on theoretical significance rather than practical application, and the information tends to be shared primarily through peer-reviewed publications or academic conferences, and only then it is disseminated for professional purposes. Practitioners and academics are different and they make different contributions to an evidence-based approach to coaching (Grant, 2016). Detailed discussion of the different evidence-based perspectives is presented in Chapter 3.

Coaches come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, with undergraduate degrees ranging from drama to psychology (Judge & Cowell, 1997), and there is a need for evidence to indicate whether the effects of coaching are related to the coach's style (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003). The background of executive coaches (e.g., counselling psychology) maybe well suited for some situations (e.g., helping a senior manager overcome an aggressive or demeaning interpersonal style) but not for others (e.g., helping a senior executive integrate organisational cultures during a merger or acquisition) (Smither et al., 2003). It is possible for the approach to executive coaching to be slightly modified, depending on the coach's background, since the primary purpose of the counselling approach is to help those who are damaged or in crisis, while the consulting approach is to increase executive capacity and achieve goals (Joo, 2005).

2.7 Grant and Cavanagh's understanding of the coaching practitioners' perception of evidence

Grant and Cavanagh are both pioneering practitioners' interest in evidence and outlining what counts as evidence in the context of coaching. Coaches appear to be increasingly aware of a need to ground their practice in solid theoretical understanding and empirically tested models, rather than the standardised implementation of 'one size fits all' coaching systems (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). The complexity of human behaviour and human systems requires coaches to respond and adapt their coaching in multiple ways, and anecdotal evidence suggests that many coaches who have been trained in standardised proprietary coaching systems feel the need for the theoretical understanding and empirical knowledge required to make these contextualised responses (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

2.7.1 Criteria of coaching efficacy

As practitioners have a diverse background (Judge & Cowell, 1997), their theoretical approach to coaching and practice varies. To determine the efficacy of coaching, Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) discussed several follow-up studies which indicated that coaching can indeed bring a sustained change.

Grant (2003a) investigated the effects of cognitive coaching, behavioural coaching and combined cognitive and behavioural coaching, and found that at a six-month follow-up only the gains from the combined cognitive-behavioural coaching were maintained. In a 12-month follow-up Miller, Yahne, Moyers, Martinez and Pirritano (2004) found that coaching with feedback was superior to training-only conditions in maintaining clinicians' interviewing skills. Investigating the long-term effects of a randomised waitlist controlled program, Green, Oades and Grant (2006) found that gains from participation in a 10-week solution-focused cognitive-behavioural life coaching program were maintained at a 30-

week follow-up. Libri and Kemp (2006) provide an example of a well-designed case study of cognitive-behavioural executive coaching. Using an A-B-A-B design with an 18-month follow-up, they found that cognitive-behavioural coaching enhanced the coachees' sales performance and core self-evaluations (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007b).

2.8 Cognitive behavioural view of evidence³

Grant and Cavanagh are at the forefront of research into practitioners' perception of evidence and in outlining the conditions of evidence in general. Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) identified two of the major challenges faced by the coaching industry. The first challenge⁴ for coaching is to prove itself as a valid and reliable change methodology. The coaching world is urged to gather solid evidence on the effectiveness of coaching through well-designed outcome studies. The second is for coaching leaders, researchers and practitioners to look beyond the demands of this immediate research agenda, to develop a vision of the role of coaching as an emerging discipline in enhancing the lives of individuals, and the sustainability of organisations and the world as a whole (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

It is perhaps deceptively easy for those in the coaching industry who come from professional backgrounds such as psychology, or who are engaged in academic research, to focus narrowly on the scientific undertaking and to forget that the health of coaching as a discipline is an industry-wide issue (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). The current penetration of coaching psychologists within the industry is low, with one study showing that only 14% of coaches report formal training in psychology (Spence, Cavanagh & Grant, 2006). While coaching psychology may 'punch above its weight' in the field, its fate is still very much

³ Cognitive behavioural approach is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

⁴ See discussion in Section 2.12.1.

linked with the wider coaching industry (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). At an individual level, the danger for those who are involved in the education of coaches and the conduct of research is that they will engage in discussion primarily within their own closed group. That the industry has developed to this point with so little input from academia suggests that it may well be doing at least some things right. Another risk to the industry is of leaving behind the bulk of practising coaches, and losing the important contribution of their expertise and experience. Increasingly sophisticated theory and research require increasingly sophisticated consumers of that research and increasingly strong connections between consumers and researchers if it is to remain relevant. This is both a significant educative task for the industry and a challenge to the vision of researchers (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Fortunately there appears to be growing industrywide recognition of the need to improve standards and education in coaching, with multiple efforts to develop competency frameworks, codes of ethics, training guidelines and accreditation systems (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). One current initiative, the Global Convention on Coaching (GCC), shows promise in creating a genuine industry-wide, international dialogue aimed at developing common frameworks of understanding and solutions to the challenges faced by this emerging discipline (GCC, 2007). However, psychologists' engagement with the non-psychological sections of the coaching industry and with dialogue processes such as the GCC will be important for the field to successfully emerge as a profession and a science. Effective engagement in this dialogue requires fostering a vision within coaching psychology that understands the present state of the industry as a step in a greater journey. Ultimately, this vision needs to encompass something of what the industry might become and what it might contribute to the world (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

2.8.1 Outcome studies

Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) defined outcome research in the context of executive coaching as research that is conducted to examine the effect of an intervention on specific variables. Such variables can include goal attainment, performance, wellbeing, stress, resilience, workplace engagement and satisfaction, organisational climate or quality of relationships.

The first published empirical outcome study in the psychology literature was the Gershman (1967) dissertation on the effects of specific factors of the supervisor-subordinate coaching climate upon improvement of attitude and performance of the subordinate (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). No other empirical outcome studies related to coaching were published until the Duffy (1984) dissertation on the effectiveness of a feedback-coaching intervention in executive outplacement. Since 1980, 69 outcome studies have examined the effectiveness of coaching, including 23 case studies, 34 within-subject studies and 12 between-subject studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Within-subject studies use pre- and post-measures from a single group of people. While, between-subject studies, use a control group as a comparison to a treatment group, but without the randomisation found in randomised controlled trials (RCTs).

The different types of outcome studies published between 1980 and July 2007 encompass various types of research methods (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). While case studies can be informative and can provide rich in-depth qualitative insights, many of the 23 case studies in the coaching literature are purely descriptive and emphasise practice-related issues rather than development of theory or the evaluation of coaching outcomes (Kilburg, 2004). Single-case designs can provide useful data-driven evaluations. However, few case studies have incorporated established and validated quantitative measures and designs that

robustly assess the impact of coaching; one rare example is that by Libri and Kemp (2006) (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The largest single methodological approach to coaching outcome research is represented by 34 within-subject studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Within-subject studies have the potential to provide useful quantitative data and allow for the use of inferential statistics, provided that the studies are well designed and use validated and reliable measures.

Although a number of commentaries rightly draw attention to the deficits in much of the existing coaching research (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006; Passmore & Gibbes, 2007), it would appear that the coaching research is moving through the ‘natural’ stages of research development, from case studies, through to uncontrolled within-subject studies, and then on to quasi-experimental and randomised controlled between-subject designs. Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) have noted only 12 between-subject studies.

2.8.2 Randomised controlled studies

Only 8 of these 12 between-subject outcome studies used a randomised controlled design (Deviney, 1994; Gattellari et al., 2005; Grant, 2003a; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Green, Grant & Rynsaardt, 2007; Miller et al., 2004; Spence & Grant, 2007; Taylor, 1997). Sue-Chan and Latham (2004) used random assignment to self, peer or external coaching group, but did not use a no-intervention or placebo intervention control group (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The eight randomised controlled studies of coaching indicate that coaching can indeed improve performance in various ways. Three of these eight studies have been in the medical or health areas. Taylor (1997) found that solution-focused coaching fostered resilience in medical students; Gattellari et al. (2005) found that peer coaching by general

practitioners improved coachees' ability to make informed decisions about prostate-specific antigen screening; and Miller et al. (2004) found that coaching with feedback was superior to training-only conditions, in a program designed to help clinicians learn motivational interviewing skills (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Four outcome studies were in the life (or personal) coaching domain, with community samples and students (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). These indicated that life coaching can improve, indeed facilitate, goal attainment and reduce anxiety and stress (Grant, 2003a), enhance psychological and subjective wellbeing (Green et al., 2006; Spence & Grant, 2007) and resilience, while reducing depression, stress or anxiety (Green et al., 2007). Only one randomised controlled study has been conducted in the workplace, with Deviney (1994) finding no changes in supervisors' feedback skills following a multiple-rater feedback intervention and coaching from their managers over nine weeks (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). No randomised controlled studies of workplace or executive coaching by professional external coaches had been published in the psychological literature until July 2007 (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The dearth of randomised controlled studies is a serious shortcoming in the coaching outcome literature (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Rightly or wrongly, randomised controlled quantitative studies have become an important benchmark for outcome research in many areas of science. However, randomised allocation to intervention or control is often extremely difficult⁵ in real-life field research. In light of the challenges in using randomised designs, researchers have attempted to deal with these challenges methodologically. Most coaching outcome studies have used single group, pre-post within-subject designs (e.g.,

⁵Practical difficulties in carrying out experimental field studies were experienced by the researcher when she decided to change the focus of the research because of participants' unavailability. Initially, a field study was planned and a self-efficacy scale was constructed for a pre-test post-test measurement. But the host organisation refused to participate in the study because of their managers' busy work schedule. This was the third organisation who declined to participate in the field study. The time constraints on this doctoral candidature precluded looking for another host organisation, and so the research focus was modified.

Grant, 2003b; Jones, Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Olivero et al., 1997; Orenstein, 2006).

Some published quasi-experimental studies have made pre-test and post-test comparisons and used non-randomised allocation to an experimental or control group. Using such a design Evers, Brouwers and Tomic (2006) found that executive coaching enhanced participants' self-efficacy beliefs in personal goal setting, but they did not measure goal attainment itself. Miller (1990) examined the impact of coaching on transfer of training skills, but findings were restricted by a high rate of participant drop-out: of the original 91 participants, only 33 completed the final measures. Barrett (2007) used a quasi-experimental, modified post-test-only control group design and found that group coaching reduced burnout but did not improve productivity. Gyllensten and Palmer (2005) found that, compared with a no-coaching control group, coaching was associated with lower levels of anxiety and stress but not depression (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

2.8.3 Developing a common knowledge base of outcomes

Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) considered the 46 within-subject or between-subjects outcome studies conducted to date a significant start to a knowledge base on the effectiveness of coaching. The amount of research is increasing over time, but a key problem in comparing the results between outcome studies is the inconsistent use of outcome measures. Many researchers develop their own idiosyncratic self-report measures, and these tend to be simplistic 'satisfaction with coaching' surveys. Such measures include return on investment studies by using post-coaching subjective success ratings (e.g., McGovern et al., 2001), leading to uncertainty about their validity and reliability (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Few studies have used well-validated measures of mental health and wellbeing, or constructs such as resilience, despite a wide, readily available range of such measures

being designed for use in the general population – for example, the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995), the Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff & Keyes, 1996) and the Cognitive Hardiness Scale (Nowack, 1990) (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Because coaching is a goal-focused process, goal attainment is an important outcome measure. Yet most outcome studies have not measured the impact of coaching on goal attainment in a way that allows comparison of studies. Goal attainment scaling (GAS) techniques offer a useful means of measuring goal progression and can link coaching success to predetermined objective success benchmarks (Fillery-Travis & Lane, 2006). Well-conducted GAS would also help address the serious limitations of the few studies that have examined return on investment in coaching using subjective post-coaching ratings of success (e.g., McGovern et al., 2001).

2.9 Evidence vs. business case

The impact of evidence on the business case has been debated by a number of researchers, who have examined return on investment of the coaching from different aspects. For example, in an early study, Douglas and McCauley (1999) presented a wide-ranging survey of development in institutions. Using telephone interviews they surveyed 2426 respondents from 300 random US organisations, and found that organisations fostering developmental programs (including coaching) were more likely to have both more satisfied employees and higher sales.

Subsequently, Smither and associates conducted an experimental field study to ascertain whether executives who worked with an executive coach experienced higher ratings from a multi-source feedback instrument over time (Smither et al., 2003). The wide-ranging study incorporated 1,361 senior managers, 404 of whom worked with a coach. After a year, managers who worked with a coach were found to have improved more than other

managers, although the effect was small. Earlier self-reported surveys had indicated that executives had found the process useful and had changed behaviours (Edelstein & Armstrong, 1993). A more rigorous outcome study by Wasylyshyn (2003) elicited the top two credentials and experience criteria for choosing a coach: training in psychology (82%) (confirmed in a later study by Stevens) and experience and understanding of business (78%) (Stevens, 2005). The study also created a typology of executives most likely to benefit from coaching – high-potential employees with no performance issues, who are at the same time interested in their development. Feggetter (2007) tested this hypothesis with high-performance employees at the UK Ministry of Defence, and found that not only does coaching impact positively on those committed to exhibiting and demonstrating leadership behaviours, but also that these improved behaviours spread through the managers' departments. Moreover, there was a supposition that benefits exceeded costs, indicating a positive return on investment (Feggetter, 2007).

2.10 Evidence effectiveness

Based on the findings shared by researchers who have studied the efficacy of coaching (Grant 2003a; Green et al., 2006; Libri & Kemp, 2006; Miller et al., 2004), the next step could be utilising this information to enhance employees' self-efficacy through coaching. Self-efficacy enhances goal commitment. Leaders can raise the self-efficacy of their subordinates by (i) ensuring adequate training to increase mastery that provides success experiences, (ii) including role modelling or finding models with whom the person can identify and (iii) using persuasive communication that expresses confidence that the person can attain the goal (Bandura, 1997; White & Locke, 2000). The latter may involve giving subordinates information about strategies that facilitate goal attainment. Transformational

leaders raise the efficacy of employees through inspiring messages to and cognitive stimulation of subordinates (Bass, 1985).

2.11 Evidence-based coach training

Adopting the scientist-practitioner model for professional practice is another debate found in the coaching literature. Few models of professional practice have been subjected to such extensive scrutiny, high levels of endorsement and severe criticism as the scientist-practitioner model (Gelso, 2006). However, despite the controversy which has surrounded this professional edifice, the last few years have witnessed a renewed interest in what it means to operate as a scientist-practitioner (Corrie & Callanan, 2000, 2001; Manafi, 2004; Trierweiler & Stricker, 1998)

The scientist-practitioner model of graduate education in the fields of professional psychology has been a source of great controversy over the 40 years since its inception (Gelso, 2006). Although the causes of the controversy are many, one of the fundamental issues is whether it is viable to train students to be scientists generally and psychological researchers specifically when, at the core, these students enter training with the wish to be practitioners and not researchers. The low research productivity of doctoral graduates has been repeatedly documented over the years (Barlow, 1981; Garfield & Kurtz, 1976; Kelly & Fiske, 1950; Kelly & Goldberg, 1959; Peterson, Eaton, Levine & Snapp, 1982; Shinn, 1987) and is often cited as evidence for the essential lack of viability of the scientist-practitioner model. One of the most powerful and consistent facts about students who enter doctoral training in professional psychology is that they are oriented toward clinical practice much more than toward research (Garfield & Kurtz, 1976; Kelly & Fiske, 1950; Parker & Detterman, 1988). Indeed, a large majority of students become practitioners after completing graduate training, and few practitioners produce research (Gelso, 2006).

Despite its contentious history, the scientist-practitioner model has retained its supporters. Many training programs in both clinical (O'Sullivan & Quevillon, 1992) and counselling psychology in the US (Baker & Benjamin, 2000; Vacc & Loesch, 1994) continue to operate along scientist-practitioner lines. Indeed, in their study investigating anticipated developments in clinical training amongst trainers, trainees and regional clinical psychologists in Britain, Kennedy and Llewelyn (2001) found strong support for the prediction that the scientist-practitioner model would continue to be a major framework for training, albeit tempered by models of evidence-based practice, critical analytical skills and generic professional competences. Moreover, as the field of professional psychology continues to grow, it is interesting to note that a number of newer psychological professions such as counselling psychology (Woolfe & Dryden, 1996) and the psychology of coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) have chosen to embrace the scientist-practitioner model rather than promoting an alternative.

Research process identified by Gelso (2006) is similar to an inductive approach, where one develops the research questions and ideas by looking 'out there' and then 'looks inward' and evaluates/tests this information by using an appropriate research design. Gelso emphasised the importance of a reflective approach, similar to the interpretative phenomenological approach proposed by Smith et al. (2009), where the researcher follows an inductive path to observe, explore and interpret the reality around him/her.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), proposed by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), adequately fits in the research training suggested by Gelso (2006). Gelso supported this inductive/reflective approach to research, considering that it has to be acknowledged as a respectable academic science.

These trends appear to be reflected in documentation by the British Psychological Society (2005) which, in detailing the subject benchmarks for psychology, identifies the scientist-

practitioner model as central to the activity of applied practice. Within this framework, the emphasis is on the appropriate use of psychological knowledge in order to (i) deliver high quality client services, (ii) work autonomously in complex settings and (iii) draw upon psychological knowledge, skills and theory to make professional judgements. Priority is given to the core skills of the applied psychologist (assessment, intervention and evaluation) and includes high levels of research skill and leadership, as manifest in the ability to conduct relevant research and to apply research to practice. For all its apparent flaws, however, there may be a more optimistic interpretation that the scientist-practitioner model has certain qualities that are deemed important for psychologists to retain (British Psychological Society, 2005).

It has been proposed that the scientist-practitioner model represents a vehicle through which the knowledge of the human condition can systematically advance. Stoltenberg et al. (2000), for example, have claimed that the model provides a framework that facilitates important scholarly and practice-based advances. In contrast to Matarazzo's dismissal of research as irrelevant to the practitioner's endeavours, Stoltenberg et al. have argued that psychologists simply cannot be competent in the delivery of their practice unless they know how to evaluate it, and that conducting one's own research is an essential precursor to understanding and utilising the published research literature in an informed way. Thus, the scientist-practitioner model really represents what they term an integrated approach to knowledge (Stoltenberg et al., 2000).

The relationship between science and practice has been intensely debated over the years (Lane & Corrie, 2006). Indeed, since its inception, the scientist-practitioner model has provoked considerable controversy, raising questions about whether it is possible to train psychologists to operate as both scientists and practitioners and whether applying science

to human problems really is the optimum way of advancing professional practice (Lane & Corrie, 2006).

In recent years, the relationship between science and practice has taken on a new mantle within the context of a broader preoccupation with effectiveness and accountability. According to Lane and Corrie (2006), for psychology as well as for other professions, the emphasis has shifted increasingly towards the notion of evidence-based, or evidence-informed practices, a requirement that aims to ground our interventions within the latest research findings. If we add to this the concepts of practice-based knowledge, service-planning initiatives, knowledge management and the contribution of so-called ‘new science’, a cocktail of models and frameworks begin to emerge. Certainly these developments add another dimension to the question of what is meant by ethical and effective practice, and pose new questions and dilemmas that the practitioners have to learn to navigate (Lane & Corrie, 2006).

To expand the discussion on practice-based knowledge, Gelso (2006) also emphasised that practice is a potent, perhaps the most potent, source of ideas for research. In contrast to the traditional notion that research hypotheses are derived from the literature, students may be shown how working with clients provides a marvellously fertile source of material for empirical investigation. The therapist-trainee simply needs to open his or her mind and eyes to become aware of the many clinical questions worthy of empirical study that may become evident even in a single session: ‘... we need to teach students to “look inward” for research questions and ideas’ (Gelso, 1979: 29). Gelso was concerned that students should be encouraged to see themselves as an integral part of the knowledge-generating process and to own their research ideas, rather than experiencing research as personally alien and as something ‘out there’. Gelso (2006) suggested that the research process is probably best seen as a three-step process. The first step entails looking ‘out there’ –

acquiring sufficient knowledge from the outside in a given domain. The second step, however, entails experiencing, looking inward and owning ideas, such that the researcher is at the centre of his or her work and of the knowledge-generating process. Evaluation is suspended for a time as students get in touch with their curiosity and with the research ideas that intrigue them. Then the third step involves accountability, wherein the researcher puts his or her ideas to the test through implementing an acceptable research design. Gelso referred to his earlier work (in 1979) as an effort to produce academically respectable science. Gelso considers that we often neglect Step 2, making the process evaluative and accountable but devoid of the sense of ownership which is vital to the scientist and is a great-sounding theory (Gelso, 2006).

Hoshmand and Polkinghorne (1992) also suggested that separating science and practice creates an artificial distinction, although the relationship between these two disciplines may take the form of more subtle synergies that are easy to overlook. Stricker (1992) argued this point convincingly when he highlighted that the impact of research on practice often occurs through an indirect 'meta-effect' whereby the research questions of one generation influence the professional developments of the next.

Grant and Cavanagh (2004) discussed the scientist-practitioner model of professional coaching practice, which draws on practice and educational frameworks established in the behavioural sciences. Within this framework practitioners are trained to have a working understanding of the principles and methodology of research. This understanding then enables them to apply informed critical thought to the evaluation of their practice, drawing on and being informed by relevant academic literature to design and implement evidence-based interventions (Haring-Hidore & Vacc, 1988), evaluating client progress and adhering to ethical practice (Barnett, 1988). Scientist-practitioners are not expected to be significant producers of research (Parker & Detterman, 1988). Rather, they are positioned as informed

consumers of research, with their practice professionalised by their ability to utilise related research (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

Whilst the scientist-practitioner model in the behavioural sciences has its critics (O’Gorman, 2001), it has nevertheless formed a vital part of the professionalisation of the behavioural sciences (Shapiro, 2002). Grant and Cavanagh (2004) argued that the movement towards a scientist-practitioner model requires that coach training programs explicitly address the theoretical and empirical foundations of coaching, provide training in sound research methodologies, basic statistical and data analysis skills, and foster informed critical thinking skills in student coaches. Such an approach would form the basis of an evidence-based coaching paradigm (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the traditional evidence-based hierarchy discussed by Grant (2016), in which different research methods are classified into a hierarchy based on the quality of the evidence they each produce.

A key notion in evidence-based practice in medicine is that research methodologies can be classified as being ‘good’ or ‘poor’ (Grant, 2016). In medical science the typically accepted standard of research is the evidence collected from meta-analyses – systematic reviews of a number of randomised controlled trials (RCTs) (Kaptchuk, 2001). At the next level of the research hierarchy is the evidence collected from the RCTs themselves.

As indicated in Figure 2.2, at the next level down are between-subject studies, which use a control group as a comparison to a treatment group, but without the randomisation found in RCTs. Next sit the within-subject studies that use pre- and post-measures from a single group of people. Below these sit cross-sectional studies, which are descriptive or correlational studies that can give good insights into the relationships between various factors, but not into causal factors. Case studies come next in the hierarchy. Finally, at the

base of the hierarchy are professional articles in non-peer-reviewed publications, opinions, editorials and anecdotal reports (Grant, 2016).

Those who subscribe to the medical model tend to place far greater emphasis and value on the upper parts of the hierarchy (Grant, 2016). Indeed, most people would agree that RCTs are the best way to thoroughly test the effectiveness of medical interventions such as new drug treatments. However, coaching is not medicine. Indeed, given that much coaching does not follow prescribed or manualised treatment regimes, the medical model may be an inappropriate framework from which to develop an evidence-based approach to coaching (Grant, 2016).

It is important to recognise that each level in the evidence-based hierarchy has its own unique and valuable characteristics (Grant, 2016). The evidence gained from each level tells a slightly different type of story, and the evidence gathered at each level will speak to different audiences. For example, the quantitative outcome or ROI data produced from RCTs or within-subject studies is more likely to resonate with a group of sceptical scientists or business audiences than a qualitative detail-rich exploration of personal experiences of coaching. Thus, from this perspective and in contrast to the medical approach, one level is not deemed better than another in the coaching context; rather each has its different uses. If we cannot say that one is better than another, we can only really say that one is better suited to the situation in which we seek to use that evidence (Grant, 2016).

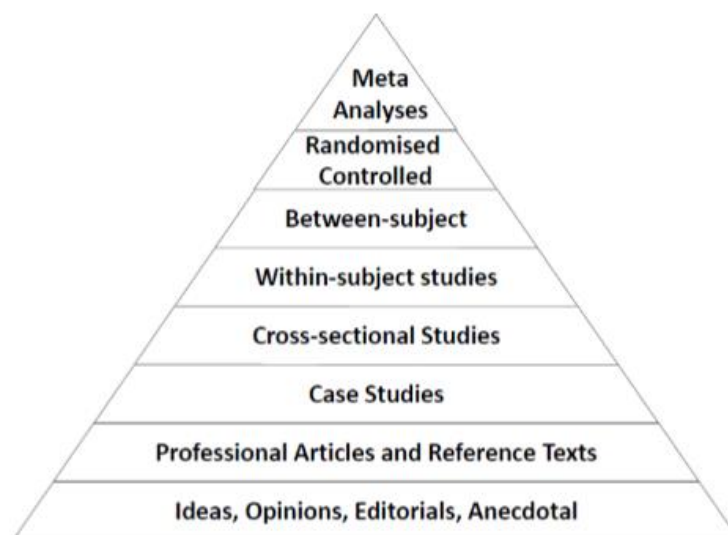


Figure 2.2: The traditional evidence-based hierarchy

(from Grant, 2016, figure 1, p. 76)

It is also important to recognise that evidence in coaching does not just come from scientific empirical research (Grant, 2016). Evidence is defined as the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid (OED, 2012). As such, evidence is not limited to research outputs or scientific studies. Evidence simply means information – and all kinds of information can count as evidence, just as long as it is valid, reliable and relevant. Bearing in mind that some evidence is more reliable than others, this perspective allows for multiple voices, from both researchers and informed practitioners (for an in-depth deconstruction of the term ‘evidence’ see Drake, 2009) (Grant, 2016).

As emphasised by Grant and Cavanagh (2004), experience and anecdotal evidence suggest that current coach training is generally woefully inadequate in preparing students to understand and utilise empirically sound research. Although many professional coaches and potential student coaches may applaud a move toward such professional training,

current industry practice well may act as a significant barrier to a widespread transition to evidence-based training (Grant, 2000). First, many commercial coach training schools teach their own proprietary coaching systems, which incorporate little or no reference to the broader knowledge base (Grant, 2000). Second, while there are undoubtedly many coach practitioners trained in research methodology, it is uncertain whether the coaching industry currently incorporates enough practitioners able to develop and teach a sophisticated evidence-based approach to coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). This means that many coach training schools need to make significant investment in personnel and course development so as to produce a truly professional curriculum. Coach training schools already have a large financial investment in their existing intellectual property, and the addition of practitioner- research training may be seen as a costly exercise rather than an investment in an emerging profession (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

Despite these difficulties, evidence-based coaching is not complex or ethereal (Sackett, Haynes, Guyatt & Tugwell, 1996a). At its simplest it involves the intelligent and conscientious use of best current knowledge in making decisions about how to design, implement and deliver coaching interventions to clients, and in designing and teaching coach training programs⁶ (Sackett et al., 1996a). Current information from valid research theory and practice can be considered best current knowledge (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Thus, evidence-based coaching is not cookbook coaching. It requires the coach to have the ability, knowledge frameworks and skills to be able to find such information, understand it, determine its applicability, apply it and finally evaluate its effectiveness. At present few coach training programs prepare their students for such tasks (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

To conclude, such an approach to coaching of course requires that such research exists (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Although the coach-specific academic press dates back to 1937

⁶ See discussion in Section 2.12.1.

(Gorby, 1937), and many thousands of articles about coaching have been published in newspapers, magazines and professional and trade journals, there is little academic literature specifically on coaching. However, there is a vast body of established research in fields intimately related to coaching, including the behavioural sciences, business and organisational studies and the field of adult education. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) have suggested that the task for coaching is to mine these rich depths, all the time adapting and refining this knowledge for coaching contexts. In this way coaching can develop its own domain specific body of knowledge. Fortunately, coaching has already progressed towards developing this body of knowledge (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

2.12 Future of evidence-based coaching

The quantity of coaching research is indeed developing, and the knowledge base is expanding (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Moreover, the sophistication of coaching research is growing. This bodes well for the future of this emerging discipline, as does the general impetus in the coaching world toward improved standards. In acknowledging these challenges it is also important to bear in mind that coaching has only recently sufficiently coalesced such that intelligent and informed scientist-practitioner dialogue between researchers has become possible. Grant and Cavanagh hope that the wider coaching industry will be brought into this dialogue. Clearly there is much to do, both in terms of improving the quality and quantity of research, developing shared standards and frameworks, and in developing an industry-wide capability to engage in open and rigorous thinking; however, the movements afoot in the coaching industry, and the state of research and literature, invite an optimistic view of the future of coaching and coaching psychology (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Perhaps the final comment should come from Alex Linley, who concisely encapsulates the opportunities and challenges that the contemporary coaching movement faces:

Coaching psychology provides a remarkable opportunity for applying the principles of psychology ... to enhancing the wellbeing and improving the performance of well-functioning individuals, groups and organisations. Unlike traditional approaches that are premised on models of what is wrong with people, both coaching psychology and positive psychology are more focused on what is right with people. It is imperative that as psychologists we develop an evidence base to support and extend this work. We need to know what works, why, and for whom, so that we can deliver best value and the most effective support to the people, groups, and organisations with whom we are working. An evidence-based approach is the foundation on which our future success will be built, and the yardstick against which it will ultimately be measured: without this evidence base, we risk becoming pedlars of the latest self-help fashion, a situation that would serve neither us as professionals nor the people who we strive to serve.

(Alex Linley, personal communication, 2007, cited by Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a:252)

2.12.1 Challenges for evidence-based coaching

Grant and Cavanagh (2004, 2007a) have highlighted three broad challenges in the future growth of evidence-based coaching: development of validated outcome measures; elaboration of the theoretically grounded approaches to coaching; and development of an empirical research base. This sections discusses these three challenges in turn.

1. Development of validated outcome measures

In order to further develop evidence-based approaches to coaching and coaching psychology, we need to extend and develop a broad range of validated and freely available outcome measures. In this way, researchers will have more choice in the selection of outcome measures. Grant and Cavanagh anticipate a number of potentially positive outcomes. First, there would be less reliance on idiosyncratic outcome measures in the coaching literature. Idiosyncratic measures that are custom developed for particular coaching interventions allow researchers to stipulate variables of interest to a specific coaching client or situation and can give important insights into a specific coaching intervention (Orenstein, 2006; Peterson & Kraiger, 2004); however, such measures may have limited validity or relevance for the broader coaching psychology research enterprise (Allworth & Passmore, 2008). Second, the use of freely available and psychometrically validated measures would allow meaningful comparisons across different research studies. This is important because the replication of findings is an essential part of developing an evidence base in any discipline that subscribes to the scientific method (Chalmers, 1976). Third, the increased use of validated psychologically relevant outcome measures will allow researchers to further develop our understanding of the psychological processes underpinning the purposeful, positive change encapsulated in coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The use of psychometrically validated measures in the published coaching literature is increasing (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Early coaching research was primarily qualitative and based on case studies (e.g., Craik, 1988, Diedrich, 1996), or used observable behavioural measures. Sergio (1987), for example, examined the effect of coaching on reducing the percentage of scrapped materials and, therefore, the overall production costs in a manufacturing context. While such measures are in themselves valuable and of

interest, they are limited in the generalisable insights they can add into the psychology of coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

There is a growing trend towards using validated psychologically relevant and validated outcome measures. These include goal attainment scaling (see Spence, 2007); validated measures of depression, anxiety and stress (Gyllensten & Palmer, 2005); resilience and workplace wellbeing (Grant, Curtayne & Burton, 2009); core self-evaluations (Libri & Kemp, 2006); psychological and subjective wellbeing and hope (Green et al., 2006); self-efficacy (Evers et al., 2006); self-reflection and insight (Grant, 2003c); employees' sickness due to psychosocial health complaints (Duijts, Kant, van den Brandt & Swaen, 2007); character strengths (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Linley, Nielsen, Gillett & Biswas-Diener, 2010b; Madden, Green & Grant, 2010) and goal self-concordance (Burke & Linley, 2007); and well-validated measures such as the Short Form Health Survey (Ware & Sherbourne, 1992), the General Health Questionnaire (Koeter & Ormel, 1991), the Dutch Questionnaire on Perception and Judgment of Work (Veldhoven & Meijmen, 1994) and the Dutch version of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Schaufeli & Dierendonck, 2000).

However, some measures of psychological constructs central to the coaching enterprise are noticeable by their absence (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Given that much coaching takes place within organisations with the aim of developing leadership (Goldsmith, 2009), it is perhaps surprising that freely available, validated measures related to leadership have not been widely used in coaching research. Several studies have reported on the use of commercial or proprietary leadership assessments in coaching (Grant, Green & Rynsaardt, 2010; Kampa-Kokesch, 2002; Trathen, 2008), but the use of such commercial or proprietary assessments is limited to those who can afford them (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

2. Elaboration of the theoretically grounded approaches to coaching

Despite considerable media interest in coaching globally (Garman et al., 2000), coaching is a broad area dealing with a huge range of issues, and the development of rigorous and coherent theoretical frameworks for coaching remains in its infancy (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Developing multiple theoretical approaches is therefore important. The key issue is not that coaches should accept the same theoretical foundations, but that the approach should incorporate scientific and conceptual rigour. Without such rigour, our interventions as coaches run the risk of being either the slavish following of coaching ‘recipes’ or the unreflective enactment of ‘gut instinct’, and clients, rightfully, demand more (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). It is encouraging to see the ongoing development of vibrant theoretical debate and academic discussion on core facets of professional coaching. These debates will form the basis of a theoretically grounded, evidence-based approach to professional coaching as it develops over time. An essential element of these ongoing debates is an increasing level of openness among professional practitioners, rather than the secrecy and reluctance to divulge methodology often currently encountered at gatherings of coaches (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

3. The development of an empirical research base

If the development of theory is to continue in a healthy and rigorous way, reflective practice and empirical research must be the fuel and touchstone of theoretical debate (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). At present there is precious little solid empirical research validating the efficacy of executive and life coaching (Kilburg, 1996). Overall the literature provides some measure of empirical support for the efficacy of both internal and external coaching, but it is clear from the overview of the academic literature that empirical research into coaching is in its infancy, and far more systematic and rigorous research is needed. Discussion articles still dominate the literature and much of the outcome research

is based on case studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Group studies are becoming more common, but many are methodologically flawed. While all these types of research make an important contribution, we need more large-scale, methodologically rigorous, controlled-outcome studies. Grant and Cavanagh (2004) have suggested that future research should focus on the evaluation of coaching by following established research methodologies, including random assignment to intervention and control groups, and group-based research as opposed to single case studies. Further, it would be useful to see an increasing emphasis on objective quantitative outcomes measures and on investigating the relative efficacy of different approaches to coaching. This necessary theoretical and empirical development could be supported by establishing journals, and holding symposiums and conferences that incorporate good quality peer-reviewed publishing processes. We need to foster and support such initiatives and be vocal in demanding that the bar be raised progressively higher in these professional forums (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

In conclusion, there is division of opinion between empirical evidence (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Grant, 2016) and experiential evidence (Gelso, 2006). Empirical evidence, derived from the scientist-practitioner model, is deductive, whereas experiential evidence is derived from practitioners' wisdom and is inductive or reflective. The empirical evidence view is that professional coaches should advocate the scientist-practitioner model of training and practice, vital if the coaching industry is to mature and move from being merely a service industry to becoming a respected cross-disciplinary profession. Research is the core and lifeblood of an emerging profession. If coaching is to be more than a management or lifestyle fad, then coaches need to be trained in the scientist-practitioner model, so that a common language can be used to communicate coaching practice professionally and ultimately lead to real professional growth (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). On the other hand, experiential evidence proponents emphasise the importance of reflective coach training by learning through their experience (Gelso, 2006).

2.13 Disciplines can flourish or languish: Grant and Cavanagh's model of disciplinary-based inquiry

Recent debate has focussed on how one might conceptualise the health or illness of an applied science. Central to the scientific method is the notion of rigour, and sciences need to be able to clearly delineate theories and articulate testable hypotheses (Diamandis, 2006). For this purpose, a scientific work can be classified as rigorous if the research methodology is able to test the hypothesis under investigation, the design does not lead to experimental biases, there is sufficient information for others to replicate the study, it has undergone critical peer review, the conclusions are supported by the data and the data are not over-interpreted (Diamandis, 2006).

Reason, logic and critical thinking are fundamental for any scientific endeavour (Chalmers, 1976). However, when overindulged, critical thinking can become an attitude or habit of criticism, and a poor substitute for rigorous thought (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). This habitual criticism can easily constrict the emotional space available for human action. Indeed, academia has often mistaken opposition for discussion, criticism for critical thinking, and rigidity for rigour (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The counterbalance to critical thinking is openness to new ideas (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a), which, together with rigorous disciplined thought, is fundamental in science. Openness to new ideas and directions implies a readiness to seek new understanding and new ways of doing. It is a willingness to push the boundaries of our current understanding and practice, or even to look beyond our current perspectives and consider new paradigms that may help us understand more fully ourselves, others and the world (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Evidence-based coaching can be a useful real-life experimental methodology for psychologists exploring the psycho-mechanics of goal attainment, the development of

resilience, wellbeing, hope and other personal strengths (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). The languishing-flourishing model of coaching psychology can be viewed in this light, with rigorous thought and openness to novelty serving as the key dimensions in this model (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). This model is presented graphically in Figure 2.3.

Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) have proposed that the upper left quadrant of the model is occupied by pseudoscience. They point out that the extreme position of uncritical acceptance of new ideas is faddism; here rigour is abandoned in favour of fervour. Ultimately, one would expect that a discipline whose main thrust was found in this quadrant would languish. As the first flush of excitement fades, the lack of substance reveals that the emperor actually has no clothes, and pseudoscientific explanations actually add little that is new or useful (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

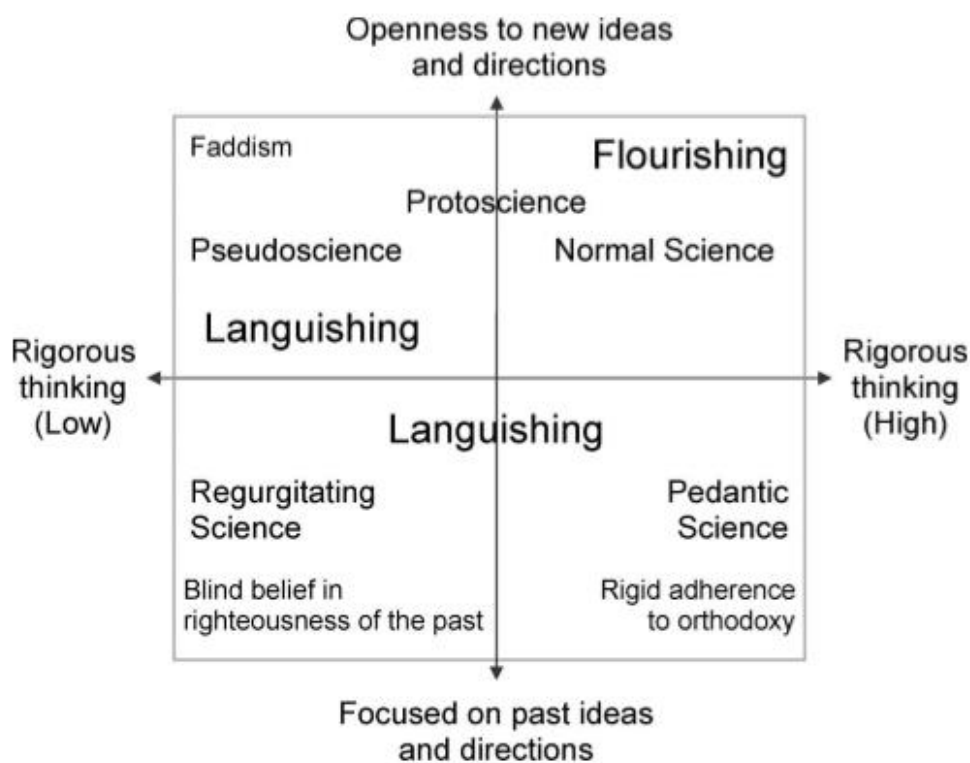


Figure 2.3: Languishing-flourishing model of coaching psychology

(from Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a, figure 4, p. 250)

In Grant and Cavanagh's model the lower left quadrant is also a place of languishing. Here rigorous thinking and exploration give way to conventional thinking, or the blind acceptance of past ways of understanding and doing; this is science that merely regurgitates past ideas. While for the proponents of these belief systems this is a place of comfort, the self-sealed and repetitive nature of thinking in this quadrant leaves no room for growth or discovery. This quadrant is the fate of systems that prematurely canonise their theories and techniques and fail to develop a solid research agenda that tests their assumptions and extends their understanding (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Rigour is present in the lower right quadrant, but it is predominantly enlisted in the service of maintaining the status quo, or scientific orthodoxy (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). It is related to the area of pedantic science in the Anderson, Herriot & Hodgkinson (2001) framework. There is little openness to alternative perspectives and therefore no possibility of paradigm change (Kuhn, 1996). Here criticism is mistaken for critical thinking, and rigidity for rigour; this is the quadrant of professional arrogance (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). The rigidities of both the lower quadrants in this model indicate that these quadrants represent thinking that creates closed systems. When any system becomes closed, the consequence is stultification and ultimately death (Stacey, 2000, cited by Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Flourishing is found in the upper right quadrant. This quadrant is characterised by a tension between rigour and openness to new directions. It is this tension that creates growth. It is not unbounded growth, as in faddism or pseudoscience, but growth grounded in evidence. In complex systems terms this is the place of bounded instability, or the edge of chaos (Cavanagh, 2006; Stacey, 2000). Openness to new perspectives and ways of doing makes it unpredictable. The commitment to rigour harnesses that unpredictable creativity to ensure it is not simply self-indulgence. Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) emphasised that new

disciplines need to find this upper right quadrant if they are to emerge and grow beyond the level of an interesting idea or fad, toward a proto-science and finally attain the status of normal science. For these scholars, it is the blend of vigour and rigour, openness and discipline that makes this journey possible (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

2.13.1 Is coaching flourishing?

Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) suggest that coaching is an emerging discipline. But in response to the question ‘is it flourishing?’, they argue in the past it has been very easy to look at the vigorous growth of the industry, the fervour of its practitioners and the rapid acceptance of coaching as an intervention among consumers, and conclude that coaching was indeed flourishing. Much of the youthful vigour of coaching remains, but not all that grows is truly flourishing. According to their model, coaching as a scientific discipline could be said to be flourishing to the extent that the literature and practice are both rigorous and open to new directions – creative and disciplined. So the question remains, how well do we manage this tension between openness and rigour? How well do we surf the edge of chaos? (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Given that the scientific status of any discipline, including coaching, is a tension between scientific rigour and openness to new ideas, Grant and Cavanagh have maintained that some elements of the industry are indeed flourishing while others are deeply languishing due to a lack of rigorous examination. Evidence of flourishing is the small explosion of writing and research that seeks to develop new ideas and make novel connections between existing ideas, and a willingness to begin to put these ideas to the test. This is an excellent start. The outcome literature started to emerge in any quantity only in 2000, but it shows a promising progression in rigour from case studies, to group studies, toward randomised

controlled studies. Such a progression is to be expected in the early stages of an emerging discipline (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

In terms of languishing, there appears to be a worrying lack of rigour in many of the claims and much of the published work in coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a), a great deal of it more akin to self-help literature. However, the field is still emerging and youth tends towards vigour rather than rigour. Perhaps more worrying than these ill-advised unsupported and pseudoscientific claims is what appears to be a lack of capability, or even desire, by many coaching practitioners to rigorously evaluate coaching claims, possibly because the coaching industry has no barriers to entry, or recognised standards of education. An ability to be rigorous, and a respect for this aspect of practice, are yet to become a part of the culture of coaching (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

The above arguments leave a challenging tension for those who would see the industry flourish and grow as a scientific enterprise. Grant and Cavanagh suggest these aspects need to be clearly differentiated from the frequently sensationalistic and pseudoscientific facets of the industry, while at the same time practitioners must resist falling into the type of scientific arrogance that alienates. Such arrogance is more likely to create the conditions of languishing in the field than to encourage a more informed approach to coaching practice⁷ (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Joo's (2005) comment on the status of coaching industry, in response to the question 'Is executive coaching a mere fad?' was 'the answer to this question appears to be "No"' (p. 485). Joo sees executive coaching becoming increasingly popular despite limited empirical evidence about its impact. However, he agrees the question about how to evaluate the

⁷ See discussion in Section 2.12.1.

effectiveness and outcome of executive coaching should be addressed head on; otherwise, it might come and go as have many other management fads.

2.14 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented an introduction to executive coaching, particularly in the context of industry's attempt to establish standardised practice by means of evidence-based coaching. However, theoretical approaches to executive coaching are based on either theory or practice, and these approaches therefore seek different kinds of evidence. For example, evidence-based approaches, including a cognitive-behavioural solution-focused approach, positive psychology and psychodynamic approach, all look for empirical evidence. In contrast, reflective practice-based approaches, including ontological coaching, adult learning approach and systems approach, look for experiential evidence. Grant (2016) outlined the contribution of practice and research to evidence-based coaching: practice shares experiential evidence whereas research shares empirical evidence. The traditional evidence-based hierarchy discussed by Grant (2016), adopted by medicine, cannot be applied in its current form to coaching practice. Experiential (reflective) evidence is very useful for coach learning but it is regarded as weak or poor evidence and lies at the bottom of traditional hierarchy due to the qualitative data collection methods used to get this evidence. On the other hand, empirical evidence lies at the top of hierarchy because of the standardised objective methods used to collect this evidence. Therefore, it is important to change this traditional biased mindset towards empirical evidence and discrediting practitioners' wisdom, which is a firsthand test of the efficacy of their coaching theory and practice.

However, the question as to what constitutes evidence of the efficacy of coaching in management performance is far from settled. Some forms of coaching theory and practice,

in the name of evidence-based coaching, have opted for a scientifically framed research process to determine the efficacy of coaching. In contrast to this, some of the more reflective practice-based views of coaching claim that coaching interactions are experientially based, grounded in unique forms of interaction, effected just as much by the personality of the coach as much as by the method of coaching, and they thus fall short of the requirements expected of a science. Practitioners within this field often believe that theory is not developed scientifically but is generated out of practice. It is by being in practice that our theories of practice develop. This perspective is well developed in Process Studies in organisational studies. Although not in the context of coaching, this perspective was well described by Weick (2010), who reflected that he became a process theorist not by first learning about process theorising, but rather by reflecting on his lived experience of theorising.

Weick (2010) said of himself ‘the author has been labelled a “process theorist” though in many ways he was among the last to discover this’, describing himself not so much a theorist but a ‘process practitioner’. It was only in retrospect that he came to recognise himself as a process practitioner: ‘I am, in Hari Tsoukas’ words a “process practitioner”’ (2010: 103), quoting Tsoukas who noted that ‘[b]y reflecting ex post facto on your process work, you draw our and your attention to aspects of it that constitute ways of process theorizing’ (2010: 103). Being a process practitioner resonates with Weick and so becomes a basis for reflecting on his own work and the nature of process practice in general. So too in the context of coaching, reflective practitioners argue that it is in the context of practice and not outside of it in some scientifically detached way that their theories of practice develop.

Rather than attempting to transform coaching into an empirical field, these experientially based views of coaching position the process of talking and writing about the efficacy of

coaching in a reflective practice format, one which gives rise to notions of narratives of coaching rather than yielding data that can be measured, quantified and standardised in the name of evidence. Drawing on a phenomenological notion, these reflective practice-based views claim that the phenomenon under investigation shapes the kind of methodology of inquiry. Coaching is just not that kind of phenomenon that yields itself to a scientifically data-based approach. Yet, borrowing from a point made by Heidegger (1929) in his essay ‘What Is Metaphysics?’, just because reflective practice-based views of coaching are not scientific does not mean that they are not a discipline. It is as much for a discipline of the self than only a discipline of method.

The tension between the two approaches to evidence, or to reflecting on and examining the coaching process is, of course, reflected in the myriad approaches to coaching. For there is very little shared agreement (Joo, 2005) as to what constitutes coaching or good-enough standards of coaching in the first place. Yet as part of the desire to, if not standardise the industry, at least establish shared agreement between different coaching stakeholders, there is a need to find common ground upon which different stakeholders can communicate with each other. Especially, but not only, in the context of coaching, it is reasonable to assume that, just as coaches enable coaches to reflect on the taken for granted assumptions of their individual practices, so research and reflective practice-based coaches can reflect on what counts as evidence for efficacy of coaching. At the very least this thesis aims to contribute towards establishing a dialogue across different beliefs and assumptions regarding what counts as evidence.

The next chapter presents a background of the medical origins of evidence-based executive coaching. It provides an overview of the evolution of evidence-based practice (EBP) to different forms of research such as phenomenology and feminist forms of critique.

Chapter 3

Concept of evidence in executive coaching

This chapter examines the historical origins of evidence-based coaching and the gradual development of a range of research approaches that are being applied in the context of coaching. It describes how evidence-based coaching has its origins in medical science. It then draws on the evolution of research in medical science to show how the latter has moved beyond an evidence-based approach to research and now incorporates a range of reflective practice-based approaches, including phenomenology and feminist critical practices. The chapter thus serves as the basis for introducing research approaches to coaching that extend beyond evidence-based research. It also alludes to the possibility that, just as medical research incorporates evidence-based research and reflective practice-based research, so executive coaching can include both forms of research, thereby progressing the field towards paradigm maturity.

The next section provides an overview of the history of the evidence-based movement, demonstrating how it gave rise to an understanding of the importance of post-positivist, feminist and phenomenological implications for evidence-based research in medicine. The chapter concludes with a discussion of phenomenological methods, using the example of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as an alternative method for inquiry in coaching, in response to the lessons learnt from the critique of evidence-based movement.

This chapter summarises the evolution of evidence-based practice originated from the field of medicine. It then describes the shift from evidence-based focus to other forms of qualitative research including phenomenology. This chapter provides the foundation for

Chapter 4, in which the relationship between forms of executive coaching and the research processes that they use is mapped out and ultimately drawn into an integrated whole.

3.1 The medical origins of evidence-based research regarding executive coaching⁸

The nature of coaching is multidisciplinary (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a). Four areas of best current knowledge are directly related to the research and practice of executive, workplace and life coaching: (i) Behavioural Sciences, (ii) Business and Economic Science, (iii) Adult Education, including workplace learning and development, and (iv) Philosophy (Grant, 2005).

Sackett, Haynes, Guyatta and Tugwell (1996a: 71) defined evidence-based coaching as ‘the intelligent and conscientious use of the best current knowledge in making decisions about how to deliver coaching to clients and in designing and teaching coach training programs’. Indeed, the concept of evidence-based coaching is adapted from medical and social services and involves far more than simply producing evidence that a specific coaching intervention is effective or being able to demonstrate return on investment (Wampold & Bhati, 2004).

Wampold and Bhati consider the evidence-based approach as not merely using double-blind, randomised controlled trials or manualised interventions. Rather, it is a broader view based on the underlying assumption that translating research evidence into practice can

⁸ This section describes how evidence-based coaching has its origins in medical science. It then draws on the evolution of research in medical science to show how the latter has moved beyond an evidence-based approach to research and now incorporates a range of reflective-practice based approaches, including phenomenology and feminist critical practices.

optimise outcomes. Stober and Grant (2006) noted that the way this is done is where the controversy begins.

Maya Goldenberg (2006) discussed various aspects of evidence-based practice. In particular, she described how evidence in medical science provides some kind of conceptual warrant for belief or action (Goodman 2003, p.2), and it is the practice of basing all beliefs and practices strictly on evidence that allegedly separates science from other activities (Husserl⁹, 1982; Kuhn, 1996). She noted that the evidence-based medicine movement discourages unsystematic and intuitive methods of individual clinical practice in favour of a more scientifically rigorous approach. She sees this rigour being achieved through methodological clinical decision-making based on examination of evidence derived from the latest clinical research. Evidence as accumulated data has been made widely and easily available to clinicians and educators by means of information technologies. Further, the editorial boards of various evidence-based practice journals describe the movement as a new paradigm in medical education and practice, a description that carries with it an enthusiasm for science that has not been since the days of positivism (Goldenberg, 2006).

Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes and Richardson (1996b) defined 'evidence-based medicine' as the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients (p. 71). Goldenberg (2006) noted that the term 'evidence-based' has a ring of obviousness to it, against which it is difficult to argue. However, she suggested that the apparent obviousness of the evidence-based movement can and should be challenged on the grounds of how evidence has been problematised in the philosophy of science. She further argued that evidence-based

⁹ The work of philosophers like, Husserl, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Rorty is cited in this thesis in the context of their contribution in the development of IPA.

practices maintain an old understanding of evidence as ‘facts’ about the world, in the assumption that scientific beliefs stand or fall in light of the evidence. This understanding of evidence is explicitly positivist, and such a picture of science has been seriously undermined by post-positive philosophies of science. For Goldenberg, basing clinical practice on the evidence is attractive to many because it rationalises the complex social process. The movement permits the use of evidence as a political instrument where power interests can be concealed by seemingly neutral technical resolve (Goldenberg, 2006).

Goldenberg (2006) traced the history of positivist and post-positivist movement in science.

Logical positivism is a philosophical system that recognises only scientifically verifiable propositions as meaningful. This school of thought originated in Vienna in the 1920s with a group of philosophers and scientists concerned with the philosophy of formal and physical science. Their attitude toward science and its relationship to philosophy defined the ‘Vienna Circle’, which rejected the possibility of justifying knowledge claims that were ‘beyond’ the scope of science, dismissing metaphysics and many of the claims made in theology and ethics as nonsensical (or unverifiable). Emigration of many of the Circle’s members to Britain and the United States during the early years of World War II led to the strong influence of logical positivism on Anglo-American analytic philosophy (Goldenberg, 2006).

The term **post-positive** refers to the critical examination of scientific thought and practice that originated in the second half of the 20th century by such historically oriented philosophers as Thomas Kuhn, Norwood Hanson and Paul Feyerabend (Goldenberg, 2006). Their historical analysis of scientific change and progress undermined the positivist-empiricist endorsement of the claims that science provides a value-free understanding of the natural world. Their examination of the relationship between science and values has been enriched by the insights of feminist epistemologies of science and phenomenological

investigations. Feminist epistemologists have exposed the political stakes in knowledge production by demonstrating the androcentric assumptions underlying conventional understandings of scientific thought and practice, while phenomenologists have questioned the goals and methods of scientific medicine through examining the patient's lived experience of illness and disease. Goldenberg (2006) shared the lessons learnt from the critique of science and evidence by post-positivist, feminist and phenomenological epistemologies, and discussed the implications of this critique for the evidence-based movement.

3.1.1 Post-positivist philosophy of science

Much enquiry into the philosophy of science over the last century has been preoccupied with challenging the positivist picture of scientific methodology on two grounds (Goldenberg, 2006). In the first, Hanson (1958), Kuhn (1970a, 1996) and Feyerabend (1978) have claimed that observation is theory laden, that is, our observations are coloured by our background beliefs and assumptions. In the second, Duhem (1982) and Quine (1960) have argued that theories are underdetermined by data. In other words, our theory choices are never determined exclusively by the evidence (Goldenberg, 2006).

Goldenberg (2006) has suggested the first claim is damaging to the positivist empiricist picture because the principles of empiricism suggest that one's perceptions are unaffected by one's beliefs and assumptions. These observations are supposed to provide a maximally certain and conceptually unrevisable foundation of empirical knowledge, a foundation that supplies the basic premises of all our reasoning and without which there would not even be any probable knowledge. Empiricist epistemology, from Hume's (1777, 2000) 18th century configurations onward, seems to rest on the assumption that there is an absolutely stable and invariable correspondence between perceptions and the stimuli which produce them.

The abovementioned critics object that observations are not ‘given’ or ‘data’, but are always the product of interpretation (in the light of our background assumptions). The idea of unambiguous objects of perception is a myth, as ‘multistable’ images (e.g., Wittgenstein’s duck/rabbit and the popular old lady/young lady image) appropriately demonstrate. This exercise in gestalt psychology suggests that what someone perceives is not independent of one’s beliefs and expectations (Goldenberg, 2006).

The second criticism that theories are underdetermined by data – commonly referred to as the ‘Duhem-Quine thesis’ in the philosophy of science – concerns the claim that any given body of evidence may support numerous, even contradicting, theories (Goldenberg, 2006). The criticism again undermines empirical science’s self-understanding as an objective enterprise that progresses (i.e., accepts, refines or rejects scientific theories) in light of how theories stand up to empirical evidence. Since scientific theories are deductively underdetermined by the data, scientists must adopt extraempirical criteria for what counts as a good theory when deciding to accept one theory in preference to its empirically adequate rivals. This ‘extraempirical criterion’ is subject to the whims, preferences, biases and social agendas of the researching scientists, and not the rigour of evidenced-based adjudication (Goldenberg, 2006).

While the ‘theory ladenness’ objection challenges the stability of observations themselves, the ‘underdetermination’ thesis undermines the stability of evidential relations (Goldenberg, 2006). Both accounts seem to permit the unrestrained expression of scientists’ subjective preferences in the content of science. If observation is theory laden, then it cannot serve as an independent constraint on theories, thus permitting subjective elements to constrain theory choice. Similarly, if observations acquire evidential relevance only in the context of a set of assumptions, a relevance that changes with a suitable change in assumptions, then it is not clear what protects theory choice from subjective elements

hidden in one's background assumptions. Although empirical adequacy serves as a constraint on theory acceptance, it is not sufficient to select one theory from all contenders as the true theory regarding a domain of the natural world (Goldenberg, 2006).

3.1.2 Post-positive implications for evidence-based movement

Feminist epistemologies of science

Feminist philosophers endorse the post-positivistic conclusions derived from analyses of the relations between observation, evidence and theory, and have taken the critique of empiricist epistemology further to challenge empiricism's 'silent partner' – the theory of the unconditioned subject (Goldenberg, 2006). In feminist thought this unbiased observer is argued to be the necessary companion to empiricist epistemology, and reflection on this subject's unusual and implausible ontology reveals further difficulties with positive thought. Positivism therefore not only errs in holding sensory observation in ideal observation conditions as the privileged source of knowledge, but also inappropriately attaches a dubious theory of epistemic agency in which knowers are detached and neutral spectators are separate from the objects of knowledge. Positivist empiricism does not in fact yield neutral and universally valid conceptions of knowledge. Instead, knowledge is indelibly shaped by its creators and attests to the specificities of their epistemic locations. Indeed, it is because subjects are irrelevant to the knowledge claims that the latter appear to be verifiable by appeals to the evidence (Code, 1993, cited by Goldenberg, 2006).

The notions of evidence and theories of epistemic agency are, therefore, closely related (Goldenberg, 2006). Yet the notion of 'matters of fact' depends on many kinds of transparencies in the grand narratives of the experimental way of life (Haraway, 1996). The 'modest witness', the protagonist of the dramas of the scientific revolution who

testifies to new facts without prejudice, had to be constructed in sufficiently detached and abstract terms to make plausible the unusual situation where his experiences could somehow represent everyone's and no-one-in particular's experiences. Notions of evidence as 'self-appearing' similarly rely on such a knower (Nelson, 1993a). Feminist epistemologies of science have demonstrated that the ideals of the autonomous knower – the dislocated, disinterested observer – and the epistemologies they inform are the artefacts of a small, privileged group of educated and prosperous white men. Their material circumstances allow them to believe that they are autonomous individuals without specific locations (i.e., gendered or raced) even in their positions of privilege. Haraway's (1996: 429) postulation of such a 'modest man', whose narratives mirror reality, requires invisibility, such that 'such a man must inhabit the space perceived by its inhabitants to be the "culture of no-culture"'.

Haraway (1996) maintained that, in this culture, the inhabitant's contingencies can be established with all of the authority, but none of the considerable problems, of transcendental truth. His modesty is of a specifically modern, professional, European, masculine and scientific form, and it imbues him with a disguised epistemological and social power concealed by modernist ideals of 'rationality', 'objectivity' and 'value-neutrality'. His modesty guarantees his legitimacy as an 'authorised ventriloquist for the object world, adding nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment. And so he is endowed with the remarkable power to establish the facts. He bears witness' (Haraway, 1996: 429).

Lorraine Code (1993) discussed the concept of 'modest witness', whose modesty authorises him to bear witness in his unbiased accounts of the world. His subjectivity therefore is his objectivity. Code has argued that objectivity is a generalisation from the subjectivity of quite a small group. However, this group has the power, security and

prestige to generalise its experiences and normative ideals across the social order, thus producing a group of like-minded practitioners and dismissing others as deviant and aberrant (Code, 1993).

Knowers are understood to be collaborative agents, whose epistemic projects are shaped by and evaluated within the communities where their knowledge-producing practices occur; standards of evidence are by no means 'self-announcing' but rather historically relative, dynamic and of our own making (Nelson, 1993a). While experience can remain central to our evidential claims, it must be understood to be inherently social, for we experience the world through the lens of our projects, categories, theories and standards. Therefore what constitutes evidence for specific claims or theories includes not only experience but also the knowledge and standards constructed and adopted by epistemological communities (Nelson, 1993a). Against the insistence of radical empiricists, feminists contend that science is not a value-free enterprise. Even the notion of empirical adequacy is conditioned by a set of beliefs which cannot be disentangled into 'factual' and 'evaluative' categories (Nelson, 1993b). The benefit of unmasking the assumptions, norms and values at play in scientific inquiry is that we can now address the important socio-political question of which values ought to enter the scientific arena (Goldenberg, 2006).

Overall, feminist insights reveal that, rather than empirical evidence increasing certainty by factoring out the subjective features of everydayness that bias our understanding of things, the constructs of 'objectivity', 'universality' and 'value-free' instead obscure the subjective elements that inescapably enter all forms of human inquiry (Goldenberg, 2006). Since the evidence is by no means objective or neutral but rather part of a social system of knowledge production, many feminist epistemologists recommend social models of scientific practice. This model entails recognising our background assumptions as playing a constitutive (and not a biasing) role in knowledge acquisition and evaluation (Longino,

1990). Scientific inquiry cannot be value-free, as traditional empiricists require, for cultural and social values make knowledge possible. These values must, of course, be subject to examination and critique, ideally by those from outside the community who do not share those cultural assumptions. Thus the evaluation of scientific beliefs becomes more rigorous: in addition to demonstrating empirical adequacy, scientific beliefs must be subject to public scientific inquiry, where the background assumptions motivating the investigation are explicitly recognised and therefore subject to the same critical scrutiny to which ‘good empiricists’ (Feyerabend, 1998) subject their knowledge claims. This public activity not only raises the standards of theoretical adequacy but also better mediates the knowledge/power interplay in scientific investigation. Once it is recognised that an uninterrogated conception of empirical adequacy is not a sufficient criterion of theory choice, we can turn to the question of what epistemological virtues we want our theories to additionally display (Goldenberg, 2006).

Feminists have found gender bias in the performance of research where women have been grossly under-represented as subjects in clinical trials (Dresser, 1992; Merton, 1993).

Feminist researchers have found bias against women not only in the research that informs evidence-based movement but also in the purportedly fair methods used to analyse and synthesise the evidence (Rogers, 2004). A common critique of the evidence-based movement’s pre-graded evidence hierarchies is that they do not acknowledge that research methods must be tailored to the question at hand, and that the best evidence is gathered by asking different questions using different research designs. Leaving aside the gendering of the quantitative vs. qualitative debates in the social sciences – with the former being regarded as ‘masculine’ and the latter as ‘feminine’ (Oakley, 2000) – qualitative methods have been favoured by many feminist researchers because such methods allow the voices of women to be heard as they describe problems and find solutions (Goldenberg, 2006).

3.2 Phenomenology of science and medicine

Goldenberg (2006) questioned why relevant evidence is assumed to come primarily from clinical trials and other objective measures, and in this way she has integrated the phenomenological approaches to science and medicine in the context of challenging the notions of evidence in evidence-based movement. Phenomenologists argue that a patient's self-understanding and experience of illness also offers a legitimate source of relevant medical knowledge (Goldenberg, 2006). This theoretical approach is grounded in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and his followers, who questioned the philosophical completeness of natural sciences. They argued that Cartesian dualism which split the world into minds and bodies, the spiritual and the physical, was erroneous; furthermore, it created a truncated body of science that exhibited impressive technological ability to control nature, but could not address questions of human self-understanding. This led to a crisis of meaning to which Husserl (1970) attributed the failure of positivist natural science (Goldenberg, 2006).

By taking seriously questions about the world as experienced rather than scientifically described, phenomenologists seek to reunite science with life experience and to explore the relationship between the abstract world of the sciences and the concrete world of human consciousness (Goldenberg, 2006). Toombs (1993) argued that as embodied beings we experience life in and through the body, both before and after we develop cognitive and symbolic structures for mapping experience and meaning. Phenomenologists typically speak of 'embodiment' instead of 'the body' to de-emphasise the physical body and the assumed subject-object split that comes with anatomical description. They instead aim to create an understanding of our bodies in their experiential 'givenness'. From this emphasis on the lifeworld rather than on the scientific organisation of the world, a different account of illness ensues. Toombs (1993) examined the different ways that practitioners approach and understand illness and encouraged them to try to understand what illness means to the

patient. Toombs advised that, rather than trying to understand disease as a breakdown of the objectified body-machine, the physician should try to approach illness as a disturbance in the patient's ability to relate to and function in the world, as it is one's embodiment, one's capability of interacting with the world, that is damaged in the event of illness (Toombs, 1993).

Greenhalgh and Hurwitz (1998) considered such an approach to medical practice would entail a radically different understanding of evidence and probably lead to a new scientific method. Once the patient and not the disease exemplar becomes the subject of examination and treatment, the personal anecdotes and life circumstances become crucial parts of the diagnosis (Greenhalgh & Hurwitz, 1998). Diagnosis would not be tailored to medical categorisation, as the goal of treatment would be centred less on the elimination of disease and more on reintegrating the patient into the lifeworld (Goldenberg, 2006).

3.2.1 Phenomenological implications for evidence based practice

While physicians are encouraged to make diagnoses in physical, psychological and social terms, the evidence-based medicine that is currently promoted either restricts itself to physical evidence alone or casts such evidence at the top of a hierarchy¹⁰ that tends to devalue any evidence 'lower down' (Van Weel & Knottneerus, 1999). The hierarchy of evidence promotes a certain scientific accounting of the goals of medicine, which worryingly is incommensurable with the proposed reorientation of medical practice toward the patient's search for meaning in the illness experience. The bridging of scientific measure and existential meaning has received some attention in the critical evidence-based medicine (EBM) literature (see, for example, Buetow, 2002; Djulbegovic, Morris &

¹⁰ Discussed in Chapter 2.

Lyman, 2000; Upshur, VanDenKerkhof & Goel, 2001), with the general consensus that we need an integrated model of evidence that properly reflects modern health care's constitution by diverse academic traditions, including the humanities, social sciences and the pure and applied sciences that rely on equally diverse notions of evidence (Upshur et al., 2001, cited by Goldenberg, 2006).

EBM values evidence that is statistical and generally applicable, and therefore places quantitative data, derived through the application of recognised study designs, at the top of its pre-graded hierarchies of evidence (Goldenberg, 2006). The phenomenological approaches rooted in hermeneutics, ethnography, sociology and anthropology regard evidence as primarily narrative, subjective and historical. Unlike the impersonal and generalisable measures undertaken in EBM, this conception of evidence is illustrated in case histories, clinical encounters and qualitative studies, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups (Upshur et al., 2001).

The features of the medical encounter and the illness experience emphasised by medical phenomenologists and proponents of a more 'humane' medicine suggest the need to reconsider what constitutes the goals of medicine (Cassell, 1982; Toombs, 1993, 1995) and flip EBM's hierarchy of evidence on its head. The quantitative measures and generalisations that come out of controlled trials and biostatistical analyses are not conducive to the questions of meaning that medical phenomenology wants to address and make central to medicine (Goldenberg, 2006).

3.3 The politics of evidence

Goldenberg (2006) as suggested that the evidence-based movement appears to be the latest expression of scientism, whereby science can produce the knowledge required to

emancipate us from scarcity, ignorance and error. However, such efforts tend to disguise political interests in the authority of so-called ‘scientific evidence’. Political issues are not resolved, however, but merely disguised in technocratic consideration and language. Thus the goals of medicine and other normative considerations lie just below the surface of these evidentiary questions and evidence becomes an instrument of, rather than a substitute for, politics (Belkin, 1997; Rodwin, 2001, cited by Goldenberg, 2006).

Goldenberg (2006) concluded a lesson learned from the philosophy of science: that evidence is not self-apparent or given when gathered from even the most idealised and controlled observational setting. The critiques launched against positivist philosophy by feminist and phenomenological epistemologies of science contest the seemingly unproblematic nature of evidence that underlies EBM, by emphasising different features of the social nature of science. The appeal to the authority of evidence that characterises evidence-based practices does not increase objectivity; rather, it obscures the subjective elements that inescapably enter all forms of human inquiry. Abstracted from the social context of medicine, EBM seems common sense and the connections between power and knowledge are obscured. However, evidence-based should not be understood to be synonymous with the best practice in all relevant practice (Goldenberg, 2006).

3.3.1 Insider-outsider perspectives

The extent to which objectivity is possible when researchers are studying in fields close to their areas of practice similarly has generated much discussion. Kanuha (2000) considered a critical analysis of a person’s prejudices as necessary, especially with groups with whom that person identifies. The value of researching a group of which a person has knowledge, or belongs to, as an ‘insider’ has frequently been contrasted to the benefits of stranger or ‘outsider’ research (Hanson, 1994; Kanuha, 2000; Wilde, 1992). Kanuha (2000)

questioned whether or not an insider researcher's knowledge enables or obscures the research process, describing such knowledge as 'both an asset and a liability'. Asselin (2003) discussed prior knowledge as potentially resulting in important pieces of information being overlooked because the researcher and the researched assume they share a common understanding of what is meant – possibly mistakenly – without it being made explicit. Asselin suggested several strategies to overcome these difficulties, including continuing self-reflection, outsider verification and member-checking. As discussed earlier, there are differing opinions on the appropriateness of the latter (Asselin, 2003).

3.3.2 Reflexivity

The value of reflexivity throughout the research process has been discussed by Mauthner and Doucet (2003). However, they caution that it may not always be possible for researchers to be conscious of their own biases. Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006: 12) have argued 'what is objective and what is subjective cannot be teased apart in any simple fashion'. Using reflexivity can help to avoid many preconceptions. As Rose, Beeby and Parker (1995: 13-14) have noted, 'phenomenology clearly has the potential to generate knowledge for practice from practice' and it would be a pity if potential researchers were deterred from using it by the complexity of its historical past.

Based on the critique of evidence-based practice from post-positivist and feminist schools of thought, alternative research methods can be proposed – for example, phenomenology can be proposed as an alternative approach to understanding the lived experiences of practitioners and clients.

3.3.3 Phenomenology

Anne Flood (2010) has described phenomenology as both a philosophical attitude and a research approach. The primary position of phenomenology is that the most basic human truths are accessible only through inner subjectivity (Thorne, 1991) and that the person is integral to the environment (Burns & Grove, 1999). It is a research approach in the interpretivist tradition (Parahoo, 1997). Koch (1995) has postulated that one has to contextualise phenomenological research to the philosophical tradition that informs its methods, such as those of Heidegger (1962), Husserl (1960), Merleau-Ponty (1962) or Wimpenny and Gass (2000).

3.3.4 Epistemological assumptions

The epistemology of phenomenology focuses on revealing meaning rather than on arguing a point or developing abstract theory (Flood, 2010). Discovery of knowledge cannot be attained by the empirical-analytical sciences (van Manen, 1997), but only by sharing common meaning of mutual history, culture and language of the world. Two types of meaning are offered: cognitive and non-cognitive. Cognitive meaning is concerned with the designative, informational, conceptual and expository aspects of the text – the semantic and linguistic meaning that makes social understanding possible (van Manen, 1997).

Combined with the non-cognitive meanings of the text, such as the evocative, the expressive, the transcendent and the poetic elements, the resulting phenomenological information enriches our understanding of everyday life (van Manen, 1997).

Crotty (1998, cited by Flood, 2010: 8) has explained how phenomenological knowledge reforms understanding and leads to more thoughtful action through constructionism: ‘all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their

world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context'. Meanings are constructed by people as they engage with the world they are interpreting. The researcher's task is to analyse the intentional experiences of consciousness to perceive how a phenomenon is given meaning and to arrive at its essence (Sadala & Adorno Rde, 2002). Social constructionism involves the creation of meaning in a community. The notion of intentionality brings to the fore interaction between object and subject and therefore rejects objectivism and subjectivism (Flood, 2010). As Crotty (in Flood, 2010: 8) has noted: 'Research in the constructivist vein ... requires that we may not remain straight-jacketed by the conventional meanings we have been taught to associate with the object. Instead ... approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. It is an invitation to reinterpretation'.

3.4 Theoretical perspectives

A theoretical perspective supports the philosophical stance underpinning a methodology, and provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and its criteria (Flood, 2010). There are two main phenomenological approaches: descriptive (eidetic) and interpretive (hermeneutic) (Cohen & Omery, 1994). These approaches differ in how findings are generated and used to augment professional knowledge (Lopez & Willis, 2004, cited by Flood, 2010).

3.4.1 Descriptive

Husserl's (1970) philosophical ideas gave rise to the descriptive phenomenological approach to enquiry (Flood, (2010). Husserl believed that subjective information should be important to scientists seeking to understand human motivation because human actions are

influenced by what they perceive to be real. Thus, a scientific approach is needed to bring out the essential components of the lived experiences specific to a group of people. This requires researchers to shed all prior personal knowledge (bracketing) to prevent their biases and preconceptions influencing the study (Drew, 1999) and to ensure scientific rigour (LeVasseur, 2003, cited by Flood, 2010).

3.4.2 Interpretive Heideggarian phenomenology (hermeneutics)

Heidegger suggested that rather than focus on people or phenomena, the focus should be the exploration of the lived experience or ‘dasein’ (‘the situated meaning of a human in the world’) (Flood, 2010; Thompson, 1990). Hermeneutics goes beyond description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common practices (Lopez & Willis, 2004) – what people experience rather than what they consciously know. Heidegger used the term ‘lifeworld’ to express the idea that individuals’ realities are invariably influenced by the world in which they live. This represents a move from an epistemological to an ontological project, focusing on how interpretation is intrinsic to human existence – it is not simply that someone merely has, but what he/she is (Heidegger; 1962, Todres & Wheeler, 2001, cited by Flood, 2010).

Heidegger (1962) asserted that humans are embedded in their world to such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked with social, cultural and political contexts (Flood, 2010; Leonard, 1999). While individuals are free to make choices, their freedom is not absolute – it is circumscribed by the specific conditions of their daily lives. The hermeneutic phenomenologist will focus on describing the meanings of the individual’s ‘dasein’ and how these meanings influence the choices they make, rather than seeking purely descriptive categories of the real, perceived world in the narratives of the participants (Flood, 2010).

Another philosophical assumption is that presuppositions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable guides to enquiry (Flood, 2010). Heidegger (1962) emphasised that it is impossible to rid the mind of the background of understandings that has led the researcher to consider a topic worthy of research in the first place (Koch, 1995); thus personal knowledge is useful and necessary to phenomenological research (Geanellos, 2000). The concept of co-constitutionality has been proposed, in which the meanings arrived at in interpretive research comprise a blend of those articulated by participants and researcher. Gadamer (1976) described this as ‘fusion of horizons’. The horizon is the background of various assumptions, ideas, meanings and experiences, which are fluid and open to change. Understanding and getting to know others is based on a personal horizon of experiences and meanings; thus the art of interpretation is always bounded by the separate, intersecting horizons of researchers and participants (Geanellos, 2000). Hermeneutic phenomenology investigates and describes a phenomenon as experienced in life through phenomenological reflection and writing, developing a description of the phenomenon that leads to an understanding of the meaning of the experience (Osborne, 1994).

3.4.3 Phenomenological research

Omery (1983) described phenomenological research as inductive and descriptive. The researcher aims to understand the cognitive subjective perspective of the person who has the experience, and the effect of that perspective on the lived experience.

Flood (2010) described how phenomenological methodology can be either structured (consisting of a sequence of steps) or more fluid (following the direction the experience indicates) – a discovery-oriented approach (Giorgi, 1970; Spiegelberg, 1960; van der Zalm & Bergum, 2000; van Kaam, 1966). The process begins with a description of a situation

experienced in daily life (Giorgi, 1975) and comes from a position of pre-reflexive thought. Descriptions of a phenomenon are obtained from the participant by the researchers, who must set aside any prior thought, conceptions or judgement so they can be open to the description. The researcher's task is to analyse the intentional experiences of consciousness to perceive how the meaning of a phenomenon is given meaning and to arrive at its essence (Flood, 2010).

3.4.4 Data collection

In phenomenological research, the interview is reflective (Munhall & Oiler Boyd, 1993) rather than observational, as in quantitative research (Flood, 2010). The interview is the main method of data collection: participants' descriptions can be explored, illuminated and probed (Kvale, 1996) using reflection, clarification, requests for examples and descriptions, and listening techniques (Jasper, 1994, cited by Flood, 2010).

3.4.5 Analysis of phenomenological data

One of the outcomes of phenomenological research is an analysis of the structure of a phenomenon in context, and to achieve this the researcher must select a method for data analysis congruent with the philosophical underpinnings of the study (Flood, 2010).

Phenomenology has gained respect as a valid approach to the study of nursing as a science of caring, and offers a means by which human phenomena or the lived experiences of nurses and patients can be studied and understood. Furthermore, phenomenology contributes knowledge that is practically relevant to nursing practice (Flood, 2010).

Based on this significance of phenomenological method for nursing, it can be inferred that both nursing and coaching are helping professions. The focus of the intervention in both

disciplines is the wellbeing of the client. If phenomenology helps to study the lived experience of the nurses and patients, it is equally useful in the area of coaching to study the lived experience of practitioners and clients.

3.4.6 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is an approach to qualitative, experiential research that has gained momentum and popularity over the past 10–15 years (Smith et al 2009). As Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008: 20, cited by Pringle, Hendry & McLafferty, 2011) emphasised, once healthcare professionals become aware of the potential of qualitative approaches such as IPA, they can value the real contribution that such research makes to ‘understanding healthcare and illness from the patient or service user perspective’.

Finlay and Ballinger (2006: 14, cited by Pringle et al., 2011) described IPA as a ‘variant of phenomenology’ that ‘aims to explore individuals’ perceptions and experiences. Taking an idiographic approach, the focus is on individuals’ cognitive, linguistic, affective and physical being’. IPA also involves a two-stage interpretation process through which the researcher tries to interpret the participant’s sense-making activity, which can be described as a ‘double hermeneutic’, referring to the twofold sense-making process (Smith, 2004: 14, cited by Pringle et al., 2011).

When considered in relation to other forms of phenomenology, IPA tends to interpret belief and accept participants’ stories, albeit in a questioning way (Pringle et al., 2011). Implications stemming from IPA therefore need to be firmly rooted in what the participants are actually saying, with direct quotes being used widely to substantiate findings (Pringle et al., 2011). Indeed, IPA researchers to think in terms of ‘theoretical

transferability rather than empirical generalizability' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009: 21, cited by Pringle et al., 2011).

IPA accounts privilege the individual and so offer a different perspective from approaches such as grounded theory that tend to use larger samples to substantiate theory (Barbour, 2007). Although smaller sample sizes might be a further limitation of IPA studies, reduced participant numbers allow for a richer depth of analysis that might be inhibited with a larger sample (Smith et al., 2009). A deeper and more interpretative analysis could be seen as drawing the analyst away from the original meanings, and indeed Smith et al. (2009) encouraged researchers to 'go beyond' immediately apparent content. However, the aim of IPA is to illustrate, inform and master themes by firmly anchoring findings in direct quotes from participant accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Quotes and metaphors used by participants can also be used in theme titles or descriptions to further root the analysis directly in their words (Smith et al., 2009). In this respect, IPA aims to go beyond a 'standard thematic analysis' (Brocki & Wearden, 2006: 21, cited by Pringle et al., 2011). Braun and Clarke (2006: 21–22, cited by Pringle et al., 2011) have argued that thematic analysis is 'a method in its own right' that provides core skills for other forms of qualitative analysis; they also considered methods such as IPA to be constrained by their theoretical roots. However, theoretical roots can add a sense of depth and purpose that thematic analysis may lack (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) and Smith et al. (2009) sought to 'operationalise' phenomenology, moving it from its philosophical roots through to a more user-friendly approach. IPA stresses the interpretative and hermeneutic elements, seeking to capture examples of convergence and divergence, rather than focusing solely on commonalities as Giorgi's approach prioritises (Smith et al., 2009). In relation to the process of analysis, earlier IPA discussions (Smith et al., 1999) have suggested that themes may be carried

forward from the first participant account to be built on or added to with subsequent accounts. However, later discussion by Smith et al. (2009: 22, cited by Pringle et al., 2011) gave greater emphasis to the need to approach each case ‘on its own terms, to do justice to its own individuality’, while also acknowledging the difficulty of bracketing the ideas that may have emerged from earlier transcripts. This perhaps shows the evolving nature of the approach, with earlier ideas being superseded by enhanced and developing guidance (Smith et al., 2009).

Warren (1994: 24, cited by Pringle et al., 2011) has argued that individual accounts and understandings offer ‘one clear way of demonstrating that human beings are the subject of nursing, not their medical condition’. Making phenomenology accessible and usable in such circumstances is one of the aims and strengths of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Similarly, the abovementioned relevance of the nature of IPA applies in the case of executive coaching with its human subjects.

Pringle et al. (2011) have predicted that the use of IPA seems certain to expand in coming years, because IPA can offer an adaptable and accessible approach to phenomenological research that adheres to guidelines regarding rigour and validity. It is an approach that emphasises the importance of individual accounts, so has much in common with nurses’ desire to offer holistic care. Just as nursing seeks to deliver care that is evidence based, the findings of IPA studies are firmly rooted in the ‘evidence’ of the words of participants. IPA has already been of value in health-related research studies, as detailed in Smith et al. (2009), and would therefore be well suited to greater use in coaching research (Pringle et al., 2011).

3.5 Chapter summary

In conclusion, coaching is a multidisciplinary profession and there are multiple realities in practice. As the idea of a scientific practice of evidence-based coaching takes hold, there is a risk that a demand for ‘evidence’ will be translated into the exclusive search for statistically proven coaching methods with universal application. This would be problematic. The evidence from the coaching literature is that context will determine the correctness of any coaching intervention. Qualitative and quantitative evidence assists experts in selecting appropriate methods. Popular science writer Danah Zohar (1997: 138–139) noted this point when discussing the benefits of dialogue over debate:

Unless a person is insane, he or she has some valid reason for holding a point of view or harboring a feeling. There is something valid about any point of view or any feeling any of us may entertain. There are no wrong points of view, no invalid ways to feel. I am here to learn your reasons and your feelings and to understand their origins and to understand my own response to them (cited by Abbott, 2006).

If the future development of executive coaching is anchored in such a philosophy that embraces cross-disciplinary approaches within a democratic tradition, then it is likely to continue to mature into a flourishing and relevant profession.

Chapter 4

Concepts of executive coaching and their research practices

This chapter compares and contrasts the relationship between the concepts of executive coaching and the research methods used to examine coaching practices. There are a range of coaching approaches, but six were chosen to discuss in detail and to compare the different approaches to both coaching and research into the value of coaching. These six approaches are widely used in practice as cited in ‘coaching in organisations’ published by Standards Australia. These six approaches have been used by the participants of this study therefore, it is closely relevant to examine the gap between theory and practice, if found, in the data analysis: (i) cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach (discussed in Section 4.1); (ii) positive psychology approach (Section 4.2); (iii) psychodynamic approach (Section 4.3); (iv) ontological coaching (Section 4.4); (v) adult learning approach (Section 4.5); and (vi) systems approach (Section 4.6). Section 4.7 then summarises the relationship between research methods and coaching approaches, and Section 4.8 concludes the chapter by outlining the major research themes generated from the foregoing discussion that are explored in the empirical part of the thesis.

All six approaches mentioned above, discuss the same factors in same order which includes; 1) executive development, 2) the business case for executive coaching, 3) the expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching, 4) theoretical approach to executive coaching, 5) evidence based coaching, 6) examples of research methods used, and 6) coach training.

Examples of research methods used in each of the six coaching concepts are provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Research methods used in different concepts of coaching

Concept of coaching	Examples of research methods
Cognitive behavioural solution focused approach (Section 4.1)	<p>Experimental research: Randomised controlled experiment (Green, Oades & Grant, 2006), within-subjects experimental design (Grant, 2003b), randomised controlled experiment (Spence & Grant, 2005), experimental and control group design (Grbic & Palmer, 2006), randomised controlled experiment; qual & quant measures used (Grant, Curtayne & Burton, 2009)</p> <p>Measurement and scaling: Solution-focused inventory (Grant, 2011), goal-focused coaching skills questionnaire (Grant, 2007)</p> <p>Qualitative research: Theme identification (Grant et al., 2009), IPA (Gyllenstein, Palmer, Nilsson, Regner & Frodi, 2010)</p>
Positive psychology (Section 4.2)	<p>Measurement and scaling: Authenticity Scale (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis & Joseph, 2008), Strength spotting Scale (Linley, Garcea et al., 2010a), Strengths Finder (Rath, 2007), VIA Inventory of Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), Realise2 (Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener, 2010c)</p> <p>Qualitative research: Structured debriefing; inductive semi-structured interviews (Roche & Hefferon, 2013), appreciative inquiry (Tickle, 2008)</p>
Psychodynamic approach (Section 4.3)	<p>Experimental research: Longitudinal field study; global executive leadership inventory (Ward, Loo & Have, 2014), T-Group training outcome study; self-actualisation instrument (Cooper, 1971), experimental field study (Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003)</p> <p>Qualitative research: Survey; telephone interviews (Douglas & McCauley, 1999), survey research (Edelstein & Armstrong, 1993)</p>
Ontological coaching (Section 4.4)	Case studies (Sieler, 2003, 2007)
Adult learning approach (Section 4.5)	Guided Reflective practice; reflective diary, focus groups (Cox, 2005), IPA; interviews (Passmore & Mortimer, 2011), behavioural skills coaching (Allison & Ayllon, 1980)
Systems approach (Section 4.6)	Case study (Rees & Porter, 2013), case study; thematic analysis (Kahn, 2011)

4.1 Cognitive-behavioural solution-focused coaching approach

Cognitive behavioural coaching is the broad theoretical framework that integrates solution-focused coaching techniques so that clients can achieve their agreed-upon coaching objectives (Stober & Grant, 2006). Cognitive behavioural coaching has been defined as ‘an integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable clients to achieve their realistic goals’ (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007: 86).

As noted by Stober and Grant (2006), cognitive behavioural coaching has largely developed since the 1990s, integrating theoretical concepts and strategies based on cognitive behavioural (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005; McMahon, 2006; Neenan & Dryden, 2002; Neenan & Palmer, 2001a; Palmer & Gyllensten, 2008), rational emotive behavioural (Anderson, 2002; DiMattia & Mennen, 1990; Kodish, 2002; Neenan & Palmer, 2001b; Palmer & Burton, 1996; Palmer & Gyllensten, 2008), problem-focused (D’Zurilla, 1986; Palmer, 1997a, 1997b, 2007, 2008), and solution-focused approaches and techniques (O’Hanlon, 1998; Palmer, 2008). These were underpinned and informed by social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), and by research into solution-focused cognitive behavioural coaching (e.g., Grant, 2001; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006, cited by Stober & Grant, 2006).

The solution-focused (SF) approach has its roots in psychotherapy. The foundational work in brief therapy, out of which the SF approach arose, was conducted by John Wicklund and others at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto, California, in the 1960s (Jackson & McKergow, 2007). The SF approach to coaching emphasises assisting the client to define a desired future state and to construct a pathway in both thinking and action that assists the client achieve that state (de Shazer, 1994).

The SF approach sees the client as fundamentally capable of solving their problem. That is to say, they already have all they need to create the solution; the client taps into the resources within themselves to enable them to construct a solution. This conceptualisation of the client sees the person as whole, and resource-full, rather than as dysfunctional and needy (Berg & Szabo, 2005; de Shazer, 1988).

4.1.1 Executive development

Cognitive behavioural coaching can be a powerful coaching intervention in a variety of contexts, including executive and leadership coaching, skills and performance coaching, life coaching, developmental coaching, peer coaching, team coaching, career coaching and health coaching (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2010). Similarly, SF is a methodology that is applicable in a wide range of coaching settings such as executive and leadership coaching, skills and performance coaching, and developmental coaching.

4.1.2 The business case for executive coaching

For Grant (2014), the business case for coaching, if nothing else, is about helping leaders and managers find real-life solutions to real-life problems. This is the case regardless of whether the coaching occurs in a leadership or managerial role, or whether the coach is a human resource professional seeking to develop others or a professional coach working with clients on a wide range of developmental, performance or skills-related coaching issues.

4.1.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

The general objectives and outcomes of solution-focused coaching have been explained by Grant (2013b) and de Shazer (1988). For Grant it is about helping people identify preferred outcomes and specific goals so they have a clear idea about what they want to achieve. For de Shazer it is about helping clients disengage from problem-focused or problem-saturated thinking so that they can spend more time thinking about possible solutions and pathways to success, rather than ruminating on the causes of the problem.

Hultgren, Palmer and O’Riordan (2013) reviewed previous research that has found cognitive behavioural coaching to be effective for a range of issues, including increasing goal striving, well-being and hope; reducing stress and depression; tackling perfectionism and self-handicapping. Studies reviewed by Hultgren et al. (2013) include those by Grant (2001, 2003, 2008), Grant et al. (2009), Grbic and Palmer (2006), Green et al. (2006), Green, Grant and Rynsaardt (2007), Gyllensten et al. (2010), Kearns, Forbes and Gardiner (2007), Kearns, Gardiner and Marshall (2008) and Libri and Kemp (2006).

4.1.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

Cognitive behavioural coaching (CBC) has been defined by Palmer and Szymanska (2007: 86) as ‘an integrative approach which combines the use of cognitive, behavioural, imaginal and problem-solving techniques and strategies within a cognitive behavioural framework to enable coaches to achieve realistic goals’.

Gyllensten et al. (2010) noted several techniques that can help coachees reach their goals; these can be cognitive (focusing on thoughts and images), behavioural, or focus on emotions or physiology. Examples of cognitive techniques include identifying PITS (performance-interfering thoughts) and PETS (performance-enhancing thoughts) or

imagery exercises. Behavioural techniques can include time-management strategies, assertion training, and behavioural experiments (Palmer & Szymanska, 2007). Techniques regulating emotion and physiology include psychoeducation, exposure and relaxation (Gyllensten et al., 2010).

CBC is based on the most well-validated and evidence-based intervention in clinical psychology: cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) (Hollon & Beck, 2004; NICE, 2008). Neenan (2008) (see also Neenan & Palmer, 2001) has described how CBT can be, and has been, adapted to the field of coaching. The basic underpinning of CBC is the ABCDE cognitive model, which proposes that activating events elicits beliefs that give rise to consequences, such as unpleasant and unhelpful emotions and behaviours; to reduce these consequences, it is necessary to dispute the inaccurate beliefs or thoughts, which in turn leads to an effective new outlook (Dryden & Neenan, 2004; Neenan & Palmer, 2001). Many of the other frameworks used to guide coaching sessions, such as PRACTICE (Palmer, 2007, 2011), can be incorporated into a cognitive behavioural framework.

More sophisticated versions of the basic CBC model, such as the SPACE model, take a bio-psycho-social approach (Edgerton & Palmer, 2005). SPACE is a psychological model developed by Nick Edgerton for use within CBC, therapy and stress management (see Edgerton & Palmer, 2005; Williams, Edgerton & Palmer, 2010; Williams & Palmer, 2013). In 2011, 62.7% of coaching psychologists reported using the cognitive behavioural approach and 21.1% reported using the SPACE model, which highlights the popularity of the approach and the model (see Palmer, O’Riordan & Whybrow, 2011).

4.1.5 Evidence based coaching

Cognitive behavioural solution focused approach doesn’t address this factor.

4.1.6 Examples of research methods used

Quantitative data collection

The first controlled study completed on an evidence-based group life coaching intervention illustrated the effectiveness of the cognitive-behavioural solution-focused approach (Green et al., 2006). The study provided evidence that the 10-week group program increased participants' goal-striving, wellbeing and hope. Participants were randomly allocated to a life coaching group program (n=28) or a wait-list control group (n=28). The gains in some variables achieved by participants in the life coaching group program were maintained up to 30 weeks later (Green et al., 2006). It is suggested that hope theory may explain increases in goal-striving and wellbeing within a life coaching intervention for non-clinical populations who wish to make purposeful change and enhance their positive psychological functioning (Green et al., 2006).

Another study found that a life coaching group program based on a cognitive behavioural and solution-focused approach reduced participants' levels of depression, anxiety and stress following the coaching (Grant, 2003b). Interestingly, the coaching did not target mental health specifically. The study was aimed to address the question 'Does coaching work, and how does it impact on self-reflection and insight?' Within-subjects design was used with a group of 20 adult participants (mean age 35.6 years). Fifty-minute group-based 'GROW' sessions were conducted over a period of 13 weeks. Scales measuring self-reflection and insight, quality of life, mental health and goal attainment were administered to evaluate coaching outcomes. Key outcomes were positive psychological benefits; the realisation that self-reflection may not facilitate goal attainment and that insight is an important factor in change; and that coaching should be solution-focused and generate insights and goal-oriented actions rather than self-focused reflection (Grant, 2003b).

Spence and Grant (2005) carried out a solution-focused CBC individual randomised control program. The aim of their study was to address the question ‘Does coaching work when screening/excluding participants for mental health issues?’ Participants were 67 adults (mean age 38.5 years,) who were offered 45-minute weekly individual coaching over a period of 10 weeks. They were assessed for goal attainment, psychological wellbeing, mental health, subjective wellbeing and emotional intelligence. The focus of screening was mental health problems, and as a result 22 (25%) of the participants were excluded (Spence & Grant, 2005).

The effects of a stress self-help manual based on a cognitive behavioural self-coaching approach were investigated by Grbcic and Palmer (2006). The middle management participants were randomly assigned to either coaching or control group. It was found that post-coaching levels of psychological problems and symptoms had decreased significantly in the coaching group. Interestingly the intervention appeared effective even if the frequency of work stressors and lack of organisational support remained unchanged (Grbcic & Palmer, 2006).

Researchers continue to develop techniques to study the impact of solutions-focused coaching, such as the taxonomy based on three core characteristics of the SF approach to assess future research, teaching and practice (Grant, 2011). Similarly, Grant and Cavanagh (2007b) developed a goal-focused coaching skills questionnaire to enhance SF coaching skills; preliminary findings have shown good reliability and validity, and scores have distinguished between professional and non-professional coaches.

Grant et al. (2009) conducted a randomised controlled study to investigate the impact of the cognitive behavioural solution-focused coaching approach, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Participants in this study were 41 executives of a large public health agency in Australia that covers a geographical region of approximately 40,000 square

kilometres, has 17,000 employees and an annual budget of A\$1.5 billion (US\$1.17 billion). The agency had been undergoing a period of significant change and organisational restructuring. The aim of the Leadership Development Program was to develop the leadership and management capability of executives and senior managers. The program was based on individual 360-degree feedback, and one half-day leadership training workshop was followed by individual executive coaching. Compared with controls, the coaching enhanced participants' goal attainment, increased their resilience and workplace well-being, and reduced their depression and stress (Grant et al., 2009).

Qualitative data collection

Grant et al. (2009) described the qualitative data collection of the health agency study. Participants were asked to respond to two questions: 'What specific positive benefits (if any) did you gain from participating in this program?' and 'What specific positive outcomes (if any) have flowed into your workplace?' Participant's responses were systematically classified and grouped according to thematic content. Five categories emerged, in order of the frequency with which they were mentioned by the participants: (i) Increased confidence (25 responses); (ii) Helped build applied management skills (24 responses); (iii) Better able to deal with organisational change/stress (23 responses); (iv) Gained personal or professional insights (14 responses); and (v) Helped me find ways to develop my career (12 responses).

Gyllensten and Palmer (2006, 2007) used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith & Osborn, 2003) to investigate the clients' general experience of coaching, rather than focusing specifically on a cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach.

Gyllensten et al. (2010) subsequently carried out a qualitative study with the particular

focus on investigating participants' experience of cognitive coaching. Studies using IPA often involve small numbers of participants as the goal is to present a detailed picture of the participants' individual experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2004). In contrast, evidence-based research generalises results obtained from experimental studies. For example, it could aim to prove coaching a valid and reliable change methodology by gathering solid evidence for the effectiveness of coaching through well-designed outcome studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Consequently, the participants in the study by Gyllensten et al. (2010) (N=10) were selected because they had participated in cognitive coaching at the workplace and thereby were able to contribute to the research question. The participants occupied middle to senior management positions. The coaching was goal directed, based on cognitive principles and used a variety of cognitive and behavioural techniques, including modifying unhelpful thoughts, visualisation, time-management techniques, relaxation and behavioural experiments.

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The interview schedule was developed on the basis on the main research question: 'How did you experience cognitive coaching?' Four main themes with related subthemes were identified: the role of the coach, increased awareness, increased cognitive and emotional knowledge, and doing things in a new way. The study found that cognitive coaching helped participants to change unhelpful thinking and regulate difficult emotions, and these findings support the continuing development of cognitive/cognitive behavioural coaching (O'Connell, Palmer & Williams, 2012).

Based on the above literature review, the epistemology of the cognitive behavioural approach can be traced back to objectivism. Michael Crotty (2003) defined objectivism as an epistemological view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of

consciousness and experience, that they have truth and meaning residing in them as objects (objective truth and meaning), and that careful (scientific) research can attain that objective truth and meaning. This is the epistemology underpinning the positivist stance (Crotty, 2003). Research adopting a positivist approach might choose survey research and use quantitative methods of statistical analysis.

Based on the classification provided by Crotty (2003), the theoretical perspective providing the backbone to the practice of cognitive behavioural approach is positivism. Practitioners have used a variety of research methodologies to expand knowledge in this area, such as experimental, survey and phenomenological research methodologies. Methods consistent with these methodologies include measurement and scaling, randomised controlled studies, mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) and interviews. Researchers in this area have developed measurement scales, used questionnaires, assessed coaching interventions and applied statistical analysis on quantitative data. The literature shows a clear relationship between the theoretical background of cognitive behavioural solution-focused coaching and research methods used to examine this concept of coaching. However, a recent trend has been observed towards qualitative data collection, such as mixed methods design and IPA method, using content analysis, theme identification and conversation analysis for analysing the data.

On the other hand, the epistemology of the solution-focused approach can be traced back to constructionism. As Grant (2011) has noted, the postmodernist Wittgensteinian¹¹ stance adopted by the early pioneers of solution-focused approaches (e.g., de Shazer, 1994) is a complex philosophy that focuses on how language both constructs and constricts our understandings of the world. De Shazer's interpretation of Wittgenstein's philosophy

¹¹ Wittgenstein's philosophy is discussed here in the context of theoretical perspectives which provided the backbone to the practice of cognitive behavioural approach.

resulted in a therapeutic modality that steadfastly supports psychological enterprise (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007). Indeed, some solution-focused proponents argue that attempts to understand how the solution-focused approach works are at best irrelevant and could even be detrimental, stating that it is only important to know that it does work, and how to make it work (Kiser, 1996; McKergow & Jackson, 2005, cited by Grant, 2011).

The relationship between a postmodernist theoretical perspective and the methodology of discourse analysis is found in the classification discussed by Crotty (2003). This methodology incorporates various methods such as document analysis, content analysis and conversation analysis. Such a position might appeal to some practitioners, and may well resonate with those who subscribe to postmodern philosophical perspectives, but Grant (2011) has argued that this position has seriously limited the broader development and adoption of solution-focused approaches (for an informative extended critique of postmodern philosophy in solution-focused approaches, see, for example, Held, 1996, cited by Grant, 2011).

Overall the literature review of the cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach indicates that research has favoured quantitative studies (e.g., Grant, 2003b; Green et al., 2006). Practitioners seeking evidence for the cognitive behaviour approach have used methods related to objectivism, the theoretical perspective of this approach (Crotty, 2003). However, coaches have also realised the need to collect qualitative data, simply because it has been found useful (Grant et al., 2009). To address the gap in studying a particular coaching approach by using IPA, Gyllensten et al. (2010) used an IPA study to investigate the coachees' experience of cognitive coaching. Because evidence-based practitioners are interested in qualitative studies (such as IPA), it could be inferred that the nature of the coaching phenomenon encourages them to collect qualitative experiential data to understand the depth, thereby compromising breadth. This recent trend towards qualitative

studies is also related to the theoretical perspective of solution-focused approach (postmodernism); Crotty (2003) classified interpretive methods such as content analysis, conversation analysis and document analysis relevant to studying postmodernist approaches.

Practitioners have used a variety of research methodologies to expand knowledge in this area, such as experimental research, survey research and phenomenological research. They have chosen methods consistent with their methodologies: measurement and scaling, randomised controlled studies, mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) and interviews. They have developed measurement scales, used questionnaires, assessed coaching interventions, undertaken statistical analysis on quantitative data, and performed content analysis, theme identification and conversation analysis to analyse qualitative data. However, overall the cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach appears to be an evidence-based approach. As shown by the above literature review, representative quantitative studies (nine studies, consisting of seven experimental studies and two measurement scale / questionnaire construction studies) outnumber the two qualitative studies (two studies: theme identification and IPA).¹²

4.1.7 Coach training

Cognitive behavioural solution focused approach doesn't address this factor.

¹² Table 4.1 shows the detailed picture of the research methods used by the cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach.

4.2 Positive psychology approach

Positive psychology is widely used in executive coaching (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The positive psychology movement has been increasing in popularity since the notion was crystallised in 1998, during Martin Seligman's 1998 Presidential Address to the American Psychological Association. Linley and Harrington (2005: 13) have defined positive psychology as the 'scientific study of optimal functioning, focusing on aspects of the human condition that lead to happiness, fulfilment and flourishing'. Positive psychology results in different questions from 'traditional' psychological approaches, which have tended to focus on a disease model of human functioning and healing people of their shortcomings; it explores not why people fail, suffer or deteriorate, but why they excel, achieve and flourish (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Nested firmly in the positive psychology movement, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is characterised by a focus on recognising and valuing the best aspects of an organisation, and on the power of asking positive questions, for example, 'What would we have done today that would make you tingle with enthusiasm?' (Liston-Smith 2008: 102). At its most basic level it is an organisational change strategy that directs group members to examine what they do well and then encourages them to do more of it (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987).

4.2.1 Executive development

One of the areas that perhaps lends itself most readily to the coaching endeavour is the identification, assessment and development of strengths. Research has shown that using one's strengths leads to a range of positive outcomes, including better goal attainment (Linley, Nielsen et al., 2010b) and higher levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy, vitality and wellbeing (Govindji & Linley, 2007; Proctor, Maltby & Linley, 2009). People who use

their strengths more have been shown to have higher levels of work engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002) and to be more effective in their development over time (Minhas, 2010), as well as performing better at work and showing increased profitability (Clifton & Harter, 2003; Corporate Leadership Council, 2002; Smedley, 2007; Stefanyszyn, 2007).

The notion of authenticity is increasingly recognised as being a vital part of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cameron, 2008; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May & Walumbwa, 2005). The notion of authenticity also has relevance in non-leadership coaching engagements, given that much coaching is aimed at developing the extent to which clients are able to identify and then pursue personally relevant, self-concordant goals (Burke & Linley, 2007).

4.2.2 The business case for executive coaching

Positive psychology doesn't address this factor.

4.2.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

Linley and Harrington (2005) noted growing interest in applied positive psychology, defined as 'the application of positive psychology research to the facilitation of optimal functioning' (p. 13). This may mean that organisations are beginning to adopt 'positive' organisational practices, such as coaching, that focus on enhancing employees' skills, happiness or wellbeing to achieve optimal performance, instead of 'plugging' development gaps to meet 'acceptable' performance. Synergies have been identified between coaching psychology and positive psychology principles in the literature, as both approaches are explicitly concerned with enhancing performance and wellbeing, by focusing on the positive side of human nature rather than what is flawed (Linley & Harrington, 2005).

4.2.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

Positive psychology is the study of positive emotion, engagement and meaning, the three aspects that make sense out of the scientifically unwieldy notion of ‘happiness’. Positive psychology attempts to measure, classify and build these three aspects of life (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Positive psychology is an applied science, and a growing number of coaches and consultants are using a strengths-based approach to their practice (Biswas-Diener, 2009). Coaching, with its positive focus, is an ideal arena for developing strengths. Strengths are defined as ‘a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user and enables optimal functioning, development and performance’ (Linley, 2008: 9).

Employee engagement is a type of positive organisational practice that has received much attention in recent years, mainly from practitioners (Saks, 2006). In their study on the drivers of employee engagement, Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004: 9) defined employee engagement as:

A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

4.2.5 Evidence-based coaching

Seligman (2007) believes that the new discipline of positive psychology provides two backbones for coaching practice: a scientific evidence-based backbone and a theoretical backbone. Positive psychology can provide coaching with a delimited scope of practice, with interventions and measurements that work, and with a view of adequate qualifications required to be a coach. As coaching now stands, its scope of practice is almost without limits: how to arrange your closet, how to arrange your memories in a scrapbook, how to be a more assertive leader, how to find more flow at work, how to fight dark thoughts, how to have more purpose in life. It also uses an almost limitless array of techniques: goal-setting, affirmations, visualisation, assertive training, correcting cognitive distortions, counting your blessings, and on and on (Seligman, 2007).

Positive psychology is rooted in empirical research (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). It uses traditional psychometrically established measurement – of experiments, longitudinal research and random assignment – and placebo-controlled outcome studies to evaluate whether interventions work. It discards those that do not pass these psychometric standards as ineffective and it hones those that do pass (Seligman et al., 2005). Based on the above orientation, the epistemology of positive psychology can be traced back to objectivism.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

An analysis of the ‘evidence-base’ for AI reveals that there is little doubt that extensive research is being carried out. For example, articles on AI have appeared in peer-reviewed journals on topics as diverse as tourism (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2012), education (Steyn,

2012), speech pathology (Dunkle & Flynn, 2012), social work (Sieminski & Seden, 2011), child neglect (Carter, 2012) and occupational therapy (Rubin, Kerrell & Roberts, 2011).

Jones (2012) has suggested that the distinction between coaching psychologists and those without a similar scientifically based training surely lies in the ability to understand and translate a more sophisticated research awareness. Despite the number of research articles published, to date much of the research on AI is descriptive and lacks the methodological rigour that marks out the best of evidence-based interventions (Jones, 2012).

4.2.6 Examples of research methods used

Practitioners of a positive psychology approach use different research methods to achieve their research objectives, such as experimental research, longitudinal research and randomised controlled-outcome studies. An inductive methodology for thematic analysis can also explore in depth the phenomenon of employee engagement. This section discusses some examples of how the constructs of this approach to executive coaching are measured.

Strengths assessment

Traditionally in the identification of strengths, psychologists, coaches and other practitioners would typically have turned to one of a number of online strengths assessments, such as Strengths Finder (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) or its recent revision, Strengths Finder 2.0 (Rath, 2007; www.strengthsfinder.com), the VIA Inventory of Strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; www.viastrengths.org) or the Realise2 (Linley, Willars, et al., 2010c; www.realise2.com).

One of the challenges that has been faced by the strengths approach is the absence of a shared language of strengths (Linley, 2008). In the absence of this shared language, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for people to create a mutually understood and sustained dialogue of their strengths. This was one of the reasons that Realise2 was developed, which includes 60 different strengths, each with their own recognisable strengths name (Linley, Willars et al., 2010c).

Linley, Garcea, Hill, Minhas, Trenier and Willars (2010a) investigated individual differences in people's strength spotting capability, broadly defined. They expected to find such differences, and so set out to develop a Strength Spotting Scale that would provide a self-report means for assessing one's own standing as a Strength spotter. This is a fundamentally helpful skill for coaches and coaching psychologists, as well as having application across a far wider range of practitioners – for example, managers, social workers, teachers, youth workers and therapists. Strength spotting Scale is a reliable, valid and internally consistent measure, containing five subscales that measure each of the five strength spotting domains: Ability, Emotional, Motivation, Application, Frequency (Linley, Garcia et al., 2010a).

Development of Authenticity Scale

In developing their measure, Wood et al. (2008) first established the definitional basis for the construct by identifying three factors underlying Barrett-Lennard's (1998) definition of authenticity: self-alienation, authentic living and accepting external influence. The Authenticity Scale also showed high correlation with self-esteem, and subjective and psychological wellbeing characteristics. The work of Wood et al. (2008) provided the first direct test of several theoretical models that view authenticity as integral to wellbeing.

Structured coaching debriefing for strengths assessment

The Centre of Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP, 2010) has developed a structured debriefing which encourages stretch goals and action planning (cited by Roche & Hefferon, 2013: 21). The goal-oriented focus of the debriefing is also important as the desired result of strengths development is behavioural change (Clifton & Harter, 2003). In essence, it is a structured coaching conversation focusing on strengths.

Roche and Hefferon's (2013) qualitative study analysed the experience of 20 clients on completion of a structured debriefing of their strengths profile report. The study aimed to get to the heart of the contributing factors that led to successful strengths development. The six men and 14 women consisted of two company directors, eight managers, 10 team leaders and one personal assistant. The age range was from 30 to 42 years.

Inductive semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with each participant to probe their experience of the assessment and debriefing process. The overarching finding was that the debriefing conversation was instrumental in instigating the participants to act. Another significant finding was that the debriefing increased the participants' understanding of their strengths and how to harness them (Roche & Hefferon, 2013).

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

A particularly informative account of AI intervention was provided by Tickle (2008). Briefly, the approach is based on what is known as the '4-D cycle', four stages of change that encourage members of the organisation to think about: What gives life to the organisation? (Discovery); What aspirations does it have for the future? (Dream); What should be done? (Design); And how? (Destiny). Although details vary with each

organisation, these stages provide a broad guide as to how AI might be implemented in an organisation (Lewis, Passmore & Cantore, 2008).

4.2.7 Coach training

Some coaches have taken face-to-face or tele-courses in coaching, but many have not (Seligman, 2007). Some are accredited by the International Coach Federation and by other rump bodies, but most are not. The right to call oneself a coach is unregulated. And this is why a scientific and a theoretical backbone will help the practice. Seligman considers that one need not be a licensed psychologist, or even a psychologist, to practise positive psychology or to practise coaching. Positive psychology is not intended to be an umbrella for yet another self-interested guild. People who are adequately trained in the techniques of coaching, theories of positive psychology, valid measurement of the positive states and traits, and the interventions that work, and who know when to refer a client to someone who is better trained, are bona fide coaches of positive psychology (Seligman, 2007).

Positive psychology practitioners use various methods to study the aspects of human condition that lead to happiness, fulfilment and flourishing. They have been involved in scale development to measure strengths, authenticity and employee engagement. There is emerging empirical evidence that links authenticity and a number of constructs that underpin evidence-based coaching, including wellbeing and optimal functioning. The Authenticity Scale developed by Wood et al. (2008) represents a direct and discrete measure of authenticity that can be used in coaching. Given that the notion of authenticity is central to much of the coaching endeavour, further development of an evidence base to coaching would benefit from the increased use of freely available and psychometrically validated measures. It can further develop an understanding of the psychological processes underpinning the purposeful, positive change facilitated by coaching (Wood et al., 2008).

Seligman (2007) believes that positive psychology is rooted in empirical research. It uses traditional methods of psychometrically established measurement, experiments, longitudinal research and random assignment and placebo-controlled outcome studies to evaluate whether interventions work. It discards those that do not pass these gold standards as ineffective and it hones those that do pass (Seligman et al., 2005). Based on the literature cited above, the epistemology of this approach can be traced back to objectivism. Objectivism is related to positivist theoretical perspective, and its most commonly used methodology is experimental research and survey research. Methods used by coaches in this field are measurement and scaling, and questionnaires (Crotty, 2003). On the other hand, practitioners also use qualitative methods for example thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crabb, 2011) and inductive semi-structured interviews (Roche & Hefferon, 2013). However, the majority of the representative research methods examples (given in Table 4.1) are quantitative, suggesting that positive psychology is predominantly an evidence-based approach.

4.3 Psychodynamic approach

Psychodynamic coaching generally involves highlighting some of the unconscious behaviours and patterns that may play out in organisational life, and coaches may also explore whether certain patterns have their origin in behaviour established in early life (Ward et al., 2014).

An explicit psychodynamic approach plays a major role in psychotherapeutic treatment, but it is not common in executive coaching. There is growing agreement that psychodynamics and the role of the unconscious in coaching conversations is not only pervasive, but relevant (Turner, 2010). A significant body of research emphasises the unconscious in the workplace, and many contributors to the coaching field have indicated

its value in the coaching domain. For example, Kilburg (2000) has argued that psychodynamic theory is a flexible and useful tool not only for psychologists but also for consultants and coaches. Allcorn (2006) considers the significant elements of the dyadic coaching relationship are those that are subjective, out-of-awareness, unconscious and hard to discuss, and Kets de Vries (2005b, 2011) emphasised the paramount importance of psychoanalytical conceptualisations in executive groups.

4.3.1 Executive development

Group coaching is growing as a leadership development intervention for executives in business schools and organisations (Ward et al., 2014). The benefits of group psychodynamic executive coaching include economies of scale, diversity of perspectives and behavioural change – one such program administered at a global business school was found to be effective over a decade (Ward et al., 2014).

4.3.2 The business case for executive coaching

Psychodynamic approach doesn't address this factor.

4.3.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

Developmental coaching is 'integrative' because the process deals with the person as a whole, considers long-term behaviours as well as growth opportunities beyond the professional arena, and puts the coach in the position of a 'thought partner' (Bachkirova, 2011). In contrast, goal-oriented coaching has a different perspective from personal development-oriented coaching with respect to the role of the coach and the objectives

(Ives, 2008). However, psychodynamic group coaching intervention seems to combine the characteristics and advantages of both approaches (Ward et al., 2014).

4.3.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

Psychodynamic group coaching borrows heavily from group theory and Lewin's development of strategies for executive groups (Ward et al., 2014). A different type of intervention from the usual dyadic forms of talking therapies and cures, group interventions are effective in producing change, albeit in some cases with only short-term effects. Outcome studies on T-Groups have reported positive benefits. Moreover, the empirical data around group therapy show positive efficacy for a range of symptoms. It may be that the security of sharing a journey where other participants experience similar challenges leads to reassurance, openness and support structures developing within the group. Broadly speaking, group interventions with executives seem to have generally positive outcomes (Ward et al., 2014).

4.3.5 Evidence-based coaching

A number of scholars have contributed to the overlapping fields of psychodynamic theory and organisational practice (Baum, 1987; Czander, 1993; Kets de Vries, 1984; Levinson, 1972; Zaleznick 2009). As yet, psychodynamic group coaching interventions have received limited empirical attention. Mapping and awareness of the existing component methodologies would assist practitioners apply a balanced combination of these components or techniques (psychodynamics, group facilitation, and coaching) and deliver more reliable and consistent outcomes (Ward et al., 2014).

The wide range of studies on group therapeutic interventions, including T-Groups, indicate a positive outcome. Typical disciplines of group therapy need to be implemented in the executive setting, such as a holding environment and dynamic administration (Thornton, 2010; Ward, 2008). In the absence of these preconditions, the group coaching experience becomes more of a facilitated conversation. While group therapy usually takes place over months or even years, the group executive coaching intervention is intensive and takes place over a day and a half, with a follow-up after a few months (Ward et al., 2014).

Most participants in the psychodynamic group-coaching intervention report great satisfaction with the process from a number of perspectives (Ward et al., 2014). In addition, anecdotal follow-ups by coaches confirm that many participants have made significant changes. It is not yet clear whether these changes are long lasting, or whether this intervention is more readily acceptable in different cultures. More data about these matters could be obtained through longitudinal studies, and it would also be interesting to examine the efficacy of other group interventions using control groups. Such studies would be difficult, but they may be well worth the effort to help further leadership coaching as a profession (Ward et al., 2014).

4.3.6 Examples of research methods used

Ward et al. (2014), who have been involved in a leadership development process at a well-known international business school, conducted a longitudinal field study. Generally, the participants in these programs are senior executives from multinational companies, diverse with respect to gender and nationality, and aged 35–50 years. Before they arrive on campus, they are asked to submit a 360-degree feedback report called the Global Executive Leadership Inventory, containing data provided by superiors, colleagues, employees, friends and family (Kets de Vries, 2005a). To date, more than 10,000 senior executives

have completed the instrument, which covers 12 leadership dimensions and combines qualitative and quantitative feedback, with positive results (Ward et al., 2014).

Cooper (1971) studied the results with the help of an instrument concerned with self-actualisation, comprising the results from 16 senior managers after two one-week T-Group training sessions. The participants showed significant change in the direction of becoming more independent and self-supporting, more flexible, more sensitive to their own needs and feelings, more spontaneous and more accepting of aggression.

In an early study, Douglas and McCauley (1999) presented a wide-ranging survey of development in institutions. Using telephone interviews they surveyed 300 random US organisations. From the 2,426 respondents, they found that organisations with developmental programs (including coaching) in place were more likely to have more satisfied employees and higher sales.

Subsequently, Smither et al. (2003) conducted an experimental field study to ascertain whether executives who worked with an executive coach experienced higher ratings from a multi-source feedback instrument over time. The time element is relevant here, as previous studies had noted an immediate impact. The wide-ranging study incorporated 1,361 senior managers, 404 of whom worked with a coach. After a year, managers who worked with a coach were found to have improved more than other managers, although the effect size was small. Earlier self-reported surveys showed that executives had found the process useful and had changed behaviours (Edelstein & Armstrong, 1993).

4.3.7 Coach training

Psychodynamic approach doesn't address this factor.

In conclusion, the epistemology of psychodynamic approach can be traced back to subjectivism, because of the pioneers studied the subjective phenomenon using qualitative research methods (Shedler, 2013). However, practitioners later became interested in objectifying the subjective data by using experimental research methods to find evidence of efficacy. For example, Ward et al. (2014) carried out a longitudinal field study by collecting qualitative and quantitative data, using inventories (360 feedback/Global Executive Leadership Inventory). Because of this shift of contemporary researchers towards EBP, there is no apparent logical relationship between psychodynamic theory and research methods used by the coaches to find the efficacy of psychodynamic executive coaching.

4.4 Ontological coaching

In ontological coaching, the dynamic interplay between language, emotions and body is referred to as the *Way of Being* (Cox et al., 2010). The essential goal of the coach is to be a catalyst for change by respectfully and constructively triggering a shift in the client's way of being, and to enable him or her to develop perceptions and behaviours that were previously unavailable, all of which are consistent with what the client wants to gain from coaching. An ontological approach to coaching is grounded in philosophy and the biology of cognition. Unlike psychologically oriented coaching traditions, ontological coaching is not based on the concept of mind but on the concept of being, or, more explicitly, the way of being (Cox et al., 2010). Ontology is the study of being, in particular, the investigation of the nature of human existence (Honderich, 1995).

4.4.1 Executive development

Ontological approach doesn't address this factor.

4.4.2 The business case for executive coaching

Ontological approach doesn't address this factor.

4.4.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

The process of engagement between the ontological coach and client revolves around (i) shared understanding of the issues the client brings to the conversation, and desired coaching outcomes, and (ii) the coach's interpretation of the client's way of being that underpins his or her issues. Clarifying issues and outcomes is central to the contractual arrangement between coach and client. In organisational coaching, the client's manager may also be part of the contracting and evaluation process (Cox et al., 2010).

4.4.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

The theoretical background of ontological coaching can be traced back to four interrelated components. Heidegger's (1962, 1971, 1999) phenomenological analysis of being, supported by Gadamer's (1994) approach to hermeneutics, forms the first major philosophical cornerstone of ontological coaching. The second part of ontological coaching's theoretical basis is Maturana's biology of cognition (Maturana & Varela, 1980, 1987). The third component is the work of Wittgenstein (1958), Searle (1969, 1979) and Austin (1973) in the philosophy of language. Finally, the fourth component is provided by philosophical investigations of the body, in particular the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Dewey (1929). Flores integrated the ideas of Heidegger, Gadamer, Maturana and

Searle (Winograd & Flores, 1986) to form an initial body of knowledge, now known as Ontology of the Human Observer (Sieler, 2003).

Heidegger and Maturana both also emphasised the interactive nature of human existence. For Heidegger, the essence of being is being-in-the-world (Dasein), being immersed in the activity of everyday living, learning how to adjust to, and skilfully cope with, the requirements of life in our dealings with others and technology (Cox et al., 2010).

Heidegger and Maturana, along with philosophers of language, highlighted the centrality of language in the formation of reality. Maturana used the expression ‘*languageing*’ to highlight language as a process that ‘brings forth a world’, and for Heidegger ‘*language is the house of being*’ (cited by Cox et al., 2010: 48–49). Following work by Wittgenstein and Austin that demonstrated that (i) language is a fundamental form of human activity, and (ii) words create effects in the world (Austin, 1973; Wittgenstein, 1958). Searle (1969, 1979) identified specific ways that language generates reality. Maturana and Heidegger also recognised the emotional and somatic dimensions of everyday living. Maturana regarded conversation as the basic unit of human interaction, consisting of the ‘braiding’ of language and emotions, involving dynamic body postures (Maturana, 1988, cited by Cox et al., 2010).

4.4.5 Evidence based coaching

Ontological approach doesn’t address this factor.

4.4.6 Examples of research methods used

Case study is the research method most commonly used by ontological coaches in their practice (Sieler, 2003, 2007). Each coaching engagement is unique, and is therefore

considered as a live coaching example to be explored by the coach. These case studies are found in the newsletters of the coaching institutes that practise and teach ontological coaching. These case studies are also published in three volumes of *Coaching to the Human Soul*, written by Alan Sieler (2003, 2007, 2012). Ontological coaches collect qualitative information about the efficacy of their coaching approach. This is the reason why no rigorous empirical studies have yet provided evidence of the efficacy of the ontological approach. However, as is seen in the data analysis, practitioners have found anecdotal evidence.

However, neither Sieler nor other researchers have conducted detailed research into his coaching approach. Any such research should adopt a hermeneutic and phenomenological perspective, two perspectives that can be traced back to constructionism and are related with the methodology of phenomenological research (Crotty, 2003). Theoretical concepts of ontological coaching emphasise reflective practice for coachee learning, which is consistent with the choice of research methods used by the coaches in this area. For example, case study is the most commonly used research method to study ontological coaching.

4.4.7 Coach training

Ontological approach doesn't address this factor.

4.5 Adult learning approach

The way in which individuals learn should also be taken into account. There is no longer an absolute belief that we learn through stimulus-response. In the past three decades, the work of writers such as Tinklepaugh (1928), Chomsky (1959) and Kolb (1984) has become

more influential in shaping the view of adult learning. The adult learning approach has been most commonly used in sports, and for developing some other skills (e.g., driving). Later, coaches practised this approach to address the workplace demands by integrating it with instruction in the workplace for learning new behaviours and skills (Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997).

4.5.1 Executive development

Adult learning approach doesn't address this factor.

4.5.2 The business case for executive coaching

Adult learning approach doesn't address this factor.

4.5.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

Adult learning approach doesn't address this factor.

4.5.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

Many theories attempt to explain how adults learn, including experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), double loop analogy (Argyris, 1991), theory of andragogy (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2011) and the theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997).

Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT)

Kolb has defined learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience' (1984: 41). Kolb emphasised experience as an important aspect of how adults learn (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). According to Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT), learning involves developing a theory, forming hypotheses and then testing those hypotheses. The learning experience comprises four stages and, while learning can occur at any point of the cycle, it generally begins with the process of 'concrete experience' (Rakoczy & Money, 1995). On the whole, the four stages of the cycle involve the learner in self-reflection, observation and testing (Rakoczy & Money 1995). For learning to be a success, the learner needs to actively complete all four stages of the cycle (Kolb, 1984).

Argyris (1991) further developed learning theory through his 'double-loop' analogy. Double-loop learning consists of asking yourself questions and then testing them. Double-loop learning occurs at the third stage of Kolb's cycle, whereby adults learn to apply their hypotheses and theories to new conditions.

Theory of andragogy

Knowles's theory of andragogy is a constructivist approach to learning whereby adults draw on their experience and so create new learning based on previous understandings (Knowles et al., 2011). Knowles has argued that readiness to learn is linked to the relevance of the learning to adults' lives, and that they bring an expanding pool of experience that can be used as a resource for that learning. Six characteristics of adult learners are thought to influence how they approach learning: they have a need to know; they are self-directed; they have an abundance of prior life and work experience; they learn

when they are ready and when they have a need to learn; they are life-centred in their orientation to learning; and they can respond to external motivators (Knowles et al., 2011).

Theory of transformative learning

The theory of transformative learning was first proposed by Mezirow (1997) and was based on research involving women returning to education. It uses a constructionist philosophy, suggesting that learners make meaning from their experiences of the social context. Over time adults construct ‘a coherent body of experience – associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses – frames of reference that define their life world’ (Mezirow, 1997: 5). Mezirow has suggested that transformative learning is the process of effecting a change in one of these frames of reference, claiming that, when circumstances allow, ‘learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience’ (p. 5).

Critical Reflection. A key aspect of transformative learning, identifiable in each of the above phases, is critical reflection, which Mezirow (2000: 11) described as the ‘critical assessment of assumptions [which] leads toward a clearer understanding by tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best judgment’. To clarify further how critical reflection can be encouraged, Mezirow (1990) described three different types of reflection that can be used to inform action, explained by Cranton (2013: 270) as:

Content reflection, where individuals reflect on the content or description of a problem; (b) process reflection, which involves thinking about the strategies used to solve the problem rather than the content of the problem itself; and (c) premise reflection, involving questioning the relevance of the problem itself, the assumptions or values underlying the problem.

4.5.5 Evidence based coaching

Adult learning approach doesn't address this factor.

4.5.6 Examples of research methods used

It needs to be emphasised that this thesis is not looking at research on Adult Education in general but adult education in the context of coaching.

Elaine Cox (2005) studied groups of adult students training to work as mentors on a community project, in an attempt to explore how they learned from their mentoring encounters through the use of reflective practice. Each mentor was asked to keep a reflective diary using a specific model of guided reflection. A model of reflective practice and the briefing and debriefing methods helped students understand the concept and processes. Questionnaires and focus groups were used so participants could reflect on the efficacy of the reflective practice model studied.

Research in the context of coaching, however, is still limited, even in the area of the development of behavioural skills and literacy skills (Allison & Ayllon, 1980). One behavioural coaching strategy with 23 participants effectively aided the learning of specific skills in sports (Allison & Ayllon, 1980). Passmore and Mortimer (2011) carried out an IPA study to use coaching as a learning technique to develop learner driving skills. Semi-structured interviews were conducted by telephone with 15 participants, in an attempt to gain a more fluid and in depth narrative from the participant (Smith, 2008). The findings suggest that coaching can improve the learning experience for novice drivers, although further research is needed to build on the insights gained from this preliminary study (Passmore & Mortimer, 2011).

4.5.7 Coach training

Adult learning approach doesn't address this factor.

The epistemology of the adult learning approach is traced back to constructivism; for example, the above-mentioned theories are based on a constructionist philosophy, suggesting that learners make meaning from their experiences of the social context.

Michael Crotty (2003) has defined constructionism, noting that there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover. Truth or meaning comes into existence out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. This is precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one culture to another, where subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning. Constructionism resonates, therefore, with qualitative methods of inquiry (Crotty, 2003).

It can be hypothesised that coaching further aids the learning process described by Kolb (1984). Coaching creates a sense of personal responsibility for learning and stimulates the double loop learning described by Argyris (1991), because the client is encouraged to reflect on their situation and its implications through questions from the coach. Another attribute of adult learning theory that imposes requisite competencies for an executive coach is the application of practical frameworks and conditions to impart permanent learning and behaviour change in executives. Thus, as advocated by adult learning theory, executive coaching skills involve the ability to facilitate executives' reflective practice and contemplation of their self-concepts and images, experiences, behaviours, perspectives and internalised constructs to produce learning at the root. Furthermore, within an executive

coaching environment, the coach promotes reflectivity through critical questioning and reflective activities (Cox, 2006).

The above review of adult learning approach has identified a relationship between theory and research methods used to study the adult learning approach to executive coaching. Examples include a reflective diary method with a guided reflection model, briefing and de-briefing methods for participants to understand the concept and processes of reflective practice, questionnaires and focus groups to reflect on the efficacy of reflective practice (Cox, 2005). IPA method is also used to study adult learning approach by using semi-structured interviews (Passmore & Mortimer, 2011). Executive coaches also follow Kolb's learning cycle as a coaching technique and collect qualitative data for evaluation.

4.6 Systems approach

Decisions taken in one part of an organisation have a 'knock-on effect' in other departments, and problems that emerge in one functional area of an organisation may have their causes elsewhere in the same organisation (Rees & Porter, 2013). However, many managers may not always be aware of the organisational connections, or they may be predisposed to ignore these. Other departments in the same organisation may be reluctant to accept that their actions may be causing problems elsewhere. They may also be reluctant to change behaviour, especially if they perceive that this would hinder the achievement of their particular departmental objectives. A holistic approach is often needed because organisations operate as systems (Millet, 1998), and solutions to problems may need to be in a different area of the organisation from where the problem has manifested itself (Rees & Porter, 2013).

4.6.1 Executive development

Systems approach doesn't address this factor.

4.6.2 The business case for executive coaching

Systems approach doesn't address this factor.

4.6.3 The expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching

A key skill for executives and managers is 'problem diagnosis' (Rees & Porter, 2013).

Unfortunately, many factors can prevent accurate diagnosis, including poor selection and development of those with managerial responsibilities. This, in turn, may need to lead to an examination of key management skills which will enable managers to identify the cause of a problem and to differentiate between cause and effect. Coaching can be a useful way of developing this key skill. Coaches can help managers take a systems approach that enables a holistic approach to organisational problems. Coaching managers taking a broader pluralist perspective could enable managers to understand situations from the employee's point of view, and thus aid better planning for the effective resolution of problems (Rees & Porter, 2013).

4.6.4 Theoretical approach to executive coaching

The past decade has seen a significant increase in literature addressing the way coaching interfaces with organisations to deliver business results. Many authors (Bunning, 2006; Cavanagh, 2006; de Haan, 2008; Huffington, 2006; Kemp, 2008; O'Neill, 2007; Passmore, 2007; Rosinski, 2003) have established theoretical and practical foundations for a relational and systemic approach to executive coaching. These authors have shown that

executive coaching is more an engagement of relatedness than any one particular method or skill (Kemp, 2008; Passmore, 2007) and that this relatedness is embedded in a greater systemic context, commonly an organisational culture (Rosinski, 2003; Schein, 1992).

Styhre (2008) discussed the concept of second-order observations proposed by Niklas Luhmann, who is widely recognised as one of the most influential contemporary social thinkers. For Luhmann, '[r]eflection may ... be defined as the process through which a system establishes a relationship with itself ... reflection is a form of participation' (1982: 327). Elsewhere he remarked: 'Reflexive mechanisms extend the potential for complexity of the society and thus the prospects of survival for the social system in which they are instituted' (Luhmann, 1979: 66). Styhre (2008) has suggested that executive coaching can be examined in the light of Luhmann's thinking. Coaching is an instituted social practice that actively seeks to enable more systematic and fruitful self-reflection. Such self-reflection is, in turn, what precedes new or modified behaviours and leadership practices (Styhre, 2008). The theoretical development of the systems approach was also influenced by the British anthropologist and cybernetician Gregory Bateson (1950, cited by Visser, 2010). Theoretically, Bateson's work showed he was a learning theorist, concerned with adaptive behaviour under environmental contingencies. Bateson regarded human behaviour as a natural result of interdependent evolutionary processes at natural, individual and cultural levels of selection. Further, he favoured observation of concrete behaviour over theorising about intra-psychic processes, adopting a descriptive rather than a diagnostic approach (Visser, 2010).

4.6.5 Evidence based coaching

Systems approach doesn't address this factor.

4.6.6 Examples of research methods used

Rees and Porter (2013) proposed an organisational model informed by a systems approach to develop effective problem-diagnosis skills in executives. They conducted case studies over a number of years in the course of undertaking consultancy work in a variety of organisations. These studies revealed inaccurate problem diagnosis in a variety of organisations: public sector organisations including local government and the UK national health service; not-for-profit organisations, for example, several universities and a children's charity; private sector organisations such as banks and building societies, hotels and manufacturing, particularly brewing and soft drinks. Rees and Porter (2013) observed the same problems whilst working both in the UK and overseas – China, France, Guyana, Malaysia, India, Indonesia and Romania.

Kahn (2011) described a case study carried out by George and Bennett (2005) to share the impact of systems coaching. The study used a 'coaching on the axis approach', a technique informed by the systems approach and used in executive coaching. A dialogical process is embedded within an axial orientation that may be used to track themes, elicit insights and generate coaching actions in a way that ensures alignment with business outcomes. The dialogical process is informed by reflective learning (Kahn, 2011).

Kahn (2011) views executive coaching in three systemic dimensions: the environment, the individual being coached and the coaching relationship itself. The relational orientation of the 'coaching on the Axis approach' ensures that the outcomes of business coaching are continuously linked to better business. Furthermore, this approach offers relative freedom from moral or clinical judgements because business coaching is not so much about correcting something 'wrong' with the client or the organisation, but rather about bringing them into an improved state of relationship (Kahn, 2011).

One study used purposive sampling to select a single client undergoing executive coaching by Kahn (2011). The richness and accessibility of the client's early coaching experience was the reason for selection. The data were collected within the coaching sessions using coaching notes. The coaching notes were subjected to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and the executive was then able to measurably adapt her leadership and relational style to deliver on business expectations in her new role (Kahn, 2011).

The above definition of constructionism resonates with theory and practice of systems approach, in which meaning is created (reflective learning), not discovered as an absolute truth, and practitioners predominantly use qualitative methods of inquiry (e.g., reflective diary, interviews). The theoretical background of the systems approach is informed by reflective learning, such as second-order observations (Luhmann, 1982) or learning theory (Bateson, 1950, cited by Visser, 2010). Techniques used by executive coaches emphasise reflective learning as a major aspect of coachee learning. Experiential learning theory also explains the phenomenon of learning by reflection. The most closely related methodology for exploring the impact of this approach is thematic analysis, although other methods used include case study, theme identification, conversation analysis and document analysis. Overall, case study method is most widely used to obtain the required evidence. Examples include a study using coaching on axis approach (Kahn, 2011), and case studies conducted as part of a consulting business (Rees & Porter, 2013). The above discussion highlights that theory and research methods used in this approach are logically related to each other.

4.6.7 Coach training

Systems approach doesn't address this factor.

4.7 Discussion of the relationship between research methods and coaching approaches

The above review of six concepts of executive coaching and their research approach illustrates a relationship between the epistemology of each approach and the choice of their research methods. Based on the classification discussed by Michael Crotty (2003), the epistemology of the cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach and positive psychology can be traced back to objectivism. The theoretical perspective behind these approaches is positivism, which resonates with the use of quantitative methods of inquiry, such as experimental research, measurement and scaling. The epistemology of a psychodynamic approach can be traced back to subjectivism (Shedler, 2013); however, recent psychodynamic practitioners are moving the practice from subjectivism to positivism, generally using quantitative research methods for their investigations (Table 4.1). This observation raises a natural question: What determines the choice of research methods to be used for researching a particular concept of coaching? Is it determined by the theory of a particular coaching approach? Or is it determined by practitioners' interest?

On the other hand, based on Crotty's (2003) classification and as discussed above, the epistemology of ontological coaching, the adult learning approach and the systems approach to executive coaching can be traced back to constructionism. The theoretical perspective behind these approaches is interpretivism, which resonates with qualitative research methods such as case study, interviews, focus groups and guided reflective practice. With these approaches, the practitioners' choice of research methods corresponds well with the theoretical underpinnings of these concepts of coaching which emphasise learning by reflection. The phenomenon of reflective learning is qualitative and can therefore be examined most appropriately by qualitative methods.

4.8 General conclusion: emergence of research themes

This chapter has discussed the six concepts of coaching and the research methods used by each one of them. This discussion is summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Classification of different Concepts of Coaching

Evidence-based concepts of coaching	Practice-based concepts of coaching
Cognitive behavioural Solution-focused approach	Ontological coaching
Positive Psychology	Adult learning approach
Psychodynamic approach	Systems Approach

Table 4.2 shows that three concepts of coaching (cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach, positive psychology and psychodynamic approach) are influenced by the evidence-based practice movement in coaching, and the predominantly objective research is conducted using quantitative research methods. These coaching approaches appear to be deductive in nature. Researchers taking a deductive approach start with a social theory that they find compelling and then test its implications with data (Blackstone, 2012). That is, they move from a more general level to a more specific one. A deductive approach to research is the one that people typically associate with scientific investigation. The researcher studies what others have done, reads existing theories of whatever phenomenon he or she is studying, and then tests hypotheses that emerge from those theories (Blackstone, 2012).

On the other hand, three concepts of coaching listed in Table 4.2 (ontological coaching, adult learning approach and systems approach) are more inclined towards qualitative research methods, and are inductive in nature. In an inductive approach to research, a

researcher begins by collecting data relevant to the topic of interest, then steps back to get an overview of the data, looking for patterns in the data and working to develop a theory that could explain those patterns. Thus when researchers take an inductive approach, they start with a set of observations and then they move from those particular experiences to a more general set of propositions about those experiences (Blackstone, 2012). Such qualitative research methods promote reflective learning not only in the field of coaching but as a research methodology itself. In these three approaches, reflection is a form of investigation, one in which the approaches to coaching are made the subject matter of examination and critique.

While all approaches may concur on the fact that coaching itself invites the coachee to reflect on their practice, and while all approaches may agree that supervision of a coach provides an opportunity for coaches to reflect on their practices, some forms of research in coaching call for reflection on coaching as a way of conducting research into coaching. This is seen especially in Adult Learning and Systems approaches to coaching. Although little has been done in the realm of ontological coaching, it is conducive to a reflective research methodology.

What begins to emerge is a distinction between scientific and reflective forms of research in the context of examining approaches to coaching. The scientific forms of research tend to focus on the objective data, while the reflective forms of research tend to use qualitative methods to reflect on the subjective data and the holistic context in which coaching takes place. This contrast between scientific and reflective forms of research is one of the key concerns guiding the empirical research of this thesis.

However, as has been demonstrated, some coaching approaches do not conduct research into their approaches to coaching, particularly apparent with regard to Ontological Coaching. This is a curious phenomenon: how can a form of coaching, one which is

based on firm philosophical foundations (ontological coaching), not conduct research into itself and thus provide evidence for itself? This question sparked off the curiosity of the researcher and so formed a central question for the empirical part of this research.

Furthermore, given the range of research methods used by the different approaches to coaching, the question which becomes important is: When is it appropriate to use one rather than another form of research in examining an approach to coaching? Is the research method chosen on the basis of the material to be investigated, or is the research method chosen in advance of the subject matter to be researched? In a sense, part of this thesis is a form of research into the fit between coaching approach and research methodology: when is one rather than the other chosen? What kinds of reasons lead to choosing one rather than the other research approach?

An even more unsettling question concerns the nature of evidence itself and of the relationship between evidence and practice. Should researchers and practitioners assume that – just because evidence for an approach has been established through the use of a research method – that practice will necessarily and automatically correspond to the evidence gained through research? This is especially significant for scientifically based research methods which are underpinned by a correspondence theory of truth, that is, methods in which scientifically established theories and practices are assumed to mirror or correspond to each other. Just because some techniques of cognitive behavioural coaching, for example, may be supported by research, does that mean that any practitioner applying cognitive behavioural techniques will achieve the same results?

In fields other than coaching – such as medicine, nursing and psychology – the notion of a correspondence theory of truth underpinning scientifically established proof and the reality of practice are starting to be questioned, and evidence-based research is being placed in

question. Rather than undermining it, however, the critics tend to want to supplant evidence-based research with practice-based research

Although this transition has not yet taken place in research in the field of coaching, articles in the fields of medicine, nursing and psychology do provide the basis for questioning the limitations of and going beyond evidence-based research. It has been difficult to find sustained and systematic critiques of evidence-based practice in the context of coaching, although such critiques are well developed in other fields such as medicine, nursing and psychology. It is to the literature in these fields that this thesis now turns in order to develop a systematic understanding of the limitations of evidence-based approaches to research, limitations which apply just as much in a coaching as in a psychological, nursing or medical context. An appreciation of the ways in which evidence-based practice have been critiqued has led to a move beyond evidence-based practice to practice-based evidence. It is to this transition that the thesis now turns.

This chapter has generated some of the central research questions of this thesis: the relationship between scientific and reflective practice-based research, and the appropriate conditions under which to make use of different forms of research. The next chapter on the transition from evidence-based to practice-based research extends the central questions of the thesis, examining to what extent the notion of practice-based research allows for a grouping of the diverse forms of research. Instead of getting embroiled in a tussle between scientific and reflective forms of research, does practice-based research allow for holding all of the forms of research together?

Chapter 5

From evidence-based practice (EBP) to practice-based evidence (PBE)

This chapter describes the transition from evidence-based practice (EBP) to practice-based evidence (PBE). This transition has occurred in medicine, psychology and nursing, but it has not yet been undertaken in the field of coaching. The chapter maintains that, just as EBP is giving way to PBE in medicine, nursing and psychology, there is good enough reason to suggest that this same transition should occur in the context of coaching. The chapter begins by critically examining an evidence-based practice (EBP) and ends by showing how the transition from an EBP to practice-based evidence (PBE) in medicine serves as an exemplar for the relationship between theory and practice in the context of coaching.

This chapter establishes a foundation for the empirical work of the thesis, which explores the evidence-based and practice-based perspectives in the context of different forms of research in coaching. The chapter is divided into three main sections. Section 5.1 questions the dominance – and the effects of the dominance – of an EBP in coaching. The primary focus is on the relationship between evidence and practice, and how best to look at the relationship between theory and practice in the context of coaching.

Section 5.2 questions the notion of ‘the best evidence’ in the context of the range of positions within the philosophy of science. Each one of these positions holds different ideals for producing the best evidence. This section provides examples of alternative methodologies for obtaining evidence in situations where the subject matter under

investigation does not call for objective measures. This section culminates with discussing four major controversies about EBP.

Section 5.3, which is the turning point in the discussion, deals with the transition from EBP to PBE in medicine. It describes the need to have an inclusive framework to integrate ideographic evidence (practice) and nomothetic evidence (empirical) to avoid splitting the discipline of medicine. This discussion leads to propose the use of PBE in the field of coaching to overcome the divide between evidence-based and reflective practice-based approaches to executive coaching.

5.1 Section 1: Dangers of the dominance of EBP

This chapter is not questioning the evidence-based perspective in general. Rather, it is questioning the dominance and almost ubiquitous use of an evidence-based form of research. A quotation from Daniel Yankelovich (1972) best sums up the dangers of a dominant_evidence-based approach to any field:

The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide.

This quote is often called the ‘McNamara fallacy’. Henry Mintzberg (2004) used it to point out that certain kinds of factors cannot be made the subject matter of quantifiable, measurable and thus evidence-based analysis. He criticised McNamara for omitting all matters of spirit and will in his assessment of the enemy while he was US Secretary of

Defense during the Vietnam War. Mintzberg argued that McNamara's evidence-based method did not allow for an understanding of issues of morale, spirit, will and the mood of both the American and Vietnamese soldiers, and because of this he was not able to make wise and strategic judgements regarding the war. Mintzberg used this example to highlight the dangers of using only quantifiable evidence in strategic management, arguing that reflective wisdom is required to take into account non-quantifiable factors such as emotion and intentions. Reflection is the basis of understanding experiences that cannot be reduced to empirical evidence-based dimensions.

Mintzberg (2004) made the same point in terms of managers' coaching relationships. He claimed that coaching is often concerned with the subjective, emotional and intentional dimensions of what it means to be a human being and which underlie self-development in becoming a manager. All the dimensions of lived experience – which include intentionality, mood, concerns and shared understanding – are not empirical variables that can be measured, but they are crucial to success as a manager. They are central to the work of a coach in enabling managers to develop as managers. These are all points which highlight evidence-based practice (EBP) and which form the basis for the development of both reflective practice-based coaching practices and reflective-based practices of assessing coaching. They form the basis of ongoing learning in the form of coaching supervision.

Jonathan Shedler (2013) discussed the same point raised by Daniel Yankelovich (1972) (quoted above). Expert clinicians know better than to follow treatment manuals posted on *Psychology Today*. Shedler (2013) elaborated on Yankelovich's point 'what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist' in the context of psychotherapies. For Shedler, no research findings suggested that manualised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) was more effective than psychodynamic therapy. These manualised forms of CBT were termed

‘empirically validated’ (the preferred term later morphed into ‘empirically supported’ and, more recently, ‘evidence-based’). Shedler noted that CBT was simply more often studied in research settings, and that ‘(t)here is a world of difference between saying that a treatment has not been extensively researched and saying it has been scientifically discredited. But academic researchers routinely blurred this distinction’ (Shedler, 2013). Indeed, Shedler suggested that the culture developed in academic psychology promoted a myth that research had proven manualised CBT to be a superior intervention. Some evidence-based researchers even began saying it was ‘unethical’ to practise psychodynamic therapy because evidence-based research showed CBT was more effective. Shedler responded that research showed nothing of the sort, and emphasised the importance of understanding the distinction between the two situations.

The experience of coaching, the coaching relationship, the fact that the issues revolve around subjective rather than objective dimensions, the fact that the coach does not stand at a scientifically objective distance from the coachee – isn’t it, as Yankelovich suggested, a distortion to put these experiences into evidence-based terms? The distortion related to EBP mentioned by Daniel Yankelovich explains the reason for the lack of evidence for the reflective practice-based approaches. As Yankelovich perceived, objectifying the subjective phenomenon is distortion. This distortion resonates with evidence-based approaches, and these have been researched extensively due to their heavy emphasis on the efficacy model of evidence by using predominantly objective measures. On the other hand, reflective practice approaches haven’t been thoroughly researched because of their emphasis on experiential reflective learning model rather than efficacy model (e.g., Luhmann, 1982; Mezirow, 1997). The nature of experiential reflective model calls for different research methodologies – case study, interviews, guided reflection – which don’t meet the criteria of evidence-based coaching approaches. Research methods used by evidence-based coaching are placed at the top of the traditional evidence-based hierarchy

discussed by Grant (2016), while the research methods used by the reflective practice-based approaches are found at the bottom of the hierarchy. As discussed in detail in the previous chapter, reflective practice approaches take coaching as a qualitative form of interaction which does not require scientific evidence for its effectiveness. There is a need to bridge the gap between these approaches by providing an integrative framework that can comfortably accommodate them with all their differences.

Shedler (2013) further maintained that, in fact, studies show that when CBT is effective, it is at least partly so because the more skilled practitioners depart from the manuals and use methods that are fundamentally psychodynamic. These include open-ended, unstructured sessions (versus following an agenda from a manual), working with defences, focusing on the therapy relationship as a window into problematic relationship patterns, and drawing connections between the therapy relationship and other relationships. This finding is not surprising, since treatment manuals do not improve outcomes, and therapists in the real world naturally adapt their approaches to the needs of individual patients (Shedler, 2013). Their practice methods also evolve over time as they learn through hard-won experience what is helpful to patients (Shedler, 2013).

Shedler (2013) noted that academic researchers have usurped and appropriated the term ‘evidence-based’ to refer to a group of therapies conducted according to instruction manuals (‘manualised’ therapies). These therapies are typically brief, highly scripted and almost exclusively identified with CBT. Shedler sees the term ‘evidence-based therapy’ as *de facto* a code word for ‘not psychodynamic’. Psychodynamic or psychoanalytic clinicians in the old days were not especially supportive of empirical research. Many believed therapy required a level of privacy that precluded independent observation. Many also believed that research could not measure crucial treatment benefits like self-awareness, freedom from inner constraints, or more intimate relationships. In contrast,

academic researchers routinely conducted research trials comparing manualised CBT with control groups. These manualised forms of CBT were therefore termed ‘empirically validated’.

In order to demonstrate the criticism, it is important to re-describe EBP from a critical perspective. EBP is an influential interdisciplinary movement that originated in medicine as evidence-based medicine (EBM) about 1992. Birger Hjørland (2011) used the term EBM when speaking of medical practice, and EBP when speaking of EBP in other disciplines or the interdisciplinary movement in general. EBP is based on the philosophical doctrine of empiricism and, therefore, it is subject to the criticism that has been raised against empiricism. The main criticism of EBP is that practitioners lose their autonomy, that the understanding of both theory and underlying mechanisms is weakened, and that the concept of evidence is too narrow in the empiricist tradition. In addition it focuses, as empirical sciences do, on objects of experience but not on lived experience itself. Indeed, it discards the latter (Hjørland, 2011).

For Hjørland, EBM can be traced back to the British physician Archie Cochrane (1972) and achieved its breakthrough with an article by the Evidence-Based Medicine Working Group (1992). Since then, the movement has grown in influence and spread to other disciplines including psychology, nursing, education, and library and information science (Hjørland, 2011).

5.1.1 What is new about EBP?

When EBM began, medical practice had been based on research for well over 100 years (Hjørland, 2011). Think, for example, of Louis Pasteur (1822–1895), who was responsible for the introduction of inoculation and sera against bacterial diseases. Procedures for

documenting and communicating scientific findings were soon developed. General medical journals were produced from the second half of the 18th century, and specialised medical journals were published from the beginning of the 1900s. Peer-review evaluation was introduced to ensure a high standard was maintained. The Surgeon General's Office published its first catalogue in 1840, to be followed by other medical bibliographies and databases, such as MEDLINE. Medical librarianship and information science is today an important field with its own specialised journals. To make medical treatment research-based and reliable, efficient tools for documenting and researching medical knowledge were required. The underlying goal, of course, has always been to provide the best possible treatment for patients. It has been accepted that the best principles for medical treatment must be found to provide patients with the best treatment. Therefore, the question has been justifiably raised: If EBM is a new movement (or a new approach or 'paradigm', or a specific position in the philosophy of science), then what was medicine before 1980? To what does EBM stand in opposition? Precisely the same question can, of course, be raised in all other disciplines to which the EBP movement has spread (Hjørland, 2011).

For Hjørland, EBM/EBP represents a considerable tightening up of scientific documentation for use in decision processes in medicine, as well as in other fields. It provides clear priorities in terms of how different kinds of investigations should be considered relevant to establishing a basis for making decisions. These endeavours have, however, a built-in dilemma and contradiction. On the one hand, one wishes to formalise and standardise research and its documentation. The process is rendered very mechanical (like a cookery book) because this corresponds with underlying ideals of control and objectivity. Science itself (as well as practice) cannot, however, be limited to an algorithm or formula. EBP is therefore in opposition to positions in the philosophy of science that emphasise interpretation based on the ideals of historicism (Hjørland, 2011). EBP gives priority to applied experiments at the expense of both the practitioner's experiences and the

theoretical understanding of, for example, underlying mechanisms. But how much should experience and theoretical understanding be downgraded? EBP has no kind of empirical knowledge that can be used to decide where the balance should be (Jones & Sagar, 1995). If research is fully taken over by EBP, then basic research will suffer and thereby also will the possibility of scientific breakthroughs¹³. In particular, the valuable work by Rieper and Foss Hansen (2007) has confirmed this view, that different positions in the philosophy of science imply different norms in terms of how best to select and synthesise evidence. Some approaches to research reviews are neo-positivist, others are hermeneutical, and some are critical realist and based on a deeper understanding of the underlying causality in the field. By implication, it is not possible to discuss EBP without considering the theory of knowledge/science, and a given view on EBP has to be defended by arguments from the philosophy of science (Hjørland, 2011).

Hjørland (2011) maintains that EBP is opposed to a theoretical understanding of a given topic and the underlying mechanisms both in a rationalist way and from the perspective of the history of subject matter theories. First and foremost, EBP represents an empiricist swing of the pendulum in the movement between empiricism and rationalism. Consequently, it has inherited all the weaknesses of empiricism, which are well described in the literature on the philosophy of science and epistemology. For example, Cohen, Starvi and Hersh (2004, cited by Hjørland, 2011) have grouped the criticisms of EBM into two main themes:

1. EBM is based on empiricism, misunderstands or misrepresents the philosophy of science, and is a poor philosophical basis for medicine (Charlton & Miles, 1998; Harari, 2001).

¹³ If the physicist H.C. Ørsted had only empiricist principles at his disposal then he would only have been able to improve candlelight and not discover electricity.

2. The EBM definition of evidence is narrow and excludes information important to clinicians (Kenny, 1997; Upshur, Van Den Kerkhof & Goel, 2001).

These themes are most important in regards to the philosophical basis for EBM and its conception of 'evidence'. If one wants to argue that EBP allows practitioners' judgements, rationalist models and theoretical-historical perspectives to influence the synthesis of knowledge, then the specific characteristics of the movements disappear and the concept is watered down. Given this one-sidedness of EBP, it would be better to speak of research-based practice (RBP), because no such one-sidedness is connected with this term. It should be said, however, that EBP is used differently, and that some uses of this term may correspond to the concept of RBP (Hjørland, 2011).

Hjørland (2011) suggested that EBP should be understood as the tradition in which a fixed hierarchy of research methods is applied in research synthesis and in guidelines for practitioners' decisions. It is also important to know that not everybody agrees about the benefits of EBM and that alternative 'paradigms' exist. These alternatives place other demands on medical documentation. This knowledge can to some degree be generalised to other domains, because the discussions about empiricism, rationalism, historicism and pragmatism exist in almost all domains. All researchers should develop independent attitudes to the phenomena with which they are working. Hjørland explained that this criticism is based on the philosophy of science and the theory of knowledge and is therefore relevant for EBM in all contexts. Indeed, empiricism/positivism today is understood as a problematic philosophy of science that must be replaced with a better alternative, and this is especially the case when EBP is used in social and human sciences (Hjørland, 2011).

5.1.2 Limitations of Evidence-Based Practice

The arguments against EBP are now well established and fully discussed in the literature. Straus and McAlister (2000) reviewed the literature and developed a classification of criticisms of evidence-based medicine (EBM) which apply equally well to the applications in other EBP fields. They grouped the criticisms as addressing either limitations or misperceptions of EBM. Two types of limitations were identified: those applying to medical practice in general (shortage of coherent, consistent scientific evidence; difficulties in applying evidence to the care of individual patients; and barriers to the practice of high-quality medicine) and those applying specifically to EBM (the need to develop new skills; limited time and resources; and paucity of evidence that EBM works) (Straus & McAlister, 2000).

Criticisms resulting from misperceptions of EBM were that it denigrates clinical expertise, ignores patients' values and preferences, promotes a 'cookbook' approach to medicine, is simply a cost-cutting tool, is an ivory tower concept, is limited to clinical research, and leads to therapeutic nihilism in the absence of evidence from randomised trials (Straus & McAlister, 2000: 838). These criticisms have been repeated and discussed by most subsequent reviewers (Gambrill, 2003; Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002; Sackett, Straus, Richardson, Rosenberg & Haynes, 2000). Others have criticised EBP on philosophical grounds, arguing that an evidence-based, rational model of decision making does not fit the realities of individualised, contextualised practice, especially non-medical practice, where problems are less well defined (Webb, 2001). Some have called attention to limitations in the methodology of systematic reviews, such as meta-analysis, which provide the evidence for use in EBP (Pawson, 2002). Concern has been expressed about how evidence-based policy is possible when so many competing factors enter into policymaking, such as public opinion, resource constraints and ideology (Grayson & Gomersall, 2003; Nutley, 2003). Of those criticisms, Mullen and Streiner (2004) identified three major limitations of EBP: (i)

shortage of evidence, (ii) applying results to individuals, and (iii) training, time and resources.

The shortage of evidence

Mullen and Streiner (2004) have noted that EBP is predicated on the belief that what professionals do should be based on the best available evidence. They have suggested that the best evidence generally comes from well-designed and well-executed randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or meta-analyses of a number of RCTs (Egger, Smith & O'Rourke, 2001). Studies of prognoses require inception cohorts (that is, groups of people who enter the study at equivalent points in their natural history), relatively complete follow-up (around 85% of the sample), and a sufficient duration to ensure that all of the people could have reached the end point, whether it be developing the disorder under study or achieving remission of symptoms (Fletcher, Fletcher & Wagner, 1988, cited by Mullen & Streiner, 2004). Streiner (2003) has recommended that assessment and diagnostic studies involve blinding of raters who complete one test to the results of the other test, as well as demonstrating the reliability and validity of the instruments (cited by Mullen & Streiner, 2004). The question that faces proponents of EBP is whether there are enough high-quality studies so that evidence-based decisions can be made. Surprisingly for a field that places a high premium on research, few studies have examined this. Ellis, Mulligan, Rowe and Sackett (1995, cited by Mullen & Streiner, 2004)) looked at the decisions that were made regarding 109 medical inpatients. They found that 53% of the treatment decisions were based on the results of RCTs and that, for an additional 29% of the patients, there was unanimous agreement that good non-experimental evidence existed. Using similar methods, Geddes, Game, Jenkins and Sackett (1996, cited by Mullen & Streiner, 2004) found that for 40 psychiatric inpatients, evidence from RCTs or meta-analyses

supported the treatment decisions 65% of the time. So the conclusion at this point, based on just a few studies, is that many decisions are still not based on good evidence, but the picture is not nearly as bleak as opponents of EBP would have us believe. Professionals must remember that when they make decisions for which little or no evidence exists, they should exercise caution and perhaps be even more vigilant in monitoring outcomes (Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

Applying the results to individuals

Results of RCTs are analysed by comparing the mean score of the experimental group against that of the placebo or control group (or some comparable summary statistic) (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). However, this masks the fact that there is always individual variability around the means, as well as overlap in the distributions of scores for the two groups. Consequently, a proportion of people in the experimental group actually do worse than some in the control group, and conversely some in the comparison group improve more than some people in the active treatment group. Mullen and Streiner (2004) have noted that practitioners cannot blindly apply a 'proven' procedure and assume that a particular individual receiving that procedure will benefit (Seeman, 2001); this has led some critics to reject the whole notion of EBP, stating that results of trials are incapable of being applied at the level of the individual (e.g., Persons & Silberschatz, 1998) and that the primary determinant should be the practitioner's judgement (Garfield, 1998).

Mullen and Streiner (2004) have identified a number of ways of responding to this valid criticism. The first is that we are at least able to quantify the probability with which an individual person will respond to a given procedure. This value is called the number needed to treat (NNT) (Laupacis, Sackett & Roberts, 1988), and is the number of people

who must be treated in order for there to be one additional success. For example, based on a study by Wood, Trainor, Rothwell, Moore and Harrington (2001), which was aimed at reducing the risk of deliberate self-harm, the staff at Evidence-Based Mental Health calculated an NNT of 4. This means that, in order to reduce by one the number of adolescents who harmed themselves, four had to be seen in therapy. For the other three, either therapy did not work or, more likely, they would not have harmed themselves again even if they had not undergone treatment. While this may sound disappointing – as we would like to believe that every person benefits from therapy – it is typical of treatments in this area, and actually compares very favourably with many medical interventions. For example, a class of drugs called the statins have been hailed as lifesavers because they control cholesterol levels. Mullen and Streiner (2004) noted some examples. In one study (LIPID Study Group, 1998), the NNT was 44 for patients with coronary heart disease, and has been reported to be at least four times higher for those without heart problems (Hebert, Gaziano, Chan & Hennekens, 1997). For a new (and very expensive) drug that lowers the risk of stroke, the NNT was 115 over a three-year period, compared with taking just aspirin (CAPRIE Steering Committee, 1996).

A second response to the criticism is that the alternative to using evidence-based interventions – with their known rate of failure – is to use unproven procedures, based only on the hope that they may work, but without any real knowledge of how often they do or do not, except our recall of successful cases. However, memory is a slippery thing. We do very well in recalling our successes, but very poorly in remembering our failures, called the ‘denominator problem’.

A third response noted by Mullen and Streiner (2004) is that EBP does not mean applying only the results of large randomised trials conducted by others. Practitioners can and should view each person as an ‘N = 1’ study (Barlow & Hersen, 1984). That is, EBP also

involves using techniques such as interrupted time series, multiple-baseline assessments, before-after designs and the like, combined with objective measures of functioning, with every person seen (Lueger et al., 2001; Streiner, 1998, cited by Mullen and Streiner, 2004).

Training, time and resources

In addition to evidence, EBP requires that professionals be trained in the skills necessary to find and critically use evidence (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). It also means that, once trained, they have the time to do computer-based searches, and therefore that computers and access to search engines are available. Each new generation (where in this context a generation is no more than about five years) is more comfortable and proficient with computers than the last, and searching the Web for information is second nature to them. Searching for evidence is becoming easier each year. Organisations in which human service and health care professionals work can provide access to original articles by subscribing to services such as PsycINFO (the American Psychological Association's database of abstracts), CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), Ovid, ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) and AARP Ageline. More importantly, people can log on to Evidence-Based Medicine, Clinical Evidence, ACP (American College of Physicians) Journal Club, Evidence-Based Mental Health, the U.K. National Health Service Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, the Campbell Collaboration Reviews of Interventions and Policy Evaluations, and other sites that select articles for their methodological rigour and provide meta-analyses, summarising the results of RCTs (Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

National and regional centres are being established to disseminate evidence through the Web to policymakers, practitioners, caregivers, and users (e.g., the Social Care Institute for

Excellence in Great Britain, the Nordic Campbell Centre in Copenhagen) (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). As computers become ever less expensive, some organisations are able to place them within each unit, so that it is no longer necessary for practitioners to find time to go to a central library. In order to save time for practitioners and researchers, Roberts and Yeager (2004) have compiled a major desktop reference book, consisting of 104 original chapters (including 56 flowcharts) on every facet of conducting EBP as well as numerous research exemplars.

Time, though, remains a problem. For the practitioner rushing from one person to the next, sometimes finding even five minutes to do a search may not always be feasible. Time spent doing a search may save many hours later, because effort is not spent on a procedure that hasn't been shown to be effective, but while this may seem reasonable in the abstract, it may not be practicable in reality. Also, organisations will need to consider how such information can best be distributed in their particular contexts. For larger organisations this may mean expanded responsibilities for a centralised information department. In smaller organisations one or more individuals may need to be designated as information experts. In nearly all cases the process can benefit from teamwork and collaborative sharing (Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

The history of all innovations has been described as comprising three stages. First, opponents say that the new discovery won't work. Once it has been shown to work, the criticism changes to 'OK, but it's not new'. Acceptance finally comes when the critics say, 'It's new, and I invented it'. Within the context of the length of time that the helping professions have existed, the history of EBP is quite short, probably somewhere between the first and second of these phases (Mullen & Streiner, 2004: 119). As with many innovations, EBP stormed onto the scene, raising opposition among many practitioners because of the brashness of some of its claims and the perception that it was trying to

elbow aside established practice. But, as with all adolescents, EBP too matures and gains wisdom and judgement. For example, the original claims that practice must be based on the conclusions of RCTs, and only RCTs, have been softened in the face of reality to the use of the best available evidence. Mullen and Streiner anticipate that over the next decade not only will the reaction of practitioners change, but also the practice of EBP. After all, EBP must be based on both evidence and practice.

5.1.3 EBP: Practice decision making vs. paradigm shift

Mullen and Streiner (2004) discussed the various descriptions of evidence-based practice proposed in the literature, and noted that some authors described EBP as applying only to clinical forms of practice, whereas others described policy and management applications. In the United Kingdom it is customary to refer to both evidence-based policy and practice (e.g., Gray, 2001; Solesbury, 2001), whereas in the United States reference is more typically made to evidence-based practice, focusing on clinical issues (Gibbs, 2003).

EBP encompasses policy, management, and direct or clinical practice (Mullen & Streiner, 2004). The field needs evidence-based policies, evidence-based management and evidence-based direct services. The shift toward EBP first emerged in medicine and health care – EBP is quickly taking hold in mental and behavioural health, education, criminal justice and social work. Although EBP is most prominent in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, it is now popular in many northern European countries, including Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, where governments and citizens are increasingly accepting the importance of measuring outcomes and effectiveness of public services (Mullen, 2003a, 2003b, in press).

In spite of the rapid movement toward EBP, a wide range of associated meanings is found. As described in the literature, EBP ranges in meaning from recognising the need to use research findings to aid in practice decision making, on the one hand, to a paradigm shift, on the other hand (Gambrill, 2003). Mullen and Streiner (2004) consider that EBP requires a major philosophical and technological change for the field, rather than simply an incremental increase in the use of research in decision making. Accordingly, these scholars consider EBP to encompass both evidence-based practices and an evidence-based process. For these scholars, an evidence-based practice is any practice that has been established as effective through scientific research according to a clear set of explicit criteria (Drake et al., 2001). For example, in 1998 a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation consensus panel concluded that its review of research findings supported identification of several evidence-based psychosocial practices for the treatment of persons with severe mental illness: assertive community treatment, supported employment, family psychoeducation, recovery skills training and illness self-management, standardised pharmacological treatment and integrated dual-disorder treatment. Four selection criteria had to be met for a practice to be considered EBP: (i) the treatment practices had been standardised through manuals or guidelines, (ii) the treatment practices had been evaluated with controlled research designs, (iii) important outcomes were demonstrated through the use of objective measures, and (iv) the research was conducted by different research teams (Torrey et al., 2001). Accordingly, EBPs were identified for the treatment of persons with severe mental illness through efficacy trials meeting these four criteria (Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

EBP has been defined in medicine as ‘the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients’ (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes & Richardson, 1996b: 71) and the ‘integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values’ (Sackett et al., 2000: 1). In the United Kingdom, social care EBP has been described as ‘the conscientious, explicit and judicious

use of current best evidence in making decisions regarding the welfare of service-users and carers' (Sheldon, 2003: 1). In the United States, social work EBP is described as:

Placing the client's benefits first, evidence based practitioners adopt a process of lifelong learning that involves continually posing specific questions of direct practical importance to clients, searching objectively and efficiently for the current best evidence relative to each question, and taking appropriate action guided by evidence. (Gibbs, 2003: 6)

Evidence-based health care has been described as 'a discipline centred upon evidence-based decision-making about groups of patients, or populations, which may be manifest as evidence-based policy-making, purchasing or management' (Gray, 2001: 9). In all of these descriptions EBP is seen as a decision-making process in which policymakers, managers or practitioners make decisions (Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

Mullen and Streiner (2004) therefore consider EBP to be a way of doing practice which involves an individualised, thoughtful process of using evidence to make collaborative decisions with actual or potential service users. Because evidence can play a strong or weak role in this process, some prefer to use alternative terms such as evidence-informed practice or evidence for practice and policy (Grayson & Gomersall, 2003; Nutley, 2003), which describe politicians' and policy analysts' use of evidence for decision making.

When EBP is explained this way to audiences, the first response is typically that the approach has obvious, reasonable merit. How anyone could object to it? In turning to a discussion of this question, Mullen and Streiner (2004) discussed this question in the light of prior analyses of arguments for and against EBP (Gambrill, 1999, 2001, 2003; Gibbs & Gambrill, 2002; Pawson, 2002; Sackett et al., 2000; Straus & McAlister, 2000; Webb, 2001, cited by Mullen & Streiner, 2004).

5.2 The question of ‘the best evidence’

EBP stresses that our actions and decisions should be founded upon the best available basis for decisions and the best scientific evidence. The claim, according to Hjørland (2011) is trivial: this is something that no rational person can disagree with. There are, however, some spokespersons for EBP for whom EBP is the only rational approach and who see the alternatives as based on intuitions, tradition or other non-rational motives. Discussion of EBP should, however, consider well-founded views concerning the meaning of the expression ‘the best evidence’. It should be added that science should not be sectarian by trying to defend the interests of non-academic methods or by attributing views to opponents that they do not hold. The relevance of a movement should not be evaluated on its most extreme points of view, but on the basis of a sober-minded analysis of the best in the movement, compared with the best in the alternative positions. It is, after all, the core issue in epistemology and in the philosophy of science to find out what ‘the best evidence’ means. In other words, it is the task of these fields to illuminate the relative strengths and weaknesses of different scholarly approaches to procure the best evidence. If it is recognised that there are different positions in the philosophy of science (e.g., positivism, hermeneutics, rationalism and critical theory) then, by implication, these positions should be accorded different ideals regarding the scientific method and different views regarding the way to procure the best scientific evidence. By implication, a critique of EBP as the point of departure should compare the different methodological ideals connected with each of the different positions in epistemology and the philosophy of science (Hjørland, 2011).

Martin Milton (2002) addressed the EBP debate and, while he conceded the concept of EBP addresses some psychotherapists’ desires for their patients’ best interests, he argued it is also one that requires thorough consideration because the notion of ‘evidence’ is not straightforward, unambiguous or clear (Newnes, 2001; Spinelli, 2001, cited by Milton, 2002). This dimension of the evidence-based debate therefore often fosters a level of

anxiety, confusion and ambivalence which is not well attended to in either the literature or health service policy. Milton (2002) noted that, while health service documents outline the usefulness of a hierarchy of evidence with the randomised-controlled trial (RCT) as the best standard (Department of Health, 1996, 2001a, 2001b; Roth & Fonagy, 1996), when thinking at a population level the psychotherapist has a different focus. The consideration is what this 'evidence' means for both the client and the psychotherapeutic project itself (Milton, 2002).

Milton (2002) argued that a true call to EBP is a more complex issue than just applying science to practice. At epistemological and service levels, the call to EBP requires us to reconsider the research findings available and to consider a range of evidence and research methodologies, to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate to the task before us (see Dept of Health, 1996, Milton, 2001; Sandler et al., 2000, cited by Milton, 2002). Another interesting and related issue noted by Milton (2002) is the relationship between traditional quantitative methodologies based on modernist assumptions and findings from formal research such as that undertaken by qualitative researchers (Dennis et al., 1994; Howe, 1996), as well as those which are informal yet highly educative and more sociological (Newnes, 2001), such as biography and literature. This raises the question of what these other forms of research would look like and what sort of evidence they would generate. It is also interesting to consider the impact that other research methods and questions might have on psychotherapists' ability to warm to and focus on empirical research (Milton, 2002).

Those within psychotherapy recognise the difficulties in finding appropriate methodologies with which to explore the effects of interpretative and insight-oriented psychotherapies (Milton, 2002). Indeed this difficulty has led to a lack of research in some areas. While this is a difficulty for psychoanalytic and systemic therapies in particular, it should not be taken

to suggest that there is no evidence against the usefulness of these psychotherapies. The Department of Health has recognised this with comments such as ‘Other psychotherapeutic approaches have not been systematically reviewed/evaluated’ (Department of Health, 2001a, cited by Milton, 2002: 5).

When considering appropriate research strategies an important point to note is the distinction between hypothesis generation and hypothesis proving (Milton, 2002). RCTs are often useful at illuminating, supporting and challenging our assumptions about the general impact of our work. However, for psychotherapy to be in a position to undertake such efforts at validation we need to consider the hypothesis generation phase of any research project. This is captured in the concepts of ‘innovative practice’, ‘case series evaluation’ and ‘theory development’, all of which have legitimate positions within the cycle of research recognised by the Department of Health (Milton, 2002).

Milton (2002) pointed out that the EBP debate leads to a crucial issue – if psychotherapy recognises the limitations of some of the more orthodox approaches to research, what alternatives can it suggest? Some responses to this question have argued the case for alternative methods, while others have challenged the focus of the whole EBP debate and suggested alternative foci. Suggested alternative methodologies include case study (see Sandler, Sandler & Davie, 2000). In some respect these have a clear place in official EBP as a manifestation of innovative practice and case study evaluation (Department of Health, 1996). As case studies are so individually responsive to particular therapies, they have the potential to be used to illuminate factors in the therapeutic process, as well as client characteristics. In addition to their legitimacy as a research enterprise in their own right, case studies can also be used in other qualitative methodologies as the data for further and alternative analyses (Mitchell & Brownescombe Heller, 1999; Milton, 2001, cited by Milton, 2002).

Methodologies such as Discourse Analysis (DA), Grounded Theory, Thematic Content Analysis and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis can all use a single case study or a series of case studies to explore issues relevant to psychotherapy and the questions that EBP asks us to consider (Milton, 2002). Diamond (2001) used DA on stored transcripts from the Psychological Therapies Research Centre to review the ‘to-and-fro’ of therapeutic sessions in order to explore the manner in which unconscious mechanisms manifest themselves in psychodynamic work and the issues that this raises for psychotherapy practice and provision.

5.2.1 Four continuing controversies

Many believe that evidence-based treatments should be preferred over those without empirical support, because the former have been systematically compared to alternative treatments by appropriate and powerful methods (Nathan, 2004) and, for that reason, should provide us assurance of superior efficacy (Barlow, 1996). Despite the developments with EBP, substantial disagreement continues to divide mental health professionals on the strength and legitimacy of the evidence base that underlies evidence-based practices (Boisvert & Faust, 2003; Deegear & Lawson, 2003, cited by Nathan, 2004).

Adherents and critics of EBP have debated some of the more controversial issues of EBP in the mental health literature. Nathan (2004) identified four major controversies regarding evidence-based treatments: (i) whether the efficacy model or the effectiveness model yields the most valid picture of psychotherapy outcomes, (ii) whether common factors or treatment factors contribute the most variance to psychotherapy outcomes, (iii) the ‘Dodo Bird’ Effect, and whether most psychosocial treatments are equally effective, and (iv) whether teaching, learning, and doing therapy are art or science. Nathan considers resolution of these issues crucial to the future of evidence-based practices. If some or all of

them can finally be resolved, agreement by most mental health professionals on the worth of evidence-based practices would seem to be assured. By the same token, if few or none can be settled, the momentum toward evidence-based practices will surely slow and ultimately stop (Nathan, 2004). These four issues are now discussed in turn.

Issue 1: Does the efficacy model or the effectiveness model yield the most valid picture of psychotherapy outcomes?

A great deal of controversy continues over which of two psychotherapy outcome research models – the efficacy model or the effectiveness model – best captures the most crucial differences among therapy techniques and procedures and can hence be relied on to provide the most accurate picture of therapy outcomes (Nathan, 2004). The efficacy model refers to the most carefully controlled, time-limited psychotherapy outcome research. Much of it involves random assignment of patients to treatments (done largely by psychotherapy researchers in laboratory or other controlled settings), using therapists intensively trained to provide the experimental treatment and using psychotherapy patients carefully selected diagnostically to receive it. The effectiveness model refers to the psychotherapy research done in real-world clinical settings, utilising clinicians in their usual treatment settings doing the kind of psychotherapy they customarily do with the patients who customarily come to see them. Psychotherapy research that employs the efficacy model is concerned above all with replication, because replicated psychotherapy outcome data are more likely to be valid. Efficacy studies contain a number of research elements that are not generally included in effectiveness studies, including:

- randomised assignment of patients to treatment and comparison groups, so that any differences in outcomes between or among the groups reflect differences in the

efficacy of the treatments rather than any systematic bias in patient assignment to groups

- inclusion of an active comparison treatment, in preference to a no-treatment control, because comparing the experimental treatment to a treatment with demonstrated effectiveness is the strongest test of the efficacy of the experimental treatment
- documentation of the delivery of treatments as planned, to ensure that the treatments whose effectiveness is being compared are being delivered as designed and with fidelity
- reliance on multiple outcome measures, so that the maximum number of relevant behavioural changes attributable to the treatments will be assessed
- appropriate length of treatment follow-up, so that the ‘staying power’ of the experimental and comparison treatments can be compared.

Although these key methodological features of the efficacy model are necessary, they are not sufficient to prove that an experimental treatment has shown empirical support. The experimental treatment must also yield significantly better outcomes for significantly more patients than comparison treatments. Such findings, moreover, ought to be replicated by more than a single team of investigators (Nathan, 2004).

Effectiveness research, by contrast, is concerned above all with the feasibility of treatments in real-world settings (Nathan, 2004). Effectiveness studies incorporate persons in need of treatment, regardless of diagnosis, comorbid psychopathology or duration of illness.

Because they are usually active practitioners in research, rather than participants, therapists in effectiveness studies are not usually trained to deliver, and do not generally expect to be asked to provide, a specific experimental or comparison treatment that requires the extensive training that is a hallmark of efficacy studies. Clinical considerations, rather than

the demands of a research protocol, largely dictate choice of treatment method, as well as its frequency, duration and means of outcome assessment. Although assignment of patients to treatments in effectiveness studies may be randomised, disguising ('blinding') the treatment to which the patient has been assigned is rarely feasible. Outcome assessments are often broadly defined and may include such 'soft' indexes as changes in degree of disability, quality of life or personality, rather than the preference of efficacy studies for targeted evaluations of symptoms by means of structured interviews. Barlow (1996) drew a useful and concise distinction between efficacy studies and effectiveness studies: efficacy studies yield 'a systematic evaluation of the intervention in a controlled clinical research context. Considerations relevant to the internal validity of these conclusions are usually highlighted' (p. 1051); by contrast, effectiveness studies explore 'the applicability and feasibility of the intervention in the local setting where the treatment is delivered' and are designed to 'determine the generalizability of an intervention with established efficacy' (p. 1055). Most of the research that has led to identification of evidence-based treatments to this time has been done according to the efficacy model. As a result, critics of the evidence underlying evidence-based treatments have claimed that efficacy studies do not reflect therapy outcomes in the real world (Garfield, 1996; Seligman, 1996; Westen & Morrison, 2001; Westen, Morrison, & Thompson-Brenner, in press, cited by Nathan, 2004).

While supporters of the efficacy model have mounted a vigorous defence of the treatment model (Hollon, 1996; Jacobson & Christensen, 1996; Wilson, 1995), the question of which of the two models provides the most valid picture of psychotherapy outcomes remains unresolved (Nathan, 2004). Until this question is resolved, the evidence base of evidence-based treatments will remain suspect. The efficacy model and the effectiveness model represent quite different approaches to studying behaviour change. Because neither model by itself appears to capture the entirety of what makes a treatment effective, clinical researchers have begun to try to integrate the two approaches in psychotherapy research

design, in the effort to gather the most broadly based empirical support for the treatments being evaluated. For instance, Norquist, Lebowitz and Hyman (the latter the director of NIMH at the time) acknowledged that ‘the intrinsic efficacy of an intervention (either pharmacological or psychotherapeutic) ... is not usually informative for treatment practice in the community’ (1999: 1). They proposed that NIMH – in consultation with basic scientists, advocates and other federal agencies – bridge the gap between regulatory (efficacy) and public health (effectiveness) models to assess outcomes. Their proposal incorporated experimental and observational work, albeit after each received methodological changes (Nathan, 2004).

Nathan (1994) suggested that, if the continuing efficacy/effectiveness controversy cannot be resolved, then (i) treatments already established as evidence based by efficacy studies may begin to be discounted, and the legitimacy of the evidence-based psychotherapy movement may begin to be questioned; and (ii) advocates for relying on ‘clinical judgment’ rather than on empirical data when choosing treatments may start to be listened to more seriously.

Issue 2: Which contributes the most variance to psychotherapy outcomes, common factors or treatment factors?

This controversial issue can be restated as whether differences in psychotherapy outcomes are more strongly associated with specific types or schools of psychotherapy (as many psychotherapists believe) or with therapist, patient and therapy process variables common to all psychological treatments (as many clinical researchers claim).

Treatment factors refer to the array of therapeutic behaviours and techniques a therapist is taught and must learn as he or she acquires the skills appropriate to the practice of a

specific intervention. For example, a therapist treating an anxiety disorder from the cognitive-behavioural perspective must learn such techniques as constructing an anxiety hierarchy, with the patient's cooperation; exposing the patient to that hierarchy, both in the office and in vivo (in real-life situations); and helping the patient develop alternative behaviours that decrease his or her having to face the full intensity of anxiety-provoking situations. By contrast, common factors refer to patient attributes such as age, gender and personality; therapist attributes such as interpersonal and social skills; and therapeutic process factors such as the nature of the relationship between therapist and patient that may influence the outcomes of many therapies (Nathan, 2004).

A number of well-respected psychotherapy researchers have concluded over the years that common factors account for a substantial amount of the treatment outcome variance (Nathan, 2004). For example, Lambert and Bergin (1994) identified therapist, patient and therapeutic process as independent sources of common factors. Therapist variables thought to affect therapy outcomes (regardless of the kind of therapy techniques the therapist uses) range from the therapist's demographic characteristics and sociocultural background to subjective factors such as values, attitudes and beliefs. Beutler, Machado and Neufeldt (1994) have suggested that therapist variables reflecting behaviours specific to the therapeutic relationship – including the therapist's professional background, style and choice of interventions – may exert the most powerful effects on therapy outcomes. In contrast to the voluminous data attesting to the impact of therapist variables on therapy outcomes, patient variables have failed to demonstrate a robust relationship to outcome variables (Nathan, Stuart & Dolan, 2000). Consider, for example, the well-known National Institute of Mental Health Treatment of Depression Collaborative Research Program (NIHMTDCRP; Elkin et al., 1989), a comparative study of treatments for depression. In that study, no single patient variable correlated significantly with outcome. More recently, Project MATCH failed to identify relationships between patient-treatment matches and

outcomes of treatment for alcohol abuse and dependence (Project MATCH Research Group, 1997, cited by Nathan, 2004).

Therapeutic process variables – factors influencing therapists’ reactions to patients’ behaviour and attitudes, and vice versa – have also been claimed to affect therapy outcomes (Nathan, 2004). To this end, Orlinsky and Howard (1986) concluded that process variables – which they believed also included the strength of the therapeutic bond, the skilfulness with which interventions are undertaken and the duration of the treatment relationship – all positively affect outcomes. Nonetheless, critics of process research have continued to emphasise the difficulties associated with the reliable collection of process data (e.g., Stiles & Shapiro, 1989). In an extensive review of outcome research data, Lambert (1992) concluded that about 30% of psychotherapy outcome variance is attributable to therapist variables, prominently including therapist empathy, warmth and acceptance of the patient. Others, including Svartberg, Seltzer and Stiles (1998), and Horvath and Symonds (1991), following Strupp (1973), have stressed the central role of the therapeutic alliance in determining outcomes. At the same time, a sizable core of mental health professionals and researchers, prominently including the developers of mental health practice guidelines, continue to assert that choice of therapy technique plays a significant role in determining therapy outcomes (Nathan, 1998). If the continuing common factors-techniques controversy cannot be resolved, programs that train psychotherapists may shift their training emphases from specific therapeutic techniques to generic therapist skills (Nathan, 2004).

Indeed, managed-care organisations may more aggressively seek the lowest cost providers, especially those without extensive professional education and training, who can nonetheless claim to have acquired the therapist attributes that have been linked to positive outcomes (Nathan, 2004).

Issue 3: The ‘dodo bird’ effect – are most psychosocial treatments equally effective?

The ‘dodo bird’ effect in psychotherapy research refers to findings that indicate few or no meaningful differences among psychotherapies in effectiveness and that, accordingly, outcomes of therapy don’t really depend on the kind of therapy patients (Nathan, 2004). Luborsky, Singer and Luborsky (1976) compared outcomes from group and individual psychotherapy, time-limited and open-ended psychotherapy, and client centred and psychodynamic therapy, concluding that ‘most comparative studies of different forms of psychotherapy found insignificant differences in proportions of patients who improved by the end of psychotherapy’ (p. 12).

More recently the ‘dodo bird’ effect has been taken to refer to efficacy comparisons among psychotherapies by means of meta-analyses that have failed to find differences in efficacy (Nathan, 2004). While Luborsky et al. (1976) were the first contemporary researchers to use this term for this phenomenon, a number of other researchers subsequently adopted the same position – that most psychotherapies are effective in inducing behaviour change but that they do not differ in efficacy (Smith & Glass, 1977; Stiles, Shapiro & Elliott, 1986; Wampold et al., 1997). However, a number of behavioural researchers, including Krasner (1971), Bergin and Suinn (1975), Rachman and Wilson (1980), Nathan et al. (2000), and Chambless and Ollendick (2001), have vigorously disputed this position. They point to data from a number of randomised clinical trials that strongly suggest that some psychosocial treatments, most of them behavioural or cognitive behavioural, appear to yield significantly better outcomes than do other psychotherapies.

Nathan (2004) has suggested possible outcomes if the continuing controversy regarding the ‘dodo bird’ effect cannot be resolved:

- the influence of practice guidelines, which depend largely on professionals agreeing that some treatments are more effective than others, may diminish
- programs that train mental health professionals in psychosocial treatments may decide to de-emphasise training in specific techniques in favour of training in common therapist factors such as empathy, warmth and unconditional positive regard.

Issue 4: Teaching, learning, and doing therapy – art or science?

The issue of art versus science in the mental health disciplines underlies all three issues discussed so far.

The change in medicine over recent decades has been away from intuition – that is, away from the art, and more toward the science. The parallels are obvious between evidence-based medical practice and evidence-based mental health practice, in particular, their respective histories, current statuses and member reactions (both popular and professional).

This issue has a particularly lengthy and important history in clinical psychology (Nathan, 2004). It dates back more than 60 years, to the era of the explosive growth of clinical psychology during and after World War II, a time when it was transformed from a small, primarily academic discipline to one of the core mental health professions. In 1942, social psychologist Theodore Sarbin predicted, on the basis of some of his own data, that actuarial prediction methods ('science') would ultimately be able to outperform humans ('art') along a variety of judgement dimensions. In 1954 Paul Meehl, who was to become one of the towering figures in clinical psychology over the next several decades, published a book that summarised his data confirming the consistent superiority of statistical prediction ('science') over clinical prediction ('art'). Although many have since advocated

for art over science in clinical psychology, support from behavioural scientists in favour of Sarbin's and Meehl's positions has been strong and consistent (e.g., Goldberg, 1965; Grove et al., 2000; Sines, 1971, cited by Nathan, 2004).

Notwithstanding opposition to evidence-based practice by some mental health professionals, increasing efforts are being expended to require mental health practitioners to follow practice guidelines, and practice guidelines are becoming more prescriptive (Nathan, 2004). American Psychological Association accreditation criteria now specify that these treatments must be taught to graduate students in approved programs. The new US Department of Veterans Affairs guidelines for treatment of serious mental illness, substance abuse and dependence, and posttraumatic stress disorder are evidence based and quite prescriptive. Demands from health management organisations are increasingly being felt for evidence of efficacy before additional psychosocial treatments are authorised (Nathan, 2004).

Nathan (2004) has predicted that, if the continuing controversy over the respective roles of art and science in mental health practice cannot be resolved, then:

- the mental health professions may return to an earlier training-and-practice model, when science was seen as substantially less central to the clinical enterprise than it is today and when art ('intuition', 'clinical judgement', and the like) was more important
- patients may choose practitioners on the basis of the eloquence of their artistry rather than on the validity of their science.

While the most attractive solution to this deadlock is to suggest that partisans on each side of this issue tone down their rhetoric until enough data have been gathered to resolve each

of these four crucial questions, that solution is unlikely to satisfy either side (Nathan, 2004).

5.3 The transition from EBP to PBE in medicine

Those involved in the EBP debate have often thought critically and creatively about the issues involved and a complementary position has been recognised (Milton, 2002). This is the notion of practice-based evidence (PBE) (see Barkham & Mellor Clark, 2000; Carroll & Tholstrup, 2001). As well as EBP making demands on those in the clinic, PBE attends to how research might be tailored to explicitly meet the agenda of those involved in the psychotherapeutic enterprise. This approach has recently been invoked in the psychotherapy literature and requires further development, including establishing guidelines and criteria for what PBE would look like. In principle it uses the evidence of the psychotherapeutic process itself to assist clinicians and service providers evaluate the service. Such a stance values local and idiographic evidence, as well as the nomothetic evidence available from RCT research. Reflection on this issue is not just a task for psychotherapists on their own; if EBP is going to reach its potential to assist the profession of psychotherapy in creating fruitful and ethical therapeutic encounters, it needs to be an inclusive debate. Without this, there is potential for splitting at various levels: research from practice and commissioners from providers with all the associated disruptive and destructive potential (Milton, 2002).

Hjørland (2011) has suggested that we should speak of ‘research-based practice’ rather than EBP, because this term is open to more fruitful epistemologies and provides a broader understanding of evidence. Hjørland sees EBP as too narrow, too formalist and too mechanical an approach on which to base scientific and scholarly documentation.

To conclude, many scholars have critiqued EBP and emphasised the need to bring an integrative framework of research that can embrace a range of research methodologies based on the epistemological uniqueness of different forms of coaching/psychotherapy approaches. Similarly, these scholars have suggested that the term ‘EBP’ is too narrow and should be replaced with practice-based evidence or research-based evidence to expand the concept of evidence.

This conclusion fits well in the context of previous review of different research methods used in different concepts of coaching based on their epistemology (Chapter 4). An important point made in the critique of evidence is that there are different positions in science and each has its own point of view about producing the best evidence. Therefore, the notion of evidence and its standardised application to all concepts of coaching by ignoring their unique epistemology would be a big mistake. A traditional hierarchy of evidence cannot be applied across all concepts of coaching.

The literature review has identified that theoretical concepts of reflective practice approaches (ontological coaching, adult learning approach and systems approach) are related with the qualitative research methods used to collect the evidence for these approaches. At the same time, theoretical concepts of evidence-based coaching approaches (cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach, positive psychology and psychodynamic approach) do not necessarily call for quantitative research methods (e.g., RCTs). This argument was also emphasised by Shedler (2013), who noted that psychodynamic or psychoanalytic clinicians in the past were not especially supportive of empirical research. Many believed therapy required a level of privacy that precluded independent observation. Many also believed that research could not measure crucial treatment benefits like self-awareness, freedom from inner constraints or more intimate relationships (Shedler, 2013). However, research interest in evidence is moving these approaches towards objective

(standardised scientific) measurement of subjective phenomena. Evidence is a contentious issue because there are qualitative and quantitative methods, and this raises the important question of where and when qualitative and quantitative research methods should be used, and where and when both qualitative and quantitative data should be sought.

This contention on evidence aroused the curiosity of this researcher to question the value of evidence in coaching from the coaches who practise the six approaches (which are the focus of the present study), and motivated the collection of empirical data through interviewing coaches about the different kinds of evidence they seek in practice.

The next chapter describes the methodology selected to accomplish the aims of the present study. It discusses the relevance of the qualitative method and phenomenological approach, describes the sampling strategy and sample characteristics, and explains the data collection and analysis methodologies, including the criteria used to demonstrate the validity of qualitative IPA data.

Chapter 6

Method

This chapter discusses the methodology used for data collection and analysis, including the rationale for choosing this methodology and the criteria used to assess the validity of the empirical data collected. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 6.1 introduces Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), briefly summarises the history and theoretical foundations of IPA, and outlines the implications of IPA for the present study. Section 6.2 discusses the rationale and design of the qualitative research methodology, and explains the methodological fitness of IPA in the context of the present study.

Section 6.3 describes the construction of the data collection instrument, that is, the interview protocol. It provides an overview of the literature source of constructs and the interview questions derived from these constructs. This section briefly outlines the pilot study of the newly designed interview protocol. Section 6.4 summarises the main study, including the justification of the sample selection (sampling strategy, sample characteristics), interviews, data collection (interviewing techniques) and data analysis. Section 6.5 discusses the criteria for assessing the validity of IPA research, and Section 6.6 provides a summary of the chapter.

6.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

This research study used a hermeneutic phenomenological method because this allows for a description of the lived experience of the meaning of evidence research in the context of coaching. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a recently developed and rapidly growing experiential qualitative approach to research. It was developed by

Jonathan Smith, Professor of Psychology, Birkbeck University of London (Smith, 2011). It originated and is best known in psychology but is increasingly being picked up by those working in cognate disciplines in the human (Flowers, Smith, Sheeran & Beail, 1997), social (Riggs & Coyle, 2002) and health sciences (Theobald, 1997). IPA is used extensively by researchers in the fields of health (Clare, 2003), and clinical and social psychology (Smith, 1999) and is also now being used by researchers in other disciplines such as management (Kenney, 2014), music, sport and exercise (Borkoles, Nicholls, Bell, Butterly & Polman 2008) in many different countries (Smith, 2011). Most of the early work in IPA was done in the UK, a crucible for qualitative psychology in the last 20 years. However, IPA is used by researchers worldwide, mostly in English-speaking countries but also increasingly in regions where English is not the first language (Smith et al., 2009: 5).

IPA is phenomenological because it is concerned with a detailed examination of the meaning of lived experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The formal term used to describe the art of interpretation is 'hermeneutics', as discussed below. Hermeneutics explores an individual's interpretation or how they make sense or meaning of an event or state, as opposed to attempting to produce an objective record of the event or state itself. IPA is concerned with trying to understand lived experience and with how participants themselves make sense of their experiences. It is concerned with exploring a person's relatedness to, or involvement in, a particular event or process (phenomenon). In choosing IPA for a research project, researchers commit themselves to explore, describe, interpret and situate the means by which the participants make sense of their experiences. Thus IPA researchers need first of all to access rich and detailed personal accounts from respondents who are able and willing to explore their views of the phenomena under investigation. Therefore the approach is centrally concerned with the meanings which those experiences hold for the participants. Phenomenology, an important theoretical touchstone for IPA (Smith et al., 2009), originated with philosopher Edmund Husserl's attempts to construct a

philosophical science of consciousness. Husserl famously urged phenomenologists to go ‘back to the things themselves’, and IPA research follows his lead in this regard rather than attempting to fix experience in predefined or overly abstract categories (Smith et al., 2009).

When people are engaged with ‘an experience’ of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening, and IPA research aims to engage with these reflections (Smith et al., 2009). An IPA researcher might be interested in looking in detail at how someone makes sense of a major transition in their life – for example, starting work, having a first child, losing a parent – or they may wish to examine how someone makes an important decision – for example, whether to emigrate to a new country, or to take a genetic test, or to commit to an elite sport. Some of these experiences are the result of proactive agency on the part of the person, while some come unexpectedly and are uncalled for. Some are discrete and bounded, while others go on for a considerable period of time. Some will be experienced as positive; others are definitely negative. What they all have in common is that they are of major significance to the person, who will then engage in a considerable amount of reflecting, thinking and feeling as they work through what it means (Smith et al., 2009).

While researchers try to get close to the participant’s personal world, IPA considers that one cannot do this directly or completely (Smith et al., 2009). Access is dependent on the researcher’s own conceptions which are required to make sense of that other personal world through a process of interpretative activity. Getting close to a person’s concepts of lived experience is a hermeneutic activity. Another important theoretical foundation for IPA is, therefore, hermeneutics – the theory of interpretation. IPA is interpretative as it recognises that this process involves an active process of interpretation on the part of the researcher. In a later part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger discussed interpretation explicitly ‘whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded

essentially upon the ... fore-conception. An interpretation is never a pre-suppositionless apprehending of something presented to us' (Heidegger, 1962/1927: 191–192). Thus the reader, analyst or listener brings their fore-conception (prior experiences, assumptions, preconceptions) to the encounter, and cannot help but look at any new stimulus in the light of their own prior experience. However, it is important to look closely at what Heidegger (1962/1927: 195) went on to say:

*Our first, last and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our ...
Fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions,
but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out the fore-
structures in terms of the things themselves.*

Smith et al. (2009) elaborated Heidegger's point, noting that the fore-structure is always there and it is in danger of presenting an obstacle to interpretation. While the existence of fore-structures may precede our encounters with new things, understanding may actually work the other way, from the thing to the fore-structure. Human beings make sense of experience through the ways in which they describe experience. Thus IPA also recognises that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA is committed to the detailed examination of the particular case, seeking the detail of what the experience for this person is like, what sense this particular person is making of what is happening to them (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is a strongly idiographic approach concerned with detailed analysis of the case, either as an end in itself or before moving to similarly detailed analyses of other cases. It is committed to the detailed study of the particular case before moving to more general claims. IPA studies usually have a small number of participants and the aim is to reveal something of the experience of each of

those individuals, and as part of this the study may explore in detail the similarities and differences between each case (Smith et al., 2009).

6.1.1 History of IPA

Smith et al. (2009) describe the history of IPA as both short and long. Its first real mark came with the publication of Jonathan Smith's (1996) paper, which argued for an approach to psychology that could capture the experiential and qualitative and yet still engage in dialogue with mainstream psychology. An important aim at this point was to stake a claim for a qualitative approach centred in psychology, rather than importing one from different disciplines; not that there was anything wrong with other subject areas, but the goal was to revive a more pluralistic psychology as envisaged by William James. Thus the argument is that psychology was, could be and should be both experimental and experiential and it recognises the important, if suppressed, role for the experiential within the intellectual history of psychology (Smith et al., 2009). While IPA appeared on the scene in the mid-1990s, it is clearly drawing on concepts and ideas with much longer histories. IPA has therefore been influenced by important theoretical ideas and is an attempt to operationalise one way of working with those ideas. It is not the only research approach trying to make manifest ideas from phenomenology and hermeneutics, and it is not a fixed thing itself (Smith et al., 2009).

6.1.2 Theoretical foundations of IPA

IPA is an approach to qualitative, experiential and psychological research which has been informed by concepts and debates from three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and ideography (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience. It aims to conduct this examination in

a way which, as far as possible, enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms rather than according to predefined category systems. This is what makes IPA phenomenological and connects it to the core ideas unifying the phenomenological philosophers discussed above. IPA concurs with Heidegger, that phenomenological inquiry is from the outset an interpretative process. IPA also pursues an ideographic commitment, situating participants in their particular contexts, exploring their personal perspectives and starting with a detailed examination of each case before moving to more general claims (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenology

Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre are leading figures in phenomenological philosophy (Smith et al., 2009), and this section describes their work relevant to IPA. Husserl's work established the importance and relevance of a focus on experience and its perception. Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre developed Husserl's work further, each contributing to a view of the person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns. They move us away from the descriptive commitments and transcendental interests of Husserl, towards a more interpretative and worldly position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directedness of our involvement in the lived world – something which is personal to each of us but which is a property of our relationships to the world and others, rather than to us as creatures in isolation (Smith et al., 2009).

Segal (2011) suggested that to be in the world means to be always and already 'in' a set of concerns. We awake and go to sleep in a set of concerns. We do not first wake up and then decide to choose what will concern us. Paradoxically, the one choice we do not have as

humans is the choice of being concerned. For choosing not to be concerned is for Heidegger a way of being concerned. The way we are within our concerns shapes the way in which we see, notice, cope with, create and respond to the world (Segal, 2011).

Thus it is evident that the complex understanding of ‘experience’ invokes a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings which are unique to the person’s embodied and situated relationship to the world. In IPA research, the attempts to understand other people’s relationship to the world are necessarily interpretative, and focus upon participants’ attempts to make meanings out of their activities and to the things happening to them.

Hermeneutics

The second major theoretical underpinning of IPA comes from hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2009). Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation. Originally, hermeneutics represented an attempt to provide surer foundations for the interpretation of biblical texts, and it subsequently developed as a philosophical underpinning for the interpretation of an increasingly wider range of texts such as historical documents and literary works. Hermeneutic theorists are concerned with questions such as: What are the methods and purposes of interpretation itself? Is it possible to uncover the intentions or original meanings of an author? What is the relation between the context of a text’s production and the context of a text’s interpretation? (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA recognises hermeneutics (Smith et al., 2009: 21–29), the skill of interpreting the participant’s words and behaviour during the interview. There is a double hermeneutic because, while the participant is interpreting their own experience and putting it into words, the researcher is making their own meaning of the participant’s words while

attempting to resist influence from their own experiences. To address the risk of bias, emerging themes were repeatedly checked to ensure they were represented in the transcript (Jarman, Smith & Walsh, 1997).

Ideography

Ideography is an argument for a focus on the particular, which also leads to a re-evaluation of the importance of the single case study (Smith et al., 2009). IPA adopts analytical procedures for moving from single cases to more general statements but which still allow one to retrieve particular claims for any of the individuals involved. The texts examined by IPA researchers are usually contemporary, or have been produced in the recent past and in response to a request by the researcher, rather than a purpose driven by the author. Under these circumstances the process of analysis is geared to learning both about the person providing the account and the subject matter of that account. Thus IPA requires a combination of phenomenological and hermeneutic insights. It is phenomenological in attempting to get as close as possible to the personal experience of the participant, but recognises that this inevitably becomes an interpretative endeavour for both participant and researcher. Without the phenomenology there would be nothing to interpret; without the hermeneutics, the phenomenon would not be seen (Smith et al., 2009).

From the particular to shared meaning

IPA provides a framework for understanding the meaning of particular interviewees' perspectives. More importantly, it provides a process for moving from the particular to an appreciation of shared meaning. This is consistent with most forms of research; research as an inductive process is concerned with moving from the particular to the general, and as a

deductive process it is concerned with moving from the general to the particular. Rather than writing about the notion of the general, IPA is concerned with generating shared meaning through the description of particular cases. Just how IPA generates the shared out of the particular is the theme of this section, and the way in which shared meaning is established in the case of this particular thesis is described below.

The conditions for moving from the particular to shared meaning include acknowledging and even accentuating differences between particular positions. A common horizon can be achieved through the articulated accentuation of differences. Working through difference allows for developing a shared horizon in that difference, as Heidegger and many other thinkers (such as Derrida) have noted, and allows for the unsaid or the taken-for-granted assumptions of particular positions to emerge. The more unsaid or taken-for-granted assumptions of particular positions can be made explicit, the greater the opportunity for each position to see both its own assumptions and the assumptions of the other positions. It leads to the possibility of greater spectrum of a dialogue across taken-for-granted assumptions. It also opens up an opportunity for establishing a shared horizon that embraces the different taken-for-granted assumptions.

Because assumptions are taken for granted, they have, by definition, not yet been established and they are, therefore, subject to doubt. Doubt is always in terms of the position of the other. Hermeneutic dialogue is the process of establishing shared meaning by working through the doubt or uncertainty regarding assumptions that reveal themselves through dialogue across difference. Hermeneutics, as Richard Rorty (1980) said, is the art of enchanting each out of their old selves by the Socratic activity of being seen through the gaze of another. This is the art of IPA dialogue and analysis. It allows us to go beyond old assumptions which frame our world in a certain way and discloses a new set of assumptions which facilitate new possibilities. Establishing shared horizons of meaning

occurs in the encounter with the strangeness of the way of being of the other, offers us the opportunity *‘to reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of [the other]. ... Discourse [with the other] is supposed to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings’* (Rorty, 1980: 321).

Richard Rorty made a point about the hermeneutics of strangeness of the other in a research and educational context. He maintains that the passion of edification is rooted in the way we respond to the strangeness of the unfamiliar: ‘The attempt to edify (ourselves or others) may consist in ... the attempt to reinterpret our familiar surroundings in the unfamiliar terms of ... [our encounter with other] culture[s] or historical period[s]’ (1980: 360).

The differences between evidence-based research and reflective practice theorising were articulated in Chapter Four. This difference was rearticulated in Chapter Five, in which medical positions on the difference evidence based research and reflective practice were discussed. Through the elaboration of difference, the taken-for-granted assumptions of each position became clearer. After the elaboration of the differences between evidence-based and reflective practice-based approaches to medicine, the notion of PBE was developed as a horizon of shared meaning which included both evidence-based approaches and reflective practice-based approaches. The process of reasoning undertaken by researchers in the field of medicine was not one of defending their different positions and disavowing the credibility of the other position, but one of acknowledging the difference in order to embrace the other.

The evidence-based movement in medicine faced criticism primarily due to its narrow understanding of the evidence (Hjorland, 2011), consequently splitting the different forms of evidence (Milton, 2002). By ignoring different positions in philosophy, EBP was predominantly focusing on objectivism, emphasising the evidence produced through

experimental methodologies. Furthermore, the concept of EBP was debated because this movement was not inclusive and was not assisting the growth of the profession (Milton, 2002). A similar divide has been found in the context of coaching because of the inherent shortcomings of EBP being adopted by medicine. The EBP debate is not inclusive because both perspectives (evidence-based and reflective practice-based) have the unique preference for particular research methods. This preference is coherent with the epistemology of a range of coaching concepts. As analysed in detail in Chapter Four, evidence-based perspective favours experimental research methodologies, while reflective practice-based perspective favours reflective methodology for investigation and learning. Coaching is a multidisciplinary field, influenced by the knowledge gained by different areas of study (Grant, 2005), and therefore standardisation efforts cannot be helpful by dominating one perspective and negating the other perspectives. Similarly, different forms of research cannot be categorised as good, bad or weak, based on the evidence they produce.

There is a need to restore the emerging multidisciplinary field of coaching by suggesting a platform for shared meanings. In line with the nature of IPA method, the current contention between evidence-based and reflective practice-based perspectives is thought to be resolved by accepting the differences and situating them in a bigger whole of the future of coaching discipline. A broader understanding of the relationship between the epistemology of the concepts of coaching and the relevant research methods for investigating them relies on accepting the differences of both perspectives. The whole cannot be completed without integrating both sources of theorising (theory and practice) about executive coaching.

The notion of embracing the other or the stranger is very central to Heideggerian and thus IPA practices of inquiry (Smith et al., 2009), and is actually central to the history of Western thought. For example, Descartes proceeded by doubting all particular beliefs

regarding the world in order to arrive at a universal set of beliefs. Plato proceeded by refuting his own particular conjectures in order to arrive at what he believed to be a universal set of Forms. Socratic thinking is a process of working through the ways in which a position contradicts itself in order to undercut the familiar, so that the taken-for-granted becomes visible for exploration. And the more the taken-for-granted becomes visible for exploration, the more universal positions are made possible. As has been noted, while IPA does not use the notions of universals, generalisations or forms, it does use the notion of a shared horizon of meaning.

Smith et al. (2009) have described IPA's commitment to the particular as operating at two levels. First is a commitment to the particular in the sense of detail, and therefore the depth of analysis. As a consequence, the analyst must be thorough and systematic. Second, IPA is committed to understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context. For these scholars, as a consequence, IPA utilises small, purposively selected and carefully situated samples, and may often make very effective use of single-case analyses. Ideography also refers to the commitment to the single case in its own right, or to a process which moves from the examination of the single case to more general claims (Smith et al., 2009: 29).

Smith et al. (2009) have maintained that the hermeneutic circle is perhaps the most resonant idea in hermeneutic theory. It is concerned with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels. To understand a particular part, the researcher looks to the whole; to understand the whole, the researcher looks to the parts. In analytical terms, it describes the process of interpretation very effectively and speaks to a dynamic, non-linear, style of thinking. The concept of the hermeneutic circle operates at a number of levels. 'The part' and 'the whole' can thus be understood to describe a number of

relationships. For example, the meaning of the word becomes clear only when seen in the context of the whole sentence. At the same time, the meaning of the sentence depends upon the cumulative meanings of the individual words (Smith et al., 2009).

Smith et al. (2009) described the hermeneutic circle as a useful way of thinking about 'method' for IPA researchers. It is a key tenet of IPA that the process of analysis is iterative; the researcher may move back and forth through a range of different ways of thinking about the data, rather than completing each step sequentially. As one moves back and forth through this process, it may help to think of one's relationship to the data as shifting according the hermeneutic circle too. The idea is that our entry into the meaning of a text can be made at a number of different levels, all of which relate to one another, and many of which will offer different perspectives on the part-whole coherence of the text (Smith et al., 2009: 28).

Such analysis should be pointing to both convergence and divergence (Smith, 2011).

Where an IPA study reports data from more than one participant, there should be a skilful demonstration of both patterns of similarity among participants and the uniqueness of the individual experience. The unfolding narrative for a theme thus provides a careful interpretative analysis of how participants manifest the same theme in particular and different ways. This nuanced capturing of similarity and difference, convergence and divergence is the hallmark of good IPA work (Smith, 2011: 24).

IPA has an idiographic sensibility (Smith et al., 2009), with the value of IPA studies being, first and foremost, that they offer detailed, nuanced analyses of particular instances of lived experience. A good case study, with an insightful analysis of data from a sensitively conducted interview on a topic which is of considerable importance to the participant, makes significant contribution.

Case study in IPA has been increasingly advocated (e.g., Smith, 2004) and numbers of case studies are expected to rise. However, most IPA is and is likely to continue to be ideographic in focus but with a sample size larger than one. Such studies have important and powerful contributions to make. The analytical process here begins with the detailed examination of each case, but then cautiously moves to an examination of similarities and differences across the cases, so producing fine-grained accounts of patterns of meaning for participants reflecting upon a shared experience. IPA analysis involves the process of sense-making through a dynamic interplay between the parts and the whole lived experience of the participants. As described by Smith et al. (2009: 2), parts are separated in time but ‘linked with a common meaning’ and the aim of the interview would be to recall the parts and their connections and discover this common meaning. In a good IPA study, it should be possible to parse the account both for shared themes and for the distinctive voices and variations on those themes. This concern with the particular with nuance and with variation means that IPA is working at quite an early stage in relation to Husserl’s ambitious program for phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009).

6.1.3 Implications of IPA for the present study

The present study used IPA method to analyse the data from the semi-structured interviews conducted with nine executive coaches. IPA is a qualitative methodology developed for psychology, with the aim of exploring and understanding meanings of the participants’ experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA has been used extensively in health psychology research investigating varying topics such as experiences of chronic pain, addiction and pregnancy. IPA method was chosen for this study for several reasons.

First, a qualitative approach was chosen over quantitative because qualitative research aims to access the participants’ world and meanings, while quantitative research takes a realist

epistemological position (Coyle, 2007: 12). IPA method fits with the subject matter in the following way: both in the literature review and the interviews the aim was to look at the paradigms of qualitative and quantitative research in the context of coaching. The concept or the phenomenon of a paradigm is a qualitative and not a quantitative notion. While some paradigms may have rules calling for quantitative methodologies, the paradigm itself is a framework of meaning. Kuhn described a paradigm as a cognitive framework with ‘an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on, shared by a given community’, in which ‘universally recognised scientific achievements ... for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ (1962: 175). The methodology for looking at meaning making is qualitative. Furthermore, the study examined the epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions of evidence and reflective practice-based approaches to coaching. The process of looking at assumptions in the context of experience is a phenomenological activity, and it is appropriate to use a phenomenological method. While there are a range of methods within phenomenology, IPA was chosen because, as stated above, it allows for exploring differences within a shared discourse, which in this case is coaching (Cope, 2011).

IPA aims to explore and understand the meaning of an experience from the participant’s point of view (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This matches the purpose of this study – to gain a rich idiographic account of the participants’ individual experiences. IPA is used where participants share a practice or phenomenon but hold divergent ways of regarding the phenomenon. In this study the practitioners all shared the notion of coaching but held divergent ways of understanding the phenomenon. IPA works with the relationship between the differences and similarities regarding that which is shared in common.

Second, IPA was chosen over other qualitative approaches because thematic analysis is descriptive while IPA is highly interpretative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore IPA is

more suitable for gaining deep insights into participants' experiences, as in previous studies by Bramley and Eatough (2005), Gyllensten and Palmer (2006), Gyllensten, Palmer, Nilsson, Regner and Frodi. (2010), Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000) and van Nieuwerburgh and Tong (2013). In addition, the study did not intend to direct the analysis towards theory development, as is required in grounded theory (Holloway & Todres, 2003); therefore, in-depth examination of parts of the whole phenomenon could be studied appropriately through IPA.

A further reason to use IPA was suggested by Smith and Osborn (2004), who stated that IPA is a useful approach to take if the area being studied is under-researched or new. Phenomenology relates to the person's individual view of an event rather than an objective statement about the event (Smith, 1996). Consequently, IPA attempts to explore the participant's perception and insider view of an event. Via interpretation of the data the researcher takes an active role in attempting to get an insider's perspective of the participant's experience.

However, it is recognised that it is impossible for the researcher to get a complete insider's perspective (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA assumes that there is a link between what participants say and what they think and feel, although it is recognised that the relationship is complicated and participants could find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or they may not want to do so (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The prime reason for choosing IPA over any other qualitative approach should be because it is consistent with the epistemological position of research question (Smith et al., 2009). Implicit in the formulation of any research question is an assumption about what the data can tell us. Thus epistemology is a conceptual issue with a practical impact upon the research that we do. This becomes evident as soon as we have a data transcript in front of us: there are infinite things we could infer about action, meaning, purpose, and so on, so

how are we to direct our gaze? What are we to code for? (Smith et al., 2009). In the case of the present study, the research question explored the evidence-based and practice-based perspectives in the context of different forms of research in coaching. This research question is inductive, open ended and exploratory because the question has not yet been answered through empirical research in the field of coaching. This issue relates to the industry's attempt to propose the scientific practitioner model for coach training, in order to standardise coaching practice. However, it is a significant concern for the coaching community, where a range of coaching approaches have a different perspective towards evidence, and consequently practitioner models, for EBP. The nature of the question and its concern for practitioners sits well with IPA method. The origin of the present study's research question was based on the contention between two perspectives: empirical (or experimental) and experiential (or reflective). Similarly, the origin of the IPA method (described above in Section 6.1.1) proposed by Smith (1996) was also based on the same contention between experimental research and experiential research, where Smith argued for an approach to study experiential and qualitative phenomena which could still dialogue with mainstream psychology (cited by Smith et al., 2009). The context of proposing IPA method sits comfortably with the context of the present study, which aims to suggest the transition from EBR to PBE followed by the fields (health, nursing, psychology) where this transition has already been taken place.

In IPA it is assumed that our data – provided that they permit us access to a reasonably rich and reflective level of personal account – can tell us something about people's involvement in and orientation towards the world and/or about how they make sense of this. Typically this requires us to identify, describe and understand two related aspects of a participant's account: the key 'objects of concern' in the participant's world and the 'experiential claims' made by the participant in order to develop a phenomenological account. Within IPA, analyses have different flavours because researchers direct their attention towards

different features of the participants' world and because different features of that world are made salient by participants.

The present study addresses a new and under-researched phenomenon in executive coaching, that is, the phenomenon of research practices concerning executive coaching. Detailed analysis of the literature informs the distinction between a range of research approaches to coaching concepts, based on their epistemology and research methods used. These concepts of coaching are broadly classified in to evidence-based and reflective practice-based approaches. Various dimensions of this classification can be further explored by IPA because it allows the analyst to understand the meanings of the experiences of executive coaches who are involved with the phenomenon. This exploration can be possible from various aspects and at various levels, as described by Smith et al. (2009). IPA also allows exploration through a dynamic process of engaging with data and making sense of the relationship between parts and the whole to come to a conclusion (Smith et al., 2009). This method was used in the analysis of data to understand if there is a transition from EBR to PBE in the field of coaching.

6.2 Qualitative research methodology: Rationale and design

Based on the literature review, the objective of this research was to explore rather than examine a phenomenon (i.e., coaching) (Schutt, 2004). Edmondson and McManus (2007) discussed the distinction between different research questions and methodological fit. They noted that research studies aim to examine where particular questions and/or hypotheses related to existing constructs. Such studies contribute by supporting theories which may add specificity, new mechanisms or new boundaries to existing theories. In contrast, exploratory studies conduct open-ended inquiry about a phenomenon of interest; the constructs are typically new and their contribution is often an invitation for further work

(Edmondson & McManus, 2007). Given this distinction, the present study is classified as nascent because it aimed to explore the two ways of meaning making in coaching practice: (i) evidence-based coaching and (ii) reflective practice-based coaching. However, reflective practice-based coaching is a new construct that has been used, in conjunction with evidence-based coaching, to classify a range of theoretical approaches to coaching into two categories. Therefore a qualitative method was chosen based on classic inductive logic (Myers, 2013) to obtain in-depth information from the practitioners of different coaching approaches. During the literature review, a methodological fit was sought and found for the aim of the study by open-ended questioning, qualitative data collection through interviews, and interpretation of findings through interpretative phenomenological analysis.

This study aims to develop greater insight into evidence-based practice by executive coaches, to contribute to the development of a shared paradigm for evidence-based executive coaching. As Kuhn (1962) pointed out, sharing a set of assumptions is the basis for the development of maturity and thus for a paradigm in a field. Kuhn defined paradigm as a set of received ontological and epistemological assumptions that form a theoretical framework, within which theories can be tested, evaluated and, if necessary, improved.

Additionally, a paradigm is also a cognitive framework with ‘an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on, shared by a given [scientific] community’ in which ‘universally recognised scientific achievements ... for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners’ (Kuhn, 1962: 175). In other word, paradigm is seen as a temporary theoretical framework and a structure of thought that provides a particular vision of reality. It guides the way we perceive, think and act during our daily researching activities.

Kuhn (1962) has suggested that what we observe is conditioned and mediated by our paradigm. Paradigm dictates what is considered rational and relevant. It manages expectations by telling us what we are expected to see. In our normal day-to-day activities our paradigmatic assumptions are exceedingly difficult to notice. Our own implicit assumptions become explicit only in scenarios of ‘breakdown’ or encounters with incommensurable others who adopt a different set of assumptions (Kuhn, 1962).

Heidegger (1985) maintains that each paradigm or set of assumptions opens up and closes down a world. Academics have made passionate pleas for strides toward embracing multi-paradigm (Chen & Miller, 2010; Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011; Primecz, Romani & Sackmann, 2009; Sullivan & Daniels, 2008) and interdisciplinary research (Cantwell & Brannen, 2011; Cheng, Birkinshaw, Lessard & Thomas, 2014; Cheng, Henisz, Roth & Swaminathan, 2009) to generate integrative theories with greater explanatory power than those based on a single paradigm and discipline.

6.3 Four dimensions of a research paradigm

Crotty (2003) emphasised the philosophical underpinnings of methodologies and methods, but how they both relate to more theoretical elements is often left unclear. To add to the confusion, the terminology is far from consistent in research literature and social science texts. In response to this predicament, Crotty proposed a reasonably clear-cut way of using terms and grasping what is involved in the process of social research, defining four elements of a research process:

Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis.

Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods, and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.

Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.

Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.

Cantwell and Brannen (2011: 6) suggested that ‘the days of a single “big question” or a unifying paradigm are long gone, and unlikely to return’. More importantly, the alternative, the status quo of one dominant paradigm, has turned out to be ‘sterile’ and ‘mostly irrelevant’ for operating business in times of globalised opportunities and risks (Lowe, Magala & Hwang, 2012: 763). However, the theoretical perspective is a way of looking at the world and making sense of it (Crotty, 2003). A range of popular theoretical approaches to research in coaching can be classified into two categories based on their methodology: evidence-based coaching and reflective practice-based coaching. There are different sets of assumptions and epistemologies behind these methodologies, involving knowledge and embodying a certain understanding of what is entailed in knowing, that is, how we know what we know. Epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis (Hamlyn, 1995, cited by Crotty, 2003). Maynard (1994: 10, cited by Crotty 2003) explained that ‘epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for dealing what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate’. Epistemology explores the nature of meaning making in both perspectives – evidence-based and reflective practice-based perspectives – by showing the nature of subject-object relationship. For Crotty, ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together. Blaikie (1993: 6) has acknowledged that the root definition

of ontology is the ‘science or study of being’. We need to recognise, however, that this is no longer ontology in its philosophical sense (Crotty, 2003). Blaikie’s use of the term roughly corresponds to what is called a theoretical perspective, and refers to how one views the world. Because of this confluence, researchers have difficulty in keeping ontology and epistemology apart conceptually (Crotty, 2003).

Ontology of the evidence-based perspective is based on the subject-object relationship and perceives the client as an object. In contrast, the reflective practice-based perspective, based on human encounter, never sees the client as an object and focuses instead on the dialogue. The research design shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes; it describes not only the methodology but also an account of the rationale it provides for the choice of methods and the particular forms in which the methods are employed (Crotty, 2003).

A qualitative design was chosen to achieve the objective of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) have suggested that qualitative research seems best suited to answer questions of description, interpretation and explanation, from the perspective of the study participants. Qualitative research is a process of data reduction that simultaneously enhances the data’s meaning. Moreover, a qualitative design is appropriate when seeking descriptions that are rich, vivid and deep (Miles & Huberman 1994).

6.3.1 Methodological fitness

As Monge (1990) has argued, choice of research methods is guided by the theory, the phenomenon and the question. This is consistent with the assertion of Edmondson and McManus (2007) that methodological fitness in research is the internal consistency among elements of a research project – research questions, previous work, research design, and

theoretical contribution. The present study was exploratory, and so qualitative data were collected through open-ended semi-structured interviews. These data then were analysed by interpretative phenomenological analytic approach.

The goal of IPA is to explore meaningful patterns that can lead to develop a theory and invite further work. Sampling technique, data collection and analysis of the study all supported the notion that executive coaches' knowledge is a nascent and useful area of exploration, particularly in the context of coaching models. IPA, as the methodology for inquiry, comprises concepts that exist in a logical relation to each other.

One concept is the double hermeneutic. This study used IPA to explore the meaning of the experience of exploring the experience of meanings. It is a process of research and a process of exploring the experience of doing or being-in-research. It explores the meanings that coaches attach to evidence and it also explores the researcher's experience of conducting research into the meaning of evidence based coaching. In this way IPA involves a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2003): the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of x. The researcher has a dual role, being both like and unlike the participant. In one sense, the researcher is like the participant, a human being drawing on everyday human resources in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the researcher is not the participant, she/he has access to the participant's experience only through what the participant reports about it, and is also seeing this through the researcher's own experientially informed lens. In this sense, the participant's meaning-making is first-order while the researcher's sense-making is second-order (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The reasons for this fit well within the scope of the IPA method; just as IPA research begins with a breakdown or transitional experience, so the research project itself can be broken down on many levels. Just as IPA research accepts that breakdowns in lived

experience are the basis for the formation of reflection and a narrative, so the breakdown of the research process formed the basis for reflection and the development of a narrative on the research experience.

The aims of the present study are consistent with the rationale for IPA, as IPA researchers focus upon people's experiences and/or understandings of particular phenomena. Such research questions are 'open' not 'closed' and they should be exploratory not explanatory. They may well reflect process rather than outcome, and they focus on the meaning rather than the concrete causes or consequences of events. Thus questions are asked about people's understandings, experiences and sense-making activities within specific contexts. IPA research is always concerned with the detailed examination of lived experience (Smith et al., 2009).

In IPA we assume that our data can tell us something about people's involvement in and orientation towards the world and/or about how they make sense of this. Typically this requires us to identify, describe and understand two related aspects of a participant's account: the key 'objects of concern' in the participant's world and the 'experiential claims' made by the participant in order to develop a phenomenological account.

As a consequence of taking this IPA approach, certain methods for collecting and analysing data are likely to be preferred. Researchers must be wary of 'methodologism' (Salmon, 2002) or 'methodolatry' (Chamberlain, 2000). These cautionary terms remind researchers that, from the perspective of most qualitative researchers, methods are understood not to have 'stand-alone integrity' (Smith et al., 2009). They do not by themselves produce meaningful outcomes. They are not themselves the guarantees of quality. Researchers have to be creative in the application of these methods. Successful data collection strategies require organisation, flexibility and sensitivity. Successful analyses require the systematic application of ideas, and methodological rigour, but they

also need imagination, playfulness and a combination of reflective, critical and conceptual thinking. The researcher who is engaged in a phenomenological inquiry is central to the IPA research focus. Researchers can think of methods showing a partial map of the territory they wish to cross. Most methods describe some of the routes which they can take to get there. Some methods describe these routes in more detail than others, but in all cases there are many ways to get where the researchers want to go and the researcher must choose the best route for the purpose of their research (Smith et al., 2009).

In IPA the primary research questions and the subsequent interview questions are not usually theory driven (Smith et al., 2009). The IPA approach to data collection is committed to open-mindedness, and so researchers should try to suspend their preconceptions when it comes to designing and conducting interviews or other data collection methods. They should strive to enable participants to express their concerns and make their claims on their own terms, since IPA requires rich data (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews tend to be the preferred means for collecting such data (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). The aim of developing a schedule is to facilitate a comfortable interaction with the participant, so they can provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation; questions are prepared but they are open and expansive, and the participant should be encouraged to talk at length. A literature review should help to initially identify a gap that the research questions can address (Smith et al., 2009).

IPA researchers focus mainly on people's experiences and/or understandings of particular phenomena (Jarman et al., 1997). These trends reflect both phenomenological and interpretative aspects of IPA. The primary research questions in IPA are directed towards phenomenological material: they focus upon people's understandings of their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The orientation of researchers towards these objects of interest (experiences, understandings) is generally open and often explicitly process-oriented. For

instance, ‘exploring’ has been used more commonly than any other verb to state the IPA researchers’ actions and intentions in relation to their chosen objects of interest. These are consistent with IPA’s inductive procedures and its focus on the interpretation of meaning (Smith et al., 2009).

A disadvantage of research questions that are too open is how we know when we have answered them (Salmon, 2002). To address this problem it is useful to identify a series of objectives, steps which once achieved will allow you to show that your question has been answered. Secondary research questions can be addressed too in IPA research; they may engage with theory but they are not hypotheses to test (Salmon, 2002).

6.3.2 Designing interview protocol

The purpose of developing an interview protocol is to facilitate a comfortable interaction with the participants which will enable them to provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation. IPA researchers usually use an interview schedule (Smith et al., 2009), which is a way of preparing for the likely content of an interview. Open and expansive questions should be prepared so the participants can be encouraged to talk at length without leading them towards particular answers. Verbal input from the interviewer can be minimal. Starting the interview with a question which allows the participant to recount a descriptive episode or experience can quickly help the participant feel comfortable talking. Analytical questions can be asked later when the participant begins to ease into the interview.

Guidelines by Smith et al. (2009) were followed for designing the semi-structured protocol for conducting the interviews. The plan for IPA interviews is an attempt to address the research question sideways. Research questions are often pitched at the abstract level and it

is not usually helpful or effective to ask them directly. Rather, the aim is to set up the interview as an event which facilitates the discussion of relevant topics and which will allow research question to be answered subsequently, via analysis. In the schedule, the researcher typically sets out the questions as she would like to ask them and in the order which she expects might be most appropriate for the participant. These things can change during the actual interview but the preparation of a schedule allows the researcher to set a loose agenda (topics that she would like to discuss with the participant), to anticipate potential sensitive issues if any (and to inform the participant in advance), and decide the appropriate phrasing of complex questions. It also helps when interviewing reserved participants who might be less forthcoming and may prefer a slightly more structured approach. A schedule gives a virtual map for the interview which can be drawn upon if the interview becomes difficult or the interviewer is stuck. As a result of this preparation the researcher is generally able to be a more engaged and attentive listener and a more flexible and responsive interviewer (Smith et al., 2009).

The in-depth interviews usually lasted an hour or more. Participants were informed about the duration and style of interviewing as part of the recruitment and informed consent procedures. A copy of the interview protocol was given to the participants ahead of the interview. Participants were asked to confirm that they felt comfortable with the chosen place of interview, and that it was reasonably quiet, safe and free from interruptions. Knowing the protocol in advance was less distracting for both researcher and participant.

In addition, the 'pruning technique' proposed by Gillham (2005) was followed. After drawing on key concepts to develop questions based on the literature, the primary questions were reduced to their essentials by (i) grouping them based on the key concepts of research and (ii) making questions according to a logical narrative order (see Appendix 1).

For conceptual accuracy, phrasing of the questions was reviewed by experts with a background of linguistics and management. The interview protocol was then piloted before the data collection for the main study. The interview protocol consisted of 17 questions spread over seven parts: an introductory part followed by five sections covering the major aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, and a closing part. Table 6.1 lists the interview questions and the relevant constructs derived from the literature.

Table 6.1: Constructs and sample questions

Constructs	Sample Questions	Source
Executive development	1. What is the role played by coaching in developing executives?	Berglas, 2002; Jarvis, 2004; Periera, 2015; Sabatier, 2016
Business case	2. What is the business case for executive coaching?	Sherman & Freas, 2004
Objectives and outcomes	3. What are the expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching?	Joo, 2005; Sherman & Freas, 2004
Coaches' knowledge	4. How do you understand executive coaching?	Diedrich & Kilburg, 2001; Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012; Kilburg, 1996
Theoretical approaches	5. What theoretical approach or range of approaches do you take to coaching?	Kampa-Kokesch & Anderson, 2001; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011
Evidence-based coaching	6. How do you understand the notion of evidence-based coaching?	Grant, 2016; Sackett, Haynes, Guyatt & Tugwell, 1996; Wampold & Bhati, 2004
Outcomes of coaching	7. Is evaluation of the coaching outcomes an essential part of your coaching engagements?	Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Ives, 2008; Stober & Grant, 2006

Nature of evidence	8. What kind of evidence of coaching efficacy do you look for in your experience, for example, case study, survey, quant or qual?	Cox, 2005; Grant, 2016; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Kahn, 2011; Rees & Porter, 2013; Sieler, 2007
Stakeholders' perception	9. Do you think different stakeholders of coaching (coaches, clients and HR representatives) have same understanding of what counts as evidence of coaching efficacy?	Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Stober & Grant, 2006
Criteria of efficacy	10. Do you think there are mutually agreed upon criteria of coaching efficacy across different coaching approaches? If yes what are they? And if not, why not?	Grant & Cavanagh, 2004
Evidence vs. business case	11. How does the evidence of coaching efficacy help to strengthen the validity of coaching process and/or business case of coaching industry?	Douglas & McCauley, 1999; Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003; Wasylyshyn, 2003
Evidence effectiveness	12. How does the evidence of efficacy help to improve the coaching practice?	Bass, 1985; Grant, 2003a; Green, Oades & Grant, 2006; Kemp, 2008; Libri & Kemp, 2008; Miller et al., 2004
Evidence-based coach training	13. What role is played by the evidence of coaching efficacy in improving the coach training programs?	Gelso, 2006; Grant, 2016; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Kennedy & Llewelyn, 2001
Coach training essentials	14. What kind of training is required in order to become a coach?	Gelso, 2006; GCC, 2007; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Seligman, 2007
Dissemination of evidence	15. How do you disseminate your evidence of coaching efficacy to the coaching community and to the customers of coaching?	Grant & Cavanagh, 2004; Parker & Detterman, 1988
Experience vs. evidence	16. What would you say is the relationship between experience and evidence in developing yourself as a coach?	Gelso, 2006; Lane & Corrie, 2006
Future of Evidence-based Coaching	17. Anything else that you want to add that promotes or impedes evidence-based coaching?	Gelso, 2006; Grant & Cavanagh, 2004, 2007

The introductory part of the questionnaire introduces the researcher and academic institute, and the major objective and nature of the study. It also explains the structure and approximate duration of the interview. All questions were derived from the literature consistent with IPA methodology. The first section addresses the significance of coaching by asking three meaningful questions (q1–q3). Coaching is considered as an important leadership development intervention, and therefore the first question asks the importance of coaching for the professional development of executives. The literature provides insight into many business cases for coaching; however, it was worth exploring to ask (q2) the views of experienced practitioners about the business case for coaching. Coaching is a goal-directed intervention so the outcomes are expected. The third question therefore invites participants to share their perception of expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching in general.

The second section, with three questions (q4–q6, see Table 6.1), explores the concept of coaching. Question 4 asks coaches to share their understanding of coaching. It is a simple and straightforward question to reveal the coaches' experiential knowledge about coaching based on their extensive practice. The majority of coaches believe in eclecticism so they choose theoretical approaches that suit the unique needs of their clients. Question 5 addresses their preference/s for theoretical approach/es to coaching. Question 6 moves the conversation from theoretical approaches towards evidence-based coaching. This question probes the meaning participants associate with the notion of evidence-based coaching.

The third section investigates the evidence of efficacy through one question (q7), followed by two probes. This section continues the notion of evidence in coaching (q6) to its implication in coaching practice (q7), with coaches sharing the evidence of the efficacy of their coaching practice. The fourth section, addressing the criteria of evidence, consists of three questions (q8–q10). Question 8 explores the coaches' preference for the nature of

evidence – qual, quant and/or both. This question is important for understanding what kind of evidence is being looked at in individual coaching practice. Question 9 points out the shared understanding of evidence of coaching efficacy across the coaching stakeholders (coaches, clients, HR representatives). This question was included in the protocol because the literature shows a need to bridge the gap among these stakeholders, and the observations of experienced practitioners are likely to be meaningful. Question 10 addresses a similar concept – shared criteria of coaching efficacy (but in a different context) across different coaching approaches. The participants' coaching practices have been informed by different coaching approaches, and this question explores their understanding of similarities and differences in the coaching efficacy found across a range of coaching theories.

Finally, the seven questions in the fifth section (q11–q17, See Table 6.1) explore the contribution made by evidence in the coaching industry. Question 11 maintains the logical flow of the previous discussion by asking whether evidence is helpful for validating the coaching process and/or strengthening the business case for coaching. Question 12 asks the coaches' views on the importance of evidence for improving coaching practice, useful for comparing the evidence-based coaching perspective (from literature) and the reflective feedback practice (from coaches). Question 13 investigates how evidence can be used to improve coach training programs. Keeping coach training programs updated, based on both current literature and practice, is vital and it was worth exploring the practitioners' perspective in this regard. Question 14 seeks an insider's view about the training (education and skills) that the coaches need in order to excel in the coaching industry. The literature describes the various training paths and accreditations for coaches but this question probes practitioners' observations of recent activity in the industry in the context of segmentation. Question 15 addresses sharing the evidence of coaching efficacy within the coaching industry and with the customers of coaching. The literature review revealed

that knowledge about coaching efficacy has been shared mostly by evidence-based practitioners who are involved in research and publication, and associated with educational institutes, whereas reflective practitioners are less able to share their evidence or knowledge. Therefore this question was included to find out how both academic and business-trained practitioners deal with disseminating their evidence with the coaching community. Question 16 invites a meaningful debate about the role played by experience (years of coaching practice) and evidence (efficacy of one's coaching practice) in the professional development of coaches. Question 17 is open ended, encouraging the coaches to reflect on the future of evidence-based coaching.

The interview concluded with the interviewer acknowledging and appreciating the interviewees' participation.

6.3.3 Pilot study

After the design of the interview protocol, a pre-test judgement test and a pilot test were carried out (Gillham, 2005) to: (i) refine the questions and increase the validity and reliability of the interview, (ii) assess challenges and (iii) anticipate any difficulties and problems during the main data collection phase (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). The interview protocol was reviewed by two PhD students and two academics (senior researchers). The PhD students were qualitative researchers and the academics had produced qualitative publications. They were requested to provide comments about the wording, phrasing and overall design of the interview protocol. The results suggested that the protocol was acceptable and its design was satisfactory, so the pilot study was then conducted.

Piloting an interview enables the researcher to assess the design and structure of the interview and its ability to collect desirable data (Seidman, 2006). Gillham (2005) has

suggested that once the questions are pruned and the structure of the protocol is formed, the interview must be piloted with actual scheduling and conduct. In qualitative research the quality of data is the function of the quality of data collection, so the key objectives of the piloting were: (i) to ensure the structure, transparency and wording of questions were appropriate, (ii) to ensure questions were appropriately targeted and (iii) to reveal any unanticipated problems and challenges in the conducting the interview (Gilham, 2005; Seidman, 2006).

Ethics approval was obtained from Macquarie University Ethics commission to carry out the pilot study (Appendix 2). The sample for the pilot test consisted of five executive coaches, three female and two male, who had at least five years of experience as an executive coach. Their ages ranged from 45 to 55 years. Participants had been briefed on the nature and objective of the study and provided with the consent letter (Appendix 3). The time and mode of the interview was chosen by the participants and permission for audio recording the interviews was obtained. All participants were interviewed over the phone by using the interview protocol, the average duration of the interviews was 45 minutes, and responses were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The guidelines of IPA method described by Smith et al. (2009) were followed to analyse the data. IPA provides an analytical focus that directs researcher's attention towards participants' attempts to make sense of their experiences. As a result, IPA can be characterised by a set of common processes (e.g., moving from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretative) and principles (e.g., a commitment to understanding the participant's point of view, and a psychological focus on personal meaning-making in particular contexts) which are applied flexibly according to the analytic task (Reid et al., 2005).

Feedback from the interviewees about redundant content and phrasing was considered. Overall feedback was positive about both the clarity and comprehension of interview questions and the face validity (relevance of protocol with research objectives). Findings of the pilot study suggested that interview protocol to be used for the main study had potential to gather rich, useful and relevant information. The research therefore moved on to the main study. After the pilot study, a PhD research-in-progress paper was presented at Academy of World Business, Marketing and Management Development Conference, UAE 2014.

6.4 Main study

6.4.1 Sampling

Sampling should be theoretically consistent with the qualitative paradigm in general, and with IPA's orientation in particular (Smith et al., 2009), meaning that samples are selected purposively (rather than through probability methods) because they can give insight into a particular experience. Most often potential participants are contacted via referral from various kinds of gatekeepers, from opportunities as a result of one's own contacts, or through snowballing (Smith et al., 2009). As this is a qualitative study, it was felt more important to involve experienced practitioners through in-depth open-ended interviews, rather than accessing a larger number of participants without such depth of discussion and reflection. Potential participants were approached using purposive sampling as this study benefited from drawing on experienced coach practitioners (Tongco, 2007).

Participants in IPA studies are selected on their ability to provide access to a particular perspective of the phenomenon under study; they represent a perspective rather than a population. IPA research is usually carried out on a fairly homogeneous sample who share similarities and differences, for whom the research question will be meaningful, and who

are also suitable for the research question (Smith & Osborn, 2004). The extent of this homogeneity varies from study to study (Smith et al., 2009). The aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous small sample so the researcher can examine convergence and divergence in some detail. As with a case study approach, the IPA method allows the researcher to develop the rich details of each participant's perspective and thus does justice to each participant's unique lived experience (Cope, 2011).

IPA is an ideographic approach concerned with understanding particular phenomena in particular contexts, with the goal of presenting a detailed picture of the participants' individual experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2004). Indeed, given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases (Smith et al., 2009). The ideal sample size for an IPA study partly depends on the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual cases; and the organisational constraints under which one is operating. There is a historical process at work here too. Initially qualitative researchers were cautious in designing their studies and, anticipating criticism from their quantitative colleagues, they opted for quite large sample sizes. As the approach has matured with researchers becoming more experienced, sample sizes are typically smaller.

Smith has suggested that beginning IPA researchers should include between three and six participants in their studies, with the number occasionally extending up to 15 (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009):

We have suggested that for most first student projects, a sample size of up to six will be sufficient for a good IPA study and indeed we would often advocate three as an optimum number for such work. It produces a detailed analysis of each case, resulting in a table or figure capturing the pattern for that particular person. (Smith et al., 2009: 106)

Indeed, many IPA studies by experienced researchers have used similar sample sizes, which provide sufficient cases to develop meaningful points of similarities and difference between the participants but not so many that one is in danger of being overwhelmed by the data generated. In effect, it is more problematic to try to meet IPA's commitments with a sample which is 'too large' than with one that is 'too small' (Smith et al., 2009: 51).

Smith et al. (2009: 52) have noted:

Our own practice is now to treat n=3 as the default size for an undergraduate or Masters level IPA study. Three is a very useful number. It allows one to conduct a detailed analysis of each case – in effect, to develop three separate case studies – but it then also allows for the development of a subsequent micro-analysis of similarities and differences across cases. For example, how is case A different to case B? how are cases A and B different from C? how are all three cases similar?

Smith et al. also acknowledge the greater difficulty in suggesting sample sizes for PhD research, which is obviously on a larger scale with time to analyse more cases; however, it is not especially helpful to think of satisfying the extra demands primarily through increasing numbers. Much depends on the research question and the quality of data obtained (Smith et al., 2009: 52). Recent PhD research shows the same trend of small sample studies in order to do justice with in-depth exploration. Recent qualitative PhD studies in coaching have included a qualitative study with eight executive coaches by using hermeneutical 'directed textual content analysis' (Francis, 2015), an IPA study with ten executive coaches (Kenney, 2014) and a qualitative study by interview with ten executive coaches (Cummings, 2013).

Based on these guidelines, the present study comprised a purposive homogeneous sample of nine executive coaches. The homogeneity varied in the context of their coaching

practice (theoretical approach), years of practice, age, gender and country of practice (see summary in Table 6.2).

The sample contained similar numbers of academically trained and business-trained coaches, with a good representation of different theoretical approaches to coaching: cognitive-behavioural solution-focused approach, positive psychology, ontological approach, appreciative inquiry, psychodynamic approach, adult learning approach and systemic approach. Interviewees included key figures in the coaching industry in three countries: Australia, UK and Sweden.

Key figures of the coaching industry across different countries had been first identified as potential participants through an internet search. Each was initially contacted via telephone, and then provided with a formal invitation letter (Appendix 4) and Consent Form (Appendix 3) via email prior to the interview being scheduled. A few of the listed coaches failed to reply. Ethical considerations were taken into account, with each participant signing an agreement outlining the confidentiality terms of the interview. These terms ensured all participants would remain anonymous. To protect the identity of executive coaches, each participant was identified by a code based on the chronological order of interviews (A, B, C, H; see Table 6.2) and participants are discussed anonymously throughout the thesis using this code.

Important relevant documents were also analysed, such as guidelines for coaching in organisations published by Standards Australia, participants' publications, and research bulletins published by the participants' organisations.

Table 6.2: Description of interviewees

Interviewees	Coaching practice	Age	Gender	Experience	Location
Mr A	Evidence-based coaching	50	Male	15yrs	Sydney
Mr B	Evidence-based coaching	42	Male	9yrs	Sydney
Ms C	Practice-based evidence	40	Female	8yrs	Hobart
Mr D	Reflective practice-based coaching	52	Male	18yrs	Melbourne
Ms E	Practice-based evidence	48	Female	20yrs	Sydney
Ms F	Practice-based evidence	53	Female	17yrs	London
Mr G	Evidence-based coaching	51	Male	11yrs	Stockholm
Mr H	Practice-based evidence	48	Male	19yrs	Sydney
Ms I	Reflective practice-based coaching	54	Female	15yrs	Sydney

6.4.2 Measures

Conversational interview is perhaps the most commonly used method in qualitative research (Lee, 1999). A qualitative research interview is often described as ‘a conversation with a purpose’ (Smith et al., 2009) – this purpose is informed, implicitly at least, by a research question. Open-ended interviews use a broad range of questions asked in any order according to how the interview develops (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Schaw, 1995). Open-ended questions, as were used in the present study, enable the interviewer to

explore deeper into the initial responses of the respondent to gain a more detailed answer to the question (Kvale, 1996).

Smith et al. (2009) outlined the characteristics and benefits of interviews. Interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants' responses, and the investigator is able to enquire after any other interesting areas which arise. Interviewing is demanding and semi-structured interviewing, as with most aspects of IPA, often seems deceptively easy to do but is hard to do well.

Table 6.3: Description of interviews

Interviewee	Mode	Date/Time	Duration	Transcription (pages)
Mr A	T	3 rd Sep/15:00	60 min	17
Mr B	T	4 th Sep/10:30	60 min	12
Ms C	T	15 th Sep/09:30	60 min	10
Mr D	T	17 th Sep/14:30	60 min	10
Ms E	F	18 th Sep/15:3	60 min	12
Ms F	T	1 st Oct/12:00	45 min	8
Mr G	T	3 rd Oct/16:30	60 min	12
Mr H	F	12 th Nov/16:00	60 min	15
Ms I	F	28th Nov/11:00	45 min	8
F = face to face, T = telephone interview				

The interviews in the present study lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, with most lasting 60 minutes as the coaches were enthusiastic to share their views on the topic and needed little probing for more detailed information (Table 6.3). They shared rich and useful information based on their extensive experience as an executive coach. Qualitative data obtained

through interviews consisted of approximately nine hours (520 minutes) of audio recording, which was converted 104 pages of transcribed interview data. Interviews were accompanied by written notes, which were included in the data analysis.

6.4.3 Data collection

The interviews followed the guidelines recommended by Gillham (2005) about types of interview (distant or phone interview, online and one-to-one), Seidman (2006) about the length of interview, and Creswell (2007) on the process road map.

The time and venue of the interview were chosen by the participants, and the interviewer obtained permission to record the interviews (see informed consent letter in Appendix 3).

At the beginning of each interview the researcher explained the purpose of the study, assured confidentiality, thanked the interviewee for his/her cooperation and asked him or her to sign a consent form. The interview protocol encouraged interviewees to first talk in general and then spontaneously and more specifically discuss their thoughts. If interviewees didn't mention something important in the light of previous theory and research they were asked more specific questions (probes).

The process of data collection for the main study took six months in 2014. Interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by phone. In IPA research, there is no significant difference found between face to face and phone/skype interviews according to a paper on "The psychological challenges of living with an ileostomy: An interpretative phenomenological analysis" (Smith; Spiers; Simpson & Nicholls) retrieved from University of Birbeck, London. These scholars state, it has been suggested that telephone or Skype interviews may be detrimental to qualitative research as interviewers may miss body language cues and be unable to establish rapport. However, like several other

scholars (Novick, 2008; Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), we found no notable difference between phone/Skype and face to face interviews. Indeed, phone/Skype interviews may have been more convenient for some participants and allowed them greater freedom to discuss potentially difficult topics as the lack of face to face contact has the potential to give more of a sense of confidentiality (Smith, 1989).

6.4.4 Interviewing techniques

Several interviewing techniques were used to obtain unbiased, rich and useful data that met the study objectives. These included (i) avoiding prejudice, (ii) probing and prompting, and (iii) encouraging reluctant interviewees.

The notion of prejudice must be carefully understood, recognised and dealt with when conducting a qualitative interview as an interpretive scheme. As suggested by Gillham (2005), the researcher ensured that the interview questions did not reflect her expectations or preferences that no prejudicial leanings influenced the flow of the interview, and that data coding and analysis were not affected by pre-judgements.

Probes and prompts were used to unobtrusively steer and control the interview (Gillham, 2005), thereby ensuring integrity and develop relevant, consistent and context-rich data.

The methodological rationale behind the use of prompts and probes is that the data collection process is standardised and comparable from one interview to another, and also that it covers the key targeted areas of the research (Gillham, 2005). Prompts were based on the key concepts and themes derived from the review of literature and were used to direct the interview towards key points if the discussion did not spontaneously address these specific topics. Probes were supplementary questions or responses which interviewers use to get interviewees to feed more data into the interview and expand,

enrich and broaden their responses in order to minimise ambiguities and maximise clarification (Gillham, 2005). Probes must be simple, clear and relevant, and must be accompanied by showing appreciation and understanding. Previous researchers have effectively used probes by asking interviewees to provide examples, name key incidents, or clarify their determinants and consequences (Najmaei, 2014).

The six-phase approach of Dundon and Ryan (2010) was utilised to develop rapport and extract rich data from respondents. This approach is particularly applicable to qualitative management research. The first phase consisted of opening the interview by obtaining the interviewee's permission, and building trust and agreement. In the second phase, respondents were given the option to stop the interview at any time if they felt tired or distracted. Off-topic talks were also allowed (not recorded or noted) to help facilitate the dialogue. Third, a quiet and comfortable place was chosen by respondents for the interviews. The fourth phase was concerned with getting back on topic. This method is likely to encourage and engage participants in discourse, and establish sufficient empathy and trust (Dundon & Ryan, 2010). The fifth phase capitalised on benevolent relationships by executing probing and prompting techniques and seeking further evidence and examples, similar to Gillham's (2005) core skills and methods of interviewing, discussed above. The last phase consisted of adding value post-interview, with interviewees asked to provide any additional story or comment to gain new rich data and anecdotes (Najmaei, 2014).

6.4.5 Overview of qualitative data analysis

Analytical procedure

Data analysis commenced in the early stages of the interviewing and continued throughout the ongoing interview process, moving from data analysis back to data gathering. An iterative process – engaging with the interview data, the interview notes taken with each interview, and the literature on executive coaching and evidence-based coaching – helped to develop a clearer understanding of the core issues. The data gathering and analysis continued for six months, to the final stages of writing up the findings. This process allowed a framework to emerge directly from data that was ultimately tested against the real world.

After each interview was transcribed and reviewed by the researcher, the transcribed documents were sent to each coach for their review and approval. All coaches approved the transcribed interviews and none of them made changes. The total corpus size of interview data was 50,711 words.

Data analysis

Analysis has been described as an iterative and inductive cycle in IPA (Smith, 2007) which proceeds by drawing upon the following strategies (Smith et al., 2009: 79–80):

- The close line-by-line analysis of each participant's experiential claims, concerns and understandings (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).
- The identification of emergent patterns (themes) within this experiential material, (Eatough & Smith, 2008).

- The development of a dialogue between the researchers, their coded data and their psychological knowledge about what it might mean for participants to have these concerns (Larkin et al., 2006; Smith, 2004).
- The development of a structure, frame or gestalt which illustrates the relationships between themes.

This step is illustrated in data analysis; the frame, i.e., reflective practice-based coaching, shows interplay between different themes, such as evidence has empirical and reflective components, implications of reflective skills in coach training, and commonly used research methods:

- The organisation of all of this material in a format which allows for analysed data to be traced right through the process, from initial comments on the transcript, through initial clustering and thematic development, into the final structure of themes.
- The use of supervision, collaboration or audit to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the interpretation.
- The development of a full narrative that takes the reader through the interpretation usually theme by theme, often supposed by some form of visual guide (a simple structure, diagram or table).
- Reflection on one's own perceptions, conceptions and processes (Smith, 2007).

Within this repertoire of strategies, there was considerable room for manoeuvre. The analysis was a joint product of the participants and the researcher. Although the primary concern of IPA is the lived experience of the participant and the meaning which participant makes of that lived experience, the end result is always an account of how the researcher thinks the participant is thinking.

The analysis was an iterative process of fluid description and engagement with the transcripts, involving flexible thinking, reduction, expansion, revision, creativity and innovation. The analytical process was multi-directional and open to change, with a constant shift between different analytical processes. The analysis followed the four-step procedure designed by Smith et al. (2009) (see Appendix 5 for full details):

- (i) Reading and re-reading the written transcript while listening to the audio tape helped the researcher actively engage with the data as a first step to entering the participant's world. Re-reading allowed a model of the overall interview structure to develop, and permitted the researcher to gain an understanding of how narratives can bind certain sections of an interview together.
- (ii) Initial comments were noted on the transcript. Comments were descriptive (respondents' key words or phrases), linguistic (how use of language or metaphor reflects the ways in which the content and meaning were presented) or conceptual (researcher's interpretation). This stage also included deconstruction of the transcript into individual sentences, for example, to help the researcher understand the context of an interview and the interrelationship between the parts and a whole and between one experience and another.
- (iii) Emergent themes were developed by mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes. This process represents one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle. The whole original interview becomes a set of parts as we start analysing, which then come together in another new whole by the end of the analysis.
- (iv) Searching for connections across emergent themes. Themes in the transcript were initially ordered chronologically, as they came up in the interview. The researcher then mapped how these themes fit together. Not all emergent themes could be incorporated and some were discarded. Other useful ways of looking

for patterns and connections between emergent themes, to give insight into a higher level of interpretation, include abstraction (putting like with like and naming the new cluster), polarisation (looking for oppositional themes by concentrating on differences instead of similarities), contextualisation (identifying the contextual or narrative elements in the analysis), numeration (frequency with which a theme is supported) and function (the function the theme plays in the transcript narrative).

6.5 Assessing the validity of IPA research

IPA, as is the case with many phenomenological methods, doesn't operate in terms of criteria of validity and reliability, but in terms of principles of internal coherence, credibility or authenticity (Smith et al., 2009). Immediate claims are therefore bounded by the particular group being studied, but an extension can be considered through theoretical generalisability, where the reader can assess the evidence in relation to their existing professional and experiential knowledge (Smith et al., 2009: 179).

Many qualitative researchers would assert that validity and quality are indeed important considerations, but that qualitative research should be evaluated in relation to appropriate criteria (Smith et al., 2009). Yardley (2000, 2008) has proposed general guidelines for assessing the quality of qualitative psychological, discussed below.

6.5.1 Yardley's criteria and how IPA can meet them

Lucy Yardley (2000) has presented four broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research. This section discusses each principle in the context of IPA.

The first principle is *sensitivity to context*. Yardley argues that a good qualitative research study demonstrates sensitivity to context, such as sensitivity to the socio-cultural milieu in which the study is situated, the existing literature on the topic, and the material obtained from the participants. For Yardley (2000), IPA researchers demonstrate sensitivity to the context in the very early stages of the research process. Sometimes the very choice of IPA as a methodology, the rationale for its adoption, will be centred upon the perceived need for sensitivity to context through close engagement with the ideographic and the particular. Sensitivity to context is also demonstrated through appreciating the interactional nature of data collection in the interview situation. Conducting a good IPA interview requires skill, awareness and dedication. An IPA analysis is only as good as its data, and obtaining good data requires close awareness of the interview process, showing empathy, putting the participants at ease, recognising interactional difficulties, and negotiating the intricate power-play where research expert may meet experiential expert. Sensitivity to context continues throughout the analysis, with the researcher requiring immersive and disciplined attention to make sense of how the participant is making sense of their (Yardley, 2000).

From the reader's or reviewer's perspective, much of the sensitivity so far will be judged indirectly – in the sense that the researcher would need to have shown the degree of sensitivity to context described here to produce a compelling and convincing IPA study (Smith et al., 2009). However, this can also be manifest explicitly in the written report itself, by including verbatim extracts and thus giving participants a voice in the project, and allowing the reader to check the interpretations being made. Researchers can also show sensitivity to context through an awareness of the existing literature, either substantive (related to the topic of investigation) or theoretical (related to the research method).

Yardley's second broad principle is *commitment and rigour*. Commitment can be demonstrated by the degree of attentiveness to the participant during data collection, the

care with which the analysis of each case is carried out, and ensuring the study is rigorous in terms of appropriateness of sample, quality of interview and completeness of analysis, for example. The analysis must be thorough, systematic and sufficiently interpretative. Good IPA studies tell the reader something important about the particular individual participants, as well as something important about the themes they share.

Yardley's third broad principle is *transparency and coherence*. Transparency refers to how clearly the stages of the research process are described in the write-up of the study, such as providing details of how participants were selected, how the interview schedule was constructed and the interview conducted, and what steps were used in the analysis.

Much of the coherence of a piece of qualitative research is judged by the reader of the finished write-up, which should present a coherent argument, with themes that hang together logically and ambiguities or contradictions that are clearly dealt with. It is not that the data should contain no contradictions – they are often the richest part of the text – but the analysis of the contradictions should not in itself be contradictory

Yardley suggests coherence can also refer to the degree of fit between the research which has been done and the underlying theoretical assumptions of the approach being implemented. If the study is claiming to be IPA, the phenomenological and hermeneutic sensibility should be apparent in the write-up. Thus the write-up should have as its focal topic a significant experiential domain for the participants and demonstrate a commitment to attending closely to it.

Yardley's final broad principle is *impact and importance*. She makes the important point that, however well a piece of research is conducted, a test of its real validity lies in whether it tells the reader something interesting, important or useful.

6.5.2 The independent audit

The independent audit is a powerful way of thinking about validity in qualitative research (Smith et al., 2009). A research report has good validity if a reader can follow the chain of evidence that leads from initial documentation through to the final report (Yin, 1989). In the case of an IPA interview project, the trail might consist of initial notes on the research question, the research proposal, an interview schedule, audio tapes, annotated transcripts, tables of themes and other devices, draft reports and the final report. The researcher presents the data in such a way that someone else could follow the 'paper trail'.

An independent audit is not the same as inter-rater reliability, commonly used when quantifying the analysis of open-ended material (Yin, 1989). The independent auditor attempts to ensure that the account produced is credible. The aim of an independent audit is not to produce a single report which claims to represent 'the truth', nor necessarily to reach a consensus. Instead, the independent audit allows for the possibility of a number of legitimate accounts and the concern therefore is with how systematically and transparently this particular account has been produced (Yin, 1989).

The independent audit can be conducted at a number of levels. Supervisors can conduct an initial audit of their students' work by, for example, by checking that the initial codes, categories or themes on the interview transcript are valid in relation to the text being examined and the approach being employed. However, the independent audit should be conducted in the same way as Yardley's (2000, 2008) criteria and, as such, it offers a range of opportunities to help the IPA researchers demonstrate the validity of their work (Smith et al., 2009).

The next stage of an independent audit could involve an independent researcher checking that the final report is plausible or credible in terms of the data collected and that there is a logical step-by-step path through the chain of evidence (Yin, 1989).

An independent audit was conducted at both these levels for the current study. The researcher's supervisor conducted a mini audit of all the data including the research proposal, an interview schedule, audio tapes, initial notes, annotated transcripts, tables of themes, draft reports and the final report. At the next stage, an independent researcher, who had previously completed a PhD in management using the IPA method, checked the interview data, audio tapes, draft and final reports. Both audits revealed satisfactory findings, establishing the coherence, credibility and authenticity of the present research. The audits supported the choice of sample selection for the particular research question, data collection method and data analysis.

6.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has described the research method selected for this study and discussed in detail the rationale for choosing the IPA method. The topics discussed in this chapter provided a road map for the researcher to obtain the required data to answer the research question. The interviews were guided by the interview protocol to collect in-depth descriptions of executive coaches' experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The IPA method was used to analyse the qualitative data obtained by interviewing nine executive coaches.

Chapter Seven provides a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from executive coaches' lived experiences shared in the interviews.

Chapter 7

Results and discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, highlighting how the participants' lived experiences relate to the literature. The chapter is divided into five sections. Section 7.1 reiterates the IPA guidelines in the context of student IPA research projects. The three subsequent sections discuss the coaches' responses about three different aspects of coaching: evidence-based coaching (Section 7.2), reflective practice-based coaching (Section 7.3) and practice-based coaching (Section 7.4). Finally, Section 7.5 presents a summary of the findings.

7.1 Reiteration of the IPA guidelines

As described earlier, the methodology of this thesis was guided by the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) technique developed by Smith and his colleagues, best represented in their book *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research* (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). In line with the IPA method, the purpose of this chapter is twofold (Smith et al., 2009): (i) to give an account of the data and to convey a sense of what the data are like and (ii) interpreting the data and explain what the data mean. Smith et al. (2009: 109) have noted that a large proportion of the data consists of transcript extracts, whilst the remainder is the researcher's detailed analytic interpretations. The underlying logic of IPA focuses on the relationship between the whole and parts of the phenomenon being investigated; indeed 'it is possible to choose not to have a clear demarcation between these two sections and rather to relate themes to the extant literature

as you are going along. In this case results and discussion are merged into one section' (Smith et al., 2009: 113), and so the results and discusses are merged in this chapter.

Smith et al. (2009) have described how, once a general pattern has been established, the researcher may choose some atypical extracts to illustrate contradiction and complexity. A hermeneutic circle is embedded in IPA writing, which moves constantly and dynamically between part and whole. Smith et al. (2009) have recommended introducing the extract and the participant and then writing some ideographic analysis, while also writing narratives in ways to re-link themes and relate to the overall analysis (Smith et al., 2009: 116–117). The hermeneutic circle is concerned with the dynamic relationship between the part and the whole, at a series of levels. To understand a particular part, the researcher looks to the whole; to understand the whole, the researcher looks to the parts. In analytical terms, it effectively describes the process of interpretation and speaks to a dynamic, non-linear, style of thinking (Smith et al., 2009).

The following discussion addresses the broad research question by analysing the patterns of similarities and differences found in the participants' responses (for more detailed discussion see Chapter 6). IPA method is based on similarities and differences; in this chapter, IPA method is used to compare and contrast the literature and the coaches' responses. Underlying the IPA-based exploration is the question whether, in the relationship between coaching research and practice, there is a move from evidence-based research (EBR) to practice-based evidence (PBE) and, if so, what are some of the main dimensions of this movement in the context of coaching.

Coaches differed in their responses to the central theme of the study, that is, the notion of a move from evidence-based coaching to practice-based evidence. Analysing the responses led to the nine executive coaches being classified into three groups: evidence-based coaching, reflective practice-based coaching and practice-based evidence. These groups

are discussed separately in the following three sections, in the light of both theory (the literature) and examples (interview extracts).

7.2 Evidence-based coaching

Coaches were asked about their understanding of the concept of evidence and their responses were analysed. In line with IPA methodology, the claims are discussed here with relevant comments from the participants (Smith et al., 2009). A pattern emerged from this analysis: while several respondents were committed to evidence-based coaching, they also had doubts about seeing research in only evidence-based terms, opening the possibility for going beyond evidence-based to including reflective practice-based practices. It is important to emphasise that they were not turning away from evidence-based research but rather they were recognising the need to include in-situation reflection. Paradoxically, it is their doubts that are encouraging. Their doubts are encouraging for the central theme of the thesis, namely a move from EBC to PBE. This move is one in which PBE includes the value of evidence as articulated by EBC in the context of reflective practice, whereas EBC marginalises the notion of reflective practice and emphasises evidence.

The overall analysis of the responses reveals that some participants believe in evidence-based practice while simultaneously holding doubts about the implications of evidence for coaching practice. They shared their doubts about how to simplify scientific evidence so the wider coaching community could grasp the concept and make use of it, especially those who lack a scientific research background. These coaches are also doubtful about the implications of incorporating evidence into coach training programs. A pattern of similarities and differences emerged with deeper analysis. Coaches believe in empirical research to provide evidence of the efficacy of coaching and to establish its credibility, but the major doubt was related to the dissemination of evidence. Two coaches believe that the

more evidence we share through research, the more creditability it will provide to the coaching profession. The third coach is doubtful, as he considers published works should be used for pushing the coaching field towards coaching psychology. For this coach, transforming the field of coaching into coaching psychology will not necessarily help the field of coaching to grow. Having doubts while believing in evidence-based coaching is the emergent theme runs through the discussion in this category. The narrative is guided by Smith et al. (2009) and illustrates the claims by using interview extracts. The similarities and differences among the three coaches in this group were analysed, and the literature was also examined for any similar doubts to those expressed by the coaches.

7.2.1 Implications of evidence for coaching practice

A major doubt was expressed by one coach, who claimed to pioneer the evidence-based coaching movement but provided no reasons for adopting this concept. Believing in evidence and saying it is a good idea to adopt this, without giving implications for practice itself, shows doubt in the significance of evidence in coaching practice.

The notion of evidence-based coaching is defined here in terms of the words of the practitioners in the field. Mr A noted his pioneering contribution to adopting the concept of evidence-based practice in coaching, and defined evidence-based coaching similarly, as explained in the coaching literature:

I came up with the term evidence-based coaching myself many years ago when we were running a conference, and then some people said to me, 'Oh, you can have it, evidence-based is going out of fashion in medicine'. I said, 'It may be going out of fashion here but I think it's a good idea'. So the notion of evidence-based really is about being able to explicitly draw on

established theory and established empirical evidence and using that as in a sense to kind of benchmark or to kind of frame your coaching practice.

Mr A presents an interesting tension that reflects two of the dimensions brought out by the literature review: the tension between evidence-based coaching and the idea that evidence-based coaching is, as he states, ‘going out of fashion in the medical literature’. The latter notion refers to the emergence of PBR in medicine. Unfortunately, respondent A rejects the move that is taking place in medicine, without offering any form of reasoning, and reaffirms a belief in evidence-based coaching. It is interesting that he claims to have identified the importance of evidence-based coaching for himself, the implication being that he was not socialised or trained in it. He sees the value of evidence-based coaching being that it allows him to benchmark his practice, and the value of benchmarking is that it acts as a process of checking and reflecting on his own practices. The value that he sees in evidence-based coaching is thus congruent with the purpose of evidence-based coaching, as it not only demonstrates evidence for coaching but also serves as a practice for reflecting on coaching:

Evidence-based coaching is not about proving that what you do is effective, it's about being able to draw on the literature and the available evidence and utilise that in your coaching practice.

Reiterating his point he says:

For example, some of the research I've done shows that the problem-focused questions are quite useful but solution-focused questions are actually much more useful in terms of enhancing positive effect and helping people move towards their goals. Understanding kind of, you know, the cognitive behavioural models and being able to apply those in a solution-

focused way and understanding the evidence for that is all part of what makes for evidence-based coaching.

The challenge for reflection in the context of evidence-based coaching is: what does it mean to reflect on a practice of coaching through the lens of evidence based research? For, in the above quote, Mr A speaks about ‘applying’ the model to practice as though it can be assumed that practice will mirror theory that is based on evidence. ‘Application’ is at best just one model for reflection in practice and, as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 5, Section 5.1, it is not the ideal one. Simply applying theory to practice assumes a subservience of practice to theory, whereas many reflective practitioners would maintain that it is through practice that their own theories of practice emerge. It is not that they first have a theory of coaching and then apply it to practice, it is through experience that their understanding of coaching practice develops. This is the case with respondent E, who thinks that the beauty and strength of coaching is to be open and to explore novel things. For these coaches, innovative practice helps the profession grow; practice is a rich source of knowledge and knowledge can be gained through reflecting on one’s practice. The views of coaches from reflective practice and practice based categories are discussed in detail in the next two sections.

Thus we already see a tension beginning to emerge: while evidence may be useful for reflection, a naive model of reflection – contained in the idea of ‘applying’ theory to practice – is not a sufficient condition for reflection. In fact, Henry Mintzberg has made this point about management education in general: it teaches theories in abstraction from practice, wants them to be used as benchmarks to practice and as tools to be applied in practice, but no systematic notion of applying to practice is ever developed: ‘Think of this as the IKEA model of management education: The schools supply the pieces, neatly cut to size; the students do the assembly. Unfortunately, the schools do not supply instructions.

They may look neat, but they are cut every which way. And the students don't know what to build, because that depends on the situation, and in the classroom there is no situation ...' (Mintzberg, 2004: 37).

The same points can be made of the notion of evidence-based research: while it might look good in the context of the ideal classroom situation, because situations are contingent and unpredictable, they cannot simply be applied in a uniform way. Furthermore, practitioners, as with the students in Mintzberg's case above, are left floundering because there is no well-developed appreciation of the notion of application and of reflection in practice.

In addition, the reflective practitioners' point of challenging evidence on the basis of practice needs to be acknowledged. For the practitioner's judgement is developed not only in applying theory to practice but in questioning theory on the basis of practice.

There is no intention of doing away with the notion of evidence, but it needs to be situated in the context of practice, taking into account the unique circumstances of practice, allowing for the development of the practitioner's own judgement and developing a reflective practice process through which to do this, one which is re-iterative or cyclical. Theory may be applied reflectively to practice but practice is also a basis upon which to question, refine and even transform theory.

The danger is a form of reductionism in which only practice or theory is privileged. Mr A expressed his doubts about how evidence helps to improve coaching practice:

Well, there's always a big gap, I think, between what research says and what practitioners think works for them or actually works for them. So, people have their preferred way of working and then they look for evidence that supports their particular way of working, you know. And I mean that's what really happens, I think, in kind of practice.

Similarly, Mr A responded to the question about how evidence improves coach training in these words:

I've got no idea what it plays overall, I don't know what other people do. I mean I know what I do, which is I try to keep abreast of things that are happening and bring new information and new ideas into both my private practice and my professional practice wherever I can.

The above quotes illustrate a confusion similar to Mr A, who described EBC as an old-fashioned and flawed concept in medicine, yet still repeating his initial response supporting the notion of EBC. Similarly, in the above quote his spontaneous response was that he didn't know how the evidence improves coach training, demonstrating that evidence-based practitioners lack a clear road map of the significance of evidence and its implications. It raises another important question: If there is no way to assess the implications of EBC in practice, and it is only helpful for coaches whose practice is informed by EBC, then how it can be suggested as a practitioner model?

7.2.2 Translating scientific evidence for audience with non-scientific background

The implication of evidence in practice requires an 'easy-to-understand' translation for those without a background in rigorous scientific research. This was another practical challenge faced and shared by the evidence-based practitioners during their interviews.

Mr B emphasised building more research so that practitioners inform their practice on the existing knowledge base, but at the same time he expressed his doubts about sharing the evidence with the wider coaching community:

... the more texture we can bring to coaching research then the more possibility we have for assisting practitioners to work effectively with

people. But then the big issue is always how do you translate scientific, well-designed scientific studies, how do you then translate that into a form that is easily digested by people who don't necessarily have a scientific background?

Mr B made two important points in the above quote in noting that coaching research can assist practitioners to inform their practice. This is again the route from general to specific (i.e., deductive) that evidence-based practitioners take to inform their practice, by excluding the other potent source of learning that is shaping the practice by reflecting on their own practice. The above response shows that, similar to other evidence-based coaches, Mr B supports the usefulness of EBC but acknowledges the challenge of translating evidence in practice, especially for those practitioners who are not trained in scientific research. This issue deals with generalising the outcomes of research without considering the uniqueness of each coaching situation and the way the epistemology of different coaching concepts is understood by different coaches. Coaching is not a cookbook recipe to be followed by all approaches, nor is it a standard-size-fits-all kind of technique. Ms E emphasised a similar point:

Coaching is flexible and nimble and emergent and post professional and across disciplines, you couldn't have a one size fits all.

Instead, each coaching conversation is unique, and the objective of coaching is different for each coachee. The above quote shows Mr B is doubtful about the implications of evidence for coaching practitioners who are not trained in scientific research. The notion of EBC becomes questionable if its scope is limited to evidence-based practitioners and it cannot be conveyed in a way that practitioners without a scientific research background can make use of it.

Mr B expressed similar doubt about disseminating evidence when asked about the effectiveness of evidence:

Well I think good-quality evidence can be helpful because it gives people guidance on what works and what doesn't work. But then the big issue is always how do you translate scientific, well-designed studies, how do you then translate that into a form that is easily digested by people who don't necessarily have a scientific background. That's a big challenge within the dissemination of research.

The above coach mentioned a challenge of simplifying the evidence for people who don't have a background in scientific research. The problem is even more basic than the one Mr B mentioned, because coaches who lack a scientific research background do not even believe that evidence is necessary to establish the creditability of coaching. They believe in developing their theories of practice through reflecting on their practice.

Mr G shared similar confusion about the implications of evidence:

It only does where the circumstances are that coaches or groups of coaches have access to that evidence. Hence I'm not sure that it does improve, well it does, but it's not broad enough yet and it's not grounded enough. Of course, if coaches spent the time looking more at what worked and what didn't and refining that then it would lead to much better outcomes in a more generalised fashion, but I don't think that's happening.

Mr G shared his doubts about the limited implications of evidence for practice in a way that raises concerns about proposing the EBC model for the growth and future of the coaching profession. As he said, 'I'm not sure that it does improve'; again, he appeared to be using phrases such as 'but it's not broad enough' and 'it's not grounded enough',

showing his serious doubts about the impact of evidence at a wider scale. His concluding remarks indicate a similar doubt in his mind: ‘I don’t think that’s happening’. The responses from these coaches show that they doubt the range/spectrum of the implications of evidence, because the biggest challenge they reported is dissemination of evidence to the general coaching community outside of EBC group of practitioners. How to deal with this challenge determines the accessibility of evidence for the general coaching practitioners and expands the range of implications of evidence in coaching practice.

7.2.3 Evidence for growth of coaching profession

The second major doubt was found in relation to the role of evidence in serving the coaching profession by ensuring its future growth. This theme has two dimensions: (i) transforming coaching into coaching psychology, and (ii) empiricism for coaching recognition in community, discussed separately below.

IPA method facilitates the researcher making sense of the pattern of similarities and differences to reach a shared meaning and to understand any doubts that coaches held while they believed in EBC. There was a contrast between the coaches from business background and psychology background. Coaches differed in how they perceived using evidence to move the field of coaching towards coaching psychology.

Transforming coaching into coaching psychology

Mr G’s major doubt was whether to serve the field of coaching or to follow his personal motives. Mr G has a business background and he practises group psychodynamic intervention. He himself is an evidence-based coach but he has a different opinion about the role of evidence in the growth of coaching profession:

I think there's some extremely good coaches, who are coaching psychologists, who are very interested in the evidence-based approach and they're interest in the numbers and the statistical data. I think your standard business coach is not, and I hate to say that but I think it's true. And so published results are not necessarily going to, well, they're not necessarily going to help the profession. What it might do is lead to an evolution of the profession in a certain direction, namely towards more psychologically based approaches, but that would take time.

According to Mr G, the evidence-based coaching movement is a vehicle for moving the coaching industry towards coaching psychology. This perception concurs with the views of Goldenberg (2006) in the context of politics of evidence. For Goldenberg, the evidence-based movement appears to be the latest expression of scientism, that science can produce the knowledge required to emancipate us from scarcity, ignorance and error. However, such efforts tend to disguise political interests in the authority of so-called 'scientific evidence'. Political issues are not resolved, however, but merely disguised in technocratic consideration and language (Goldenberg, 2006).

Mr G's concern, mentioned above, has been cited in a similar context in the literature: that evidence-based practitioners might use this movement for political purposes, possibly because coaches want to enhance the maturity of this field by increasing its own knowledge base. The nature of coaching is multidisciplinary, and the literature cites four areas of best current knowledge directly related to the research and practice of executive, workplace and life coaching: (i) Behavioural Sciences, (ii) Business and Economic Science, (iii) Adult education including workplace learning and development, and (iv) Philosophy (Grant, 2005). One of the major areas that influences coaching is behavioural

sciences (psychology). Organisational or behavioural psychologists are more influenced by randomised controlled experiments and quantitative research, as stated by Mr A:

It's no use turning up to a conference full of quantitative organisational psychologists or behavioural scientists with some rich case study, they're not going to be interested. What they want to see is a randomised control study and they want to make sure that the controls were tight and the measures are valid, and they'd be interested in the numbers.

In this context, Mr A uses evidence as a tool to attract psychologists, aiming to win their acceptance for coaching as an empirically validated outcome measurement tool. These coaches try to bridge the disciplines of psychology and coaching, so the merger can compensate the lack of theoretical grounds of coaching as a discipline. Spence, Cavanagh and Grant (2006) described the low penetration of coaching psychologists within the industry, with one study showing that only 14% of coaches report formal training in psychology. The response from Mr A reflects an attempt to increase the representation of coaching psychologists in the coaching industry. Grant and Cavanagh (2007a) maintain that psychologists' engagement with the coaching industry and with dialogue processes such as the Global Convention on Coaching will be important if the field is to successfully emerge as a profession and a science. For these scholars, effective engagement in this dialogue requires a vision within coaching psychology that understands the present state of the industry as a step towards its success (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Based on the literature cited above, Mr G's response makes sense, in that that coaching psychologists are increasing the knowledge base of coaching mainly by doing quantitative research; however, this is not going to help the coaching profession in general. Instead, it can turn the coaching industry into coaching psychology, but it will take time.

In a similar context, Coach A commented:

So I think getting evidence of effectiveness of coaching is really important. And trying to move that whole coaching into a more scientific or more rigorous framework I think is very important, and I think that's increased the business case and the perceived creditability of coaching.

Mr B shared similar understanding of evidence:

I think it's a critical issue within the coaching industry. So a key part of the professionalisation of the industry is ensuring that it creates its own specific knowledge base but which draws on other related fields. I see evidence-based coaching as being critical for the long-term future of the industry.

Both coaches Mr A and Mr B mentioned a role played by the evidence in the increased credibility of coaching; however, Mr A perceived EBC as a tool to move coaching towards psychology. But there is controversy among the coaches from psychological and business backgrounds. Both Mr A and Mr B are evidence-based practitioners with a psychological background, and they agreed on the similar function played by evidence for the future of coaching. On the other hand, an evidence-based coach with a business background thinks that the coaching profession does not necessarily grow in the direction where coaching psychologists are moving it, as mentioned by Mr G (above). Analysing Mr A's responses in the light of Mr G's perception about him, it appears that Mr A observes other coaches' knowledge and skills from a psychologists' perspective:

They don't have a psych background, and so when they try to kind of measure psychological constructs they really don't know what they're doing

...

So you'll have lots of people that might collect data but then they really don't know how to write and analyse the data and present that ...

So I see lots of people who try to put together coaching questionnaires, and you look at them from a psychologist perspective, and you think that's just a rubbish questionnaire that doesn't actually measure anything. So, a little knowledge is dangerous.

In response to the questions about the evidence-based coaching, Mr A repeatedly mentioned the superiority of evidence-based coaches because of their quantitative research expertise, as seen in the above quotes. Mr A commented on the dangers of lack of knowledge in the light of his personal observation. For him, not everyone can do scientific research, which is very central to the idea of evidence based coaching. Mr A distinguished himself by his quality research and rated the work by other coaches as substandard:

I'm not saying I'm an expert, but I probably know more than a lot of the people.

Mr A evaluated other coaches' practice and quality of research:

I think an evidence-based approach is very important in establishing credibility with the client, as long as the evidence that you're representing is not bullshit. So I've seen people, but actually they don't really understand the literature, theories.

Mr A repeatedly highlighted the research skills of evidence-based coaches with a psychology background and rated the evidence presented by others as weak, using phrases like 'rubbish questionnaire' and 'they don't really understand the literature'.

Mr A revealed an internal conflict, on the one hand emphasising EBC in order to give credibility to the field of coaching, while on the other hand providing no clear pathway as to how this evidence could improve coaching practice and coach training. That is the reason EBC faces criticism, but the criticism is not against ‘adopting’ ideas from other disciplines; rather, it is against ‘not adapting’ those ideas according to the nature of coaching.

7.2.4 Empiricism for coaching recognition in community

Evidence-based coaching practitioners believe that empirical evidence can increase the acceptance of coaching as a reliable and valid leadership development intervention in the wider community. However, the analysis of responses from three coaches in this group demonstrate that the wider community providing the recognition is primarily the psychological community.

Mr B further elaborated on the significance of evidence:

I think if we can develop a body of evidence that is founded on good empirical methods and good research designs, then I think we're on a much better footing in terms of being able to say concrete things about coaching and how it's helpful.

Mr B emphasised the current challenges faced by the coaching industry discussed in literature, that the coaching world is urged to gather solid evidence on the effectiveness of coaching through well-designed outcome studies (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Mr B and Mr A both have a background in psychology and they appeared to be discussing evidence-based challenges and the coaching community's expectations from a psychologist's perspective. However, Mr G, who has a business background, thinks that a

standard business coach doesn't worry about the same expectations as psychologists. Mr A and Mr G provided examples from their practice where an individual coachee (in the case of Mr A) and an organisation (in the case of Mr G) refused to take quantitative measures in the coaching process. This indicates that it is usually not required by the buyers of coaching; rather, it is a requirement of the 'gatekeepers of coaching' as mentioned by Mr A, 'outcome studies ... [are] ... is really important, those are the kind of things that impress people, particularly the gatekeepers of coaching'. It appears that coaches A and B perceive psychologists as a wider coaching community whose recognition of coaching is a reliable and valid leadership intervention. Reiterating on his previous point, Mr B said:

if coaching is improving its act from an empirical standpoint then it also starts to become more respected, I think, in the wider community.

The above two quotes from Mr B describe the implications of evidence on establishing its credibility as a useful leadership development technique that can also increase the acceptance of coaching in the wider community. This coach builds the business case for coaching around its effectiveness and increased acceptance and recognition by the wider community of coaching stakeholders. But he overlooked a closely related aspect of business case – personalised intervention. This personalised dimension of coaching needs to be restored while emphasising outcomes measurement.

Mr A is an evidence-based practitioner whose coaching practice is informed by cognitive behavioural solution-focused approach. He described the cyclical nature of scientific method, defining EBC as informed by the existing knowledge base. The above example demonstrates how he tests coaching methodology, informed by the existing knowledge of coaching approach he takes to practice. EBP operates on the deductive method of research, where hypotheses are deduced from existing theories and tested in the light of empirical evidence and then accepted or rejected according to whether the hypotheses conform to the

existing theories. This cycle repeats itself. The deductive route adopted by EBP is one of the major topics discussed in the fields of nursing, medicine and psychology (Goldenberg, 2006; Mullen & Streiner, 2004; Nathan, 2004). Hjørland (2011) discussed the narrow focus of empiricists because practitioners lose their autonomy, the understanding of both theory and underlying mechanisms is weakened, and the concept of evidence is too narrow in the empiricist tradition. In addition it focuses, as empirical sciences do, on objects of experience but not on lived experience itself. Indeed, it discards the latter (Hjørland, 2011).

Mr B takes an evidence-based approach to executive coaching and defines evidence-based coaching in these words:

Evidence-based coaching is coaching in a way that the practices, the tools and techniques that you're using in the coaching engagement are grounded and founded in empirical evidence in some way, so that there's some form of either scientific support or practice-based support for what people are doing. I think it's a critical issue within the coaching industry particularly because of the unregulated nature of the industry.

As the above quotation indicates, 'evidence-based coaching' makes use of scientific method to assess the tools and techniques of coaching approaches to support what coaches do in practice. Mr B emphasised 'support' while Mr A spoke of 'empirical evidence', a distinction that should be held in mind as empirical evidence by its very nature might not support but can also refute practices. It enables us to say what does and does not work. Furthermore, empirical evidence is less about the person or way of being of the coach, and more about the assessment of methods, tools and techniques of coaching.

Mr G also takes an evidence-based approach to executive coaching, with a similar view of evidence as other evidence-based coaches such as Mr A and Mr B:

Well, it's developing a picture and a framework around interventions in the coaching paradigm that from a statistically measurable point of view work. Understanding their sort of theoretical foundations, understanding the mechanisms that sit within the frameworks that people are using. Getting the evidence from that and testing it, both from sort of an output and an outcome perspective. The output I would argue is at the point of exit, did this work and then the outcome would be something that you would measure later, and grounding that in some kind of theory, some kind of theoretical framework.

The above three definitions provided by three evidence-based practitioners (A, B and G) share the same principles found in the EBC literature. The above definitions refer to conduct using words such as 'statistically measurable', 'outcome', 'output', 'empirical evidence' and 'tools and techniques'. This emphasis on measurement meets another condition for evidence-based coaching: that coaches need to be trained in research methodologies, statistical and data analysis skills (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). Evidence-based coaching values the quantitative/statistical skills needed to design, administer and evaluate measurement instruments designed to test the effectiveness of coaching theories. EBC suggests that practitioners are trained to evaluate their practice by designing and implementing evidence-based interventions (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004), and well-designed outcome studies prove coaching as a valid and reliable change methodology (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007a).

Mr A adheres to the above condition of EBC:

One of the key things about getting information about the effectiveness of coaching out there is first of all being able to collect information and data that's actually meaningful.

What is meaningful for these coaches is primarily quantitative data for developing, validating and standardising measurement scales to demonstrate the effectiveness of coaching approaches. For example, Mr B shows his preference for quantitative measurement:

Well I guess I've probably got more of a quantitative preference in terms of the research that I'm most attracted to ...

So yeah, I don't really read many case studies as such, I prefer broader research approaches, I guess, in terms of assessing general levels of effectiveness across multiple individuals rather than just single case studies or similar designs.

7.2.5 Situationally specific experiential knowledge

According to these practitioners, the biggest challenge to the coaching community is to prove coaching as a reliable and valid change methodology, as discussed by Grant and Cavangh (2007). In order to meet the requirements of reliability and validity, they are undermining the situationally specific knowledge or know-how developed through coaching, and transforming it into more like a standardised practice that can be measured through standardised instruments to give same results if the conditions are kept constant. While these situationally specific learning experiences are reported to be an important contribution by coaching in executive development (Joo, 2005; Sherman & Freas, 2004) (for more detailed explanation see Chapter 2, Section 2.2), there is a danger in reductionist forms of evidence-based coaching not only ignoring but even negating what coaches learn through the lived experience of their practice.

This leads to a further issue needing clarification: just because evidence might be empirical, it is not necessarily experiential. Empirical evidence is objective, requiring a researcher to stand outside of the experience as an observer or spectator of the game, and thus it is independent of experience, whereas learning through practice is experiential without necessarily being empirical, that is, objective. Experiential learning is learning from within the game of coaching. A researcher can have a refined empirical knowledge without being experienced as a practitioner. A practitioner can be experienced without having an empirical knowledge. EBC is in danger of eliminating experiential knowledge. The challenge is to integrate both.

The three coaches A, B and G expressed a similar understanding of evidence-based coaching as cited in the literature (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). They showed their interest in measurement and evaluation of coaching outcomes, and all agreed that they understand the principles and methodology of research being a coach (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004). All three coaches believe in the scientist-practitioner model, which requires that coach training programs explicitly address the theoretical and empirical foundations of coaching, and provide training in sound research methodologies, basic statistical and data analysis skills, and foster informed critical thinking skills in student coaches. Such an approach would form the basis of an evidence-based coaching paradigm. Experience and anecdotal evidence suggests that current coach training is generally woefully inadequate in preparing students to understand and utilise empirically sound research (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004).

These three coaches all met the conditions of EBC to be placed in this category, despite differences between coaches with a business background and those with a psychology background. Mr G, who has a business background, does not believe that the evidence-based movement should be heavily influenced by psychology. This coach considers that the growth of the coaching profession is not a result simply of its merger with the field of

psychology. The literature identifies four areas of best current knowledge directly related to the research and practice of executive, workplace and life coaching: (i) Behavioural Sciences, (ii) Business and Economic Science, (iii) Adult education including workplace learning and development, and (iv) Philosophy (Grant, 2005). Mr G observed is that EBC is heavily influenced by behavioural sciences, particularly psychology, with little input from the other three areas. Difference of opinion such as this keeps the field of coaching open to learning from various disciplines, rather than being skewed towards a single discipline.

7.3 Reflective practice-based coaching

Reflective practice-based practitioners agreed with the notion of evidence-based coaching but they added an extra component to their understanding of the term ‘evidence’: reflecting on their own practice.

7.3.1 Evidence has empirical and reflective components

For these coaches, evidence is incomplete without reflecting on coaching practice. Mr D defined reflective practice-based coaching as follows:

My understanding is there's two parts to that. One is that coaching has a sound theoretical basis from which there's, you know, a solid methodological framework has been developed, and that the other part is more the empirical side of or people collecting data about the effectiveness of coaching, which in a sense can be a testing of a certain theoretical approach to coaching. The other part to me is the encouraging the coach to be, what I call like a reflective practitioner. Yeah, so it's almost like, okay,

you're a practitioner but you're reflecting about your own approach as you go. So in a sense I suppose it's first-hand research of your own coaching.

The last two statements need to be emphasised: reflective practitioner approaches do not simply reflect on a methodology independent of the coach; rather, they reflect on the way the coach operates in practice in order to observe, correct and improve their own performance as coaches. As indicated at the beginning of the quote, there is no refutation of evidence-based approaches to examining techniques and tools of coaching. However, there is a willingness to recognise that coaching research needs to embrace more than the examination of methods, and that the coach brings themselves into the process; the coach needs to reflect on their own way of coaching as part of a critical examination.

Mr D discussed two important dimensions of evidence. First is empirical evidence that informs the theoretical grounds of coaching practice. Second, he emphasised the importance of collecting experiential evidence (i.e., first-hand research of your approach to coaching). It relates to an important debate in the literature about whether coaches are content experts or process experts (Kempster & Iszatt-White, 2012). Coaches need to inform their practice on existing knowledge but at the same time they also learn from their experience about the effectiveness of the coaching process. If coaches are content experts who know the theoretical concepts of their coaching approach and also have business knowledge, at the same time the effectiveness of their coaching also depends on the actual coaching process (techniques, coach and coachee characteristics), whereas a major source of learning about the effectiveness of coaching process is experiential evidence. Experience plays a vital role in enhancing process expertise of coaches, along with empirical evidence.

Ms I took a reflective approach to executive coaching and shared her views on evidence:

To me evidence-based coaching is using approaches that have been found to produce sustained behavioural change. So I'm interest in approaches that are found to have a profound impact on behavior in a long-term way.

Ms I perceives that evidence is useful by informing the practice of coaches so they can take the approaches to coaching which are found to produce behavioural change. Ms I spoke of 'sustained behavioural change', and 'profound impact on behaviour in a long-term way'. She spoke of distal outcomes, which can be differentiated into individual success and organisational success (Joo, 2005). Individual success includes individual performance, compensation, promotion, job satisfaction and commitment, and psychological wellness, whereas organisational success includes organisational performance, talent retention and organisational transformation (Joo, 2005). Ms I favoured a developmental focus, described by Joo as individual success, rather than a goal-focused approach to coaching.

Being a reflective practitioner, Ms I responded to the effectiveness of evidence in coaching practice:

I think the approach of the coach at a personal level is really important and probably could override some of the evidence; they might just get good outcomes through that. But with entrenched difficult-to-change behaviours you probably need to bring a bit more science to it.

In the above quote Ms I mentioned that the impact of a coach's experience overpowers the evidence. Experience can solve complex puzzles in unique situations where evidence is not found or where it doesn't help because the situation is different. This is similar to the point raised by Shedler (2013) in the context of manualised psychotherapies that treatment manuals are not helpful if applied without adapting to the situation. Shedler has maintained that therapists in the real world adapt their approaches to the needs of individual patients,

and their practice methods also evolve over time as they learn through hard-won experience what is helpful to patients and what is not. What Shedler found in the context of psychology is similar to what Ms I found in her coaching practice. Unique coaching situations demand ‘more science’, which she refers to as a coach’s personal approach, while for Shedler it ‘evolves over time’.

Reinforcing her previous point, Ms I seemed to be more in favour of experience or practice as a source of learning, as she is a reflective coach:

Buyers look for experience more than training. So there’s a feeling out there that experience is one of the most reliable predictors of being effective as a coach, and I’m probably biased in that way. But you can be very experienced without using good evidence. So for me my experience counts a lot.

Ms I emphasised the importance of learning through practice, which is central to theoretical concepts of reflective approaches to executive coaching, as discussed in Chapter 4. Theoretical concepts of reflective practice-based approaches emphasise learning by reflection in the context of action and lived experience (for example, Argyris, 1991; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb 2005; Rakoczy & Money, 1995). Working, thinking through or meditating on experience is an important aspect of how adults learn (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience in the context of practice (Kolb, 1984: 41).

7.3.2 Implications of reflective skills in coach training

Developing reflective practitioner skills in graduate coaches is a major component of coach training programs run by Mr D, who runs an international coaching business. He

highlighted the course component, especially the aim to develop reflective skills in his graduates:

In the final semester they have to engage in a series of conversations with people outside the course. So they have to find people that want to be coached by them and they have eight of these conversations, and we ask them to basically be a reflective practitioner to provide a detailed report that's got two parts to it.

Mr D further elaborated on the reflective components of his coach training programs:

That's got what do they notice about their own demeanor, how do they manage themselves mentally and emotionally as the coach. And so that's the first part. And then the second part is we ask them to report in detail about what aspects of the methodology did you use and what seemed to be the effects of that. And then the third part we've got a very simple, I think it's about five questions, like a one page evaluation form, we ask the people who have been coached to fill out. It's an evaluation of the coach, the coaching. So the students in the course, they report on the coaching and they submit the coachees' evaluation as well.

The coach training approach taken by Mr D is similar to that of Gelso (2006), who emphasised that practice is a potent, perhaps the most potent, source of ideas for research. In contrast to the traditional notion that research hypotheses are derived from the literature, students may be shown how working with clients provides a fertile source of material for empirical investigation. We need to teach students to 'look inward' for research questions and idea' (Gelso, 1979: 29). Mr D integrated a similar practitioner model by observing and reflecting back on the practice to learn and improve their practice.

Ms I explained how her practice is informed by reflective skills training:

I've encouraged my coachees to write scripts, to do a lot of writing and do a lot of rehearsal, to do reflection, and to make notes, to keep a journal. So, you know, you're bringing a whole lot of practices that I'm encouraging them and relating it back to if this is something you really wanted to achieve, this is what you will need to do to get there.

She re-emphasised 'so it's part of my rhetoric all the time'. She provided the reason for grounding her practice on this rhetoric:

And it gives them responsibility then for the outcomes more than for me, because it's about adherence to protocols and to things. And if they're not getting there I'll be saying to them, 'What is it you think you need to do more of?'

The above lived examples from reflective practitioners demonstrate that they believe practice is a potent source of learning, for both coachees and practitioners. Their practice of coaching is based on inductive research (Blackstone, 2012), which allows practitioners to be open and exploratory to observe, reflect and learn from practice, and to test and establish the creditability of coaching theories without being limited by the existing knowledge base.

7.3.3 Commonly used research methods

Reflective practitioners use qualitative research methods as these resonate with the epistemological grounds of the coaching concept they take to practice. Case study is one of the most commonly used method to study their approach to coaching, such as described below by Mr D:

In fact we've got case studies happening all the time through people doing the graduate diploma, and some of them have given me permission to include them in the coaching examples of the three books I've written.

Mr D chose the case-study method because his emphasis on learning through reflection and case study provides rich source of in-depth information about the coaching experience and learning from the coachee.

When asked about the research in which she is interested, Ms I responded:

I'm more interested in research that looks at, is based on more observational feedback of behaviour. I think more I'm interested in research which shows profound shifts in behaviour, and that's usually not reliant just on self-report but perhaps reports by managers, by direct reports and things like that.

The above two lived examples from coaches are in line with the literature review on reflective practice-based approaches (Chapter 4), where most of the research done by practitioners is qualitative, such as case studies (Sieler, 2003, 2007); guided reflective practice, reflective diary, focus groups (Cox, 2005); IPA; interviews (Passmore & Mortimer, 2011); behavioural skills coaching (Allison & Ayllon, 1980); case study (Rees & Porter, 2013) and thematic analysis (Kahn, 2011).

After analysing the participants' responses, Mr D and Ms I were grouped as reflective practice-based coaches. The theoretical concepts of coaching they take to practice can be traced back to constructionism, which allows practitioners to construct reality based on their experience. Michael Crotty (2003) has defined constructionism, noting that there is no objective truth waiting for us to discover. Truth or meaning comes into existence out of our engagement with the realities in our world. There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning

is not discovered but constructed. In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. This is precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one culture to another, where subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning. Constructionism resonates, therefore, with qualitative methods of inquiry (Crotty, 2003). Reflective practice-based forms of coaching believe in the same principles of constructionism. Both Coaches Mr D and Ms I accept Gelso's (2006) model, where practice is the most potent source for learning. Analysis of these coaches' responses show that they have no doubts about their beliefs in reflective practice, as was found in evidence-based coaches. Neither Mr D nor Ms I criticised the notion of EBC; rather, they explained it in their own words as it is explained in literature, illustrating their open-mindedness in that they agree with a practitioner model while they believe in reflective practice. Their definition of evidence has an added component – reflective practice – which was not found in the EBC category, but they had no doubts about the implications of reflective practice in coaching practice and for coach training programs.

7.4 Practice-based evidence

Four coaches were classified in this group – Ms C, Ms E, Ms F and Mr H – mainly because they all held some doubt about the narrow definition of evidence proposed by evidence-based coaching practitioners. These coaches were more open-minded in accepting different forms of evidence and suggesting an inclusive framework for coaching practitioners to embrace these different forms to work in collaboration rather than in competition. These four coaches expressed their concern for the future growth of the coaching profession but they focused on working through embracing the differences and working together under the shared meaning of evidence. These coaches do not believe that a scientific paradigm is

the only paradigm for sense-making in the field of coaching. Rather, they accept the unique epistemological grounds for different concepts of coaching and for choosing the most suitable methodology. Coaches from both evidence-based coaching and reflective practice-based evidence approaches were classified under this category, because they all want coaching to be integrated instead of fragmented.

7.4.1 Single research paradigm for sense-making of coaching

One of the major doubts by practice-based evidence coaches was enhancing understanding by limiting coaching to an evidence-based paradigm. These coaches were doubtful about proposing a single research paradigm for practitioners because coaching is multidisciplinary and calls for multiple research paradigms for sense making, based on the uniqueness of different concepts it offers to practice. Ms E took a reflective concept of executive coaching to her practice and explained the notion of evidence:

I think we invented that ten years ago to try and bring dignity to coaching. I think we now need to let it go because it's only a kind of game play really. The concept of evidence-based in itself is a kind of flawed concept that's come out of medicine and maths and so which are only one paradigm for understanding and making sense of things. But I don't think that coaching should confine itself to that.

Ms E described EBP as an obsolete and flawed concept, rejected in the field from where it had originated. She thought it unwise to adopt an obsolete concept in the hope that an emerging discipline would flourish. In the above quote, Ms E called EBC 'a game play' and 'we now need to let it go'. The response from Ms E shows that, following on from

medicine, even in coaching practitioners now realise why the notion of evidence is being used and disseminated.

Ms E further emphasised that coaching shouldn't be confined to only one paradigm (scientific) for understanding. This argument is appealing because if coaching is multidisciplinary then it should be open to embrace a range of several paradigms for sense-making. She further added on the nature of coaching:

Because it's eclectic and informed by many disciplines it needs to allow itself to be open to understanding new things rather than the other way of saying we will only allow it once there is hard evidence for it. I don't think that matters, I think you just need to stay modest.

For Ms E, the strength of coaching is that it is multidisciplinary with potential for growth and expansion. She believes that if practitioners try to limit its boundaries by scientific paradigm, it will limit the possibilities of innovation and consequently its future growth.

Ms C is an evidence-based executive coach and defined EBC as follows:

There's probably two levels that I would approach this at. So the one is the use of evidence for scientific research in informing the content and informing my own development. So there's that level of me, myself, as a coach. And then the second is bringing the evidence for coaching and trying to keep up to date with the evidence that there is around coaching to then inform how I would put together coaching programs for organisations and what that might look like to inform who might be coached within an organisation.

While defining EBC, Ms C talked about its implications for coaches' personal development and for coach training programs. As she moved on to explaining the criteria of evidence she was uncomfortable with the narrow definition of evidence:

My belief would be that the vast majority of coaches want to be evidence-based, but it's also being able to fit that evidence into what at times is largely an intuitive process too. So it's being able to fit the evidence or integrate the evidence seamlessly in an intuitive process, so with coaching being more an art than a skill.

Ms C is an evidence-based coach but she was doubtful about the narrow concept of evidence that cannot incorporate the different forms of evidence found in coaching practice. She appeared to be saying that the 'vast majority' of coaches desire to be evidence-based, but the evidence should be inclusive and capable of holding different forms of evidence together.

Ms C noted that the forms of evidence she found did not meet the criteria of scientific evidence in the strict empiricist tradition and so did not meet the conditions of EBC. She mentioned her confusion by highlighting the narrow definition of evidence used by EBC. Her response can be traced back to the criticism of evidence in medicine, nursing and psychology (Hjørland, 2011; Milton, 2002; Mullen & Streiner, 2004; Nathan, 2004;). This criticism led these fields to move from evidence-based practice to practice-based evidence (see Chapter 5 for more detailed discussion). Ms C also conveyed her doubts about informing a spontaneous, fluid and dynamic process of coaching based on the existing knowledge base.

Ms E further explained the challenge of addressing the spontaneity of coaching sessions. She believes in an inductive approach where evidence comes from practice:

If you videotaped a coaching session you could probably find enormous evidence of competencies in it and you could link that to efficacy according to a particular model or approach, but you couldn't do it the other way around, you can't just take the model or approach and apply it.

Neither Ms E nor Ms C were comfortable with starting a coaching conversation with general theories and then moving to the specific concerns of coaches; rather, they believe in the other way around, that is, from specific situation to general theories. Ms E commented further:

I think that if we took a narrow scientific approach that would impede the development of coaching because it would immediately make it less nimble. To only build on scientifically based concepts of evidence we would lose our capacity to be exploratory and postmodern. So I think that as long as we take an evidence-based approach to be wider than scientific evidence we're on a good course.

The above comment shows that, like other PBE coaches, Ms E criticised the narrow concept of evidence but is happy to agree with an EBC approach if it broadens the definition of evidence. For Ms E that is the right track for the future growth of the coaching profession.

7.4.2 Sources of theorising

Ms F took a reflective approach to coaching and shared her views on evidence:

That's coaching that's informed by some kind of systematic research. And that might be from literature or from exploring practice or it might be some piece of designed fieldwork, like a Masters dissertation or a PhD, etc.

Ms F talked about both sources of theorising in coaching: literature and practice. She favours integrating theory and practice, rather than just informing the coaching practice by the existing knowledge base. Ms F combined both sources of theorising in coaching proposed by both perspectives: evidence-based coaching (literature) and reflective practice-based coaching (practice).

7.4.3 The relationship between practice-based value-in-use and scientific evidence

Coaches expressed their doubts about the relationship between scientific knowledge, gained abstractly, and the usefulness of know-how gained from practice. Just because evidence may be scientific does not mean it is useful, and not all forms of usefulness are amenable to scientific analysis.

Ms E doubts the practical problems in valid measurement of coaching outcomes:

Very often we can't attribute exactly how an intervention, a conversation, an insight, did or didn't contribute to an outcome. One wants to be careful about it because scientific evidence is often found to be wrong.

She also doubts the conditions for evidence in scientific paradigm, and questions the need for scientific evidence:

For centuries we have known meditation is effective. It's only the last decade we've been able to understand what's happening in your brain when you're doing it that explains why it's effective, but should we have not allowed it for all those centuries because we didn't have evidence? The evidence we had was observation of its effectiveness and that is real evidence. Whereas the evidence-based coaching we're talking about is using a very narrow definition of evidence.

Ms E raised a valid point about the danger of dominance of an evidence-based approach. Her doubts about taking a narrow concept of evidence and accepting or rejecting the evidence only on conditions of meeting the scientific criteria resonates with Yankelovich (1972), who discussed the dangers of a dominant_evidence-based approach to any field:

The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is OK as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be easily measured or to give it an arbitrary quantitative value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume that what can't be measured easily really isn't important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide.

Ms E thinks that a lack of scientific evidence for techniques that practitioners have found useful should not prevent us from accepting the technique. She provided an example of meditation in the above quote. She believes such rigidity in the field of coaching, just because we are 'obsessed' by science, is not going to be helpful for the profession and it will restrict its growth. She is mindful of the transition in medicine:

Western medicine doesn't deal well with diseases. When medicine doesn't offer up clear explanations, we invent names for these conditions but actually it's a name for a black hole because we actually don't understand it.

According to Ms E, in novel situations (as above) if science doesn't provide an answer then practitioners should move from deductive inquiry to inductive inquiry. New situations demand a creative practice and practitioners should be open to trying new things to reach to the solution. It would not be helpful in such situations for practitioners to insist on being scientific and try to practise what is evidence based. An honest practice would be to accept

the not knowing and explore inductively. In an inductive approach to research, a researcher begins with a set of observations and then they move from those particular experiences to a more general set of propositions about those experiences (Blackstone, 2012).

The point made by Ms E is that science cannot prove everything (e.g., chronic fatigue), because science is only one paradigm for understanding objective things. Sometimes the nature of the subject matter demands looking for other paradigms, seeing the subjective dimension of existence in its own light, that is, without transforming it into something objective. Ironically, this means being mindful of subjectivity which is a central theme of phenomenology, and ‘the primary position of phenomenology is that the most basic human truths are accessible only through inner subjectivity’ (Thorne, 1991, cited by Flood, 2010: 7). Similarly, in coaching there are subjective dimensions that cannot be turned into objective knowledge. We should stay modest about our claims and we should embrace ‘not knowing’.

7.4.4 Coaching evaluation

Coaches expressed their doubts about objectifying data through standardised measures for coaching evaluation that is based on subjective nature of coachees’ individual objectives.

Ms C noted the difficulty of trying to quantify and measure the efficacy of coaching because coaching is personalised and tailored for each individual coachee:

It would be a difficult and tricky thing to determine what does constitute the best for an individual because it’s going to be as diverse as ... [the number of] ... people.

Ms C described how what is best for an individual varies from one coachee to another.

Rather than having a one-size-fits-all approach, the coaching strategy needs to be

determined separately for each coaching engagement. Therefore standardised measurement scales and scientific measurement are hard to achieve with soft skills development intervention. Each coaching engagement is personalised around the objectives of coaching and cannot be pre-determined to be measured in a certain way to establish its validity.

Similarly, Ms E does not favour coaching evaluation because she sees the increasing demand for coaching as evidence that it helps executives to improve their personal and professional development:

While it's an obsession, particularly in Australia, there are some people who are very sophisticated about coaching and would see it like good parenting. They don't actually need to prove a measure, they absolutely believe investing in parenting is worthwhile. And so there are some organisations who have that approach to coaching.

What is interesting in this quotation is questioning the role of evidence in coaching. The interviewee goes so far as to say that the need for evidence is a culturally shaped phenomenon rather than an objective need per se. Indeed, it could be inferred from this that the need for evidence in coaching also plays a psychological and political role. Evidence-based approaches assure a kind of psychological certainty and also confer a legitimacy on coaching.

Ms F is a reflective practice-based coach but she understands and accepts EBC. However, she does not believe that evaluating coaching outcomes is a necessary condition for establishing the efficacy of coaching practice, commenting that evaluation is not necessary to test the efficacy of your coaching once it has been proven effective:

It's just like we understand how a motor car works, so we don't have to keep proving it every time we go out in the car, we just trust that it's going to work.

Being a reflective practitioner, Ms F believes in testing her approach through observing and shaping her own practice. She explained this using the analogy of a motor car: if driver knows the car is working then he trusts and drives, instead of taking it for inspection by the mechanic every time. Similarly, reflective practitioners test their practice and trust, but they also need some supervision to reflect on their practice when they need external assistance.

Mr H provided an example from his practice about challenges in efficacy measurement:

I think there are so many different approaches to coaching and that's part of what the richness of coaching is about as much as anything. So I think there has to be multiple criteria. I think the coach needs to have kind of a suite of tools that they have available that they can choose the right ones, and again, whether it's qualitative, whether it's quantitative.

Mr H thinks that coaches should be open minded in selecting the method of measuring efficacy, choosing a method that suits both the situation and the client. Evidence-based coaches have highlighted the potential contribution made by EBC to expanding and strengthening the knowledge base of the coaching profession. The vehicle used for this purpose, EBC, is somewhat obvious (Goldenberg, 2006), but it does have a narrow focus that is based on rigorous scientific evidence.

Mr H spoke about accepting multiple criteria for multiple forms of evidence, as coaching is informed by 'many different approaches'. This open-mindedness indicates that there are more coaches (four) in this category under PBE (compared with the other two categories)

who want to move coaching from the scientific paradigm to an integrative framework that holds the field of coaching together.

7.4.5 Phenomenological data about the coachees

Coaches expressed their doubts about the absence of in-depth phenomenological data about the coachees in the EBC paradigm. They accepted notions of evidence proposed by both evidence-based coaching and reflective practice-based coaching perspectives. But at the same time, they added a third dimension: gathering subjective, phenomenological information about the coachees. Mr H was the best representative of this view; he takes an evidence-based approach to coaching and believes in EBC as defined in the literature, but he went further and added two more dimensions:

I guess there's two forms. One, it's absolutely underpinned by quality rigorous research. So looking at kind of peer review research and how does that inform your practice. So I guess the label that I use there would be the scientific practitioner.

Mr H is an evidence based practitioner but his definition of evidence is more integrative instead of rigid in terms of scientific criteria. He continues:

The other one is around being a reflective practitioner. So looking at the evidence of my own practice, so what worked, what didn't work, how do I reflect on my successes, my failures, what's going on for me and how do I use that evidence to help me? So I guess in terms of that, the importance of supervision to help me to reflect on my practice is really important.

This adds a new dimension that is central to reflective practice but is not necessarily highlighted in evidence-based approaches, that is, the latter do not include discussion on

the effect of supervision on coaching performance, while the former tend to see reflection through the supervision relationship as a way of checking their own performance and attunement. Mr H further added to his definition of evidence:

And just recently I was speaking to a woman around evidence-based practice and she introduced the notion of gathering evidence from, and it was a health-based one, and she said gathering evidence from the patient. So I thought from a client perspective, and she said, 'You need to understand the client and the evidence that they present to inform your approach because if you don't understand where they're at, what their pressures are, what their world is, then you're not necessarily able to help them'.

This example shared by Mr H from a health practitioner shows the transition from evidence-based practice to in-depth qualitative data collection about patients. This trend is found in the fields of medicine, nursing and psychology (Flood, 2010; Goldenberg, 2006; Nathan, 2004; Pringle, Hendry & McLafferty, 2011). Mr H appreciated the health practitioner's suggestion to understand the world of patient/client in order to help him out. This movement in medicine and health-related fields, from empirical evidence to experiential evidence, reflects the interest towards phenomenological methods of research as discussed by Mr H. However, phenomenologists are critical of evidence-based medicine and question why the evidence is assumed to come primarily from 'objective' measures (Goldenberg, 2006), arguing instead that the patients' self-understanding and experience of illness also offers a legitimate source of relevant medical knowledge. This theoretical approach is grounded in the philosophy of Edmund Husserl and his followers, who questioned the philosophical completeness of natural sciences. For these scholars, science cannot address human self-understanding. Husserl (1970) attributes this 'crisis of meaning'

to the failure of positivist natural science. It points out the narrow focus of evidence in empiricist tradition that might leads to reductionism between theory and practitioners' wisdom.

7.5 Summary of findings

The analysis identified various doubts about the phenomenon of evidence-based practice in the field of executive coaching. Interview data were analysed in line with IPA method.

Analysis of responses from nine executive coaches using patterns of similarities and differences classified them into three strands of evidence: evidence-based coaching, reflective practice-based coaching and practice-based evidence.

Three executive coaches in the evidence-based coaching category believe in EBC, while expressing doubts about the implications of evidence for coach training and translating the evidence to the wider coaching community with diverse background. One coach doubts that work published by coaching psychologists helps the field of coaching; rather, in this scenario EBC is used as a vehicle for moving the coaching profession towards psychology.

Two executive coaches grouped into the reflective practice-based camp agree with the notion of EBC but emphasised it must include a reflective dimension to the evidence. They have no doubts about the implications of reflective practice for coaching practice and coach training.

Coaches from the third category, practice-based evidence, accept the notion of evidence proposed by the EBC perspective but highlighted the narrow concept of evidence where different forms of evidence do not fit easily. These coaches suggested using multiple criteria to embrace multiple forms of evidence. They believe in both sources of theorising in coaching: evidence-based coaching (theory) and reflective practice-based coaching

(practice). They seem less appreciative of coaching evaluation and more influenced by the idea (from medicine) to gather phenomenological data about the client (coachee) and the coaching experience. Most of the coaches (four) were classified into this category because they were open-minded to an inclusive framework that embrace both notions of evidence-based coaching and reflective practice-based coaching.

The coachees' doubts about the narrow concept of evidence, and its implications for coaching practice and coach training, resonate with the transition of EBC to PBE in medicine, nursing, psychology literature (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The findings suggest the need for a shift from the narrow concept of evidence to the broader concept (PBE) that holds both forms of coaching together.

As the literature on evidence-based coaching evolves it shows the transition from a narrow definition of scientific evidence (Grant & Cavanagh, 2004) to a broad, less reductionist definition of evidence that includes a contribution from professional wisdom (Grant, 2016). A recent shift in the evidence-based coaching literature highlights acceptance that coaching is different from medicine. Grant (2016) has proposed a broad definition of evidence-based coaching, where both empirical evidence and professional wisdom have considerable and often equal value. Furthermore, coaches cannot obtain evidence in a similar way to medical practitioners, because the traditional hierarchy of evidence in medicine cannot be applied to coaching (Grant, 2016). Coach A explained a similar point when he said, 'But we're not medical scientists, so we can't have that degree of certainty or that degree of accuracy about what we do, because we're working within human systems not biological systems'.

Grant (2016) maintains that evidence can be in any form, but it has to be reliable and valid. The research methods at the top of the traditional evidence-based hierarchy are ranked highest in terms of meeting the criteria of reliability and validity. However, even though

phenomenological research methods do not base themselves on conditions of reliability and validity, they do have a systematic approach to research. The discipline of developing narratives is just that: a discipline. For example, IPA has been proposed in nursing and medicine as an alternative method for addressing the shortcomings of empiricism (Goldenberg, 2006). Whereas EBC allows for the development of objective knowledge, IPA allows us to access the lived experience. It is important not to conflate objective knowledge and lived experience. A researcher having objective knowledge of X does not guarantee they will have a familiar or felt sense of X in the context of practice. To know the objective dimensions of a situation does not mean to know one's way about in the situation. IPA facilitates developing the narrative of the felt sense of a situation, something that is central to practice but is not within the paradigm of EBC (Smith, 2011).

The relationship between the general conclusions reached in evidence-based coaching research and particular practices of coaching is a question that needs to be raised. Whether or not there is evidence at the general level of research bears no relationship to the performer being an effective practitioner. Indeed, this is where the value of reflective practice-based approaches emerges, for these approaches encourage coaching practitioners to reflect on their practice in the context of performance. General evidence alone does not provide this continuous development in practice, and a range of the interviewees supported the notion of integrating evidence and reflective practice.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The present study investigated different perspectives of coaching in order to explore the similarities and differences in research frameworks used in different forms of coaching. Based on a literature review, a critique of coaching literature in terms of transitions in medical and nursing research, and on empirical research, this study concludes with the recommendation that research (and education) in coaching move from a dominant focus on evidence-based research (EBR) to practitioner-based evidence (PBE).

The present research is an initiative towards developing an integrative research framework to embrace all research approaches by appreciating that difference and doubt are not obstacles but open up the possibility of testing assumptions through which a shared discourse becomes possible. This integrative framework is to be found in PBE. A movement towards integrating different forms of evidence will enhance the professional maturity of the coaching industry, which is achieved where there is shared understanding even though there might be differences of points of view. In fact, as has been said, shared understanding is a fruitful outcome of working effectively with different points of view.

Development in the recent past to increase the collaboration among coaching stakeholders, such as *Guidelines for coaching in organisations* (2010) published by Standards Australia, is an encouraging step towards PBE. It shows that the industry is ready to move towards embracing the differences among the practitioners that result from their multidisciplinary backgrounds. This study suggests that it is now time to promote a practitioner model that integrates the rich evidence of all forms to progress towards transforming the coaching industry into a professional discipline.

8.1 Implications for theory

The key finding from this research sets the grounds for a shift from EBP to PBE in the field of executive coaching, as has already occurred in the fields of medicine, nursing and psychology. Integration of evidence-based and reflective practice-based forms of evidence under the notion of PBE is a further development into the contemporary notion of evidence-based coaching (Cavanagh, Grant & Kemp 2005). What emerged from the data in this study is that practitioners have been categorised into three groups. One group is inclined to exercise the evidence-based view that emphasises rigorous standardised and systematic research; on the other hand are coaches who emphasise the reflective practice-based evidence and are reflective practitioners. Four coaches mentioned dissatisfaction with the narrow concept of evidence because it is unable to hold different forms of evidence. These coaches believe in the notion of evidence but the other way around – that is, practice as a rich source of learning through one's own experience. This recent trend in the coaching industry is hoped to contribute towards the importance of learning by reflection for developing oneself as a coach.

These two research-based coaching perspectives – evidence-based coaching and reflective practice-based coaching – were found to be associated with the divide between academically trained coaches and business-trained coaches, as the multidisciplinary training is not the only distinguishing feature between the practitioners of various coaching approaches. Furthermore, their views about the type of evidence they look for to assess the efficacy of coaching are also different. Business-trained coaches are more inclined towards evaluation through reflecting on their practice in order to learn and improve their performance. For them, this is first-hand evidence of efficacy of their coaching approach.

On the other hand, coaches who strictly follow the evidence-based view place more emphasis on the evidence from theory or research, and not on first-hand evidence from

their practice. This kind of evidence adds more to the theoretical concepts of coaching but less towards the theoretical development of coaching process, which itself is an integral part of the coaching theory. As a result, coach characteristics and delivery of coaching techniques through the coaching process play a vital role in the success of coaching engagements.

To discuss the future of evidence-based coaching, consideration should be given to the practical experience of business-trained coaches and thus to an appreciation of the transition from EBC to PBE. Another significant difference found among the two categories of coaches was that their orientation to the dissemination of scholarly evidence (published research) to the coaching community varies. Business-trained coaches shared their experience that organisations rarely make decisions based on the coaching literature. Similarly, general coaching practitioners tend not to read sophisticated published papers which are beyond their comprehension. In this scenario, the literature on evidence-based coaching addresses a limited audience (scholars). This divide between business and academic should be kept in mind when considering the future dynamics of the coaching industry.

The results of this research support the exploration of whether a coaching perspective (PBE) can be proposed by integrating the evidence from both broad coaching perspectives (evidence-based and reflective practice-based) on a range of coaching approaches. Moreover, another divide among coaches in terms of business-trained and academically trained shows the multiplicity of the background of coaches. This research illustrates the legitimacy of multiple forms of coaching practice. These findings suggest further theoretical development in this direction, which might lead towards setting the grounds for practice-based evidence by bridging the gap between both perspectives. In that case, this

research could be an initiative for overcoming the fragmentation of the unregulated coaching industry.

8.2 Implications for practice

The research has three major practical applications.

First, it provides an interdisciplinary research framework for executive coaching which allows the diverse community of practitioners (evidence-based, reflective practice-based and practice based evidence) to collaborate in terms of practice and research. It is hoped that this collaboration among the stakeholders leads towards further progress of this industry.

Second, the research allows the coach training institutions to inform the coaching curriculum by integrating the evidence of a broad range of coaching approaches. Karl Marx once said that ‘circumstances change and the educators must themselves be educated’. This applies to the coaching industry. Although we may be progressing beyond the ‘wild west’, an image used in the introductory chapter, coaching is a dynamic field consisting of multiple stakeholders. Thus researchers and coaching educators need to rethink their research and theoretical assumptions in the light of the way in which practice and the plurality of stakeholders in the field emerge. This seems quite apt: if coaching involves reflection on practice, then research into coaching ought also to involve reflection on the practice of researching into coaching. The same point applies to coaching educators, as well as to the way in which coaching curricula are designed: it is recommended that they incorporate the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. This will facilitate educating future coaches to be more exploratory, open-minded and receptive to the changes happening in the field of coaching in regards to the practitioner models.

Finally, although this point has not been discussed in the thesis, this research has implications for the *Guidelines for coaching in organisations* (2010) developed by Standards Australia. It contributes to the development of coaching standards for practice and research developing a shared understanding across the different research practices. It is worth repeating that the methodological approach of this research, IPA, is grounded in the notion that recognising difference and working through difference is the basis for the development of shared understanding for coaching research, practice and education.

8.3 Limitations

Like all other research, this thesis has limitations, both external and internal. The external limitations are easier to outline. This thesis underwent a dramatic refocusing due to the unavailability of a research cohort. As was pointed out in the autobiographical introduction, the initial focus of this thesis was to test a particular approach to the efficacy of executive coaching based on Albert Bandura's (1997) work on efficacy. An efficacy scale had been developed in line with Bandura's empirical methodology (paper based on scale development presented at 23rd International Business Research Conference, 2013). It had also been validated on a pilot group of MBA students. However, at the last minute, a team within a corporate division of a company that had committed itself to providing both the experimental and control groups for a particular approach to coaching that would then be assessed in terms of Bandura's scale of efficacy, needed to use the managers they had allocated to this study elsewhere.

It therefore became necessary to make a radical shift in the thesis topic in order to complete within the time stipulated for the candidature. It was in this context that the idea was introduced of assessing the way in which the concept of evidence is used in different approaches to coaching. Once the thesis supervisor had agreed to this change of direction,

it was a matter of finding executive coaches, from as diverse coaching approaches as possible, to interview. This in itself was not only challenging but time consuming, and this shift in the middle of the candidature impacted the timeframe to complete this research.

Be that as it may, it is hoped that the thesis will be an invitation for others to continue to explore the range of notions of evidence in executive coaching and to contribute to further research into PBE. It is expected that the distinction between evidence-based and reflective practice-based perspectives and continued work in the area of PBE will be fruitful as a basis for working towards professionalising executive coaching.

A further limitation of this study is not exploring the subjective relationship between coach and coachee. It is not only the coachees' objectives that are subjective, but the relationship between coach and coachee is also subjective and cannot be put in objective terms, because it varies not only from coach to coach but even from one coachee to another for the same coach. The relationship therefore cannot simply be standardised in a scientific way. This was not something that is explored in the thesis but there is much in the literature on this aspect that is worth studying.

North American coaches were requested to participate in the study but unfortunately they failed to reply. Therefore, this research is limited to six commonly used approaches to executive coaching; furthermore, the study could not be expanded because the consent to interview the practitioners of some other approaches could not be obtained. It would be interesting to study the North American coaching practice in future studies.

The internal obstacles refer to the biases of the researcher. Every research approach has its own bias and when research is being conducted into processes of research (meta-research) one can expect the researcher to have their own biases. Interestingly enough, the biases of this researcher were built around training, which was always evidence-based in the

empirical sense of the word. The research was initiated with the expectations that there would be almost universal agreement that empirical research was the most appropriate and legitimate form of research. The result was a clear vision that it is one among a number of research approaches. It was not expected that the category ‘reflective practice research’ would emerge, and it was a pleasant surprise when it did. Thus, on a personal level, I learnt something new. I believe research is about being willing to learn something new; to work with the unexpected. It also seemed to me that most coaches, whether empirical or reflective practice-based, were eager and open to seeing research in different ways.

8.4 Future research

Future researchers may wish to investigate the dynamics of the development of the two major coaching perspectives (evidence-based coaching and reflective feedback-based coaching) over time, since in a changing coaching industry, evolutionary factors could conceivably transform these perspectives. Future research could further explore the differences between these perspectives to deepen our understanding. Furthermore, exploration to find ways of integrating both perspectives in future research could be a next constructive step towards paradigm maturity.

Another significant dimension that has emerged from the data is the importance of coaching supervision to improve coaches’ performance through reflecting on their own performance. This adds a new dimension that is central to reflective practice, but is not necessarily highlighted in empirical evidence-based approaches as these do not include discussion on the effect of supervision on coaching performance. The reflective practice-based approaches tend to see reflection through the supervision relationship as a way of checking their own performance and attunement.

The role of evidence in coaching is also questioned in this research, and the need for evidence was perceived as a culturally shaped phenomenon rather than an objective need, per se. Indeed, it could be inferred from this that the need for evidence in coaching also plays a cultural and political role. Evidence-based approaches assure a kind of psychological certainty, and also confer a legitimacy on coaching. This challenge to the need for evidence is worth exploring in future research. This view could not be reflected to those coaches who favour evidence-based coaching. Their perspectives on the cultural and political functions of evidence were not examined. Future study could focus on this dimension, perhaps extending it even further to ask the question regarding the value and significance of evidence itself. Just because we have evidence does not mean that coaches of that particular approach will be good performers – just as evidence-based medicine does not mean that a particular medical practitioner will be effective in diagnosis and executing duty of care in particular circumstances.

This research suggests, for further study, the need to examine the impact of the implicit assumptions that coaches hold about coaching on their perspectives of evidence and reflection, and the relationship between the two. While evidence-based coaching allows for development from the general to particular, it seems that when reflective practitioners use evidence-based work to reflect on their practice they are able to work from the general to the particular. More regarding this process needs to be explored.

8.5 Concluding remarks

The circular challenge with this work is that I have used a particular research approach to evaluating research! I have used a phenomenological approach which sits comfortably within a reflective practitioner framework and so I do not want to exclude this as a source of bias towards reflective practitioner approaches. However, I also point out that

phenomenology was used because it is a qualitative phenomenon under exploration, the relationship between different approaches to coaching. Furthermore, I did not expect, in advance, a distinction between evidence-based and reflective practitioner-based approaches as a thematic way of characterising the relationship between the different forms of coaching. This thematic developed in the context of the literature review, while analysing the research approaches described by Crotty (2003) across a range of concepts of executive coaching, and not beforehand.

My central aim is to bring out the relationship between different approaches to research in coaching. As suggested in the previous paragraph, a thematic distinction between evidence-based and reflective practice-based approaches reflects the range of different approaches. It is thus suggested that this distinction be used to develop a typology through which to situate the different kinds of approaches in relation to each other. But more than this, the distinction between evidence-based and reflective practitioner-based approaches creates the opportunity for a dialogue across different forms of coaching. For, as has been indicated in the remarks of a range of interviewees, these are not mutually exclusive approaches.

In this sense the two are actually dependent on each other, and the one without the other leaves open a dangerous gap in professionalising the field. The more coaches can recognise their mutual dependence, the more the emerging profession can move towards a collaborative notion of how to work with the relationship between the different approaches, and thus set up the framework for developing standards that form the basis for professionalising the emerging practice, taking it beyond fads which are popular for a while but lack both discipline and depth.

While evidence-based coaching is well documented in the literature, the notion of reflective practice-based approaches to researching coaching has not been given the same

degree of legitimacy or credibility. What is crucial is not to play one off against the other, but to find a way of embracing both approaches, seeing the value in each and seeing that they can both be used in service of each other. However, this does not mean that the critique of each from the perspective of the other should not be undertaken. Indeed, critique is central to growth but it should be critique in terms of agreeing that it is the same game that is being played. It is not productive if each side isolates itself within their own rules of the game, extolls their own virtues and shouts down the other. It is important that they work together. While in theory this may not always be easy, I hope it is clear that I have provided evidence that, in practice, coaches can and do take both perspectives into account.

After all, it is from the pragmatic position of the everyday reality of coaching that phenomenology, the process adopted in this thesis, has worked. It should also be noted that phenomenology is that kind of methodology that, while different from quantitative and empirical methodologies, does not exclude the latter methodologies as legitimate research practices. On the contrary, it includes them but in their proper time and place. Thus adopting a phenomenological method does not necessarily imply a bias against empirical-scientific forms of research. It aims at situating them in their proper context in research in coaching which, as has been demonstrated, occurs in the framework of PBE.

Phenomenological research is concerned with working through the meaning of phenomenon which in this case was the relationship between two approaches to research in the context of coaching.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Standardised open-ended interview protocol

Investigator: Sabiha Sultana

Interviewee's Name: -----

Date: -----

Time: -----

Venue: -----

Case No: -----

Introductory Section

- A brief description of research study, the nature and duration of interview.

I am sabiha, doing PhD at Macquarie Graduate School of Management, located in Macquarie University. I am doing a qualitative thesis on executive coaching and keen to explore the evidence of its efficacy in practice.

This interview consists of 17 open ended questions and might take approximately about an hour.

Significance of Coaching

1. What is the role played by coaching in developing executives?
2. What is the business case for executive coaching?
3. What are the expected objectives and outcomes of executive coaching?

Concept of Coaching

4. How do you understand executive coaching?
5. What theoretical approach or range of approaches do you take to coaching?
6. How do you understand the notion of evidence based coaching?

Evidence of Efficacy

7. Is evaluation of the coaching outcomes an essential part of your coaching engagements?

Probes:

- If yes, how do you evaluate?
- Any examples of the assessments used for this purpose?

Criteria of Evidence

8. What kind of evidence of coaching efficacy do you look for in your experience e.g., case study, survey, quant or qual?

Probe:

- Do you believe both qual and quant evidence is required to complete the picture?
9. Do you think different stake holders of coaching (coaches, coachees and HR representatives) have same understanding of what counts as evidence of coaching efficacy?
 10. Do you think there are mutually agreed upon criteria of coaching efficacy across different coaching approaches? If yes what are they? And if not, why not?

Improvement Based on the Evidence

11. How does the evidence of coaching efficacy help to strengthen the validity of coaching process and/or business case of coaching industry?
12. How does the evidence of efficacy help to improve the coaching practice?
13. What role is played by the evidence of coaching efficacy in improving the coach training programs?
14. What kind of training is required in order to become a coach?
15. How do you disseminate your evidence of coaching efficacy to the coaching community and to the customers of coaching?

Probe:

- What is the barrier in your opinion? Measuring the outcome when it's not a client's requirement
OR publish to share?

16. What would you say is the relationship between experience and evidence in developing yourself as a coach?
17. Anything else that you want to add that promotes or impedes evidence-based coaching?

Ending

Thank you very much for your precious time this interview gave me valuable information.

Appendix 2. Ethics committee's approval letter



SABIHA SULTANA <sabiha.sultana@students.mq.edu.au>

Approved

Stefanie Jreige <stefanie.jreige@mgsm.edu.au>

Tue, Jul 15, 2014 at 10:04 AM

To: steven.segal@mgsm.edu.au

Cc: sabiha.sultana@students.mq.edu.au

RE: Ethics Application - Final Approval

Send to: Chief investigator/Supervisor
CC: Co-Investigator or Co-Investigators

RE: Ethics Application Ref: - Final Approval -

Dear Dr Segal,

RE: 'A Meta-framework for Evidence Based Executive Coaching ' (Ref: 5201400644)

The above application was reviewed by the MGSM Ethics Sub-Committee. The MGSM Ethics Sub-Committee wishes to thank you for your well-written application. Approval of this application has been granted, effective 15/07/ 2014. This approval constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/_files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Chief Investigator: Dr Steven Segal

Other Personnel: Sabiha Sultana

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 15/07/ 2015

Progress Report 2 Due: 15/07/ 2016

Progress Report 3 Due: 15/07/ 2017

Progress Report 4 Due: 15/07/ 2018

Final Report Due: 15/07/ 2019

NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any

reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/>
http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of Final Approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have Final Approval, please do not hesitate to contact the FHS Ethics at the address below.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of final ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Chair
MGSM Ethics Sub-Committee

Email: ethics@mgsm.edu.au
Web: <http://www.research.mq.edu.au/>

Appendix 3. Information and consent form



Macquarie Graduate School of Management
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 2 9850 7800

Fax: +61 2 9850 9019

Email: Steven.Segal@mgsm.edu.au

Dr Steven Segal
Senior Lecturer in Management

Information and Consent Form

“Evidence Based Executive Coaching”

You are invited to participate in a study of evidence based executive coaching.

The purpose of the study is to explore the evidence based practice across a representative range of theoretical approaches to executive coaching and to build a common framework for its efficacy as a contribution towards professionalization of executive coaching.

The study is being conducted to meet the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in Management degree for Sabiha Sultana (the Co-Investigator), under the supervision of Dr Steven Segal, telephone: +61 2 9850 7800, email: steven.segal@mgsm.edu.au of the Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be the subject of an interview with the Co-Investigator covering your thoughts and experience of the practice of executive coaching in professional contexts.

For interviews, an audio recording will be made and later transcribed in order to analyse the responses of the interviewees to the questions asked by the Co-Investigator.

In terms of the frequency and duration of your participation, it is requested that you undertake one qualitative interview and one follow up session for clarification if required. Following completion of the research there will be an opportunity for you to discuss the outcomes with the Investigators.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law*). No individual or organisation will be identified in any publication of the results.

The Investigator and Co-Investigator (Sabiha Sultana) will have sole access to all data. A summary of the results of the data can be made available to you on request by contacting the Co-Investigator directly via email: sabiha.sultana@students.mq.edu.au

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to participate and if you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence.

I, *(participant's name)* have read and understand the information above and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from further participation in the research at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Investigator's Name: _____
(Block letters)

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone (02) 9850 7854; email ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

(INVESTIGATOR'S [OR PARTICIPANT'S] COPY)

Appendix 4. Invitation letter



Macquarie Graduate School of Management
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY NSW 2109
Phone: +61 2 9850 7800

Fax: +61 2 9850 9019

Email: Steven.Segal@mgsim.edu.au

Dr Steven Segal
Senior Lecturer in Management
Mrs. Sabiha Sultana
PhD Student

“Evidence Based Executive Coaching”

Dear XXXX

Mrs. Sabiha Sultana is currently enrolled in the PhD program at Macquarie Graduate School of Management. Under my supervision, she is conducting a study into the practice of evidence based executive coaching to meet the requirements of the PhD in Management degree.

The purpose of the study is to explore the evidence based practice across a representative range of theoretical approaches to executive coaching and to build a common framework for its efficacy as a contribution towards professionalization of executive coaching.

For this research project we wish to interview executive coaches from different theoretical and business orientations. The primary outcome of this work will be a written research report submitted by PhD student (Sabiha Sultana). A secondary outcome will be an article to be written and published in an academic journal. Any information or personal details gathered in the course of the study are confidential (*except as required by law*). No individual or organisation will be identified in any publication of the results.

Appreciating that you are busy, the extent of commitment we are asking is one, one-hour interview with Sabiha over the next couple of months with follow up for clarification. She will forward a brief set of questions to you beforehand to facilitate the interview.

If you would be willing to participate in this research we would be most appreciative.

We look forward to your response at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully

Dr Steven Segal

Appendix 5. Four-step procedure for analysis (Smith et al., 2009)

Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) designed a step-by-step procedure for analysis which is particularly useful for first-time IPA researchers. Smith et al. provided a description of the process of analysis for a single case. After detailed analysis of the first case, the researcher moves sequentially to the subsequent cases. The present research followed this procedure. It was quite helpful to start with the interview which was more detailed, complex and engaging. This appendix outlines the four steps in the analysis.

Step 1: Reading and re-reading

The data (written transcript) is read and re-read while also listening to the audio recording. Imagining the voice of the participant while reading the transcript helps with a more complete analysis. To begin the process of entering the participant's world it is important to enter a phase of active engagement with the data. Repeated reading also allows a model of the overall interview structure to develop, and permits the researcher to gain an understanding of how narratives can bind certain sections of an interview together.

Step 2: Initial noting

This initial level of analysis is the most detailed and time consuming. The researcher must be open minded and write anything of interest within the transcript. This process helps the researcher become familiar with the transcript. This is close to being a free textual analysis – the aim is to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments on the data. The researcher understands through this process that there is likely to be a descriptive core of comments which have a clear phenomenological focus and are close to the participant's explicit meaning, such as describing the things which matter to them (key objects of concern such as relationships, processes, places, events, values and principles) and the meaning of those things for the participant (what those relationships, processes, places are like for the participant).

Developing from this more interpretative noting helps the researcher understand how and why the participant has these concerns. It involves looking at the language that the participant used, thinking about the context of his/her concerns (lived world) and

identifying more abstract concepts which could help to make sense of the patterns of meaning in the account. This exploratory commenting is a useful analytic tool for in-depth analysis. Using three different coloured pens was also useful to identify three types of notes/comments (descriptive, linguistic and conceptual). It is important to engage in analytical dialogue with each line of transcript, attempting to check what it means for the participant. Analysis is done on the hard copies of each interview transcript. Smith et al. (2009) suggest using a transcript copy with wide margins, leaving one margin for comments and the other for the emergent themes in the next stage.

Descriptive comments come from analysing the transcript to describe content. Generally key words, phrases or explanations used by the respondent are recorded. These initial notes take things at face value and highlight the objects which structure the participant's thoughts and experiences.

Linguistic comments focus on how the transcript reflects the ways in which the content and meaning were presented. It is concerned with the use of language. The researcher pays attention to: pronoun use, pauses, laughter, functional aspects of language, repetition, tone, degree of fluency (articulate or hesitant). Use of metaphor is a powerful component of the analysis because it is a linguistic device which links descriptive notes to conceptual notes.

Conceptual comments are more interpretative and may often take an interrogative form. This stage asks a lot of the researcher. It takes time – for discussion, reflection, trial and error, and refinement of the ideas. During the earlier stages of the analysis, the researcher does not yet have a detailed overview of data and each interesting feature of a participant's account leads to new questions. Ultimately, some questions lead nowhere, while others could lead the researcher back to the data, where re-analysing the data or reflecting on what the codes might mean will raise some tentative questions. Other questions still lead the researcher to working at a more abstract level. There is often an element of personal reflection to conceptual coding.

Deconstruction

It is helpful to de-contextualise the transcript to understand the participant's words and meanings, for instance, to fracture the narrative flow of the interview by taking a paragraph and reading it backwards, a sentence at a time, to get a feel for the use of particular words. This is an attempt to avoid focusing on simplistic readings of what the researcher thinks the participant is saying or following traditional explanatory scripts, and so getting closer

to what the participant is actually saying. Such de-contextualisation helps the researcher to understand the context of an interview and the interrelationship between the parts and a whole and between one experience and another.

Overview of writing initial notes

The process of engaging with the data is almost as important as the process of writing on the transcript itself (Smith et al., 2009). It can be done in two ways: the analyst can write initial notes or alternatively work first on a section of the transcript with descriptive comments, and then go back and examine it with a linguistic focus, and finally analyse the section in terms of conceptual comments. However, in this study the researcher used the second way of analysis, which appeared more systematic and enabled to focus on one particular kind of comments at a time.

The following two ways of doing exploratory noting were also used alongside the strategy described above:

- Going through the transcript and underlining text which seems important, then for each underlined piece of text, attempting to write in the margin an account of why it is important.
- Free associating from the participant's text, writing down whatever comes into the researcher's mind when reading certain sentences and words.

These different approaches (mentioned above) share the fluid process of engaging with the text in detail, exploring different avenues of meaning which arise and pushing the analyses to a more interpretative level.

Step 3: developing emergent themes

After initial noting the data grows substantially but to look for emergent themes the researcher simultaneously attempts to reduce the volume of detail whilst maintaining the complexity in terms of mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes. This process represents one manifestation of the hermeneutic circle. The original whole of the interview becomes a set of parts as we start analysing, but then it comes together in another new whole at the end of the analysis in the write-up.

The analytical focus shifts to working primarily with the initial notes rather than the transcript itself. However, if exploratory commenting is done comprehensively it will be very closely tied to the original transcript. The main task in turning notes into themes involves an attempt to produce a concise statement of what is important in the various comments attached to a piece of transcript.

Step 4: Searching for connections across emergent themes

The first three steps result in a set of themes being established in the transcript, ordered chronologically as they appeared. The next step is mapping how the researcher thinks these themes fit together. Not all emergent themes can be incorporated at this stage and some may be discarded. This in part depends on the overall research question and its scope. It is important to keep an open mind at this stage as in the light of the analysis done on subsequent transcripts the researcher has to come back to earlier transcript to re-evaluate the importance of some themes. The current study used the following basic way to look for connections:

The typed list of themes was printed out and then cut up so each theme was on a separate piece of paper. All themes were placed on a large space (floor) to enable moving the themes around. Themes with similar understandings were placed together, and themes in opposition to each other were placed in opposite poles or ends of the floor.

There are some other useful ways of looking for patterns and connections between emergent themes which gave insight into a higher level of interpretation. These include abstraction, subsumption, polarisation, contextualisation, numeration and function.

Abstraction it involves putting like with like and developing a new name for the cluster. It develops a sense of 'super-ordinate' theme.

Subsumption is similar to abstraction but here an emergent theme itself requires a super-ordinate status and brings together a series of related themes.

Polarisation involves examining transcripts for the oppositional relationships between emergent themes by focusing on difference instead of similarity.

Contextualisation is a useful way to find connections between emergent themes, by identifying the contextual or narrative elements with an analysis.

Numeration is the frequency with which a theme is supported. However, it is not the only indicator of importance; sometimes an important theme is evinced once, although numeration is still an indicator of relative importance of emergent themes.

Function is where emergent themes can be examined in terms of their function in the transcript. The interplay of meanings illustrated by organising themes by their positive and negative presentation may be interpreted beyond what the participant presents in terms of their meaning and rather as a distinct way of presenting the self within the interview.

The above strategies are not mutually exclusive and were used in this study according to which strategies worked for a particular case. Organising themes in more than one way is creative and can push the analysis to a higher level.

A single case can be written as a case study report; however, the present study involved more than one cases so the next step was moving to the transcript of the next participant and repeating the same process. In accordance with IPA guidelines, each participant was treated on its own terms to retain its individuality. It is an important skill in IPA to allow new themes to emerge in each case (Smith et al., 2009). After analysing all cases the next stage was to look for pattern across cases. It led to a reconfiguring and relabelling of some themes which had a room for creativity.

Appendix 6. Appraisal inventory

This survey is designed to assess your beliefs in your competence to undertake a range of communication and self-management tasks as a Customer Sales Specialist (CSS) that can positively affect your performance. It consists of 19 questions. Your responses are confidential. Researchers from Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University are the only people who will see individual survey responses for research purposes. The results will be available in a research report in a way that no individual can be identified. The knowledge gained through this survey will guide the design and development of training programs at Bank SA to help CSS's manage the situations they have to cope with.

Personal Information (for contact and record keeping purposes only)

Full Name:

Staff ID No:

Gender: (Please circle) Male Female

Age (in years):

Highest Educational Background: (Please circle)

High School Certificate TAFE Certificate/Diploma Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree & above Other

When did you join this organisation? Month _____ Year _____

When did you start work in your current position? Month _____ Year _____

Practice Question

Think about your ability right now to ask the customers for their business where a clear need has been identified but they expressed a concern or a potential objection. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

*Rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 (in multiples of 10) using the scale given below for **all six** statements in the following question:*

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Cannot				Moderately				Highly Certain		
do at all				can do				can do		

Where a clear need has been identified I can ask the customers for their business however they expressed the concern or a potential objection:

Confidence

(0-100)

At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions	_____
At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions	_____
At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions	_____
At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions	_____
At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions	_____
On every profiling session	_____

Possible Sample Answers

If you are very confident that you can ask the customers for their business even if they expressed a concern or a potential objection at least once out of every 20 profiling sessions , your answer would look something like this:

At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions 100

If you are confident that you can ask the customers for their business even if they expressed a concern or a potential objection at least once out of every 10 profiling sessions, your answer would look something like this:

At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions 80

If you are reasonably confident that you can ask the customers for their business even if they expressed a concern or a potential objection at least once out of every 5 profiling sessions , your answer would look something like this:

At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions 50

If you are somewhat confident that you can ask the customers for their business even if they expressed a concern or a potential objection at least once out of every 3 profiling sessions , your answer would look something like this:

At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions 30

If you are slightly confident that you can ask the customers for their business even if they expressed a concern or a potential objection at least once out of every 2 profiling sessions , your answer would look something like this:

At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions 10

If you aren't at all confident that you can ask the customers for their business if they expressed a concern or a potential objection on every profiling session, your answer would look something like this:

On every profiling session 0

Using the scale below please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 (in multiples of 10) for **all six** statements in each of the following **nineteen questions**:

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Cannot				Moderately				Highly Certain		
do at all				can do				can do		

When answering all of the following questions, imagine it's a Friday afternoon in September and you are stressed due to your workload and targets. You've had a really busy day conducting profiling sessions with customers and are now running behind with more customers still to see before the weekend.

1. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to ask your customers effective questions in order to get required information for identifying their needs. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation, I can ask my customers effective questions to get required information for identifying their needs:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 1.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 1.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 1.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 1.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 1.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

2. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to ask your customers clear/simple questions that allow you to get accurate specific information in a timely manner. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation, I can ask my customers clear/simple questions that allow me to get specific information in a timely manner:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 2.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 2.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 2.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 2.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 2.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 2.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

3. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to listen to your customers and identify their needs when they are unclear about what their needs are. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can listen to my customers and identify their needs when they are unclear about what their needs are:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 3.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 3.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 3.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 3.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 3.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 3.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

4. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to make appropriate recommendations to customers based on their identified needs. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can make appropriate recommendations to customers based on their identified needs:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 4.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 4.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 4.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 4.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 4.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 4.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

5. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to be committed to continue conversations with your customers even if the output doesn't meet your objective. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I am committed to continue conversations with my customers even if the output doesn't meet my objective:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 5.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 5.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 5.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 5.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 5.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 5.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

6. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to be a good listener to your customers even **when you are stressed due to your work load**? How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can be a good listener to my customers even when I am stressed due to my work load:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 6.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 6.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 6.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 6.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 6.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 6.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

7. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to manage your negative moods for effective communication with your customers. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can manage my negative moods for effective communication with my customers:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 7.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 7.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 7.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 7.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 7.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 7.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

8. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to improve your performance by managing the influence of your moods on your behaviour. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can improve my performance by managing the influence of my moods on my behaviour:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 8.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 8.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 8.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 8.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 8.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 8.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

9. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to manage your moods by re-adjusting your posture and muscle tension (body). How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I am capable of adjusting my moods by appropriately re-adjusting my posture and muscle tension (body):

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------|
| 9.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 9.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 9.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 9.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 9.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 9.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

10. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to evaluate your judgement and observe its impact on your behaviour when you are interacting with your customers. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can evaluate my judgement and observe its impact on my behaviour when I am interacting with my customers:

Confidence
(0-100)

- 10.1 At least once in a profiling session _____
- 10.2 At least twice in a profiling session _____
- 10.3 At least three times in a profiling session _____
- 10.4 At least four times in a profiling session _____
- 10.5 At least five times in a profiling session _____
- 10.6 At least six times in a profiling session _____

11. Think about your ability in the above situation to maintain your presence of mind. How certain are you about how often you can do so?

In the above situation I can maintain my presence of mind:

Confidence
(0-100)

- 11.1 At least once in a profiling session _____
- 11.2 At least twice in a profiling session _____
- 11.3 At least three times in a profiling session _____
- 11.4 At least four times in a profiling session _____
- 11.5 At least five times in a profiling session _____
- 11.6 At least six times in a profiling session _____

12. Think about your ability in the above situation to manage the impact of your behaviour on your customers' behaviour. How certain are you about how often you can do so?

In the above situation I can manage the impact of my behaviour on my customers' behaviour:

Confidence
(0-100)

- 12.1 At least once in a profiling session _____
- 12.2 At least twice in a profiling session _____
- 12.3 At least three times in a profiling session _____
- 12.4 At least four times in a profiling session _____
- 12.5 At least five times in a profiling session _____
- 12.6 At least six times in a profiling session _____

13. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to hold an appropriate body posture in order to generate a positive and constructive mood while speaking to your customers. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can hold an appropriate body posture to keep myself in a positive and constructive mood while speaking to my customers:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|------|---|-------|
| 13.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 13.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 13.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 13.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 13.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 13.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

14. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to keep the right body posture in order to avoid negative moods when you are conducting a series of customer profiles. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

I can keep the right body posture to avoid negative moods when I am conducting a series of customer profiles:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|------|---|-------|
| 14.1 | At least once in a profiling session | _____ |
| 14.2 | At least twice in a profiling session | _____ |
| 14.3 | At least three times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 14.4 | At least four times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 14.5 | At least five times in a profiling session | _____ |
| 14.6 | At least six times in a profiling session | _____ |

15. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to use your body posture and gestures to make your communication more effective with customers. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can use my body posture and gestures to make my communication more effective with customers:

		Confidence (0-100)
15.1	At least once in a profiling session	_____
15.2	At least twice in a profiling session	_____
15.3	At least three times in a profiling session	_____
15.4	At least four times in a profiling session	_____
15.5	At least five times in a profiling session	_____
15.6	At least six times in a profiling session	_____

The next section follows a similar format but the response options for the next four questions have been slightly changed:

Using the scale below please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 100 (in multiples of 10) for all six statements in each of the following three questions:

0	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
Cannot do at all	Moderately can do						Highly Certain can do			

When answering all of the following questions, imagine it's a Friday afternoon in September and you are stressed due to your workload and targets. You've had a really busy day conducting profiling sessions with customers and are now running behind with more customers still to see before the weekend.

16. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to effectively link products and services to customer needs. How certain are you about how often you can do so?

In the above situation I can effectively link products and services to customer needs:

		Confidence (0-100)
16.1	At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions	_____
16.2	At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions	_____
16.3	At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions	_____
16.4	At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions	_____
16.5	At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions	_____
16.6	On every profiling session	_____

17. Think about your ability in the above situation to give your customers the right of refusal in response to the information you provide them about the products and services even if selling them is really important to you. How certain are you about how often you can do so?

In the above situation I can give my customers the right of refusal in response to the information I provide them about the products and services even if selling them is really important to me:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|------|--|-------|
| 17.1 | At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 17.2 | At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 17.3 | At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 17.4 | At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 17.5 | At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 17.6 | On every profiling session | _____ |
18. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to build trust in your relationship with customers instead of focusing on selling products and services. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can build trust in my relationship with customers instead of focusing on selling the products and services:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|------|--|-------|
| 18.1 | At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 18.2 | At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 18.3 | At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 18.4 | At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 18.5 | At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 18.6 | On every profiling session | _____ |
19. Think about your ability **in the above situation** to be aware of the impact of your moods in building trust worthy relationships with your customers. How **certain** are you about **how often** you can do so?

In the above situation I can manage the impact of my moods in building trustworthy relationships with my customers:

Confidence
(0-100)

- | | | |
|------|--|-------|
| 19.1 | At least once out of every 20 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 19.2 | At least once out of every 10 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 19.3 | At least once out of every 5 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 19.4 | At least once out of every 3 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 19.5 | At least once out of every 2 profiling sessions | _____ |
| 19.6 | On every profiling session | _____ |

Appendix 7. Audit Reports

Audit Report 1: Written by Dr Steven Segal

I, Dr Steven Segal supervised the research titled “Evidence-based and Reflective practice-based approaches to executive coaching: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis” done by PhD researcher, Sabiha Sultana.

I hereby, as an auditor, endorse the validity of the above-cited Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. IPA method is proposed by Dr Jonathan Smith from Birbeck University, London. Smith, et al (2009) suggested research scholars to do an independent audit of their qualitative data analysis to establish the validity of the findings of IPA research. In line with Smith’s recommendation, I audited a complete process of data analysis from transcribing to themes identification and interpretation of data. The research candidate provided me the soft and hard data in the form of USB and box files respectively. I listened to the audio recorded interviews and the transcription done by the candidate. I audited the data analysis process by looking at different levels of theme identification and confirm that this IPA study satisfactorily meets the validity criteria of IPA research.

Name: Dr Steven Segal

Date: 12-10-2016

Audit Report 2: Written by Dr Arash Najmaei

I, Dr Arash Najmaei audited the research titled “Evidence-based and Reflective practice-based approaches to executive coaching: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis” done by PhD researcher, Sabiha Sultana.

I hereby, as an independent auditor, endorse the validity of the above-cited Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) study. IPA method is proposed by Dr Jonathan Smith from Birbeck University, London. Smith, et al (2009) suggested research scholars to do an independent audit of their qualitative data analysis to establish the validity of the findings of IPA research. In line with Smith’s recommendation, I audited a complete process of data analysis from transcribing to themes identification and interpretation of data. The research candidate provided me the soft and hard data in the form of USB and box files respectively. I listened to the audio recorded interviews and the transcription done by the candidate. I audited the data analysis process by looking at different levels of theme identification and confirm that this IPA study satisfactorily meets the validity criteria of IPA research.

Name: Dr Arash Najmaei

Date: 14-10-2016

Appendix 8. Email correspondence with Albert Bandura

A query about self-efficacy scale

SABIHA SULTANA <sabiha.sultana@students.mq.edu.au>

Tue, Sep 17, 2013 at 2:07 PM

To: albertob@stanford.edu

Hi Albert,

Hope you are well. I am a doctoral student at Macquarie University, Australia. My previous qualification is in psychology and now am doing PhD in management. Sorry to bother you but I really wanted to clarify something from you which is very central to my thesis and your expert guidance can satisfy me. My thesis is a combination of executive coaching and self-efficacy. I constructed a scale based on your guideline to construct self-efficacy scales. I followed the guideline completely. I established the face/content validity and pilot-tested the scale on a small sample of 18 students just to ensure the comprehension and smooth execution of the scale in the main study. I modified the scale after respondents' feedback and did a qualitative analysis to remove the problems. Purpose of the pilot test wasn't validation because the major aim of my thesis is assessment of the effect of coaching on managers' performance by administering a self-efficacy scale. I will do a pretest-posttest field study therefore I am focused on the major aim but due to lack of empirical research in the field of executive coaching, I couldn't find an existing scale to serve the purpose.

People who are unfamiliar with the nature of self-efficacy scales treat them like other scales and suggest to do a validation study before using it in the main study, whereas I believe after reading about the validation of self-efficacy scales that if it predicts the future performance I can establish its predictive validity (i.e., a part of construct validity) after collecting data from the main study. Otherwise, validation and then main data collection it will take too long to complete my project on time. Can you please suggest me am I doing the right thing?

Thanks very much

Kindest Regards

Sabiha Sultana

SABIHA SULTANA <sabiha.sultana@students.mq.edu.au>

Fri, Oct 18, 2013 at 8:56 AM

To: Albert Bandura <bandura@stanford.edu>

Thanks very much Albert. I am delighted and honoured by having your comments on my work.

Kind Regards

Sabiha

On Fri, Oct 18, 2013 at 7:48 AM, Albert Bandura <bandura@stanford.edu> wrote:

Yes, you are doing it right.

Albert Bandura