

**THE PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL VALUE OF COACHING:
EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE COACHEE**

by

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The personal transformational value of coaching: Exploring the lived experience of the coachee

I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. The seventh edition of the publication manual of the American Psychological Association was used as the reference style.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



SIGNATURE

01 June 2021

DATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

POEM – START CLOSE IN

Start close in,
don't take the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.

Start with
the ground
you know,
the pale ground
beneath your feet,
your own
way to begin
the conversation.

Start with your own
question,
give up on other
people's questions,
don't let them
smother something
simple.

To hear
another's voice
follow
your own voice,
wait until
that voice
becomes an
intimate
private ear
that can
really listen
to another.

Start right now
take a small step
you can call your own
don't follow
someone else's
heroics, be humble
and focused,
start close in,
don't mistake
that other
for your own.

Start close in,
don't take
the second step
or the third,
start with the first
thing
close in,
the step
you don't want to take.

~ **David Whyte**

“The step you don't want to take” as referred to in this poem reminded me of how extremely difficult it was gaining confidence to take that first step to start this PhD journey and writing-up the thesis. I doubted myself continuously cognitively, emotionally and somatically, and I felt so many times that I am not capable of taking on this journey. But then, I did take the first step and am grateful for completion of writing up the thesis. In the light thereof I would like to give acknowledgement to the following people, things and events that inspired and supported me to start close in, to take the first step in pursuing my dream and finding my own voice in writing the thesis and ultimately, self-expanding as a human being.

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ABSTRACT

Coaching is a professional field of practice in psychology and its popularity continues to grow in the work context. Research on the value of coaching is predominantly grounded in the perspective of the coach, with limited empirical exploration of the experiences of the coachee. The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to understand the personal transformational value of coaching through an exploration of how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee. The study was meta-theoretically grounded in transpersonal and positive psychology. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants in senior leadership positions in a corporate setting, who had engaged with a coaching programme of at least six coaching sessions. Participants were selected by means of purposive sampling and the data analysis strategy applied was interpretative phenomenological analysis.

The findings of the study are of value to the application of coaching in the discipline and field of industrial and organisational psychology, specifically, consulting and coaching psychology. The contribution of the study is grounded in the identification of four themes: (1) coaching as process; (2) coaching mechanisms; (3) coaching the holistic self; and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context.

A conceptual framework was developed, describing the integrated dynamic of the primary findings to capture the essence of the transformational value of coaching for the coachee. The study demonstrates how the personal transformational value of coaching is constituted in its potency to initiate, facilitate and maintain a continuous process of transforming higher levels of being towards flourishing, which is the ultimate end-state of psychological well-being.

KEY WORDS

Coaching, coaching psychology, consulting psychology, flourishing, hermeneutic phenomenology, integral coaching, interpretative phenomenological analysis, positive psychology, transformation, transpersonal psychology, well-being

OPSOMMING

Afrigting (*coaching*) word wyd erken in die sielkunde-veld en die gewildheid daarvan binne die werkskonteks neem voortdurend toe. Navorsing oor die waarde van afrigting is hoofsaaklik geskoei op die perspektief van die afrigter (*coach*). Daar is tot op hede 'n beperkte hoeveelheid empiriese navorsingstudies wat spesifiek fokus op die ervaring van die afgerigte/kliënt (*coachee/client*). Die doel van hierdie hermeneutiese fenomenologiese studie was om die waarde van afrigting te verstaan spesifiek in die konteks van persoonlike transformasie. Die studie het derhalwe ondersoek ingestel na die wyse waarop afrigting persoonlike transformasie vir die kliënt bewerkstellig. Die studie was meta-teoreties gegrond in transpersoonlike sielkunde (*transpersonal psychology*) en positiewe sielkunde (*positive psychology*). Semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is met sewe deelnemers in senior korporatiewe leierskapsposisies gevoer. Die deelnemers was betrokke by 'n afrigtingsprogram bestaande uit minstens ses afrigtingsessies. Deelnemers is deur middel van doelbewuste steekproefneming geïdentifiseer terwyl interpretatiewe fenomenologiese ontleding aangewend is om die data te ontleed.

Die bevindinge van die studie lewer 'n waardevolle bydrae tot die dissipline en veld van bedryfs- en organisasiesielkunde (*industrial and organisational psychology*), met spesifieke fokus op raadgewende (*consulting psychology*) en afrigtingsielkunde (*coaching psychology*). Die bydrae van hierdie studie lê in die identifisering van vier temas: (1) afrigting as proses; (2) afrigtingsmeganismes; (3) afrigting van die holistiese self; en (4) die rimpeleffek binne die werk-lewe-konteks.

'n Konseptuele raamwerk is ontwikkel, waarvolgens die primêre bevindinge geïntegreerd en dinamies gekonseptualiseer word om die aard van persoonlike transformasie as die kernwaarde van afrigting vir die kliënt, vas te lê. Die studie demonstreer hoe die persoonlike transformasiewaarde van afrigting opgesluit lê in die vermoë daarvan om 'n voortgesette proses te inisieer, te fasiliteer en te handhaaf waarvolgens hoër bestaansvlakke getransformeer word tot florering (*flourishing*). Florering is dié gewenste uiteindelijke toestand van sielkundige welstand (*psychological well-being*).

SLEUTELWOORDE

Afrigting, afrigtingsielkunde, raadgewende sielkunde, floring, hermeneutiese fenomenologie, integrale afrigting, interpretatiewe fenomenologiese ontleding, positiewe sielkunde, transformasie, transpersoonlike sielkunde, welstand

NGAMAFUPHI

Ukukhoshha/ukweluleka kuwumkhakha wobizo lomsebenzi wesifundo sezengqondo/sesayikholoji kanti lo mkhakha uya ngokuya ukhula endaweni yokusebenza. Ucwangingo mayelana nokubaluleka kobizo lomsebenzi wokukhoshha lugxile kakhulu emqondweni okhoshi/abaluleki, kanti luncane kakhulu uphenyo oluphathekayo olwenziwe lolwazi oluhlangabezane nowelulekwayo. Inhloso yalolu cwangingo oluyi-*hermeneutic phenomenological study* kwakuwukuchaza ukubaluleka kokuguquka komuntu ngokwezeluleko zokukhoshha ngokuphenya indlela ukukhoshha kusiza ngayo ukuguquka komuntu, lowo owelulekwayo. Ucwangingo ngokwesimo esiphathekayo nesomqondo (*meta-theoretically*) lunamathele kwinguquko yomuntu kanye nakwisayikholoji/nakwingqondo enhle. Izinhlolovo ezimbaxambili zeyi zenziwa ngabadlalindima abayisikhombisa abakwizikhundla eziphezulu zobuholi kwisizinda sezamabhizinisi, laba babandakanyeka ohlelweni lokukhoshha okungenani izinkathi zokuhlangana eziyisithupha. Abadalindima bakhethwe ngokusebenzisa isampuli enenhloso (*purposive sampling*) kanye nesu lokuhlaziywa kwedatha elisetshenziwe belingendlela yohlaziyo ebizwa nge-*interpretative phenomenological analysis*.

Ulwazi locwangingo olutholakele lubaluleke kakhulu ekusetshenzisweni kohlelo lokukhoshha kwisifundo kanye nakumkhakha *we-industrial and organisational psychology*, ikakhulu, isayikholoji yezokuxhumana kanye nokukhoshha. Igalelo locwangingo ligxile ekwehlukaniseni kwezizinda ezine: (1) Ukukhoshha njengohlelo oluqhubekayo; (2) ukukhoshha njengendlela; (3) ukukhoshha njebunjalo bakho bomuntu obuphelele; kanye (4) nezinguquko eziyinsalelo endaweni yangempela yokusebenza.

Isakhiwo somqondo wegama liye lakhiwa, lachaza inguquko ehlangene yolwazi lokuqala olutholakele ukuthola ukubaluleka kwenguquko yokweluleka lowo owelulekwayo. Ucwangingo lukhombisa indlela ukubaluleka kokuguquka komuntu okwenziwa ukweluleka, lokhu kwenziwe ngamandla awo okuqala, okunceda kanye nokugcina uhlelo oluqhubekayo lokuguqula amazinga aphezulu aqonde ukufinyelela impumelelo enkulu, okuyisimo sokugcina sempilo enhle yokusebenza kwengqondo.

AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA

Ukweluleka, isayikholoji yezokweluleka, isayikholoji yezokuxhumana, impumelelo enkulu, ihermeneutic phenomenology, ukweluleka okuhlangene, i-interpretative phenomenological analysis, isayikholoji/isimo somqondo esihle, inguquko, isayikholoji ehlose ukuguqula umuntu, impilo enhle

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMP:	Advanced Management Programme
APA:	American Psychological Association
CA:	Chartered Accountant
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CFO:	Chief Financial Officer
EQ:	Emotional Intelligence
GIBS:	Gordon Institute of Business Science
HBDI:	Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument
HR:	Human Resources
IGCCP:	Interest Group in Coaching and Consulting Psychology
IO:	Industrial and Organisational
IOP:	Industrial and Organisational Psychologist
IPA:	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IT:	Information Technology
MBA:	Master in Business Administration
P1-7:	Participant 1-7
PERMA:	Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning, Accomplishment
PhD:	Doctor of Philosophy
PPC:	Positive Psychology Coaching
PWB:	Psychological Well-being
ROI:	Return on Investment
SOC:	Sense of Coherence
SIOPSA:	Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa
SWPP:	Second Wave Positive Psychology
SWB:	Subjective Well-being
UNISA:	University of South-Africa

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CHAPTER 1: POINT OF DEPARTURE AND SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION

You cannot teach a man anything. You can only help him discover it within himself. Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Coaching has become very popular in the new millennium (Theeboom et al., 2014) and is a reputable practice applied in many organisations with the purpose to affect behaviour change (Grover & Furnham, 2016). As suggested in the quotation from Galileo Galilei, coaching is not a teaching intervention, but a process of self-discovery (Goble et al., 2017; Griffiths, 2005). The relevance of coaching and its contribution to the well-being of an individual, an organisation and society, have been questioned by some (Grant, 2006). Yet, the mere fact that organisations continue to appoint coaches is indicative of the need for and potential value of coaching in a corporate setting. Moreover, many agree that coaching as a practice is well established in the organisational context (Ellinger et al., 2017; Grant et al., 2010; Theeboom et al., 2014).

In the field of psychology, professionals across psychology sub-disciplines focus on human behaviour and how to change behaviour (Butler-Bowdon, 2007; Eger, 2017; Grant, 2003, 2006; Jarosz, 2016; Maslow, 1968). The poet Rumi said, “Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself” (Goalcast, n.d.). In recent years and in practice, the disciplines of industrial and organisational (IO) psychology and consulting psychology have invested in coaching as a modality to effect deep change in people’s lives (Barkhuizen et al., 2014; De Haan, 2019; De Haan et al., 2020; Kilburg, 2016; Lowman, 2002, 2016; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). This thesis reports on my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) study, which focussed on the value of coaching as an intervention method to effect personal transformation.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a scientific grounding and context for this study. As such, in this chapter I commence with the rationale for the study by first

providing the background to the study. I then critically reflect on my evolving interest in the topic of this study, and explicate the research problem and research question, concluding with a formulation of the research objective. To demarcate the disciplinary boundaries of the study, the primary discipline and the sub-disciplines in which the study was conducted are explained, along with conceptualising coaching and the meta-theoretical paradigms applied to personal transformation through the study. The disciplinary boundaries are followed by a summative presentation of the manner in which this study was conducted (research approach and method). Then, for the reader to understand how I report on the study in this thesis, I set the scene of the writing style and reflexivity I employed. I close this chapter with an outline of the chapters to follow.

1.2 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

From the outset of my doctorate journey, I wanted to understand the lived experiences of the personal transformation of clients who engaged in coaching and in that way to explore the value of coaching. Such an approach is fundamentally based on phenomenological principles, which entail the study of people's lived experiences and the meaning of their experiences (Finlay, 2008; Van Manen, 2007, 2014). To establish the rationale for the study, the background of the study is discussed, followed by a critical reflection on my interest in the study, the research problem and question, as well as the research objective.

1.2.1 Background of the study

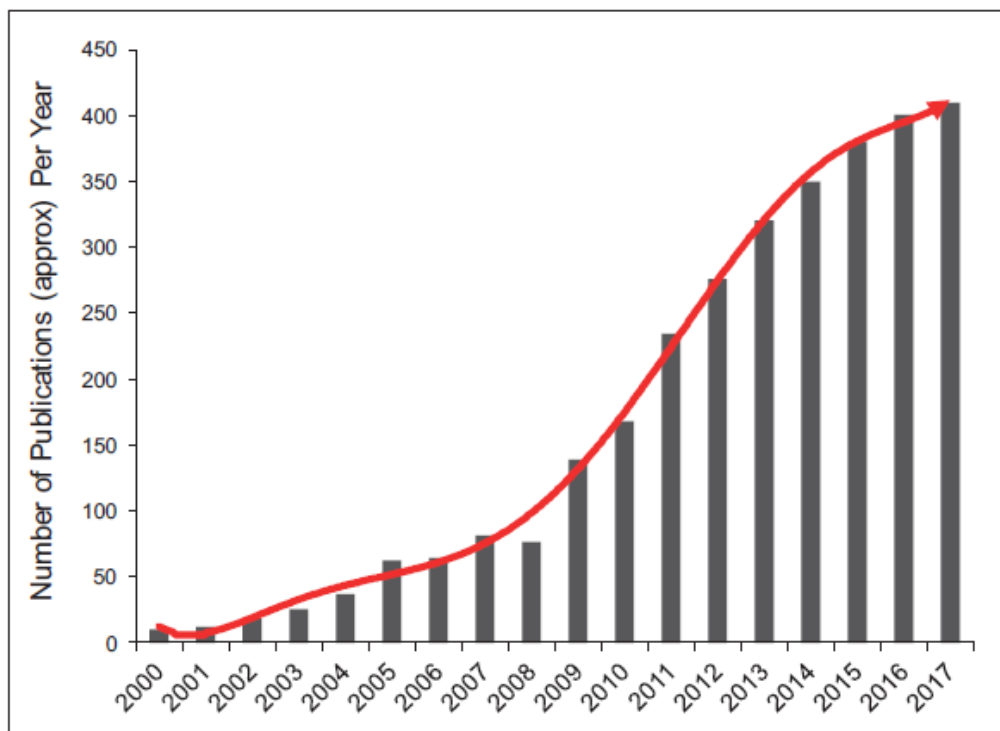
Coaching is an emerging profession and remains a growing field of practice. Professional coaching has become popular worldwide (American Management Association, 2008; Annual Report International Coach Federation, 2020; Executive Summary International Coaching Federation Global Coaching Study, 2020; International Coach Federation, n.d.; Lane et al., 2014; Sasha Corporation, 2019; Stout-Rostron, 2009a) and the coaching industry is booming, reflecting the importance of coaching and the value thereof to individuals and organisations. Milne-Tyte (2016) states the following:

In the last ten years the coaching industry has exploded. Membership of the International Coach Federation has more than tripled. A report by the market research firm IBISWorld at the end of 2014 said coaching is a \$1 billion industry in the U.S. alone.

More recently, Stephens (2019) stated that the coaching industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry where coaches are hired to assist people with various aspects of their lives. The number of people working as coaches worldwide exceeds 53 000 while the demand keeps growing, with a predicted growth rate of 6.7% through the year 2022 (Stephens, 2019). It is not only the coaching industry that is growing. Literature on coaching has also grown exponentially since the start of the millennium (Theeboom et al., 2014). Coaching research continues to expand into a substantial body of knowledge (Fillery-Travis & Cox, 2014; Grant & O'Connor, 2019; Odendaal & Le Roux, 2016; Stout-Rostron, 2009b), as is evident in the rising number of coaching publications from 2000 to 2017, illustrated in **figure 1.1**.

Figure 1.1

Pattern of publications (approximately) in the scholarly coaching literature from 2000 to 2017 (Grant & O'Connor, 2019, p. 4)



From a business perspective, the focus of coaching is on different levels. On the *individual level*, the focus is on personal growth, individual purpose and meaning. On *team level*, the focus is on improved team efficiency, creating synergies. On the *organisational level*, coaching focusses on less absenteeism, retention, staff motivation, higher profitability/return on investment (ROI)/productivity. Lastly, on a *social level*, the focus of coaching is a successful company, higher sustainability and corporate social responsibility (Bresser & Wilson, 2016). The coaching focus is moreover interactive. For example, in an organisational context the outcome of individual coaching could be that the individual will influence the broader organisational system (Grant et al., 2010). Hence the expectations from managers that coaching focusses on not only personal change, but also on organisational change by enabling employee engagement, well-being and performance (Grant & Spence, 2009). Theeboom et al. (2014) emphasise that coaching is an effective tool for improving the functioning of individuals in organisations. In fact, it is said that all people in an organisation should make use of coaching as part of their professional learning (Askew & Carnell, 2011).

Coaching is expected to be aligned with the business objectives and the overall performance agenda of the organisation (Levenson, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Thus, coaching in an organisation should be positioned strategically and implemented thoroughly, to enhance the experience of the coachee. Organisations do ask how coaching contributes to results and measure the value of coaching through ROI, but this approach has been widely criticised. Grant (2012, p. 2) argues that ROI “is an unreliable and insufficient measure of coaching outcomes.” Therefore, it is not always possible to place a price on coaching and determine financial benefits attributed to a coaching intervention for individuals and their organisations (Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011; Theeboom et al., 2014). Though it is not always possible to quantify the impact of coaching on the performance of the coachee, confirming the value of coaching remains an important aspect of coaching in a business context. Theeboom et al. (2014) broaden the value perspective to the positive impact that coaching has on performance and skills, by including its positive impact on well-being, coping, work attitudes and goal-directed self-regulation. Grant (2012, 2013) argues that the coaching process is restricted and even increases anxiety in the process when the focus on ROI is over-emphasised. Similarly, Grover

and Furnham (2016) explain that there is no reliable way to measure the benefits of coaching in an organisation in terms of ROI. In resolution, Levenson (2009) and Theeboom et al. (2014) argue that the contribution of coaching is beyond ROI measures, thus the value of coaching extends measurement in terms of ROI and is fundamentally based on the principle of bringing about change and growth. Yet, the objective measurement of change and growth is a difficult feat and even more so to statistically prove that change was indeed a direct result of a coaching intervention. Hence the required credentials of a coach¹ and the coaching profession itself have become regulated, to ensure that coaches have the necessary training and accreditation to credibly facilitate a process of change and growth (America Management Association, 2008; Brockbank & McGill; 2006; Page & De Haan, 2014; Stout-Rostron, 2009b).

The value of coaching lies in being a process that helps people to become more self-aware, to look differently and from new perspectives at the same situation. Coaching is a process that helps people to develop, to experience life differently by changing the way they think, feel and behave (Grant et al., 2010). It encourages change and brings out the best in a person (Flaherty, 2010). In the broader context coaching is referred to as a process of change, self-reflection, personal satisfaction, discovery and fulfilment of one's full potential, enhancement of effectiveness, achievement of goals, improvement of performance, self-awareness, social awareness, meaning-making on a personal and social level, and self-directed learning (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Grant & Spence, 2009; Peltier, 2006; Stelter, 2009; Stout-Rostron, 2012). It helps people to get 'unstuck' and to develop a different way of conducting themselves (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010). Coaching therefore intends to maximise potential and alters people's way of doing and being, which is ultimately a transformational process that brings about change. Hence, coaching contributes to human development and it involves perspective and behavioural change (Jarosz, 2016; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016; Peel, 2005; Stelter, 2007; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Self-awareness is central to the coaching process, resulting for some people in a deep personal change process, followed by visible behavioural change (Carey et al.,

¹ For the purposes of this study, 'coach' will refer to the person who provides coaching, and 'coachee' or 'client' will refer to the person who receives coaching.

2011; Fielden, 2005; Hanssmann, 2014, Koroleva, 2016; Page & De Haan, 2014; Stout-Rostron, 2009b).

Coaching therefore has a transformational purpose (Brockbank & McGill, 2006; De Haan, 2008; Graf et al., 2020; Griffiths, 2005; Stelter, 2014). According to Carey et al. (2011, p. 64), “personal transformation is also provoked by intense strengthening of the focus and commitment to change, monitoring by the coach and others.” This happens where the coach facilitates meaning-making and transformation by triggering a shift in perspective and exposing the coachee to critical moments, turning points and personal dilemmas (De Haan, 2008; Griffiths, 2005). The coach has an important role to play in this process by asking powerful and thought-provoking questions (Griffiths, 2005; Kowalski & Casper, 2007). It is a form of collaborative conversation in which the coach is participating in the development and learning process of the person who is coached, thus facilitating the enhancement of life experience and building on the strengths of the person (Grant & Spence, 2009; Munro, 2012; Page & De Haan, 2014; Stelter, 2007). The purpose of coaching is therefore not finding quick and easy answers, but creating a reflective space and promoting change over time (Koroleva, 2016; Stelter, 2009). In addition, Flaherty (2010) refers to the intended outcomes of coaching as “long-term excellence, the competence to self-correct, and the competence to self-generate” (p. 11).

There are also cases where people want to go through a series of coaching sessions for a variety of work-related reasons. Some of these include issues such as disappointment at not being promoted, insecurity at work, tensions that may exist between the individual and the organisation or career transitions. All these issues may have an impact on self-identity (Askew & Carnell, 2011). The focus of coaching is also on maintaining one’s health through fitness, a healthy diet and enough sleep, which therefore includes the body (Stout-Rostron, 2009b). There is thus indeed a need for coaching “to make people’s lives and work more meaningful, balanced, and holistic” (Orem et al., 2007, p. xv). Coaching should thus be a holistic and integrative transformation process.

Over the past few years ample research has been done on coaching. A number of articles are available on, among others, coaching and its value, coaching models, types of coaching, the need for change, mitigating certain shortcomings, self-awareness development, a combination of coaching and transformative learning, the impact of coaching on changes in behaviour, the application of transformative learning theory in coaching, transformative coaching, integral coaching as a process to encourage new ways of thinking and learning, self-understanding among leaders and managers, effectiveness of coaching and coaching competencies and attesting to the importance of the field of coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Carey et al., 2011; Everson et al., 2006, Kowalski & Casper, 2007; Munro, 2012; Peel, 2005; Peterson, 2007; Rankin, 2012; Sammut, 2014). Literature is available on the career history and credibility of the coach, what the experience of the coach was during the coaching process, as well as how the coach supports and upholds the coachee during transformational change (Hanssmann, 2014; Passmore, 2010). Literature also tends to focus on successful and effective coaching (America Management Association, 2008; Bluckert, 2006; Fielden, 2005; Page & De Haan, 2014; Sonesh et al., 2015), the coach-coachee relationship, which influences the coaching outcome and possible behaviour change (America Management Association, 2008; Bluckert, 2006; Fielden, 2005; Koroleva, 2016; Page & De Haan, 2014; Sonesh et al., 2015). Coaching research, in particular research focussing on its value, has predominantly been conducted from the experience and perspective of the coach, rather than from the experience of the coachee (De Haan, 2008; González, 2003), which from a value perspective presents an important gap in the body of knowledge.

Research is needed to deepen understanding of the personal transformational value of coaching from the perspective of the coachee. Clients who underwent a coaching process and who invested time and effort in their development might change (Peterson, 2007). This study aimed to understand what the coaching client experienced on a personal transformational level during the process of coaching. Exploring how personal transformation happened during coaching from the coachee's perspective contributes to the field of knowledge about the personal transformational value of coaching. The study was therefore not intended to measure change, but to understand personal transformation that forms part of behavioural change. Change includes critical moments such as a new insight and

breakthrough for a person (Day et al., 2008). Hanssmann (2014) refers to change as transformational change. Longhurst (2006, p. 62) concurs that “the ‘Aha’ moment is defined as the prime device by which clients in life coaching achieve transformational (rather than incremental or merely behavioural) change.” Further to this, internal change needs to take place for external behavioural change to be maintained (Wales, 2003). The literature review gives evidence that coaching contributes to personal and professional development; however, according to Hanssmann (2014), little empirical research has studied how coaching facilitates transformational change for a client, and according to Koroleva (2016), there is a lack of empirical studies focussing on describing sustainable behavioural change.

From the background above, it is clear that the intent of coaching is to facilitate personal transformation and change. However, despite numerous coaching theories, models and approaches, the way in which coaching in fact has a transformational impact on the coachee seems unsubstantiated. The lack of scientific evidence substantiating actual personal transformation as a result of coaching may also be the reason for the wide variety of coaching models, theories and approaches that has been developed and designed. To motivate the use of coaching, most authors claim its transformational value, yet little has been done to provide phenomenological evidence to this effect. Mostly, considerable emphasis is placed on the coach during the coaching process, with very little evidence of what happens during the coaching process for the coachee.

I acknowledge that the researcher’s own presuppositions, choices, experiences and actions inevitably influence the research process (Dowling, 2006; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Primeau, 2003). Therefore, I next present as part of the rationale for this study, a critical self-reflection demonstrating the relevance of my subjectivity and positionality on choices made in this research. By doing so I want to acknowledge and make my subjectivity visible to the reader from the start and throughout the research process (Ortlipp, 2008; Primeau, 2003).

1.2.2 A critical reflection on my evolving interest in the topic of this study

In reflecting on how I chose personal transformation and coaching as research topic I realised how the world of everyday life and the world of science and scientific research differ, but are also closely related (Mouton, 2015). I selected coaching and personal transformation as phenomena that I experienced and worked with in the everyday world to enquire about rigorously in the scientific world. I had a personal interest in coaching as a research topic because it had a deep-seated impact on me and I am still on a journey of self-discovery and change as a result of having engaged with coaching nine years ago. My engagement with coaching entails having been coached and having been trained as and practising as a coach. I encountered coaching as personally transformative, as it inspired some significant changes in my life. It became clear to me that my own readiness for coaching influenced my transformational process. Hanssmann (2014) and Johnson (2007) concur with the importance of the client's readiness for change in coaching, as it has an impact on the outcome of the coaching process. Coaching helped me to make certain decisions in my life, which contributed to finding new meaning and purpose. Because of my exposure and strong belief in the impact of coaching and personal transformation not only on me but also on other people who underwent coaching, I was stimulated to start reading more on the topic of personal transformation and coaching and found a gap in literature that naturally evolved into the preferred topic for my PhD research project, which began in 2016.

Lewis and McNaughton Nicholls (2014) explain the importance of doing a literature review before starting with a research project to ensure the need for the study and therefore not to replicate previous research, but rather to build on previous research. At the start of this research project I asked myself what it means to live in this world and why research is a meaningful endeavour for me. I was intrigued by the meaning of the word research according to Becker (1992, p. 31), namely, "to search again or in a new way." I became aware of the phenomenon of 'personal transformation' because I experienced it as a result of coaching and it became a continuous thread permeating my whole life. In my ensuing literature search I did not find adequate evidence of what I was experiencing in relation to the coaching process. I found numerous articles (as indicated in the background section above), yet my intention to

explore change as a result of coaching “*again or in a new way*” led me to the phenomenon of personal transformation. I strongly identified with this phenomenon, and my relationship with it directly influenced my research interest and choice of focus.

The choice of research methodology was influenced and also closely related to my increasing awareness of and working with my phenomenological coaching experience. As such, I was leaning towards a qualitative in-depth exploration of other coachees’ lived experiences, ultimately choosing a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach to the study, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In doing the research I became aware of my own phenomenological experience and awareness of personal transformation and its impact on my everyday life. Keeping a reflection journal is a key element throughout the research process (Ortlipp, 2008; Cruz & Tantia, 2017; Spence, 2017). I wrote in my reflection journal about a classic example when I had to make use of the Gautrain on a particular day and noticed an abbreviation on one of the concrete pillars among the buses at the Sandton Gautrain Station namely ‘PT’ (**figure 1.2**) and I immediately related it to ‘personal transformation’. Vagle (2014) emphasises how the phenomenon, which in my study is personal transformation, manifests and appears to the phenomenologist. It appeared to me in this situation to be literally and figuratively demonstrating my conceptual predisposition. This example made me aware of my bias and predisposition towards personal transformation, and since personal transformation was such an intense experience for me, I decided to include it here in an attempt to be transparent in how my experiences influenced the research topic from the start.

Figure 1.2

Personal transformation pillar at the Sandton Gautrain Station



The manner in which my own experience directly influenced my research topic and methodology is validated by Moustakas's (1994, p. 104) explanation that in phenomenological research "the question grows out of an intense interest in a particular problem or topic" and "the researcher's excitement and curiosity inspire the search." I had to become phenomenological by crafting something from nothing, from an empty space, with no recipe, like an artist (Vagle, 2014). Strozzi-Heckler (1997) refers to the difference between a craftsman and an artist, where the craftsman knows what the outcome will be, whereas an artist does not know what will happen, as it is a process. It was indeed difficult for me to work without a recipe, just being in the process as it happens, as it was mostly contrary to the way I used to function. I slowly shifted towards a mind-set of 'trust the process' and by doing that, writing up the thesis became an evolving process in which my experiences with coaching continued to influence what I read (literature) and how I looked at the data. Against the background I provided above, my interest in coaching as a research topic clearly stems from personal interest, experience and curiosity. My predisposition towards coaching, which includes being coached and doing coaching myself, influenced my choice of this research topic and methodology. In addition, my phenomenological experience of personal transformation as a result of being

coached continued long after the coaching sessions ended. Thus, I have to acknowledge that I was biased to view personal transformation as the essential part of coaching, as the core value of coaching, as what coaching is all about, and I had a need to substantiate this empirically. Upon reading more about coaching, the scientific need to substantiate claims for personal transformation became an important objective to me and led me to ask questions about personal transformation in a coaching context.

In the next section I will discuss the research problem and research question. The research question also demonstrates why the study is needed (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014) and it was the overall guiding question throughout my research project (Flick, 2009).

1.2.3 Problem statement

Despite the purported significance of coaching, personal transformation that could potentially result from a coaching experience is not always objectively measurable. Objective measures of change only provide part of the truth. Personal transformation cannot be quantified because quantification cannot encompass the wide variability of personal meaning that is related to deep personal change. Arghode (2012), Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Tuli (2010) explain that quantitative research is rooted in the positivist paradigm where numbers are used to study the phenomenon, which does not allow for the lived experience of participants as in qualitative research. Stout-Rostron (2009a, p. 83) specifically points to the need for research with regard to the value of coaching: “we need empirical evidence that coaching can make a difference on an individual, organisational and societal level.” Hanssmann (2014, p. 24) confirms that “little empirical research has examined how coaching facilitates clients’ transformational change.” While much research has been done on the experience and value for coaches when in the process of coaching (De Haan, 2008; González, 2003), limited research has been done on the personal transformational value of coaching for the coaching client (Hanssmann, 2014). Based on the literature review conducted, I argue that there is limited understanding of the personal transformational value for coachees who completed a series of

coaching sessions, and point out the need to study how coaching facilitates people's change more deeply.

In light of the above, I have formulated my **research question** as follows:

How does coaching facilitate personal transformation for the coachee?

The research question was key to the research methodology (design) that I used (Flick, 2009) (to be discussed in Chapter 2) as well as in formulating a research objective for this study. In the next paragraph I present the research objective.

1.2.4 Research objective

The objective of this study was to explore the lived coaching experiences of coachees in order to deepen the understanding of how personal transformation is facilitated by the coaching process and thus to describe the personal transformational value of coaching. This overall research objective can be broken down into three sub-research objectives namely:

- to explore the lived coaching experience of coachees;
- to explore how personal transformation was facilitated by the coaching process;
- to describe the personal transformational value of coaching.

1.3 DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES DEMARCATING THE STUDY

In the sections that follow I provide the disciplinary boundaries of the study, which include the primary and secondary disciplines as well as the related meta-theoretical perspectives of the study. As such, I explain IO psychology as the primary discipline in which the study was conducted, as well as how the study relates to the sub-disciplines of consulting psychology and coaching psychology. Within this disciplinary boundary, the conceptual focus of the study was on personal transformation as a behavioural phenomenon. The relevant meta-theoretical paradigms that underpinned the study are transpersonal psychology and positive psychology. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, specifically in terms of

how personal transformation is conceptualised from these perspectives. To conclude the meta-theoretical foundation of the study here, coaching is discussed as the psychological intervention that facilitates personal transformation.

1.3.1 Primary discipline: Industrial and organisational psychology

Industrial and organisational psychology has been in existence for more than 100 years and is a well-rounded discipline and profession across the world (Veldsman, 2001). In South Africa, IO psychology has grown exponentially since the 1980s (Thompson, 2008) and has continued to develop in recent years in accordance with the premium placed on human capital development (De Kock, 2018). The focus of IO psychology as an applied area of psychology is the understanding of human behaviour (Cascio, 2015, Van Vuuren, 2010). The aim of IO psychology is to apply psychological principles, theory and research related to the work environment, hence IO psychology is the application of both science and practice (Cascio, 2015; Augustyn & Cillié, 2008; Coetzee & Van Zyl, 2015; De Kock, 2018; Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007; Veldsman, 2001). Furthermore, IO psychology focusses on the effective functioning of people and deeper understanding of the behaviour of people in the work environment, influencing and optimising the individual, group, organisation and society as a whole (Cascio, 2015; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010; Van Zyl et al., 2016).

Despite some debates on whether IO psychology is psychology, Strümpfer (2007, p. 1) explains that IO psychology “is general psychology applied in industry and organizations”, and that psychology is a mixture of basic and applied science. Similarly, Cascio (2015) refers to psychology as the scientific study of behaviour in the workplace. The responsiveness of IO psychology to changes and demands in the work environment resulted in a multi-disciplinary character consisting of various subfields in IO psychology (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010; Van Vuuren, 2010). Recognised subfields, also referred to as subdisciplines within IO psychology, are among others personnel psychology, organisational psychology, career psychology, psychological assessments, ergonomics, consumer psychology, employee and organisational well-being and employment relations (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). In addition to the multi-disciplinary character of IO psychology, Van Vuuren (2010)

explains the inter-disciplinary nature of IO psychology, which refers to the link with disciplines such as accounting, business management, marketing management, economics, sociology, education, philosophy, business ethics and anthropology. Furthermore, Strümpfer (2007) refers to four illustrative topics in IO psychology, namely motivation, leadership, assessment and appreciative inquiry.

For industrial and organisational psychologists (IOPs) to stay relevant they have to understand the needs and changes in the business environment and to remain aligned with these, as well as bringing science and practice together (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010). With reference to workplace challenges, IOPs not only have to contribute to the bottom-line success of organisations, but also to the welfare of employees (Cascio, 2015; Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007; Van Vuuren, 2010; Van Zyl et al., 2016). Moreover, Cascio (2015, p. 883) refers to today's paradigms of work as "anytime, anywhere, in real space, or in cyberspace", which makes workplace challenges even more challenging and emphasises the importance of the role of the IOP in the workplace.

The professional association/body to which the majority of IOPs in South Africa belong is the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa (SIOPSA), which includes different working interest groups (Thompson, 2008; De Kock, 2018). These interest groups are the (1) interest group in the systems psychodynamics of organisations; (2) interest group for people assessment in industry; (3) interest group in coaching and consulting psychology (IGCCP); (4) interest group for psycho-legal matters; (5) interest group for transformation; and (6) interest group for applied organisational neuroscience (<https://www.siopsa.org.za/interestgroups/>). The interest group my study relates to is the IGCCP. This was formed during the SIOPSA annual conference in June 2006 and the focus of the IGCCP is on establishing and growing a sustainable framework for both coaching and consulting psychology (<https://www.siopsa.org.za/interestgroups/>). The IGCCP is affiliated with the International Society of Coaching Psychology and the American Psychological Association's (APA) Society of Consulting Psychology (<https://www.siopsa.org.za/interestgroups/>). In the next paragraph I will explicate consulting psychology and coaching psychology as sub-disciplines of IO psychology.

1.3.2 Sub-disciplines: Consulting and coaching psychology

Kilburg (2016) relates that during 1919, the APA established the Standing Committee on the Certification of Consulting Psychologists. Consulting psychologists may consult across three levels – with individuals or groups or organisations or a combination thereof (Cooper, 2012; Lowman, 2002, 2016). Similarly, Backer et al. (1992) refer to consulting psychologists as psychologists who fulfil different roles, which include both the organisation and the individuals working for the organisation. Moreover, in relation to consulting psychology, Leonard (1999) calls for psychologists to focus on developing people rather than reactively resolving issues. This, according to Leonard (1999), requires focus on leadership, conflict resolution skills, creative problem-solving and good coaching. Consulting psychologists are involved in different activities in the field, such as individual assessment, coaching, creating or improving team functioning and improving the quality of the system as a whole, hence, system-wide changes (Lowman, 2002, 2016). Lowman (2002, p. 3) emphasises that the “primary role of consulting psychologists is to advise others on how to do their jobs – not to do their jobs for them.” Consulting psychology exists in a highly competitive environment, therefore the importance of consulting psychologists engaging with science to apply this in practice (Lowman, 2012; Sahir & Brutus, 2018). In addition to consulting psychology, other forms of consulting are management consulting, financial consulting, information technology (IT) consulting and human resources (HR) consulting (Sahir & Brutus, 2018).

Consulting psychology emerged and became a sought-after discipline in South-Africa (locally) and worldwide (globally). Since 2005 the University of South-Africa (UNISA) has been the only university in South-Africa that offers a doctorate in philosophy in consulting psychology; it has annually been hosting a consulting psychology conference. Between 2005 and 2019, 28 students in South Africa completed their PhD degrees in consulting psychology at UNISA (M. Campher, personal communication, May 04, 2021). Coaching plays a pertinent role in the field of consulting psychology, including executive coaching, where coaching has an impact on job performance and productivity, learning, self-awareness and development, and leadership effectiveness (Lowman, 2002). Moreover, Kilburg

(2016) contends that consulting psychologists have been doing executive coaching since at least the 1950s. According to Lowman (2002), coaching interventions are described as a tool that consultants use to help people in different contexts, such as in their roles at work, as well as their lives in general. Coaching psychology is therefore closely related to consulting psychology, and has been pioneered by psychologists as an emerging field in psychology and underpinned by scientific theories and frameworks in psychology (Grant, 2011; Passmore et al., 2018; Simon et al., 2014; Vandaveer et al., 2016). The existence of the IGCCP highlights the close relationship between consulting psychology and coaching psychology. It also confirms the need and importance of coaching and consulting psychology in a South African context. The roots of coaching psychology are founded in psychology (Grant, 2011; Lai & McDowall, 2014). Hence, coaching psychology is applied by psychologically trained practitioners in applying psychological approaches, interventions and processes (Allen, 2016; Passmore et al., 2013; Passmore et al., 2018). Furthermore, coaching psychology is considered a form of applied positive psychology to facilitate promotion of optimal human functioning and change on individual, group, organisational and community level (Allen, 2016; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Linley & Harrington, 2005; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Passmore & Oades, 2014; Simon et al., 2014) and in the South African context, in a multi-cultural context (Simon et al., 2014). Six different descriptions follow, which explain what coaching psychology is, as summarised in **table 1.1** below.

Table 1.1*Descriptions of coaching psychology*

Conceptual Focus	Description	Source
Psychological and theoretical approach with non-clinical populations/normally functioning people	Applied behavioural science and positive psychology, facilitating change on an individual, organisational and social level, unhindered by psychological distress.	Grant and Cavanagh (2007)
Psychological and theoretical approach with non-clinical populations/normally functioning people	Applied positive psychology underpinned by established psychological approaches and behavioural science to enhance the life experience, work performance and well-being for individuals, groups and organisations that do not have clinically significant mental health issues or abnormal levels of distress.	Palmer and Whybrow (2007)
Psychological and theoretical approach	An applied area of psychology that is underpinned by a body of theory and research with a positive influence on individuals, organisations and society.	Palmer (2008)
Psychological approach with non-clinical populations/normally functioning people	Psychological intervention and process with the focus on non-clinical populations with the aim to facilitate and elicit behaviour changes.	Lai (2014)
Psychological and theoretical approach with non-clinical populations/normally functioning people	"... a conversational process of facilitating positive development and change towards optimal functioning, well-being and increased performance within work and personal life domains, in the absence of clinically significant mental health issues, through the application of a wide range of psychological theories and principles and is directed at individuals, groups, teams, organisations and communities within a culturally-specific context."	Odendaal and Le Roux (2016, p. 18)
Psychological and theoretical approach	Applied psychological approaches, interventions and processes to coaching practice.	Passmore et al. (2018)
Psychological and theoretical approach	An evolving field that takes into account the methods, principles and knowledge of related psychological disciplines.	Corrie and Kovacs (2019)

Descriptions of coaching psychology in the above table involve the application of psychological approaches, interventions and processes. In addition, Grant (2016) confirms that coaching psychology is informed by a broad range of theoretical approaches, as indicated in the table above. Typical theoretical approaches in coaching psychology are positive psychology, strengths-based approaches, appreciative enquiry, psychodynamic approaches and systemic approaches to leadership and organisational development (Grant, 2016). Coaching psychology relates to how, through the study of psychology, we can enhance the practice (i.e. coaching), consequently leading to materially different outcomes of the coaching process (Passmore et al., 2018).

1.3.3 Conceptualising coaching

Coaching dates back as far as Socrates, who believed that when a person takes ownership of a situation and its outcome, the best learning takes place (Fielden, 2005). “The term *coaching* is derived from a French term that means to convey a valued person from one point to another” (Haas, 1992, cited in Carey et al., 2011, p. 52). As described by Kilburg (2004, cited in Peltier, 2010, p. xxix), coaching seems to be something secretive: “For all of the work that has been done to illuminate the subject of coaching in the past 15 or 20 years, what actually happens in coaching engagements remains quite mysterious.” The first reference to coaching in the workplace dates back to a research paper by Gordy in 1937 (Passmore et al., 2018).

The coaching approach is different from counselling, therapy and mentoring, though the expectation of all of these is to change. Brockbank and McGill (2006) refer to therapy as including psychotherapy or counselling. Thus, coaching differs from therapy, as it is not primarily intended to address psychopathology or serious intrapersonal or interpersonal distress (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Hart et al., 2001; Joo, 2005; Simon et al., 2014; Ulrich, 2008; Williams, 2004). Hence the focus of coaching is on the future rather than the past (Bresser & Wilson, 2016; Hart et al., 2001; Ulrich, 2008) and on human potential and possibility; coaching therefore embodies the ultimate purpose of psychology (Williams, 2004). Significant mental health issues should be absent from the coaching process and best practice in coaching encourages the referral of clients to clinical or counselling psychologists

when primary health issues are present (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Williams, 2004). Mentoring, on the other hand, takes place when the mentor gives advice to the mentee and shares his/her experience, knowledge, skills and wisdom (Stout-Rostron, 2009b).

Moreover, coaching is a platform grounded in positive psychology and is applied across personal, professional and social domains (Grant & Spence, 2009; Salavert, 2015). Hence, coaching is a whole life experience, as it is applied and valued in different contexts on a personal and professional level (Bachkirova, 2016; Cilliers, 2011; Grant et al., 2010; Grant & Spence, 2009; Grover & Furnham; 2016; Kearns, 2006; Stout-Rostron, 2009b; International Coach Federation, n.d.). According to Cherry and Boysen-Rotelli (2016), the core of any coaching approach is that the coachee should be willing and ready to be coached by a coach. It does happen when people participate in a coaching programme that they do not know what to expect, as they had not previously been exposed to coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011). It is therefore important for coaching to be positioned correctly with the coachee. The coachee is responsible for the entire coaching process and is its owner. The role of the coach is to facilitate the process according to the needs of the coachee and to empower the coachee to achieve personal growth (Bresser & Wilson, 2016; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Moreover, coaching is not a passive process, but an active process that includes experiential learning for the coachee (Du Toit, 2007). The coach facilitates and co-creates the coaching process and therefore is not in a position to tell the coachee what to do, but rather provides a thought-provoking and creative process to help the coachee to find her² own solutions (Griffiths, 2005; Gessnitzer et al., 2016; Stout-Rostron, 2009b; International Coach Federation, n.d.).

Coaching today has a different meaning and is not stigmatised as in the past when it was assumed that a person had done something wrong or that coaching was remedial in nature. The focus has rather shifted to what a person has done right and the organisation that suggests coaching for an employee sees the person as having

² Throughout the thesis I have used the female gender as a general reference to people or a person, except when referring to research participants; I used their gender. I did this because I identify with the female gender and used a first person writing style, as explained in section 1.5. I have not changed the gender used by authors in text that I cited or consulted as references.

high potential and as an investment (Page & De Haan, 2014; Kets de Vries, 2014). The emphasis is on shifting a person from good to great, which is aligned with positive growth and the theory of positive psychology (Gloss, 2012; Grant & Spence, 2009).

Factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of the coaching intervention include coach-client compatibility (chemistry), a strong coaching relationship that emerges and is established between the coach and the client, and the self-efficacy of the client. Termination of a coaching relationship is often a result of a mismatch between the coach and the coachee, as well as the expertise of the coach that is in question (American Management Association, 2008; De Haan et al., 2016; Fielden 2005; Joo, 2005; Koroleva, 2016; Page & De Haan, 2014; Sonesh et al., 2015). Different aspects that hinder coaching include a mismatch between the coach and the coachee, the expertise and credentials of the coach, ROI, which is highly debateable in the field of coaching, and people nominated for coaching being sceptical about the purpose of coaching.

Typically, the coach as facilitator would lead transformational learning for the coachee. Through this process of transformational learning, critical reflection on a person's underlying beliefs and assumptions is encouraged. This leads to the development of new meaning by the client through critically reflecting on her behaviour (Mezirow, 1991). Similarly, Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 214) explains that reflecting on the assumptions that cause specific behaviour moves a person to change behaviour and therefore "to review the belief systems that underlie those assumptions." Hanssmann (2014) and Passmore (2010) refer to a transformational space the coach has to provide to the coachee; this is where the coach holds a space to both support and challenge the coachee during the coaching process. For that reason coaching should not be too comfortable, as that limits growth and change for the coachee. Challenging the coachee is consequently an important part of the coaching process (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Cavanagh, 2005; Passmore, 2010). In addition to holding a safe space, the coach has to set aside a safe space for reflection and exploration, as this might allow for new meanings and new possibilities to open up for the coachee and encourage new behaviour in challenging situations (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Bluckert, 2006; González, 2003; Stelter, 2009).

Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 2) explains that “coaching is not about ‘doing’ for the client, but more about ‘being’ – creating a safe thinking environment; a space where thinking, feeling, insight and creative decision making can take place.”

Furthermore, coaching is seen as a medium that helps people to make a transition in their personal and professional lives and improve their over-all level of well-being (Cilliers, 2011; Duijts et al., 2008; Grant, 2003, 2006, 2017; Grover & Furnham, 2016; Jarosz, 2016; Theeboom et al., 2014). Stelter (2014, p. 25) refers to the coaching process as leading to a “perspective transformation or a shift in perspective”. It is said to enable deep change to happen, inevitably evoking a shift in a person’s way of being in the world and her collective existence (Cook-Greuter, 2004, 2007; Goble et al., 2017; Krapu, 2016; Sieler, 2012). Coaching results in a personal transformative journey on which coachees discover a new self (Goble et al., 2017). The words of Krapu (2016, p. 17) similarly highlight the transformational effect of coaching, as he explains how coaching shapes a person’s view of the world:

As more and more people accomplish significant things in their life as a result of coaching, and even transform their life in significant ways, coaching will be increasingly seen as a powerful methodology to effect change and growth in people’s lives.

1.3.4 Meta-theoretical approach to transformation: Transpersonal and positive psychology

The application of coaching has evolved to different contexts, namely *theoretical approaches, coaching models and different styles or genres of coaching* (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Stout-Rostron, 2012). These theories, styles and models, as mentioned below, are useful for coaches to apply as a means to invite transformation for the client. *Theoretical approaches* that apply in coaching include the psychodynamic approach, cognitive behavioural approach, solution-focused approach, person-centred approach, Gestalt approach, existential coaching, ontological coaching, narrative coaching, psychological development in adulthood and coaching, transpersonal approach to coaching, positive psychology approach to coaching, transactional analysis and coaching, and the neuro-linguistic programming approach

to coaching (Bachkirova et al., 2014). *Different coaching styles or genres* applied by coaches in coaching include according to Bachkirova et al. (2014), skills and performance coaching, developmental coaching, transformational coaching, executive and leadership coaching, team coaching, peer coaching, life coaching, health and wellness coaching, career coaching and cross-cultural coaching. *Different coaching models* could be used in coaching (Stout-Rostron, 2009b; Stout-Rostron, 2012), such as: Nested-levels model, four-quadrant models, including the Hippocrates model of the four humours, insights four-colour model, domains of competence model (Habermas), Ken Wilber's four-quadrant integral model, GROW and CLEAR models, emotional intelligence (EQ) model, Kolb's experiential learning model, and Hudson's renewal cycle model. Other models are the input-throughput-output model, and Scharmer's U-process model.

In this study the transpersonal psychology and positive psychology approach to coaching as a vehicle for personal change was chosen and therefore used as the conceptual framework to understand the personal transformational value of coaching. These two meta-theoretical approaches to coaching are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Arghode (2012), Gillo (2021), Moustakas (1996), Omona (2013) and Tuli (2010) refer to how the approach in phenomenological research is on revealing qualitative aspects in behaviour and experience rather than quantitative aspects. Deep change is a subjective experience, not an objective one that can be quantified (Omona, 2013), motivating the application of phenomenology in this study in order to understand the lived experiences of the participants (Becker, 1992; Spinelli, 2005; Van Manen, 2014). Specifically, the phenomenological **research approach** applied in this study was a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, which refers to the interpretation and understanding of the lived experiences of the participants (Lavery, 2003; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Reiners, 2012). The research participant is personally involved and so is the researcher in attempting to understand the lived human experiences of the participant that are not approachable through quantitative approaches (Arghode, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Moustakas, 1996). Hence the

type of study was qualitative. Quantitative research is a systematic and structured process where numbers are used and tested to interpret data and to come to conclusions (Arghode, 2012; Boyd, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Donmoyer, 2008). Moustakas (1996) explains the difference between quantitative and qualitative research in that the focus in phenomenological research is on the whole experience instead of the parts; meanings and essences are sought instead of measurements, by obtaining the lived experience of people by means of first-person interviews. In quantitative research, reality is singular and one truth exists, whereas in qualitative research multiple truths are seen as viable (Arghode, 2012). According to Boyd (2009, p. 3), the qualitative researcher has in mind to understand “social phenomena from the inside”, which is to understand the lived experience of the participants. Further to this, Moustakas (1996) explains that the data of experience is of importance to understand human behaviour and to act as evidence for scientific investigations in qualitative research. The **research method** applied was face-to-face semi-structured interviews with seven participants who underwent coaching over a period of time. The **data analysis strategy** applied to interpret data within the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of the study was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to make sense of and interpret the lived experiences of the participants. I explain my methodology, which includes the research approach and methods, in detail in Chapter 2.

1.5 ENSURING QUALITATIVE RIGOUR: WRITING STYLE AND REFLEXIVITY

This study is qualitative and writing is perceived as being central to ensuring good quality qualitative research (Jonsen et al., 2018). Using a qualitative enquiry, I continuously had to be mindful of being academically and scientifically rigorous, and of applying the writing style that would bring the reader into my world in a convincing manner (Jonsen et al., 2018). In the difficult search for a writing style with which I could identify and which would be scientifically convincing at the same time, I came across these inspirational words: “Writing *is* researching” (Jonsen et al., 2018, p. 32; Van Manen, 2014). In addition, Antoniou and Moriarty (2008, p. 161) assert that “writing is to WRITE.” Research includes not only interaction between the researcher and the voices of the research participants, but also interaction between

the researcher and her potential readers (Flick, 2009; Langer, 2016). I came to realise that it is not only about my writing about the phenomenon, but also about writing creatively to draw the attention of the reader. This refers not only to how I propose and construct the research story, but also to how the reader will receive and interpret it, necessitating the researcher to write and speak with authority (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Jonsen et al., 2018). A new way of thinking opened up for me during my PhD journey, involving challenging my own ideas and beliefs, which I was not used to doing. One of its demands was to confront my self-efficacy about scientific writing and following the advice of seasoned scholars (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008; Jonsen et al., 2018; Van Manen, 2014). I just started to write, which helped me to become more confident in asserting my voice and opinions. Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) emphasise the importance of using one's own voice in writing on research.

Moreover, Antoniou and Moriarty (2008) explain that academic writing entails bringing one's whole self to the writing process. The writing style that finds expression in a research report (as this thesis) includes not only the intellect, but also the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the writer (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). Hence in the scientific endeavour, creative writing is both a skill and a very personal process (Jonsen et al., 2018). I could concur with bringing different aspects of myself to the writing; this is especially evident in my use of colour in the thesis, as well as the colourful visual structuring of the thesis chapters (see section 1.6 below). I am also aware that writing creatively does not mean excluding "intellectual rigour, analytical excellence and technical competence" (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008, p. 160). In addition to the above, because my study is qualitative, it involves deep engagement with the phenomena which should be reflected and demonstrated in the writing style employed (Reid et al., 2018).

In my struggle to write academically I was relieved to find that many academics experience academic writing as a complex process, doubting their ability to produce text that is good enough (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). It became clear to me that to develop my writing skills I had to start reading more, which included articles and theses of other people, and exploring their writing style (Antoniou & Moriarty, 2008). I then realised that developing and acquiring good writing capabilities would be part

of this journey (Trafford & Leshem, 2012). Writing and expressing myself in my second language created additional discomfort, yet this is regarded as typical of writing in a second language (Kara, 2013). To convey the message effectively, I therefore had to employ the services of a professional language editor.

It is against the above background that I applied a reflexive first-person style. A first-person writing style is considered appropriate specifically where the researcher wants to offer an insider perspective, a presence and authorial self-representation (Starfield, 2015). In qualitative research, reflexivity is part of the research process and the researcher has to be clear and detailed about it (Dodgson, 2019; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Though reflexivity has been neglected in qualitative research (Palaganas et al., 2017), it is indeed key to the research process (Kuehner et al., 2016). Moreover, reflexivity has been regarded as action that comes after one becomes aware of and reflects on something. Reflexivity, which will be outlined in the paragraphs that follow, is also demonstrated by using first-person language (Berger, 2015).

The focus of hermeneutic phenomenology as methodology is a reflection on the lived experience of the participants, hence reflective writing is appropriate in this tradition of inquiry (Van Manen, 2014). I found this to be a challenging skill to integrate in my writing style. The manner in which I chose to demonstrate my reflective practice was threefold. Firstly, I reflected in this orientation chapter on how my personal experience with coaching predispositioned me to focus on personal transformation as a core value of coaching and on taking a phenomenologically orientated methodological stance. Secondly, in the closing chapter I provide further in-depth reflection on what happened for me as researcher on a personal level throughout the study (Chapter 7, section 7.5). This includes how my own experiences amalgamated with the phenomenon under study and how this is reflected in my findings. Thirdly, doing this study entailed a recurring process of awareness, reflection and action for me (Teh & Lek, 2018). I applied reflexivity across my entire research project, as it contributed to making the research process open and transparent (Ortlipp, 2008; Palaganas et al., 2017). This reflection is also evident in the last chapter where I reflect critically on how I attempted to ensure the quality of this study.

In my application of reflexivity I enhanced the quality of my research through the articulation of my research subjectivities (section 1.2.2), and the way in which these influenced the research topic and process (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Primeau, 2003; Sutton & Austin, 2015). From this perspective, subjectivity is not necessarily negative, but it is unavoidable, and therefore it is best for the researcher to articulate these subjectivities upfront in a manner that is clear and coherent to readers (Sutton & Austin, 2015), as explained in section 1.2.2 of this chapter and in section 2.2.2 of Chapter 2.

Furthermore, reflexivity is regarded as both a concept and a process (Dowling, 2006). As a process it implies introspection on the role of subjectivity in the research process (Dowling, 2006). Subjectivity of the researcher permeates the research process (Dowling, 2008; Kuehner et al., 2016; Patnaik, 2013; Primeau, 2003) and I was aware of my own subjectivity as a researcher in having been coached and having been trained as and practising as a coach in the interpretation of the phenomenon. It aligns with the fact that qualitative research is subjective rather than objective (Dodgson, 2019) and by means of reflexivity the researcher addresses subjectivity (Cavalcanti, 2017; Dodgson, 2019; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Primeau, 2003). Hence, meaning was given to how I as the researcher reasoned and interpreted a text based on my values, beliefs, experience and interest (Chapter 5), which are prone to a degree of subjectivity (Creswell, 2013; Palaganas et al., 2017).

Reflexivity as a concept refers to a certain level of consciousness and self-awareness (Dowling, 2006). I was self-aware of my unconscious relationship with the data and my interpretation thereof (Dowling, 2008; Kuehner et al., 2016; Patnaik, 2013) as discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.5. By applying critical self-reflexivity in Chapter 7, section 7.5, I demonstrate the quality and rigour of the research report, which are the gold standard to determine trustworthiness in qualitative research (Given & Saumure, 2008; Palaganas et al., 2017; Teh & Lek, 2018; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The quality of the data is confirmed by means of triangulation (Williams & Morrow, 2009) and rigour in how I presented the text as believable and plausible (Koch & Harrington, 1998). The quality and rigour of my research will be discussed in the final chapter. Furthermore, in striving towards trustworthiness of the

research project, I applied the trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Shenton, 2004). The application of these in my research are discussed and explained in Chapter 2, section 2.7.1 and in the last chapter, to provide a more accurate picture.

1.6 CONCLUSION AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

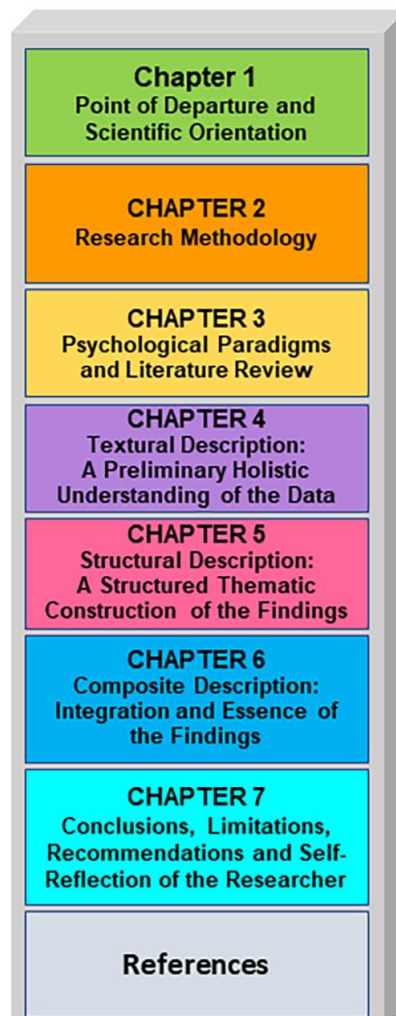
In this chapter I gave a detailed description of the rationale of the study where I introduced the background of the study, followed by a reflection on my interest in the study. The research problem, research question and research objective were discussed and I explained the primary discipline and sub-disciplines in which the study was conducted. I conceptualised coaching and presented the meta-theoretical approach to transformation and an overview of the research design. I concluded this chapter where I described how I positioned myself as researcher through my writing style and consistent self-reflection. In the next paragraph an outline of the different chapters that follow, is provided.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research methodology. I explain my philosophy of science and paradigmatic orientation, as it sets the foundation of my research. Hermeneutic phenomenology as the research approach is presented, including the type of study, namely a qualitative study. The overall research strategy and research methods applied in this study are discussed and I indicate how I applied quality and ensured ethical research. Chapter 3 forms the literature review of the study, where the psychological paradigms, meta-theories, meta-constructs and personal transformation are discussed. I dedicated Chapters 4 to 6 to the research results that emerged from this study. Chapter 4, which flows into Chapter 5, offers the textural description, where I introduced the stories of the research participants. In Chapter 5 the structural description is presented, which includes the findings that unfolded from the four different themes that were identified in the research data. Chapter 6 offers a detailed review of the composite description by providing a conceptual integration of the literature and findings, as well as introducing a conceptual framework. The thesis is concluded with Chapter 7, where the conclusions, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Chapter 7 also offers the self-reflections of the researcher. References are listed at the end of the final chapter, followed by appendixes as referred to in Chapter 2. This chapter outline or structure of the thesis is visually presented in **figure 1.3**. In the next chapter I shall introduce the research methodology.

Figure 1.3

The structure of the thesis



CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on how I became interested in coaching as my research topic and how the study crystallised. In establishing my position as researcher, my intention was to be transparent in explaining how my own biases and assumptions influenced my research decisions and how I wrote and engaged in the study.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the research methodology and the way in which it was applied to answer the research question efficiently. Crotty (2005), Creswell (2013) and Scotland (2012) refer to methodology as the research strategy or plan of action, which includes deciding on the methods to be used in the research, the techniques to be used to collect and analyse data, and the way in which everything will be linked together. In addition, Saunders and Rojon (2014, p. 75) highlight that methodology refers to the underlying theoretical orientation of how research should be undertaken and that it has an impact on the methods chosen in a study:

Methodology is therefore not the justification for your choice of particular data collection methods, rather it encompasses the philosophical assumptions and underpinnings upon which your research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods you have used.

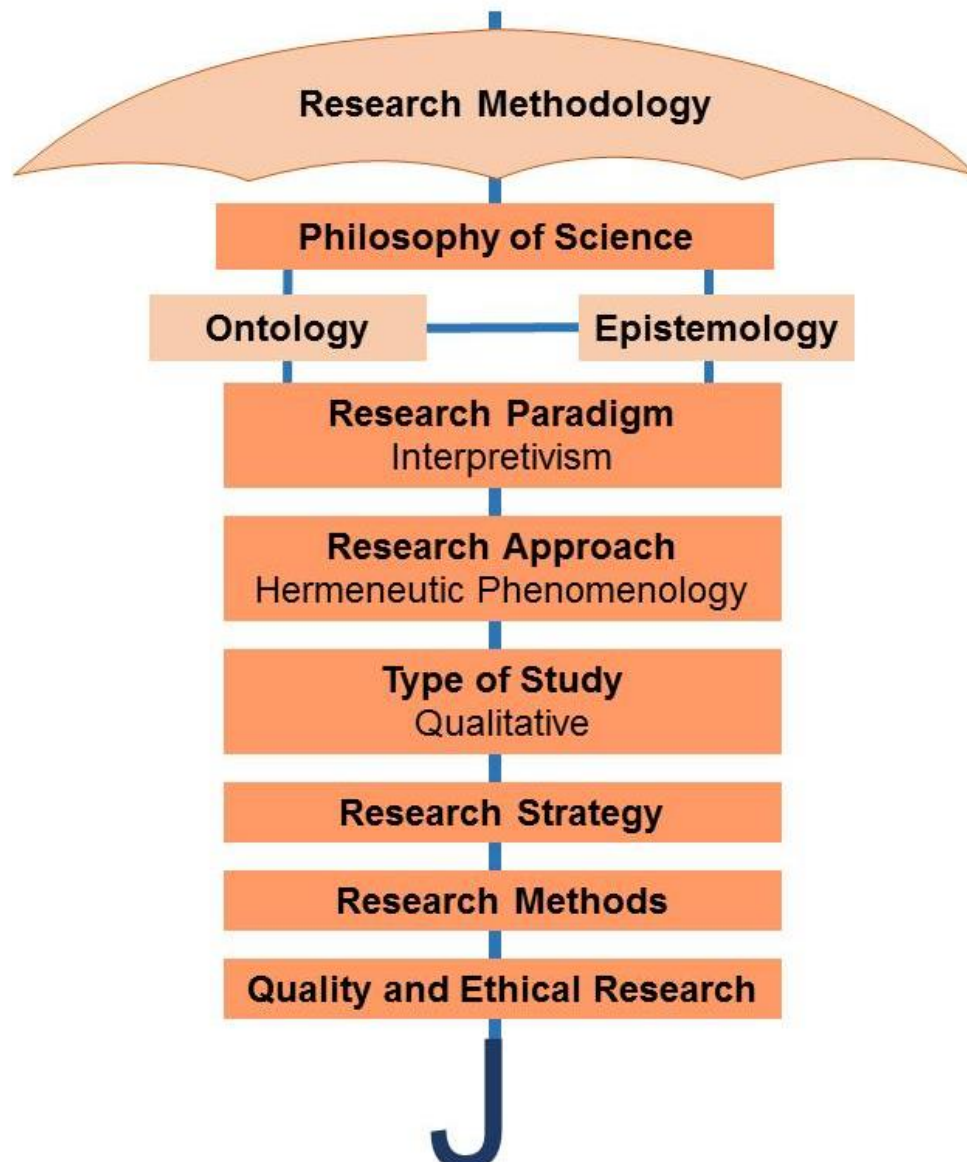
Details about my theoretical research orientation as well as the methods used in my research project are included and discussed in this chapter to motivate clearly how this study was operationalised. In the first section of the chapter I continue to present myself as a researcher by reflecting on my philosophy of science and clarifying my ontological and epistemological assumptions. Consequently, I explain interpretivism as the research paradigm that was foundational to how this study was conducted and influential in the research decisions I took. Congruent to an interpretive paradigm, I next discuss my research approach, which was a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. This is followed by a characterisation of qualitative research as the type of inquiry conducted. In the remainder of the chapter I outline

the overall research strategy and research methods used in this study. These include the specific data analysis strategy I favoured, which is IPA. Lastly, I focus on the strategies I employed to ensure quality and ethical research, which are essential in ensuring rigour and integrity in any research study.

My research topic guided me towards the research methodology to be undertaken in this study. Silverman (2011, p. 166) states that when selecting a research method “everything depends upon your research topic”. **Figure 2.1** below depicts the manner in which I have structured the research methodology.

Figure 2.1

Research methodology



2.2 PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND PARADIGMATIC ORIENTATION

The theoretical orientation to a study, as distinct from a theory, “is sometimes referred to as the research paradigm and influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 2). The research paradigm is important, as it sets the foundation for the research methodology and design and determines what knowledge claims to expect from the research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Ponterotto, 2005). “It is the choice of paradigm that sets down the intent, motivation and expectations for the research” (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 2). The research paradigm demarcates the paradigm in which the researcher will design and do the research (Grix & Watkins, 2010; Trafford & Leshem, 2012). Likewise, a paradigm can be defined as the “basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choice of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105). Similarly, Willis (2007, p. 8) explains a paradigm as “a comprehensive belief system, worldview, or framework that guides research and practice in a field.”

There are different paradigms representing different and distinctive orientations to research, namely positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism/constructivism and the critical/ideological paradigm (Morrow, 2005; Musa, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005). These paradigms are usually distinguished and defined by their underlying ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological beliefs or assumptions, which represent the philosophy of science (Musa, 2013; Ponterotto, 2005). These ontological and epistemological assumptions reflect the lenses through which the researcher sees the world and has an impact on the paradigm chosen and the organisation of a research study (Tuli, 2010). As such, my underlying ontological and epistemological position determined how I looked at the personal transformational value of coaching in terms of my perception, understanding and interpretation thereof (*cf.* Trafford & Leshem, 2012).

It is not possible to engage in any form of research without assuming an ontological and epistemological position (Scotland, 2012). I concur with Kafle (2011) that researchers are influenced by their underlying ontological and epistemological positions and that these philosophical assumptions constitute the building blocks of

any particular research orientation (or paradigm), which determines the way in which a study is operationalised. In this section, I discuss the ontological and epistemological assumptions and positions underlying this study, followed by an integrative discussion of the interpretive paradigm that represents my research orientation.

2.2.1 Ontology

Ontology deals with what is real, what exists, what is the nature of reality and beliefs about what there is to know about the world (Baptiste, 2001; Lavery 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kim 2011, Nel, 2007; Ormston et al., 2014; Ponterotto, 2005; Willis, 2007). Researchers need to adopt a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and how things really work (Scotland, 2012). According to Grix (2010, p. 60), the “ontological position of the researcher is implicit even before you choose your topic.” I agree with Grix (2010) in that I realise that my view of coaching was implicit even before I commenced with the study. This is clear from my personal story of how I embarked on this study and its topic. I acknowledge that I was predispositioned in my belief that people who engage with coaching experience a shift in the way they deal with themselves, others and the world, because I experienced this personally. Even though I found authors agreeing that coaching causes change and transformation, as noted in the background literature review in Chapter 1, as a psychologist, I found limited evidence of *how* this happened. I assumed transformation results from coaching, yet I was dissatisfied with the level of understanding of this effect. I consequently believe that one can only credibly know a phenomenon if one truly understands it from the perspective of the person experiencing it. As such, I assume and presuppose a truth, but also believe that its nature depends on subjective experience. It is therefore my contention that I can only understand the transformational value of coaching by exploring people’s perspectives and experiences of the coaching process.

Upon embarking on a literature review of meta-scientific assumptions and the importance of explicating one’s research paradigm, I could locate my ontological beliefs in contemporary ontological positions. According to Ormston et al. (2014), ontological assumptions in social science can be categorised on a continuum of

idealism to realism. **Realism**, on the one end of the spectrum, represents the belief that an external reality exists independently of our beliefs or understanding (Ormston et al., 2014). **Idealism**, on the other hand, is described by Ormston et al. (2014) as the conviction that reality is only knowable through the human mind and through socially constructed meanings, hence no reality exists independently of these. In addition to idealism, Ormston et al. (2014, p. 5) state that “reality is fundamentally mind-dependent”. Willis (2007, p. 10) concurs that “there is no reality other than what humans create in their own minds.” Thus, reality is a perception that is subjective and constructed in the mind (Willis, 2007). From an idealist perspective, it is possible to view reality in many ways, hence multiple realities exist (Creswell, 2013; Krauss, 2005).

As a researcher, the ontological question is therefore what I believe about social reality or truth (Grix, 2010). In the context of this study, my notion of truth and reality relates to my understanding of the research phenomenon, which is the personal transformation of the coachee when undergoing coaching. My predisposition that coaching leads to transformation concurs with authors in my literature review, people I dealt with in the coaching fraternity and participants in this study, hence my belief that multiple perspectives about a phenomenon exist and that some perspectives are shared. I therefore align myself with Ormston et al.’s (2014) version of **subtle idealism**, which acknowledges a reality – yet one which is established through shared and co-constructed meanings in the particular contexts in which one is brought up and to which one is exposed. In tandem I believe that there is no objective reality independent of our beliefs and understandings, but only a reality from the perspective of people and that people co-construct their realities, share meaning and can create collective understanding (Ormston et al., 2014).

Ontology cannot be considered separately from epistemology because of their interrelatedness (Grix, 2010; Krauss, 2005). Similar to this, Nel (2007) states that though ontology precedes epistemology, it is difficult to separate ontological and epistemological assumptions, as the one flows into the other. Ontology may initially seem rather abstract, whereas the relevance of epistemology is more obvious (Saunders et al., 2009).

2.2.2 Epistemology

'What knowledge is' is not the same as studying or acquiring knowledge from a 'body of knowledge' (Geldenhuys, 2015). Crotty (2005, p. 3) refers to epistemology as "a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know." It is a way of making sense of how one looks at the world. In epistemology the focus is on the relationship between the knower and the known, what knowledge is, as well as how it is possible (Badenhorst, 2011; Krauss, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nel, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005; Scotland, 2012; Tuli, 2010; Willis, 2007).

There is a range of epistemological positions, namely **objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism** (Crotty, 2005). I will firstly refer to dichotomies of objectivism and subjectivism and thereafter discuss constructionism. According to Crotty (2005), **objectivism** is the belief that truth and meaning reside within an object and can be known independent of human subjectivity. An objectivist in the most extreme form believes that there is only one true social reality that is experienced by all social actors (Saunders et al., 2009). **Subjectivism** implies that there is no truth or meaning independent of the mind and that truth includes the social actors' opinions, narratives, interpretations and perceptions that convey their social reality (Crotty, 2005; Saunders et al., 2009).

Constructionism is a subjectivist epistemology that implies that there is no objective truth and that meaning is not created or discovered, but constructed by different people and in different ways in relation to the same phenomenon (Kim, 2011). Constructionism and **social constructionism** are used interchangeably to denote the same epistemological perspective (Crotty, 2005). Confusion however frequently exist when constructionism or social constructionism are juxtaposed against constructivism. Some authors note that constructivism and social constructionism are very closely related and are also frequently used interchangeably (Charmaz, 2006). Yet, this creates conceptual confusion and according to Crotty (2005) these two are in fact slightly different epistemological positions. Social constructionism is based on the work of Berger and Luckmann (1966), "*The social construction of reality*" (Kham, 2013; Stam, 2011). In social constructionism the focus is more compellingly social and in a community context and hence involves interactions with other people,

whereas in constructivism it is more individually focussed and the way through which the world of experience is constructed entails cognitive processes (Crotty, 2005; Galbin, 2014; Kham, 2013; Young & Collin, 2004). Galbin (2014, p. 84) explains that “social constructionism represents a movement toward redefining psychological constructs such as the ‘mind’, ‘self’, and ‘emotion’ as socially constructed processes that are not intrinsic to the individual but produced by social discourse.”

According to Crotty (2005), reality is socially constructed and there is no exception. Crotty (2005) proposes social constructionism to include the assumptions of a perspectival reality that is characteristic of constructivism, but argues that social constructionism adds to this perspectival reality the contextual or relational generation of knowledge. **Social constructionism** denotes that meaning is created by everyday interactions between people to construct meaning of the multiple realities that exist (Andrews, 2012; Musa, 2013; Saunders et al., 2009). The knowledge referred to in social constructionist epistemology denotes that which is constructed through social processes. Knowledge is socially constructed and therefore subjective, since it represents different realities and multiple answers (Arghode, 2012). Hence all knowledge is regarded as perspectivistic (Geldenhuys, 2015), but it is also known through the subjective experiences of people (Creswell, 2013).

In addition, construction of meaning is created through conversations based on a common interest through the interactions between individuals, thus it is a social and an interactive process (Geldenhuys, 2015; Kim, 2011; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2006). Geldenhuys (2015) refers to the interactive process as relating and relatedness. Thus, meaning is constructed with who we are in relation to an experience (Spinelli & Horner, 2007). Furthermore, the construction of meaning takes place through social interchange by means of conversations and through the medium of language (Andrews, 2012; Flick, 2009; Kham, 2013; Leeds-Hurwitz, 2006). Galbin (2014, p. 84) concurs with the fact that “people exist in language”. Construction of meaning also involves inter-subjectivity among individuals (Geldenhuys, 2015; Kim, 2011).

As a researcher, I acknowledge that my reality is constructed in a specific and unique way, which influences what I carry with me and how I function in the world

(Kim, 2011). My understanding of the world around me is inextricably bound to and influenced by who I am and what I think and believe. Who I am has been influenced by my upbringing, society and experiences. Similarly, I believe that how participants experience something is related to how they know and look at the world. When doing the research, the context of the coaching and of the participants' work and lives was important to me in understanding what occurred during the coaching sessions for the coachees, and then to construct knowledge that was based on this shared understanding with the participants and between the participants and the researcher (Andrews, 2012; Kham, 2013; Kim, 2011; Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014).

The **social constructionist research orientation is consistent with my ontological and epistemological assumptions** that all reality is constructed through social processes in a subjective frame, hence there is no objective reality. Social constructionism argues that there is no objectivity, that people are subjective in how they construct their reality; it therefore makes the researcher aware of subjectivity (Galbin, 2014). Andrews (2012) states that social constructionism as an epistemology is not concerned with asking ontological questions because it is included in the epistemology of social constructionism.

I identify with **social constructionism as an epistemological position** as I believe that I can only construct meaning and interpretation by accessing the experiences and perspectives of the participants. Yet, I cannot disengage myself from my own interpretive lenses and subjectivity when I engage with participant experiences, and my understanding of their experience consequently adds an additional layer of meaning to theirs that may or may not be similar or dissimilar to theirs. As such, knowledge is actively co-constructed and not passively received (Ormston et al., 2014). Further to my epistemological position, I can only understand the personal transformational value of coaching through the way in which the coachee has experienced it and what it means for the coachee. According to Geldenhuys (2015, p. 5), in social constructionism "knowing is always an ongoing process of meaning-making and creating common understandings."

2.2.3 Interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is central to qualitative research, as it plays an important role in interpreting and understanding the phenomenon being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Ormston et al., 2014). The research was conducted in the interpretive paradigm, which is congruent with my ontology of subtle idealism and epistemology of social constructionism. Furthermore, the epistemological position of social constructionism is related to a more subjectivist epistemology and is congruent to an interpretive paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Levers, 2013). According to the interpretive approach, people cannot be separated from their knowledge, therefore the knower and respondent co-create understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Furthermore, there is a clear link between the researcher and the research subject (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

According to Tuli (2010, p. 101), “the interpretive research paradigm views reality and meaning making as socially constructed and it holds that people make their own sense of social realities.” I wanted to understand the social world and to construct meanings and interpretations based on the perspectives of the participants in a particular context (Arghode, 2012; Ormston et al., 2014; Saunders et al., 2009; Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Willis, 2007), hence I sought to understand how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the participants. It was as if I wanted to stand in the shoes of the participants to discover, understand and interpret what happened for them from within, thus “from the interior” (Flick, 2009, p. 65).

The interpretivist paradigm is naturalistic and the focus is on real-world situations in the context under study (Arghode, 2012; Crotty, 2005; Tuli 2010). Whereas positivism is governed by laws of cause and effect and is more objective, interpretivism is intent on gaining understanding of what the experience of the participants was regarding the phenomenon under study (Tuli, 2010). This relates to how coaching facilitates personal transformation and how it unfolded for the participants. In the interpretivist paradigm participants have limited control and are vulnerable to researchers imposing their own subjective interpretations upon them (Ormston et al., 2014; Scotland, 2012). Interpretivist researchers accept multiple

meanings and ways of knowing (Levers, 2013) and they are comfortable to argue their viewpoint, despite the subjectivity (Willis, 2007).

In this section the interpretivist paradigm was discussed. In the next section I will focus on the research approach that I followed, which is hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the most applicable research approach in my study, as it enquires into the interpretation of text and is akin to interpretivist research (Crotty, 2005; Scotland, 2012; Nayak & Singh, 2021).

2.3 RESEARCH APPROACH – HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGY

Hermeneutic phenomenology as research approach will be discussed in the section that follows. I elaborated on the nature of hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology, self-reflection in hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry, the hermeneutic circle and hermeneutic phenomenology as my research approach.

2.3.1 The nature of hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology

Willis (2007, p. 104) explains the origin of hermeneutics:

Originally the term hermeneutics referred to the study of sacred text such as the Talmud or Bible. You can see how study of a document that was originally written over a period of time in a number of different languages several thousand years ago might present some problems when it comes to understanding exactly what is meant by a particular passage. Efforts to get at the meaning might include the study of the meaning of terms and phrases from the document in other writings from the same era, the social and political context in which the passage was written, and the way the concepts discussed are used in other parts of the document. This is a simplistic explanation of the original idea of hermeneutics ... Gradually, hermeneutics has expanded beyond that original meaning to include understanding human action in context.

Similarly, Crotty (2005) and Rennie (2012) explain that hermeneutics was and is the science of biblical interpretation and the explanation of what a biblical text means, hence hermeneutics is a disciplined approach to interpretation of text. Though hermeneutics began by offering guides to the interpretation of religious texts, it has been extended to all interpretation (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Edmund Husserl is known as the father of phenomenology (Kafle, 2011; Kvale, 1996; Lavery, 2003). Phenomenology originated from a constructivist perspective (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) and started with Husserl as descriptive phenomenology (Reiners, 2012). What we experience is what we know and how we behave (Becker, 1992). Phenomenology discloses the meaning of the lived experience of the participant (Becker, 1992; Spinelli, 2005). Becker (1992, p. 8) also explains what experience is: "Experience is with us during every waking moment; it is what we think, feel, remember, imagine, see, hear, smell, taste, or touch ... Even when asleep, we continue to experience sensations, thoughts, and feelings." The aim of phenomenology from Husserl's perspective was to study the lived experiences of participants while setting aside or bracketing one's own opinions in order to remain unprejudiced in the description of the essence of the phenomena (Kvale, 1996; Reiners, 2012; Vagle 2014). Yet, Kvale (1996, p. 54) describes phenomenological reduction (bracketing) by saying that it "does not involve an absolute absence of presuppositions, but rather a critical analysis of one's own presuppositions." However, Moustakas (1994) also refers to phenomenological bracketing (epoché) as seeing things as they appear, free of prejudgments and preconceptions.

The descriptive phenomenological approach implies that the researcher takes an objective perspective towards the research by setting aside personal experiences through bracketing or epoché (Creswell, 2013; Kafle, 2011; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). However, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), who was a student of Husserl (1859-1938), believed it was impossible to bracket one's own pre-knowledge and experiences to enter the life world of the participant objectively. Such an assumption relates to the social constructionist belief that all people are already born into a world of meaning and that individuals develop understanding or knowledge that is affected by socially constructed meaning (Crotty, 2005). Because of this social constructionist perspective, hermeneutic (interpretative) phenomenology developed (Reiners,

2012). Therefore, in the hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach, bracketing is not a consideration (Laverty, 2003; Reiners, 2012). Rather, the focus is on acknowledging and making transparent the subjectivity of meaning (Finlay, 2008; Kafle, 2011), which is aligned with social constructionism (Creswell, 2013). “Heidegger is often credited with bringing phenomenology and hermeneutics together” (Vagle, 2014, p. 37). After Heidegger developed phenomenology (the human lived world) further, it was even followed by Jean-Paul Sartre (human action) and by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (to describe directly rather than to explain or to analyse the lived experience) (Kvale, 1996).

Becker (1992) emphasised that a person is a ‘being-in-the-world’ and accentuated the importance of understanding people in their context or situations in which they live. By listening to and reading the stories of the participants, I started to discover, in terms of their coaching experience, what being-in-the-world meant to the participants, but I was still in the process of understanding it by means of interpretation of text (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004).

By applying a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, I explored what the meaning of a lived experience was and constructed meaning and understanding from the lived experiences of the participants (Arghode, 2012; Kafle, 2011; Kvale, 1996; Laverty, 2003; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Tuohy et al., 2013). Kvale (1996, p. 46) speaks about interpretation process as ‘having a dialogue or conversation with the interview text’. I sensed having a dialogue with the text as I was reading the text, questioning it, re-reading, writing about my thoughts and again questioning and re-reading the text. This helped me to interpret the interview data and reach a deeper psychological interpretation of non-intended meanings, entailing depth hermeneutics (cf. Kvale, 1996). Hermeneutics refers to the philosophy of interpretation and understanding as explained by Reiners (2012, p. 2): “The essence of human understanding is hermeneutic, that is, our understanding of the everyday world is derived from our interpretation of it.” Hermeneutic phenomenology is also known as interpretive phenomenology (Laverty, 2003; Reiners, 2012; Tuohy et al., 2013). In order to interpret the data, I engaged with it by repeatedly listening to the audio recordings and reading the transcripts several times to learn to know the data inside out, as well as writing and re-writing about the data (Spence, 2017; Van Manen,

2014). Dean (2017) concurs that knowing the data well enhances one's understanding of it.

Hermeneutic phenomenological study is the interpretation of text (hermeneutics) of the lived experience (phenomenology) and casting light and reflecting upon the lived meaning of the experience (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Van Manen, 2014). Moreover, our personal and unique experiences influence our way of being in the world (McManus Holroyd, 2007). Paterson and Higgs (2005, p. 342) refer to hermeneutics as "the theory and practice of interpretation." Through this interpretive process I interpreted the lived experiences of the participants and studied the essential meaning of how coaching facilitates personal transformation by listening to the life world stories of the participants in the context of coaching. In other words, by interpreting the lived experience, I dwelled within the data and went into deeper layers in the lived experiences of the participants to read between the lines and thus to interpret the 'unsaid' or the 'unspoken' (Smythe et al., 2008; Fleck et al., 2011). Though hermeneutic phenomenology was the appropriate research approach that I selected for this study, it also intrigued me because hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology is not fixed (Crowther et al., 2017). Therefore the approach is creative, intuitive and free from right and wrong (Crowther et al., 2017), which allowed me flexibility, as if I could 'dance' with this approach.

Hermeneutics is one of the many roots of social constructionism (Galbin, 2014). A hermeneutic phenomenological approach complements my epistemology of social constructionism. In hermeneutic phenomenology (as in social constructionist assumptions) the biases and subjectivity of the researcher are regarded as essential to the interpretive process (Lavery, 2003). Objectivity is essentially believed not to be possible in social constructionism (Andrews, 2012; Ponterotto, 2005), hence subjectivity in social constructionism is aligned with subjectivity in the hermeneutic process. As a result of acknowledging the inevitable impact of subjectivity in research, Kafle (2011) also refers to the possibility of endless interpretations within hermeneutic phenomenology. Thus, the inevitable subjectivity is rather a resource than a source of error or biasness (Sim & Wright, 2000). As such, I acknowledge that the findings I constructed in this study are one perspective of the research phenomenon and that others may be possible.

In the hermeneutic phenomenological approach different tactics are employed to attain the goal of rigour in the study, as opposed to objectivity. I applied self-reflection, which is a tactic of phenomenological reduction as opposed to bracketing (Lavery, 2003; Whitehead, 2002). Lavery (2003, p. 28) states:

... a hermeneutical approach asks the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection to quite a different end than that of phenomenology. Specifically, the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather are embedded and essential to interpretive process. The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience and to explicitly claim the ways in which their position or experience relates to the issues being researched.

Other data analytic strategies with similar ontological and epistemological notions such as grounded theory analysis, thematic analysis and narrative analysis were explored. Yet, due to its congruence with my research approach, I decided on using IPA. Interpretive phenomenological analysis aims to give the individual in a particular context, a voice and aims to understand how they make sense of their experience, while also interpreting their accounts with reference to established psychological concepts (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The goal of grounded theory analysis is to produce theory (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007) which was not my intention at the start of the study. Thematic analysis is described as a tool widely used across research methods in a way that is theoretically and methodologically sound and one of its benefits is its flexibility as it is not tied to any particular discipline or set of theoretical constructs (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the start of planning my thesis I searched for a congruent analytic approach which was clearer and more detailed in facilitating the researcher through the steps in data analysis and I found myself attuned to IPA. Thematic analysis differs from other analytic methods that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data, however both IPA and grounded theory seek patterns in the data, but are theoretically bounded (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis does not require the same level of detail in the transcript as with narrative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Narrative analysis identifies the basic story being told, focusing on the way an account or narrative is constructed, the intention of the teller and the nature of the audience as well as the meaning of the

story or 'plot' (Riessman, 2008). Grounded theory analysis, thematic analysis and narrative analysis have detailed analytical steps, which are frequently presented in slightly different ways by different researchers applying these analytic methods. Although I could have applied any of these analytic strategies, I found IPA to be consistent in its application, detailed and understandable and in literature very clearly related to my hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Interpretive phenomenological analysis is regarded a most appropriate data analysis strategy when using hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2004, 2017).

2.3.2 Self-reflection in hermeneutic phenomenology inquiry

Building on the previous section, hermeneutic phenomenological research requires critical self-reflection to bring forth the rigour of the research when interpreting text (Fleck et al., 2011; Rennie, 2012; Somekh, 2008; Spence, 2017). I had to self-critique and self-appraise my own experiences and the influence that these might/might not have on the research (Dowling, 2007; Whitehead, 2002). In Chapter 1 (section 1.5) and Chapter 7 (section 7.5) I provide detailed self-reflections on these signify important research strategy decision points. Albeit less prominently, I also weave in self-reflections throughout the thesis in the narrative reporting and writing style that I adopt. According to Clancy (2013, p. 16) the researcher needs to be aware of her positionality in research "which involves an often difficult analysis of personal values, beliefs, feelings, motivations, role, culture, ethnicity, age, gender and other factors such as personality and mood." In addition, findings in the research could be influenced by the positionality of the researcher and therefore researchers have to be willing and able to acknowledge that (Clancy, 2013). I had to ask myself an important question: through which lenses am I looking and how does that influence not only my approach to the research but also my findings? The researcher's lenses are various. In my case these include my personal experiences in receiving and applying coaching (in this regard I applied self-reflection in Chapters 1 and 7), my identity as a white Afrikaans-speaking woman (Chapter 7), my own journey with identity work (Chapter 7) and my theoretical preconceptions presented in a theoretical framework (Chapter 3), which were all present when I interpreted the data.

“Social research requires us to account for our humanness” (Dean, 2017, p. 1), therefore I have to write something about myself in my research project. I constantly had to take into consideration that my experience of the coaching process as the ‘client’ was life-changing and hence I presupposed personal transformation. I was aware of my own lived experience of coaching as opposed to the coaching experiences of the participants in this study. Realising that my experience pre-empted my expectations in the study, I decided to refer to coaching literature to test and scrutinise my preconceptions. My findings (as explained in the rationale and background section in Chapter 1) provided me with many similar claims, yet limited credible evidence. Dean (2017, p. 30) uses the following formula that explains something about the lenses through which I approached the study: “*(Who we are x What we’ve got) + Where we are = What we do.*”

The hermeneutic approach I used in my study enabled me to interpret the lived experiences of the individuals who underwent coaching and to uncover the coaching experience as it is lived and reflected upon in the life world stories of the individuals (Kafle 2011; Lavery, 2003; McManus Holroyd, 2007). The literature that I read (in Chapter 3) influenced my conceptual lenses and constitutes further preconceived lenses unique to this study and myself as researcher. Moreover, Crotty (2005, p. 88) defines hermeneutics as “a method for deciphering indirect meaning, a reflective practice of unmasking hidden meanings beneath apparent ones.”

2.3.3 The hermeneutic circle

Kafle (2011, p. 187) states, “To generate the best ever interpretation of a phenomenon it proposes to use the hermeneutic cycle.” Lavery (2003), Rennie (2012) and Spence (2017) refer to the hermeneutic cycle as a circle of readings, reflective writing and interpretations of texts. In my study it happened that I applied the hermeneutic cycle by reading, reflecting and interpreting the data. Further to this, the hermeneutic circle is a flexible and iterative process where I moved forward and backwards, between the whole and the parts of the lived experiences of participants, in order to find meaning in the text and to increase the depth of its meaning (Lavery, 2003; Tuohy et al., 2013; Vagle, 2014). Furthermore, Vagle (2014) states that Heideggerian phenomenology assumes that humans live in the

world as interpretive beings in a continuously interpreted world. Interpretation thus repeats in a never-ending cycle and interpreted meanings are never fixed. This cycle reflects the process in which the researcher and participant co-create meaning of the participants' lived experience (Laverty, 2003). Moreover, Todres and Wheeler, (2001, cited in Dowling, 2007, p. 134) "argued that phenomenology without hermeneutics can become shallow." Hence there is richness and depth in applying the hermeneutic cycle. The manner in which I applied the hermeneutic circle is frequently demonstrated throughout the thesis, for example below in relating my approach to theory, when discussing how I applied IPA and it is evident in the presentation and discussion of the findings.

2.3.4 My approach to theory

In hermeneutic phenomenology, theory should fit the data to make it a complete process (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). I realised how my literature review and themes from the data analysis needed to be in harmony to facilitate understanding and the interpretation of key concepts related to the phenomenon (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). The combination of the literature review and data enabled me to present the product of this hermeneutic phenomenological study namely a framework of the personal transformation value of coaching.

I completed a preliminary literature review about coaching, personal transformation and behaviour change for my research proposal in order to crystallise my ideas on the research topic and how I wanted to conduct the study. This is evidenced in the background and rationale section in Chapter 1 of the thesis. Thereafter I focussed on the collection of data and the first round of analysis, before continuing the literature review to familiarise myself with concepts. This resulted in me being influenced and having my own preconceived ideas about how I would approach the literature review for further study and which literature I would seek to explore, because of some common themes that emerged from the data (Lo, 2016). After more focussed reading, I went back to the data, and this resulted in new themes. I modified some themes and discarded themes in the data-analysis process as conceptualisation started to take place. The conceptualisation was on the one hand aided by my reading of relevant theories and research; on the other hand, my

continued review of literature was directed by my understanding of the data. This is a further example of the hermeneutic circle, in which the iterative movement between data and literature develops meaning. According to Johnson and Waterfield (2004), qualitative data represents meanings, and meanings are analysed through conceptualisation. During data analysis, I went back and continued the literature review, which allowed me to make theoretical connections (Noon, 2018). The search for literature was more focused and directed compared to the first stage (Lo, 2016). I became more sensitive in identifying and connecting concepts, which enhanced the richness of the theory, and continued engaging with literature. This became a recursive process to expand the emerging theory and continuously to incorporate it as I formulated my study (Lo, 2016). It resulted in a more fluid and integrated process of interpretation of the data and emerging themes (Lo, 2016). According to Lo (2016, p. 180), “the purpose of including/reviewing literature metamorphosed at various points in theory formulation.” In this way, I was able to reach a satisfactory level of theoretical saturation (Lo, 2016) because the conceptualisations of the themes became crystallised and grounded in both data and theory.

In my description of how I engaged with theory I focused on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to a systematic literature review (De Gagne & Walters, 2010). Literature searches were completed by the researcher when the study was planned and continued throughout the study and were impacted to become more focused as the research went along but were not done as a formal systematic review. It was completed on different search engines/databases’ (such as Taylor and Francis, Web of Science, Scopus, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, SAGE, APA), from-to dates and keywords were included where “inverted commas” were also used such as: Psychology (industrial and organisational, consulting, coaching, transpersonal, positive), coaching, models of coaching, well-being (psychological well-being, eudaimonic well-being, subjective well-being, hedonic well-being), emotional intelligence, flourishing, sense of coherence, wholeness, self-integration, spirituality, mindfulness and personal transformation.

In most research a blend of inductive and deductive processes is used (Graebner, et al., 2012; O’Leary, 2007). Similarly stated, the two general approaches to reason

that may result in the acquisition of new knowledge are inductive reasoning and deductive reasoning (Hyde, 2000). Inductive reasoning is a more open-ended approach. It occurs when the researcher is building on theory and “seeking to establish generalisations about the phenomenon under investigation” (Hyde, 2000, p. 83). Deductive reasoning is a narrower approach and is “a theory testing process which commences with an established theory or generalisation, and seeks to see if the theory applies to specific instances” (Hyde, 2000, p. 83).

In my approach to theory described in this section, both inductive and deductive approaches and reasoning were therefore evident in this study. After data had been collected from participants through semi-structured interviews about the personal transformational value of coaching, I looked for significant themes or patterns in the data, and developed a theory and model (inductive reasoning) related to the phenomenon (Thomas, 2006). Thereafter I outlined the results and findings of the new theory and model, in terms of how they were consistent with existing theory (deductive reasoning) (O’Leary, 2007; Thomas, 2006).

In this section, hermeneutic phenomenology as my research approach was discussed. Hermeneutic phenomenology as an approach is appropriate to a qualitative inquiry (Freeman, 2008; Omona, 2013; Rennie, 2012), which constitutes the core nature of the design of this study. The type of study will now be discussed.

2.4 TYPE OF STUDY – QUALITATIVE

Congruent to operationalising a hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, the nature of this study is qualitative. As a novice researcher, I had to decide which type of research inquiry I would like to apply to enable me to understand the phenomenon under study and to reach the essence of the study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). My consideration of the research question and my scientific beliefs about what would constitute credible and valuable knowledge for me inevitably paved the way for qualitative research. I wanted to gain in-depth understanding about the phenomenon as a whole in its context, and to immerse myself in the research process in order to discover multiple realities and perspectives as the study continued (Fossey, et al., 2002; Krauss, 2005), thus having flexibility in exploring the phenomenon and

investigating how meaning in qualitative data evolves continuously (Ormston et al., 2014; Whitehead, 2002). Flexibility in qualitative research implies doing research without following a recipe or a cookbook (Graebner et al., 2012; Smith, 2004). I treated each participant's lived story as an individual case study because I wanted to examine the detail of each case in depth (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2011; Simmonds-Moore, 2016; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). It is also in moving to and fro between individual cases and the data set from all the participants as a whole, that application of the hermeneutic circle is evident.

Qualitative research was developed in the social and human sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Flick, 2009; Lockyer, 2008; Ormston et al., 2014; Willis, 2007; Woods, 1999). Characteristics that are typical of a qualitative study relate to its interpretive nature, where the focus of the research is on understanding how participants interpret and make sense of their experiences and their lived worlds (Alase, 2017; Ormston et al., 2014; Van Manen, 2017; Woods, 1999). Qualitative studies are naturalistic because social phenomena are studied in their natural settings and the nature of study is subjective; the researcher tends to become subjectively immersed in the research (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Grix, 2010; Morrow, 2005; Woods, 1999). Lewis et al. (2014, p. 353) state that "the value of qualitative research lies in its ability to explore issues in depth, from the perspectives of different participants, with theories and explanations developed inductively from the data." Furthermore, Ormston et al. (2014) refer to the richness of data that exists in qualitative research. In qualitative research data are collected in an unstructured way (Joubish et al., 2011; Ormston et al., 2014). Fossey et al. (2002, p. 717) explain qualitative research "as a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that describe and explain persons' experiences, behaviours, interactions and social context without the use of statistical procedures or quantification."

2.5 OVERALL RESEARCH STRATEGY

In order to describe how coaching facilitates personal transformation or change, I applied an interpretative hermeneutical research approach and created meaning through qualitative data collection, analysis and interpretation of the participants' lived experiences of coaching (Kafle, 2011; Laverly, 2003). Using qualitative

research methods, data were gathered from conducting semi-structured interviews with seven participants. The data-analysis strategy that was applied to make meaning of the data was IPA. The specific research methods that I employed in endeavouring to answer the research question will be discussed next.

2.6 RESEARCH METHODS

Methodology refers to the process and procedures of the research to gather knowledge and analyse data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ponterotto, 2005) and to secure the quality of the research produced (Ormston et al., 2014). In this section I discuss the research methods adopted in this study to justify how I collected data for analysis in order to provide evidence for answering my research question (Jackson, 2013). I elaborate on the research context, how access was gained to participants, the sampling method that was used, and the manner in which data were collected and managed, as well as on the data analytic strategy employed.

2.6.1 Research context

The research context focussed on each individual as the unit of analysis and was not organisation-specific. Research interviews were conducted with seven participants in English and across industries, namely telecommunications, banking, entertainment, transportation and information technology. Interviews took place at the business premises of each of the participants in senior leadership positions in a corporate setting, who had engaged with a coaching programme of at least six coaching sessions and were coached by certified integral coaches.

2.6.2 Gaining access and establishing researcher and participant roles

The participants were initially approached through gatekeepers to ask if they would be interested in participating in this study. The gatekeepers were all certified integral coaches. In pursuit of homogeneity of the participants (see section 2.6.3 below), I opted to include participants who were exposed to the same coaching approach. My training as an integral coach, predispositioned me to the integral coaching approach and provided me with convenient access to a network of coaches, which I

approached to assist me with access to potential participants. I approached 21 gatekeepers in total and ended up with four gatekeepers and seven participants for this study. Except for two of the gatekeepers, all the others were known to me owing to my involvement in coaching and my coaching network. An email was sent to the gatekeepers in which I requested their assistance (**Appendix A**). Webster et al. (2014, p. 90) refer to gatekeepers as “individuals through whom potential participants are contacted.” Similarly, gatekeepers are the people who give and control access for the researcher to the research participants (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Ritchie et al. (2014) and Smith and Shinebourne (2012) refer to the role of a gatekeeper as assisting the researcher to identify people who meet the criteria of the study and then to approach the participants. They could be very effective in helping to generate a sample.

Ritchie et al. (2014) state that gatekeepers can provide the researcher’s contact details to individuals or get consent from the individuals to pass on their details to the researcher. In this study all of the participants gave consent to the gatekeepers to share their contact information with the researcher, whereafter I contacted them. I would not have been able to gain access to any of the participants in my research without gatekeepers. The role of the gatekeeper was only to assist the researcher to gain access to the participant, and was not a formal process such as gaining access to any of the participants’ organisations in which they were employed at the time of the research. Some research requires a much more formal process to gain entry to an organisation first and then access to the participants (Singh & Wassenaar, 2016), which was not applicable in my study.

2.6.3 Sampling and participants

Establishing boundaries in a qualitative study is done by means of inclusion and exclusion criteria (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Inclusion criteria should specify attributes that participants should possess to qualify for participation in the study, whereas exclusion criteria should indicate attributes that would disqualify participants from the study (Robinson, 2014). In this study, only the inclusion criteria are specified. The more inclusion criteria that are used to define a sample universe, and the more specific these criteria are to specify what is permissible, the more homogenous the

sample universe becomes (Robinson, 2014). The research group of this study was homogenous because the participants shared the same characteristics (Dudovskiy, n.d.; Robinson, 2014) along the lines of the inclusion criteria. These characteristics included firstly that all participants had undergone a number of coaching sessions (minimum of six sessions), which made them rich in lived experience relevant to the topic of study. Secondly, participation in the study required participants to have been in senior leadership positions in business (corporate setting) and coached by coaches who had been trained and certified as integral coaches. Thirdly, as noted in the previous section, I decided to include participants who were exposed to the same model of coaching, namely integral coaching, instead of focussing on different coaching models.

To explore differences, the heterogeneity of the group was also considered in the sample, in terms of differences in race, gender, age group and corporate companies. According to Dudovskiy (n.d.), diverse characteristics contribute to variability in the primary data. The participants were all in the role of a coachee. Therefore, the participants were selected because they had lived experience that enabled them to provide relevant data to answer the research questions that were asked during the interview (Olivier, 2011). In terms of heterogeneity, the study participants were purposively selected from various industries according to the inclusion criteria described above. According to Olivier (2011, p. 245), purposive sampling is “a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research.” According to Ritchie et al. (2014), non-probability sampling is suited to qualitative research and the characteristics of the sample group are used as the basis of selection to explore the lived experience of the participants. Furthermore, Ritchie et al. (2014, p. 113) state that purposive sampling is precisely what the name suggests: “Members of a sample are chosen with a ‘purpose’ – to represent a type in relation to key criterion.” Purposive sampling is in line with hermeneutic phenomenology and with the analytic IPA strategy, because the participants provided access to the researcher concerning the phenomenon that was studied, namely exploring the lived experience of the coachee (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Interpretative

phenomenological analysis is discussed in more detail under data analysis strategy in this chapter. Because of data saturation there was no need for further sampling. Data saturation occurs when the researcher gets to a point when no new information, concepts or themes are observed in the data. No new themes could be added to further enhance the findings of the study, therefore information gathering was brought to an end (Cleary et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006).

Sample size and design in qualitative research are as important as in quantitative and mixed methods research (Omona, 2013). However, sample sizes used in qualitative studies are usually much smaller than those used in quantitative studies because of the interactive process with participants (Cleary et al., 2014; Gentles, et al., 2015; Mason, 2010). The number of participants needed and the number of interviews per participant depend on the purpose of the research study (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Generally small sample sizes are relevant to interpretive phenomenological studies to allow for the in-depth examination of the lived experience of each participant and to prevent the researcher being overwhelmed by the amount of data generated (Smith, 2004; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The typical sample size for phenomenological studies ranges from one to 10 participants, hence data from only a few individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and who are able to provide a detailed description of their lived experience might serve to uncover its core elements (Creswell, 2013; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Gentles et al. (2015) refer to fewer than 10 participants to be interviewed in the case of more intense interviews in hermeneutic phenomenology. Many studies in IPA have samples of five to 10 participants (Smith, 2004). Smith and Shinebourne (2012) regard six participants as a sufficient sample size using IPA and Morse (1994) suggests at least six participants to understand the essence of their experience.

Another factor that influences the sample size in qualitative research is the researcher using saturation as a guiding principle during data collection. The adequacy of the sample size should therefore be based on data saturation (Cleary et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010; O'Reilly & Parker, 2012). Guest et al. (2006) refer to data saturation occurring in a study involving as few as six in-depth interviews. However, according to Burmeister and Aitken (2012) and Dibley (2011), data saturation is not about the numbers per se, but about the depth and richness of

the data. Saturation during data collection occurred in this study, which meant that a clearer understanding of the participants' lived experience was not possible (Cleary et al., 2014; Guest et al., 2006; Laverly, 2003); I had reached a point when no new themes occurred to me. Data saturation includes some general principles. It occurs when no new coding is feasible, no new themes occur and the ability to replicate the study is proven (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). According to Hale et al. (2008), data saturation is not regarded as a goal of the IPA approach, but is rather intended to seek richness of data from the sample used.

Having seven consenting participants in my study was a sufficient sample size, as the smaller sample size allowed me to commit to thorough and in depth-analysis of each individual case, which in turn enabled me to highlight the individuality of particular experiences, which is a key principle in IPA (Noon, 2018; Smith, 2004). Having enough participants in the study to supply all the information needed for a comprehensive analysis added to the quality and rigour of my study (Guetterman, 2015; Robinson, 2014). According to Crouch and McKenzie (2006, p. 484), "from a more empirical perspective, the labour-intensive nature of research focused on depth (including, sometimes, 'reflexivity') can be evoked to justify a small sample size." Ritchie et al. (2014) concur that there are four reasons why qualitative research usually employs a small sample size. Firstly, when data are properly analysed, very little new evidence will be obtained by have a larger sample size; secondly, qualitative data are rich in detail, thirdly qualitative research yields rich data and lastly, it is highly intensive.

2.6.4 Data gathering

There are various ways and forms of data collection in qualitative research, such as interviews (structured, unstructured, semi-structured), observations and focus groups (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). However, many regard the interview as the main method of data gathering in qualitative and phenomenological research (Haverkamp, 2005). The interview is ideal because it aims to obtain descriptions of the lived world experience of participants in order to interpret the meaning of the phenomena described (Kvale, 1996; Moustakas, 1994). Traditionally face-to-face interviews are the preferred way of conducting interviews (Yeo et al., 2014). Face-

to-face interviews allow the researcher and participant to establish rapport and to take into account non-verbal communication of the participant (Yeo et al., 2014). In qualitative research face-to-face interviews allow for in-depth focus on an individual (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014).

I conducted face-to-face interviews in a semi-structured format to access participants' lived experiences. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to obtain qualitative descriptions (Kvale, 1996; Oerther, 2021) of the participants' personal lived experiences of coaching and "to explicate their essential meaning" (Kvale, 1996, p. 53). A semi-structured interview is flexible and has both predetermined open-ended questions as well as other questions that evolve in response to the discussion during the interview (Ayres, 2008; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Grix, 2010; Qu & Dumay, 2011). The semi-structured interviews allowed me to have both structure and flexibility in the gathering of data (Grix, 2010; Yeo et al., 2014). Furthermore, according to Smith and Shinebourne (2012, p. 76), "the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that they enable the researcher and the participant to engage in a dialogue in real time, and they afford a flexibility to follow up important issues that come up in the participant's account." The semi-structured interview was not a question-and-answer session, but took on the form of a dialogue where the participants shared with me their lived worlds (Kvale 1996; Oerther, 2021) and that again is how social construction of reality and hermeneutical interpretations started to evolve (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Some literature refers to a semi-structured interview as an in-depth interview (Grix, 2010; Yeo et al., 2014). The purpose of in-depth interviews is "to delve more deeply into different aspects of the research issue" (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316), therefore to give participants the opportunity to share their personal experiences more fully. As part of the semi-structured interviewing process, I asked probing questions to delve deeper into certain conversation issues and stories in order to elicit more elaborate responses (Ayres, 2008; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Qu & Dumay, 2011). Kvale (1996) and Yeo et al. (2014) explain how the researcher by means of an in-depth interview gains deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants and the meaning they attach to the interview theme. In other words, the interview is

the medium to unfold, uncover and to go below the surface of what is said and how it is said by the participant (Kvale, 1996; Yeo et al., 2014). This assisted the researcher to explore the lived experience of the coachee in terms of the personal transformational value of coaching.

Gathering data by means of interviews was a mechanism to encourage the participants to describe their lived experiences relating to the research topic as freely as possible (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), as I wanted to understand if anything had been transformed on a personal level for the participants as a result of coaching, and if so, how this personal transformation happened. Yeo et al. (2014, p. 206) state that “every interview situation is unique, and every interview a step into unknown territory”; the experiences of the participants were all unknown to me.

The semi-structured interview guide (**Appendix D**) was prepared and produced prior to interviews being conducted (Noon, 2018). Two pilot interviews were conducted before the main research study commenced to identify any challenges related to the research, such as recruitment of participants, the relevance of the data collection method and the identification of potential practical problems (Kim, 2010; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). A pilot study is a small version of the main study; it is also referred to as a preliminary study, a feasibility study, or a trial run(s) (Kim, 2010; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). No potential problems were identified, except for keeping to an hour as contracted with the interviewee when conducting the interview, as both the participants and I wanted to continue for more than an hour and I could ascribe this to the richness of their experiences. Kvale (1996) pointed out that it is often difficult to terminate a qualitative interview because the interviewers and interviewees want to continue and explore insights gained during the interview.

After the pilot interviews, face-to-face semi-structured interviews as per the semi-structured interview guide of one hour each were conducted with the sample of seven participants to gather information about their personal experience of the coaching process, whether and how personal transformation was experienced, and thus to explore the personal transformational value of coaching for the coachee. I did not report on the data of the pilot interviews, as these were intended to review my

interview questions and to prepare myself for the interviews. In addition, the participants in the pilot interviews were colleagues known to me, coaching experts themselves, who were also trained in the integral coaching model. The pilot participants did not fully adhere to all the sampling criteria. Therefore I only reported on the sample of seven participants, owing to saturation of data previously explained in this chapter.

No follow-up interviews took place as part of this study. However, I obtained permission from the participants to conduct follow-up email conversations if I felt the need to probe or clarify anything resulting from the interview. I consequently continued to have additional email conversations with five of the participants to probe and clarify aspects in their narratives after the interviews had been transcribed. Using this opportunity to confirm unclear information and clarify understandings worked well and elicited additional dialogue with the participants. Kvale (1996, p. 46) explains this process as follows:

... the research interview is a conversation about the human life world, with the oral discourse transformed into text to be interpreted. Hermeneutics is then doubly relevant to interview research, first by elucidating the dialogue producing the interview text to be interpreted, and then by clarifying the subsequent process of interpreting the interview text produced, which may again be conceived as a dialogue or a conversation with the text.

All the participants made themselves available and collaborated during the interview process. A relaxed atmosphere was created during all the interviews, especially since all interviews took place on the home ground of the participants, which allowed them to express their lived experience of the research phenomenon (Yeo et al., 2014). My coaching background and the interview skills that I had gathered over years of conducting interviews in a corporate environment helped me in conducting the respective interviews and being present, as the researcher has to present and establish a caring relationship during the interview process (Laverly, 2003). In semi-structured interviews, the development of rich and relevant data rests on the interviewer's skills and ability to understand, interpret and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by participants (Ayres, 2008). In addition, the

interviewer's task is to listen actively, which is fundamental to the interview interaction, not only to obtain information, but also to encourage participants to speak (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Yeo et al., 2014). Listening is an important part of establishing good rapport during interviews and rapport involves trust and respect for the information shared by the interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Yeo et al., 2014). I built rapport with the participants by displaying confidence in conducting the interviews, which was supported by maintaining eye contact, giving the odd smile and the occasional nod to express attention and most of all by asking relevant follow-up questions (Yeo et al., 2014).

The interview with each participant took place in a private room, which was confidential (Kvale, 1996). Interviews should be conducted in a quiet environment in a private space without disturbances, allowing the participants to share their personal experiences, as occurred during the interviews (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Yeo et al., 2014). All the interviews, including the pilot interviews, were conducted in English. According to Kvale (1996, p. 43), "language constitutes reality, each language constructing reality in its own way."

The number of questions developed for an in-depth interview is usually between five and 10 and should not be more than 10 in total (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Grix 2010). The questions that I prepared for the semi-structured interviews were categorised into opening questions, transition questions, key questions and a concluding question. Adding probing questions to each interview meant that the interviews ultimately included more than 10 questions, yet the probing was necessary to explore the lived experience of the coachee in depth. The interviews included probing questions concerning the cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational and spiritual experiences of the participants during their coaching programme. I noticed that during the first interview I did not ask the participant about her spiritual experience, which I could ascribe to my own discomfort at that time. Yeo et al. (2014, p. 204) state: "it is often surprising how willing people are to talk about sensitive subjects, and researchers may find that their own discomfort is greater than that of the interviewee." Initially, when I started with the research interviews, I referred to these as 'interviews'. As I progressed, the word 'interview' felt very formal to me. During the introduction to the interview with P3, I started to change the word

'interview' to having a research 'conversation', which took place in a professional context. Kvale (1996), referred to the interview as a conversation and as "*interviews*" and "the knowledge constructed inter the views of the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 15). This view concurs with that of Haverkamp (2005), who refers to an interview or a research conversation. I realised that a 'conversation' is another way of referring to an 'interview' in order to get to know other people and that it is a form of human interaction (Kvale, 1996) in the context of coaching.

On reflecting after the interviews, I became aware that my body responded to certain words and phrases in different ways as some of the participants' stories touched me and/or I resonated with their stories (Vagle, 2014), which I found very interesting. I also reflected on how I became aware, after conducting some of the interviews, that I was very tempted to assume the role of coach, with good intentions. Some examples were P3, where I was drawn to coach her on fully authorising herself in using her voice, and P6 on using emotional vocabulary. Instead of coaching them, I sent them some reading material on e-mail about the various aspects mentioned and copied the respective coaches (see also my self-reflexivity where I differentiate between the role of researcher versus the role of coach in Chapter 7, section 7.5.2.1). Haverkamp (2005) explains that ethical challenges do occur in qualitative research and 'good intentions' are not necessarily ethical. Furthermore, it is important for the researcher to recognise that particular moment, such as when I wanted to assume the role of coach (Haverkamp, 2005). Yeo et al. (2014) explain that it is challenging for the researcher to retain a neutral approach, even more so when the researcher is drawn to the research topic. Frequent debriefings with my supervisor helped me to surface this awareness to refrain from becoming a 'coach' and maintain my role and interest as researcher.

2.6.5 Data recording and management

Participants in this study were aware that being interviewed was voluntary and they all consented to the interview being audio-recorded (**Appendix B**). Any devices, techniques and strategies used to collect data should only be used with the full consent of participants (Alase, 2017). Kvale (1996); Vagle (2014) and Yeo et al. (2014) concur that most of the time during research interviews, the interviews are

recorded and that this is the most common method followed. The reason why interviews are recorded is to allow the interviewer to stay focussed during the interview instead of trying to remember everything or missing important nuances (Al-Yateem, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Stuckey, 2014). In addition, it enables the interviewer to concentrate on listening and responding to the participant, without being distracted by needing to write extensive notes (Stuckey, 2014). However, to complement the audio-recorded interviews I took limited field notes such as comments on the environmental context, behaviour and nonverbal cues that might not be adequately captured through the audio recording (Sim & Wright, 2000; Sutton & Austin, 2015). In interpretive phenomenological research all interviews should be audio-recorded and the whole interview should be transcribed, including false starts, significant pauses, laughs and the interviewer's questions (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Audio recordings enable the researcher to have interview information available for transcribing and for data analysis purposes (Al-Yateem, 2012; Kvale, 1996; Sim & Wright, 2000).

All the interviews conducted (including the two pilot interviews) were recorded by means of using an audio recorder. I made use of a back-up electronic recording device (i-pad) in case the recorder failed as a result of a technical error. Equipment failure is possible during the recording of an interview and therefore equipment should be checked and tested ahead of an interview with a research participant (Easton, et al., 2000). I was fortunate in that no equipment failure took place during any of the interviews. When using an audio recording the interviewer is able to concentrate on listening and responding to the participant, without being distracted by needing to write extensive notes (Stuckey, 2014). However, to complement the audio-recorded interviews I took limited field notes, such as comments on the environmental context, behaviour and nonverbal cues that might not be adequately captured through the audio recording (Sutton & Austin, 2015). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure adequate security for the safekeeping of data collected in a study (Alase, 2017, Sutton & Austin, 2015). I kept data collected by means of audio recordings, transcriptions and field notes in a safe and secured place to which only I had access.

Since data collection was recorded in this study, the first subsequent step was that the data had to be transcribed verbatim before data analysis could begin (Lech et al., 2018; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Subsequently, after the interviews had been conducted, the recorded information was sent to a professional transcriber who transcribed each interview. It is recommended that the researcher transcribes one or more interviews to assist with aspects such as the quality of the recording, asking and getting clear answers and realising the difficulty of the task when asking others to transcribe (Kvale, 1996; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Nevertheless, in most studies recordings are transcribed by a professional transcriber (Kvale, 1996; Sutton & Austin, 2015). In this study I did not transcribe any of the audio recordings, as the professional transcriber transcribed all of the interviews conducted; however, after the transcribing had been done by the professional transcriber, I read through each transcription while listening simultaneously to each of the recordings to ensure the correctness of the transcriptions (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Sutton & Austin, 2015). As a result of that a few errors were identified where a word was misspelled or misunderstood, which I then corrected and adjusted on the transcription, as it could influence the entire meaning of a particular phrase and could influence the data analysis (Easton et al., 2000; Stuckey, 2014; Sutton & Austin, 2015). The quality of the recordings was good, as no environmental hazards such as noise or interruptions took place during the interviews, which helped the transcriber with the flow of the transcriptions (Easton et al., 2000).

Kvale (1996) states that depending on the length of the speech, a one-hour transcribed interview results in 20 to 25 single-spaced pages, whereas Sutton and Austin (2015) explain that a 45-minute audio-recorded interview will generate 20 to 30 pages of written dialogue. Most of the seven interviews I reported on in this study lasted an hour and the number of transcribed pages varied from 13 to 21 single-spaced typed pages.

In order to structure the large amount of data I used a qualitative analysis software programme, Atlas.ti, as a tool to manage data (Hwang, 2008; Smit, 2002). I did this by uploading relating documents, including digital media formats and all the transcripts. Atlas.ti enabled me to analyse the raw data by means of text segmentation, coding and writing memoranda (Hwang, 2008; Smit, 2002). As I

progressed with the data analysis, I migrated from Atlas.ti to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was more suitable for me to generate and cluster themes, as discussed in section 2.6.6.3.

2.6.6 Data analysis strategy

Data analysis is the process through which themes and storylines are developed, containing the words and experiences of participants that result in the research findings (Krauss, 2005). According to Krauss (2005), qualitative data analysis is an intuitive process. Interpretations should be well-supported by the data and remain true to the original data (Lewis et al., 2014).

Two key processes in data analysis, as referred to by Spencer et al. (2014), are data management and the process of abstraction and interpretation. During data management the researcher familiarises herself with the data by labelling, organising and sorting data according to a set of themes in order to prepare for the interpretive analysis (Spencer et al., 2014). Abstraction and interpretation involve the creation of analytical concepts and themes to reach the main findings based on the research eventually (Spencer et al., 2014). The outcome of the data analysis should relate to the research question (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004; Paterson & Higgs, 2005; Spencer et al., 2014). I could concur with the first data management process, in the way I started to immerse myself in and familiarise myself with the data by listening to the audio recordings and then reading and re-reading the transcripts several times before starting with the actual abstraction process. My goal was to get as close to the data as possible through sustained engagement with the text (Noon, 2018; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Engaging with the data systematically and repeatedly initiated the process of interpreting participants' lived experiences of the coaching process and making sense of those subjective lived experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

Different data analysis strategies exist in order to interpret data. Consequent to immersing myself in the data, the particular data analysis strategy I applied within the hermeneutic phenomenological approach of the study was IPA, which is informed by and recognised as an appropriate data analysis strategy in qualitative research and specifically hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry (Alase, 2017; Brocki & Wearden,

2006; Callary et al., 2015; Lech et al., 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2004, 2011; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Van Manen, 2017). Interpretative phenomenological analysis provides flexible guidelines for analysis that can be adapted by researchers in accordance with their research aims (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Furthermore, it allows for the utility of subjective experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006) and aims to understand and make sense of the in-depth lived experience of the participant in relation to a particular phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Smith, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2003, 2015; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Van Manen, 2017). Moreover, IPA is about getting behind what participants are saying to try to truly understand the world from their perspective (Sutton & Austin, 2015) and therefore IPA acknowledges the researcher's active role in the interpretation of the text (Kelly & O'Brien, 2005). The aim of data analysis is to understand the content and complexity of meanings rather than measuring their frequency (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I applied IPA in the context of coaching. According to Brocki and Wearden, (2006) IPA accounts should be both sufficiently interpreted and contextualised.

According to Smith (2004; 2011), IPA is the most commonly used qualitative methodology in psychology because of the fact that psychologists interpret clients' interpretations. In addition, Van Manen (2017, p. 778) states that "Psychologists want their clients to tell and make sense of their experiences and then it is the psychologist's responsibility to make sense of the sense that their clients reveal." Interpretative phenomenological analysis is experiential, as it includes the cognitive, affective and embodied lived experience of the client (Smith, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2003).

In the context of the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology followed in this study, IPA is also congruent to the sampling and the data collection strategies I followed and it allows for the operationalisation of the hermeneutic principle. In terms of sampling, the sample size in IPA is usually relatively small and the aim is to find a reasonably homogeneous group that had experienced a similar phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, 2004; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Sample size was discussed in more detail in the section 'sampling and participants' of this chapter and is congruent to this IPA tradition. In terms of data collection strategies, the majority of IPA studies use semi-structured,

in-depth, one-on-one interviews as the method of data collection (Smith, 2004, 2011; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012), as discussed in the 'data-gathering' section of this chapter. Most of the interviews in this study were approximately one-hour interviews. According to Smith and Osborn (2003) and Smith and Shinebourne (2012) the duration of an interview using IPA should typically be an hour or more, whereas Alase (2017) refers to the duration of an IPA interview as approximately 60 to 90 minutes (Alase, 2017).

Lastly, IPA allows for the application of the hermeneutic circle principle. Hermeneutic phenomenology recognises that there are numerous ways of working with data and interpreting a text, which includes an iterative process of reading, thinking, writing, re-reading, re-thinking and re-writing that deepens the analysis of data in order to attach meaning to the participant's stories (Crowther et al., 2017; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This process is also referred to as the hermeneutic circle, therefore interpreting a text means entering the hermeneutical circle (Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). The manner in which the hermeneutic circle is applied in IPA is evident in how the analysis iterates between the different IPA stages. I followed the different stages in the application of IPA in my study in such an iterative manner. The stages are discussed below.

2.6.6.1 Initial stage: Getting a preliminary holistic understanding of the data

Interviews were transcribed and by reading the transcripts of the interviews a number of times, hence the whole text, I immersed myself in the data (Söderhamn, Dale & Söderhamn, 2013; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). According to Lindseth and Norberg (2004), a naïve understanding of the text is formulated from the initial reading. Reading the whole text helped me gain understanding of the content, because the meaning of the whole influenced my understanding of the parts (hermeneutic circle) as I continued with the data analysis (Söderhamn et al., 2013). Furthermore, reading the transcripts several times provided me with new insights and I started making initial interpretative comments, including making notes of my thoughts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012) on both the transcripts and the software program Atlas.ti. My interpretation of the data started already during this stage, but without working with

the detail. The multiple readings helped to gain intuitive understanding of each participant's lived experience, which helped me to introduce the participants in Chapter 4. Creswell (2013) refers to this stage as the textural description of the experience and *what* happened for the participants.

2.6.6.2 Second stage: Transforming notes into emergent themes

I started analysing each transcript in more detail by going through the stages described here, per transcript. I added transcripts one by one as I went along, constantly referring back to the previous one. For each interview transcript, I generated and compiled a list of significant statements (notes) about how participants experienced the phenomenon (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006) refer to this process as generating initial codes. Thereafter a list of non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements (codes/notes) was developed. Each statement (code/note) was treated as having equal worth (Creswell, 2013). This was done on the hard copy transcripts and on the software program Atlas.ti.

It became an iterative process and in the movement of the hermeneutic circle, each part (each transcript) was interpreted in relation to the whole (previous transcripts) and the whole (all transcripts) was interpreted in relation to the parts (each of the interview transcripts) (Rennie, 2012; Smith, 2017; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). I read the transcription of P1 multiple times in order to analyse the information and created initial codes. Thereafter I continued with the same process with P2. I then compared the codes I had used for P1 and P2 to determine which codes were the same and which codes were different. Thereafter I continued with the same process from P3 to P7, comparing the codes created for each participant with the whole by moving forward and backward, following an iterative process. During this stage I contacted a few participants by means of an email conversation where I had to confirm some information in the transcript, or information that was not clear in the interview, or information I did not ask for during the interview by mistake.

After compiling a list of significant statements (codes/notes), I transformed the codes to themes, which I summarised and discussed in Chapter 5. During the stage when the codes are transformed into emergent themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012) the researcher tries to formulate a concise phrase at a slightly higher level of abstraction, which may refer to a more psychological conceptualisation (Noon, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). According to Smith and Shinebourne (2012), during this stage the researcher is influenced by having already interpreted the transcript as a whole, with which I could resonate. Creswell (2013) refers to this stage as the structural description, as it is a description of *how* the experience happened for the participants and the importance of both the setting and context in which the phenomenon was experienced.

2.6.6.3 Third stage: Seeking relationship and clustering themes

The significant statements (codes) were grouped into larger units of information, referred to as themes, which formed a structure of explanation (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2013, Morrow et al., 2012; Simmonds-Moore, 2016; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Söderhamn et al., 2013). This process included looking for connections between emerging themes and it ended with the construction of themes and sub-themes, as well as some of the themes being discarded because of a weak evidence base (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Confirming the themes meant I went back and forth through the interview transcripts, reviewing and comparing the relevant evidence (verbatim text in each interview) with the theme conceptualisation. Similarly, I had to review evidence to ground my understanding of how the themes related to one another. The relationships between themes helped me to find meaning in the whole text (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012; Söderhamn et al., 2013). I initially used the software program Atlas.ti and then migrated to an Excel spreadsheet in table format where I clustered the different themes, sub-themes, categories and verbatim quotations together, followed by the participant number and page number.

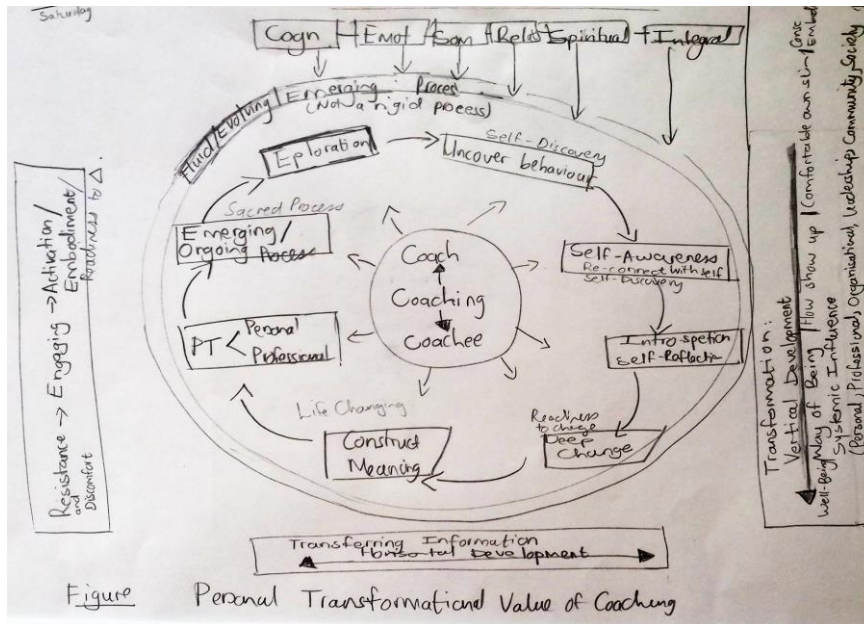
The analysis of the data gathered from the first participant became part of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, which influenced the analysis of the subsequent transcripts (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). I repeated the whole process of analysis

for each participant, which became an iterative process in which I moved forward and backwards between the original transcripts and table of themes and reviewed the information to ensure that the clustering of themes and sub-themes made sense in relation to the original transcripts (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). It resulted in the combination of themes, reduction of data and making decisions based not only on the prevalence of data, but also on the pertinence of the themes and their capacity to illuminate the account as a whole (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The final table of main themes and sub-themes was then produced in Chapter 5. This stage also forms part of the structural description of how the experience happened for the participants (Creswell, 2013).

In the process of seeking relationships and clustering themes I drew models, as in **figure 2.2** and **figure 2.3** below. The development of various models reflected the potential interrelatedness between the themes and their capacity to reflect the data as a whole. This evolved into the final conceptual framework (Chapter 6) that I developed to demonstrate visually how coaching facilitates personal transformation.

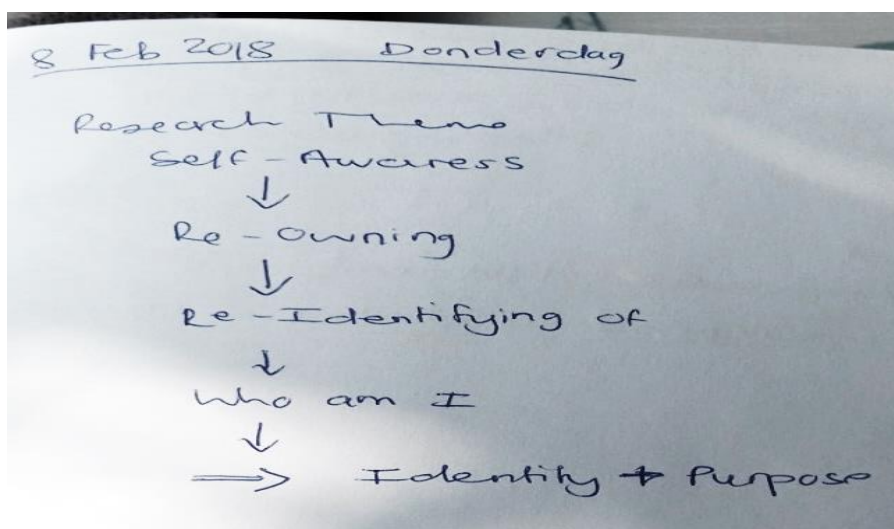
Figure 2.2 is an image of how I initially visualised the concepts and relationships (Trafford, 2008) related to the process that takes place when personal transformation happens. This was one of the first models/images I drew and was derived from both literature and data, before the final writing up of both.

Figure 2.2
My first model



The below figure demonstrates how I clustered themes pertaining to self-awareness and identity work.

Figure 2.3
Identity work and purpose



2.6.6.4 Fourth stage: Writing up the research

During this stage I conceptualised each theme, sub-theme and categories with the verbatim examples of participants and my own interpretative commentary (Creswell, 2013; Morrow et al., 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, Smith & Shinebourne, 2012).

The table of themes (see Chapter 5, section 5.2) opened up into a persuasive description intended to explain to the reader the important experiential issues that had been found during the data analysis process, in which I combined the results and discussion (Noon, 2018, Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Each description was substantiated with verbatim extracts from participants and quotations were followed by confined analytic interpretive comments (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The verbatim examples described “*what*” the participants experienced in relation to the phenomenon and what happened for them (Creswell, 2013; Morrow et al., 2012, Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). The discussion section, which reflects my constructed understanding of the research phenomenon, is presented in Chapter 5. In a typical IPA study the verbatim examples are followed by a discussion section that relates and links the identified themes to existing literature (Noon, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). Although I did start to relate themes to existing theory at this stage, the comparison and integration between data and theory became more pronounced as the analysis matured.

By writing the stories of the participants I enabled not only the reader to assess the pertinence of my interpretations, but also the voices and personal experiences of the participants to be heard (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). This was where interpretative phenomenological inquiry and the interpretation of lived experience through IPA came together for me by means of the preliminary holistic understanding of the data (Chapter 4) and a structured thematic construction of the findings (Chapter 5), followed by the integration and essence of the findings (Chapter 6). Creswell (2013) refers to this last step as the composite description and describes it as follows: “This passage is the ‘essence’ of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study” (p. 194). As a result of this, the whole thesis started to take shape for me and led up to a comprehensive understanding in response to the whole that was interpreted. Chapter 6 is not only

the final outcome of my holistic understanding of the data, but also my holistic understanding of the data integrated with my theoretical lenses, therefore data and theory combined.

2.7 QUALITY AND ETHICAL RESEARCH

Qualitative research looks to the human-as-an-instrument for the collection and analysis of data and is inherently subjective, since the researcher is the main instrument doing the analysis (Omona, 2013; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Hence, in order for the researcher to document and evaluate the data analysis process, her role is important to ensure rigour and trustworthiness throughout the research process (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). I discussed reflexivity in section 2.3.2 of this chapter, as well as in more detail in Chapter 1, Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 of the thesis. The discussion in this section will focus more strongly on additional conventional quality and ethical criteria and more specifically on the strategies I employed to ensure quality and ethical research.

2.7.1 Quality criteria and the strategies I employed

Quality and rigour in any research are essential and should not be dealt with as merely ticking a box (Morrow, 2005; Haverkamp, 2005). Research findings should be as trustworthy as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Morrow 2005). In quantitative research trustworthiness includes the use of concepts such as validity, reliability and generalisability (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The rigour required in qualitative research is referred to as trustworthiness, which includes credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Given & Saumure, 2008; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Shenton, 2004; Whitehead; 2002). Because research findings should be as trustworthy as possible, I put measures (credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability) in place to evaluate my study in relation to the procedures I used to generate the findings in order to achieve trustworthiness (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

According to Haverkamp (2005, p. 146), “the term trustworthiness captures the recognition that participants can be vulnerable and that researchers carry a

responsibility to promote their welfare and guard against them.” Failure of trustworthiness can cause harm to research participants and thus the researcher carries a responsibility to look after the welfare of participants and guard them against harm (Haverkamp, 2005). I have endeavoured to provide adequate substantiation and evidence of the rigour in this study and applied the four concepts of trustworthiness in my research findings, which will be explained below. Though these concepts are discussed separately, they should be viewed as intertwined and interrelated (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004).

The first concept, **credibility**, refers to “confidence in how well the data and processes of analysis address the intended focus” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p.109) and hence the credibility of research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility includes the appropriateness of my research methods and how well these methods were established, which includes how sampling was done, how data were collected, which data analysis strategy was selected, the use of representative quotations from the transcribed text, how triangulation was reached and in my findings, how well the themes covered the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Shenton, 2004). Moreover, credibility refers to the believability of the research findings and is enhanced by the rigour of its conduct (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). The research methods were described in detail in this chapter. In the discussion I attempted to reflect frequently on the appropriateness of the methods used in relation to the research objective and to the overall research approach and methodology. In particular, I provided a detailed explanation of the data analysis strategy followed. By using verbatim quotations in the presentation of the themes in Chapter 5, I also established credibility in the interpretation of data (Söderhamn et al., 2013).

Self-reflection is another aspect of credibility that I applied by means of a reflective commentary as the research study developed (Morrow, 2005; Shenton, 2004). I provided reflexive notes in Chapters 1 and 7 on how my own experiences of coaching affected not only my choice of research, but also the research process and my preconceived expectations of what I might find (Morrow, 2005). Furthermore, I made my own notes of reactions, reflections and emotional engagements during the process of data collection in the form of a journal (Kelly & O’Brien, 2015; Sim &

Wright, 2000) and did self-reflection as the research study developed (Shenton, 2004). As noted in Chapter 1, my self-reflexive writing style permeates the thesis and is intended to consistently demonstrate my critical self-awareness in making decisions throughout the study. Patnaik (2013) refers not only to introspective reflexivity where the researcher understands her experiential location that might influence the research, but also to methodological reflexivity, which strives to ensure that standardised procedures have been followed in conducting the research. Therefore, openness and the ability to identify any methodological shortcomings in my study were important (Shenton, 2004), including clarification of the audit trail by means of reflexivity (Johnson & Waterfield (2004), which is what I presented in section 2.3.2 above.

Dependability as the second concept refers to the degree to which it could be ensured that if the work was repeated, in the same context, with the same methods and with the same participants, similar results would be obtained (Saumure & Given, 2008; Shenton, 2004). An audit trail was kept of the research processes and methods used, to ensure that the research can be repeated in different contexts (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004; Morrow, 2005; Saumure & Given, 2008; Shenton, 2004). Because of the subjective philosophical notion underlying a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that is foundational to this study, I assume that different meanings may be possible, as constructed by different researchers and participants.

Thirdly, **transferability** refers to the possibility of transferring and applying the findings of this study to other situations, settings or groups, thus making these applicable in other contexts (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Shenton, 2004; Lewis et al., 2014). Sufficient contextual information about the data collection and process of analysis was provided to ensure that another researcher could replicate my study (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Shenton, 2004). However, this does not imply that the research findings can be generalised to other populations or settings (Morrow, 2005), among others because of the small number of participants in this study (Shenton, 2004), as well as the hermeneutic phenomenological nature of the study.

Lastly, **confirmability** refers to objectivity in the sense that the findings are not the preferences of the researcher, but the result of the inputs of the participants (Shenton, 2004). Morrow (2005, p. 252) states that “confirmability is based on the acknowledgement that research is never objective.” The findings should not represent the biases of the researcher; integrity of the data should lie in the data and the researcher must adequately relate the data, analytic process, and findings in such a way that the reader is able to confirm the adequacy of the findings (Morrow, 2005). According to Johnson and Waterfield (2004), the researcher’s reflexivity lends plausibility to the findings. Apart from the reflexive strategies that I have noted already, in this chapter I kept an audit trail of the research to allow any observer to trace the progress of my research step by step via the decisions made and procedures described (Lincoln & Guba; 1985; Morrow, 2005; Rodgers, 2008; Shenton, 2004). Moreover, I had follow-up email conversations with five of the participants, where I clarified and confirmed information after the initial interviews. I subsequently discussed the findings with my supervisor, who reviewed them. Lastly, I compared, integrated and contextualised the meta-constructs in Chapter 3 with existing literature.

In addition to the above, **authenticity** is an important aspect of establishing trustworthiness (credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability) in qualitative research (James, 2008). The well-being of the participants in this study was important during the interview process. The researcher was open, honest and clear about who she was and what the process would entail, which she also explained in the information sheet and informed consent form that the participant needed to sign. Participants could refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time (Dawson, 2002). According to James (2008, p 45) “in establishing authenticity, researchers seek reassurance that both the conduct and evaluation of research are genuine and credible not only in terms of participants’ lived experiences but also with respect to the wider political and social implications of research.”

2.7.2 Strategies I applied to ensure ethical research

Ethical approval from UNISA’s research ethics committee was obtained to proceed with the research study. Flick (2009) states that an ethical committee is important to

review if the research is in line with ethical codes and to ensure the ethical soundness of the research project. An important consideration in my research was that it should be ethically acceptable by doing good and avoiding harm (Flick, 2009; Haverkamp, 2005; Orb et al., 2000).

To guarantee ethical acceptability, I informed the participants about the purpose of the research and the interview process. An information sheet explaining the purpose of the research project and interview process was provided to each participant before the interviews commenced (**Appendix B**). In addition, voluntary agreement and written informed consent was obtained from each participant to participate in the study (**Appendix B**). Webster et al. (2014) and Yeo et al. (2014) note that to protect the participants' rights, their participation should be voluntary. Alase (2017), Flick (2009), Haverkamp (2005), Kvale (1996), Noon (2018), Webster et al. (2014) and Yeo et al. (2014) similarly emphasise the importance of the participants being informed about the research purpose and the interview process and being asked to give their informed consent to participate in the research project.

In a further attempt to be ethically acceptable, I applied confidentiality and anonymity. According to Webster et al. (2014), confidentiality and anonymity should be maintained at all times by the researcher and be communicated as such to participants. The researcher should not disclose who said what or quote participants in ways that could lead to them being identified. A data security and confidentiality agreement was provided and signed by the professional transcriber to maintain confidentiality and security of data related to this research project (**Appendix C**). I also used pseudonyms when referring to the seven participants in this thesis, namely P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7.

Participants may withdraw from participation at any time during a study (Cone & Foster, 2006; Fossey et al., 2002; Orb et al., 2000; Webster et al., 2014; Yeo et al., 2014). Participants were informed of their rights in this regard; however, none of the participants in this study withdrew.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter my research methodology was discussed. This entailed the theory according to which I approached the research context and conducted the empirical study. My research paradigm and approach directed the methodological choices throughout the study, and it helped me to decide which methods and techniques to use. The interpretivist paradigm was indicated as my research paradigm, which allows for multiple meanings that are socially constructed.

The research approach, being hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, where the approach is to investigate the meaning of a lived experience and to create meaning and understanding thereof, permeates the type of research, which is qualitative. The research followed a flexible, unstructured and evolving approach. My philosophy of science, as mentioned in the first paragraph, falls into the boundary of qualitative research. This led me to employ research methods applicable to a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study. I explained the nature of hermeneutic phenomenology, self-reflection in hermeneutic phenomenology, the hermeneutic circle and how I approached theory in my study. The type of study, which is qualitative, was discussed, including the overall research strategy. I explained how participants were approached and selected for data-gathering purposes. Congruent with qualitative research, I employed semi-structured interviews and IPA as my data analysis strategy, which is regarded as a distinctive approach in conducting qualitative research. I concluded with how I applied quality and rigour in my research, as well as strategies to ensure ethical research. In the next chapter I shall introduce psychological paradigms, meta-theories, meta-constructs, personal transformation and the literature review.

CHAPTER 3: PSYCHOLOGICAL PARADIGMS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the focus was on the research methodology and explaining my research strategy for the research project. This chapter focusses on the psychological paradigms and literature review. Research needs to be informed by existing knowledge in a subject area, therefore a literature review is important to refine familiarity with existing literature in a subject field (Hart, 2018; Rowley & Slack, 2004). The literature review was important in contextualising the research and for building and understanding of theoretical concepts important to analysing data and interpreting results (Rowley & Slack, 2004). This chapter is an integration of what I have read and analysed in relation to my study throughout the research project. This literature review, as it is presented in this chapter, was instrumental in how I structured my research and it enabled me to formulate a theoretical framework of this study (Hart, 2018; Trafford & Leshem, 2012). Furthermore, it enabled me to understand the theory that underpinned my research and the theoretical contribution to the research theme.

Trafford and Leshem (2012, p. 67) suggest that “literature comes alive when you open a book, read and then think.” Engaging with the existing literature (Flick, 2009; Trafford & Leshem, 2012) and using it in order to ground arguments (Flick, 2009) are equally important. Engaging with the literature turns it into a friend-making process, which eventually evolves into a meaning-making process (Mouton, 2015; Trafford & Leshem, 2012). The above helped me in the way I approached my literature review and in becoming close friends, like developing an intimate relationship with the literature in order to gain depth and insight, and to demarcate information. It helped me to distinguish between significant and less significant information (Mouton, 1996; 2015; Trafford & Leshem, 2012) and to gain insight into how other scholars interpret information (Mouton, 2015). I became aware of when the literature review would be enough and when would it become too much, but was able to keep it focussed and narrow (Vagle, 2014). A literature review is supposed to help the reader to make sense of the accumulated knowledge in the field being studied, and as the researcher the literature review enabled me to share the new knowledge I gained on

the research topic (Hart, 2018; Webster & Watson, 2002). With relevance to the literature review, both present and past tense could be used, but Webster and Watson (2002, p. xviii) suggest the present tense, as concepts are real in the here and now and “it gives the reader a greater sense of immediacy.” The literature enabled me to build a theoretical framework at the hand of how I interpreted the data and this process between the literature review and data analysis happened consecutively, simultaneously and iteratively for me.

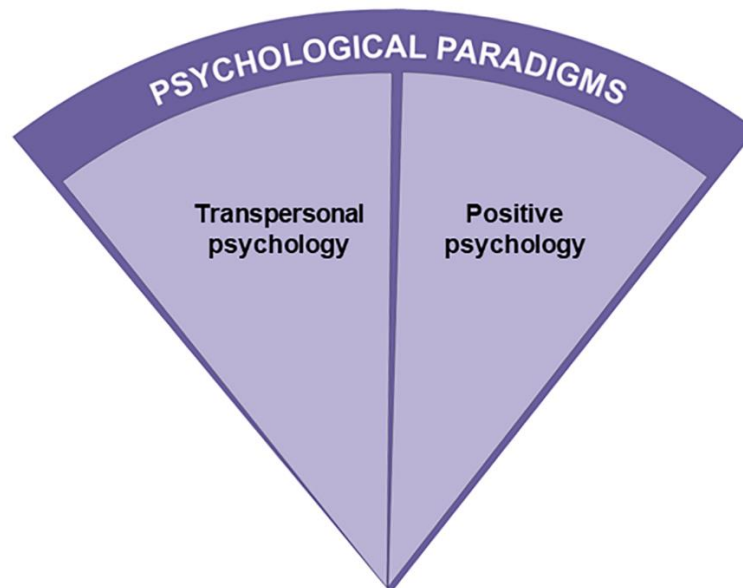
In this chapter, I discuss the psychological paradigms applied in this study, which include transpersonal psychology and positive psychology. In addition, I discuss the meta-theories and the meta-constructs relevant to understanding the core theme of the research, namely personal transformation. This chapter was of much value to me to see how the different pieces of this research puzzle started to fit together, though I still had to work out many other pieces and where they would fit.

3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL PARADIGMS

My interest and expertise in coaching, transformation, meaning-making, mindfulness and body work helped me and influenced the choice of psychological paradigms most applicable to my study. The psychological meta-theories I applied in my research study are located within the paradigms of transpersonal psychology and positive psychology and will be discussed below. A summative graphic visual of the relevant psychological paradigms, namely transpersonal psychology and positive psychology, is provided in **figure 3.1**.

Figure 3.1

Psychological paradigms



Using the appropriate psychological paradigms helped me to link the meta-theories, meta-constructs and data, as well as to see the connection with the research paradigm, namely interpretivism (which was discussed in Chapter 2) (Trafford & Leshem, 2012). Having a clear framework as a foundation or map helped me to align the empirical observations and my conceptual conclusions, as well as to give meaning to the interpretations (Trafford & Leshem, 2012).

3.2.1 Transpersonal psychology

When exploring the genesis of transpersonal psychology, Maslow is often credited with being the father of transpersonal psychology (Friedman, 2018; Shorrock, 2008; Valle, 1989). By early 1968, Abraham Maslow, Viktor Frankl, Stanislav Grof, and James Fadiman had together agreed on the term 'transpersonal' (Valle, 1989). According to Friedman and MacDonald (2003), Stanislav Grof is considered the most influential contemporary transpersonal psychologist and according to Hastings (1999), Ken Wilber is the most influential theorist in transpersonal psychology. However, Grof (2008) and Shorrock (2008) claim that Wilber does not have any clinical experience and the primary sources of his data have been his extensive

reading and experiences from his personal spiritual practice. Furthermore, Wilber distances himself from transpersonal psychology in favour of integral psychology (Grof, 2008).

Transpersonal psychology, also known as the 'fourth force' in psychology, emerged from humanistic psychology in the late 1960s (Collins, 2008; Cowley, 1993; Grof, 2008, Friedman, 2018; Hartelius et al., 2013a; Hastings, 1999; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Shorrock, 2008; Valle, 1989). The '*first force*' in psychology was known as the behavioural and cognitive schools, '*force two*' was ascribed to the psychodynamic/psychoanalytic movement, '*force three*' to the humanistic/existential school and '*force four*' to the transpersonal psychological approach (Hastings, 1999; Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Shorrock, 2008; Valle 1989). According to Caplan et al. (2003), the contemporary viewpoint of Ralph Metzner explains that transpersonal psychology grew out of a need to have a language for a fourth strand (or school) of psychology (besides psychodynamic, behaviourist and humanistic) that would cover areas of human experience not covered by these three. Furthermore, Williams (2012, p. 228) refers to the fifth force by explaining:

A more recent approach, the integral model of Ken Wilber and others, is emerging and may become a fifth force, integrating all that has come before and offering a holistic and even multilevel view of the various modalities for understanding human development and our desire to evolve mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

According to Davis (2003), Collins (2008); Pappas and Friedman (2007), Valle (1989) and Vaughan et al. (1996), 'transpersonal' means 'going trans' or 'beyond the personal' or 'through different experiences or states' (as in transform), as the process seeks to disclose and develop the source and deeper nature of identity and being. Hence transpersonal psychology as a psychological paradigm is relevant in personal transformation by starting with the sense of self and the 'who am I'. Therefore, in the transpersonal psychology paradigm personal transformation points to a deep level of being, identity work and changing the individual's meaning of the self. In the expansion of self-identity, one is dealing with radical self-transformation that employs a qualitatively different way of seeing the 'human being' (Collins, 2008;

Valle, 1989) and a notion that approaches renewed understanding of human potential (Collins, 2008; Pappas & Friedman, 2007). Furthermore, Valle (1989, p. 261) states, "Questions regarding the nature of 'normal' functioning and the possibility of 'optimal' physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health come to the fore. One is now addressing the full range of human nature and our ultimate capabilities and potential." Vaughan (2010, p. 3) defines transpersonal psychology and adult human development "in terms of growth toward wholeness that includes a balanced integration of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual capacities of the adult person. This implies that growth continues throughout life." This explanation of transpersonal psychology by Valle (1989) and Vaughan (2010) is a mirror image of the different aspects touched on during an integral coaching process and therefore transpersonal psychology as a psychological paradigm is relevant to deep transformational change, which involves working with the self. Hence, the purpose of coaching in the transpersonal psychology paradigm is to bring about personal transformation on a deeper level of being. Vaughan et al. (1996) explain that transpersonal experiences often stimulate psychological growth and development and Vaughan (1979) refers to behaviour that tends to change when one becomes aware of the transpersonal dimension of being. In addition, transpersonal psychology contributes to the health and well-being of individuals (Elmer et al., 2003; Stork, 2021). According to Law et al. (2010) transpersonal psychology is referred to as a distinctive discipline due to its relation to science and is relevant to coaching as it takes the coachee onto a journey from being 'I'-centred to a higher level of consciousness. Law et al. (2010) refer to integrative/holistic psychology and psychology of transformation that became recently more prominent, however it is argued that transpersonal psychology and the application thereof in coaching for change in the wider context has not been made yet. Law and Buckler (2020) explain that transpersonal coaching is not new, but still a developing field.

Hartelius et al., (2013b) explain transpersonal psychology in three characteristic themes, namely (1) a psychology of self-expansiveness (where an individual is not isolated, but expands herself to include others, nature, or all of space and time), (2) a whole-person psychology (where an individual understands the whole person in a sense that includes not only body and mind, but also relationships and situatedness in the world and cosmos) and (3) a psychology of transformative process (where the

individual mind, human communities and the cosmos itself are interconnected living systems in constant engagement with creative self-expression and self-invention, and where an individual is a participant in this larger transformative process, living purposefully and evolving towards a meaningful end). In this study coaching is regarded as a vehicle to guide a person through transformation (see Chapter 1).

According to Brock (2014, p. 67), “transpersonal psychology was born of the desire to find a place for spirituality within the context of psychology”; however, it is not a spiritual system per se (Davis, 2003; Friedman, 2002, 2018; Grof, 2008). Hence, transpersonal psychology is a multi-disciplinary movement that cuts across disciplines such as religion, psychology, neurobiology and philosophy (Lajoie & Shapiro, 1992; Shorrock, 2008). It has furthermore contributed to psychology and psychiatry by recognising the genuine nature of transpersonal experiences and the value of these (Grof, 2008). Transpersonal psychology is congruent with modern science (Friedman, 2015) and takes the wisdom and science of both Eastern and Western philosophies into consideration (Hartelius et al., 2017) by bridging Western philosophical traditions and Eastern contemplative traditions (Davis, 2003).

Transpersonal psychology includes all facets of human experience, even the most sensitive, exceptional and sacred experiences (Anderson, 2015). A transpersonal experience could be a mystical, spiritual and exceptional human experience, which opens up something for a person far deeper than words and therefore not always possible to explain in words (Davis, 2003; Grof, 2008, Hartelius et al., 2017; Law et al., 2010). Hartelius et al. (2017, p. iv) explain that transpersonal experiences are seen as “mainly orientated to the non-ordinary, the transcendent, the esoteric and the elite.” Instead, these encounters, which are often among the most significant, meaningful, inspiring, life-shaping and transformative kinds of experiences and capacities in human life, are already occurring everywhere in contemporary communities and societies (Hartelius et al., 2017). Furthermore, Maslow (1962) refers to these encounters as peak experiences that cannot be forced or planned; they happen when they happen, anywhere, in any place, most of the time unexpectedly. He emphasises the life-changing effect of such experiences, which are relevant in the context of personal transformation. Hence, a transpersonal experience and consequent transformation can happen as much on the sports field

as it does at a music event (Hartelius et al., 2017) and is therefore not separate from everyday life experience (Daniels, 2005). Maslow (1962) initially referred to moments of great awe as 'mystic experiences' and later changed the description to 'peak experiences', which are not eternal mysteries and therefore *in* the world and not *out* of the world. Maslow (1962, p. 11) even went further and described a peak experience as "a transient or temporary episode of self-actualization or health." For some people a peak experience is a quiet, relaxed and serene experience and for others it is more of a 'high' and exciting experience (Maslow, 1962). Walsh (1992) refers to peak experiences as among the most important experiences in life. Brock (2014) explains that transpersonal psychology is an outgrowth of the uppermost level, the so-called peak experience, of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. In addition, Honsová and Jarošová (2019) describe a peak experience as those 'a-ha moments', also referred to as a moment of insight and awareness. In the coaching fraternity, De Haan et al. (2010, p. 610) refer to these 'a-ha moments' as 'critical moments' in coaching, which they identify as 'exciting, tense or significant moments'; moreover, 'a-ha moments' are referred to as 'turning points'. These turning points bring about transformation and contribute to the process of personal transformation. I think we sometimes make a transpersonal experience complex, whereas these turning points could be very simple, but indeed significant and meaningful. Transpersonal experiences have a great impact on human life and even on society and are not exceptions to the rule, but integral to optimal psychological health, well-being and individual potential (self-actualisation) (Caplan et al., 2003; Daniels, 2013; Elmer et al., 2003; Hartelius et al., 2017; Hastings, 1999; Valle, 1989). Transpersonal psychologist Anderson (1998, cited in Collins, 2008, p. 550) asked:

What is the nature of being fully human? We cannot know who we can be unless we push the edges of our potential and possibilities. In that way we create our future in every aspect of our lives as we live them.

In addition, Daniels (2013, p. 27) explains that transpersonal psychology "aims to reinstate interest in the kinds of higher human experiences that are generally ignored or neglected by mainstream psychology. These include love, empathy, creativity, intuition, mystic experiences, altruism and compassion."

According to Hartelius et al. (2007) transpersonal psychology studies have a broader approach to human transcendence, wholeness and transformation. Hartelius et al. (2007) analysed the definitions of transpersonal psychology published over the last 35 years, which resulted in three themes (numbering added for clarity): (1) Psychology beyond ego; (2) integrative/holistic psychology; and (3) psychology of transformation, as set out in **figure 3.2** below. These three themes have been assembled into a summary definition by Hartelius et al. (2007, p. 145), “Transpersonal psychology: An approach to psychology that 1) studies phenomena beyond the ego as context for 2) an integrative/holistic psychology; this provides a framework for 3) understanding and cultivating human transformation.”

Figure 3.2

*Themes and theme strands resulting from analysis of transpersonal definitions
(Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 143)*

Theme I Beyond-Ego Psychology (TP-I)

A. States Beyond Ego

An in-the-moment inner experience, awareness or state of consciousness that is unambiguously beyond or outside of “ordinary” states of mind

B. Stages Beyond Ego

The potential for or results of personal development beyond the ego, excluding in-the-moment states

C. Paths Beyond Ego

Meditation, mysticism, mystics, or aspects that are mystical or contemplative

D. Aspirations Beyond Ego

Human potential, optimal human development in any area, or ultimate values, meaning, or purpose

E. Beyond Ego Phenomena Not Otherwise Specified

Non-ordinary perceptual capacities, perceptions gained by non-ordinary means, realities beyond ego, deep psychic structures, states tending toward ego-transcendence, or beyond-ego phenomena not otherwise specified

Theme II

Integrative/Holistic Psychology (TP-II)

A. Embodiment

The physical body as part of the widened context within which the study of psychology takes place

B. Social/Ecological Situation

The social or ecological situation as a relevant part of the context for psychology; multi-cultural or interdisciplinary approach to psychology

C. Transpersonal as Context

Beyond-the-ego experiences and realities as the organizing context for psychology, or the transformative context of psychotherapy

D. More-than-Ego Psychology

Non-ordinary psychology that transcends and includes traditional Western psychology, or to a comprehensive, holistic, multicultural, integrative or integral psychology that includes an extended range of human consciousness, experience and functioning

Theme III

Transformative Psychology (TP-III)

A. Personal Transformation

Transformation, transconventional development, transpersonal self-actualization, psycho-spiritual growth, embodied knowledge, and equivalent formulations

B. Social Transformation

Application of the findings of transpersonal psychology to education, business, therapy, the wider world, ethical thinking, right action, compassionate social action, service to humanity, etc.

The relationships between these three themes are explained in the table below.

Table 3.1

*Relationships between the three themes defining transpersonal psychology
(Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 144)*

Theme I (TP-I)	Theme II (TP-II)	Theme III (TP-III)
Transpersonal as Content of a beyond-ego psychology	Transpersonal as Context for integrative psychology of the whole person	Transpersonal as Catalyst for human transformation
Beyond Ego	Pervading Personhood	Changing Humanity
Trans = Beyond	Trans = Pervading	Trans = Changing

Transpersonal psychology is based on interconnectedness where it recognises each part (e.g., each person/human being) is fundamentally and ultimately a part of and intertwined with the whole (the cosmos, the universe), therefore one has no meaning when treated independently of the other, as the person and world co-constitute one another (Davis, 2003; Friedman, 2018; Hartelius et al., 2013a; Hastings, 1999; Valle, 1989). The influence of transpersonal psychology in the field of coaching is that it focusses and addresses the whole person perspective, namely mind, body and spirit (or body, brain and being) (Williams, 2012). Vaughan (2003) explains that transpersonal psychology addresses the whole person in relation to body, mind, emotions, spirit, community and culture (Vaughan, 2003). According to Williams (2012), coaching does well, as it is transformational for humans and the planet (cosmos) that is inhabited by humans.

3.2.2 Positive psychology

The need for positive psychology was first voiced by Martin Seligman during his 1998 presidential address at the APA (Orem et al., 2007; Seligman, 1999). The history of positive psychology dates back to 1902 when William James referred to 'healthy mindedness' (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Linley & Harrington, 2007; Linley, et al., 2006). Traditionally, psychology had a different focus, as it was applied to address

and repair dysfunctional behaviour and not necessarily to benefit well-functioning adults (Grant, 2007). After World War II the focus of psychology was on psychopathology, or stated differently, mental illness and healing (Grant, 2007; Gloss, 2012; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As a result of that, a flourishing individual and thriving community was neglected and a movement started to take place away from psychopathology, healing, and what is wrong with people. It rather studied what is right with people to enhance individuals, groups, organisations, families and a society that is healthy and flourishing (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Grant, 2007; Grant & Palmer, 2015; Gloss, 2012; Seligman, 1999, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). It is also important to understand that positive psychology does not disregard or deny the other side of the coin, which is among others human suffering and dysfunctional systems. There is indeed a place for clinical psychology and the treatment of pathology; therefore, positive psychology does not imply that the rest of psychology is necessarily negative (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Hence, positive psychology addresses the imbalance (the positive relative to the negative) in mainstream psychology (Linley et al., 2006; Wong, 2011).

It is noteworthy to bring into perspective that coaching psychology is allied to applied positive psychology, with which it has much in common (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). Coaching psychology and positive psychology were developed from the humanistic psychology approach, which includes the fully functioning person (Rodgers, 1961) and self-actualisation (Maslow, 1968; Linley & Harrington, 2007; Linley et al., 2006; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007). Furthermore, Abraham Maslow was particularly interested in psychological well-being (PWB) and supported positive health (Walsh, 1992).

Coaching is derived from human psychology (Sammut, 2014) and is grounded in positive psychology (Orem et al., 2007; Seligman, 2007). This positive psychology approach is relevant to coaching and personal transformation, as it focuses on the positive aspects of human nature and is applied to help the coachee to increase well-being and to inspire growth and change. It is believed that this approach explores what engages a person, leads to self-actualisation and positively transforms a person's life (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Linley et al., 2006; Wong, 2011). Hence, the positive psychology approach is instrumental in coaching, personal change and

transformation (Boniwell et al., 2014; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p. 5) explain positive psychology as:

The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: Well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits; the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent, and wisdom. At the group level, it is about civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship: responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance, and work ethic.

Further to positive psychology, Seligman et al. (2003) distinguish three desirable lives, namely the 'pleasant life, the good life and the meaningful life.' The 'pleasant life' and 'good life' are conceptualised as hedonic well-being, and the 'meaningful life' as eudaimonic well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). These constructs fall within the framework of the 'meta-constructs' section, in which they will be discussed in more detail. Wright (2017) refers to three content pillars of positive psychology, namely positive emotion, positive character and positive institutions. According to Wright (2017, p. 416), positive emotions have been divided into three types, "those directed toward the past (satisfaction, contentment, pleased, and lucky); the future (optimism, hope, confidence, inspiration, and faith); and present (warm hearted, enthusiastic, cheerful, and interested)." Within the framework of positive psychology, when a person could integrate emotions related to the past, present and future, such a person could lead a *pleasant life* (Wright, 2017). Moreover, Wright (2017) states that if a person implements her signature character strengths within family, work or love, the *good life* will be achieved, and in addition to the good life, a *meaningful life* will be achieved when a person is using her signature strengths in service of someone or something much larger than herself, such as the community. Positive psychology is referred to as the optimal function of a human being that leads to happiness, flourishing, fulfilment, self-actualisation, well-being, life purpose, meaning-making

and a focus on human strengths and virtues (Boniwell et al., 2014; Dodge et al., 2012; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Leach et al., 2011; Linley & Harrington, 2007; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Sheldon & King, 2001).

Different positive psychology constructs exist. Leach et al. (2011) refer to well-being, resilience and hope as constructs that enable people to flourish. Grant and Spence (2009, p. 178) emphasise that it is fair to expect that where coachees participate in a coaching programme to work through challenges and to develop, “it is reasonable to expect that participation in such a programme would improve positive psychological constructs such as self-regulation (goal attainment), self-concordance, insight, resilience, self-efficacy, and subjective and psychological well-being.” Linley and Harrington (2007) define the outcomes of interest in positive psychology as subjective, interpersonal and social states that characterise a good life. The *subjective level* includes factors such as happiness, well-being, fulfilment and health. The *interpersonal level* includes positive communities and institutions that foster good lives. Lastly, the *social level* includes “political, economic and environmental policies that embrace diversity, and promote harmony, citizenship and sustainability” (Linley & Harrington, 2007, p. 46).

Positive psychology intends to find meaning in life in good and bad times (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016; Sims, 2017; Wong, 2011). Lomas and Ivtzan (2016) refer to the emergent second wave in positive psychology, which includes understanding of the interplay of both positive and negative experiences in a person’s life, as negative experiences could contribute to optimal human functioning. “Second wave positive psychology (SWPP) is above all characterised by an appreciation of the dialectical nature of wellbeing” (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016, p. 1754). Wong (2011) also refers to SWPP as ‘positive psychology 2.0’. Sims (2017) and Wong (2011) argue that negative/challenging emotions (e.g. guilt, regret, frustration, anger) do have a place and contribute to understanding of human well-being and positive change. Hence Wong (2011, p. 70) states that “a balanced model of positive psychology explicitly seeks to harness the positive potentials from negative emotions and situations for both individuals and society.” According to Wong (2011), the four pillars of SWPP are virtue, meaning, resilience and wellbeing. Seligman added another pillar, namely relationships, which is regarded as a major source of meaning. (Wong, 1998).

Therefore, from a coaching perspective, SWPP allows the coachee to tell her challenging story, and not to suppress her emotions, but to engage with difficult emotions in order to grow and develop (Sim, 2017).

In my own personal coaching journey, I resonated with transpersonal and positive psychology. My personal experience took me to a place of exploring possibilities at a difficult time in my life when I had to make career decisions. Therefore, my life and wellbeing speak of the interaction of positive and negative aspects, good and bad times; overcoming the bad times led me to positive changes (Wong, 2011). Furthermore, there is the question about primarily what makes life worth living in the positive psychology context (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Through difficult times I aspired to reach a place of self-actualisation, PWB, moments of insight and awareness, as well as human transformation, and I am therefore of the opinion that I relate to both transpersonal and positive psychology as a psychological paradigm.

In this section the psychological paradigms were discussed, as well as their relevance in the theoretical framework of my study and coaching as such. In the section that follows I will discuss the related meta-theories, whereafter I will start narrowing down the meta-theories into meta-constructs relevant to the study.

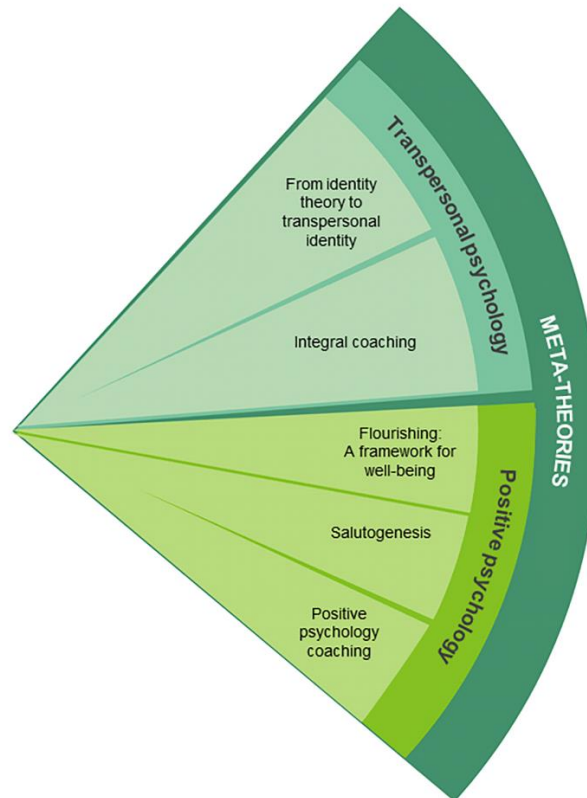
3.3 META-THEORIES

The meta-theories that will be discussed are constituted within the transpersonal- and positive psychology paradigms. The assumptions and principles of both the transpersonal and positive psychology paradigms are underpinned by the meta-theories.

Transpersonal psychology theories I identified in relation to the study are identity theory, transpersonal identity and integral coaching. The identified positive psychology theories are flourishing, salutogenesis and positive psychology coaching (PPC). Meta-theories, as explained this chapter, helped me to understand coaching and transformation on a deeper level and to realise how coaching facilitates personal transformation.

A summative graphic visual of the relevant meta-theories are provided in **figure 3.3**, and represent transpersonal psychology and positive psychology theories.

Figure 3.3
Meta-theories



3.3.1 Transpersonal psychology theories

The two theories underpinned within transpersonal psychology that will be discussed are (1) from identity theory to transpersonal identity; and (2) integral coaching. Both these theories relate to transpersonal psychology, since when we change our identities and work with the self, we do identity work and a transpersonal perspective to do identity work relates to self-expansiveness, wholeness, transformative processes and transformative experiences. These experiences entail working with the self on a deep level and changing meanings and understandings of the self. Furthermore, integral coaching focusses on the whole person and her way of being in the world. It includes inter-connectedness with others and the cosmos, a spiritual component and working beyond the self, which are all aligned with personal transformation.

3.3.1.1 From identity theory to transpersonal identity

At this point, I feel that who I am as a priest and the role associated with that and who I am are the same.

The human Tom and the priest Tom are so intertwined generally that I cannot separate them.

- Episcopal priest

'Who am I'? The question has probably tormented humankind since the dawn of civilisation and even today remains one of the most vexing of all human questions (Wilber, 1979). According to Wilber (1979, p. 3), answers to this question of 'who am I' have been offered "which range from the sacred to the profane, the complex to the simple, the scientific to the romantic, the political to the individual." Brygola (2011) also refers to the question of 'who am I' as one of the most important questions in human life, which is about one's own identity. In addition, Brown (2015), Kreiner et al. (2006a, 2006b) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) refer to exactly the questions of 'who am I' and 'who are we', and the ongoing struggles to create a sense of self. Hence, who is the me in the we, and who are we in the me? After she survived Auschwitz, as an adult Eger (2017, p. 234) asked herself the question "Who is the real me? Do I know who I am?" Identity is also referred to as personal awareness of the 'self', and thus a self-concept that consists of cognitive and affective structures, as well as meanings that individuals attach to themselves, reflexively (Brown, 2015).

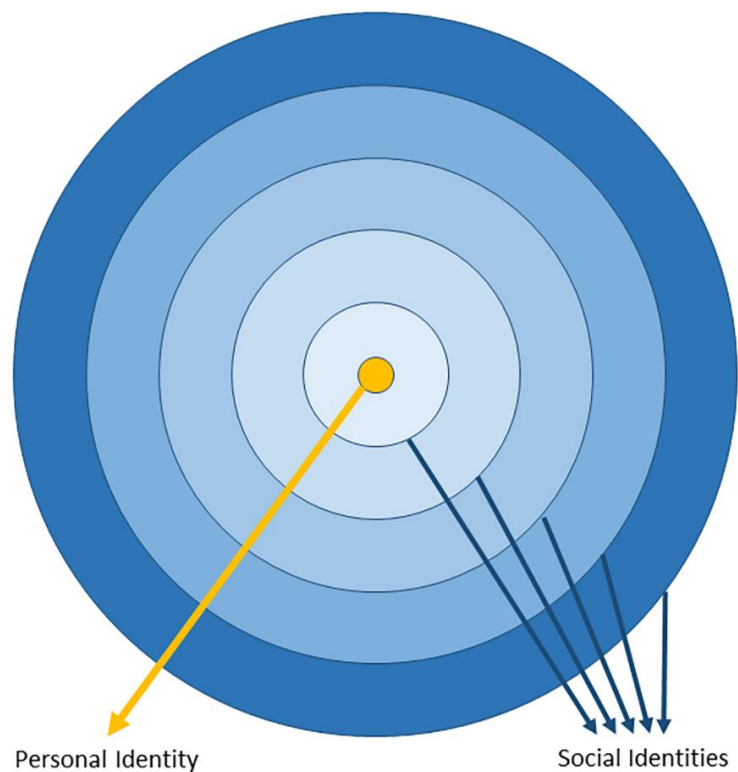
Different social groups exist today, such as organisations, professions, clubs and churches, and members of these are submitting to the identity and values of these collectives, which could be limiting for the particular social group (Kreiner et al., 2006a). Therefore multiple identities exist in an individual, social, professional, leadership and organisational context (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Additionally, Brown (2015) differentiates between personal identities (e.g. height, intelligence), social identities (e.g. gender, nationality) and role identities (e.g. mother, professor). Brewer (1991, p. 476) defines personal identity as "the individuated self - those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others within a given social context", whereas social identities are described as depersonalising of the self and

where the I becomes we, therefore the individual becomes part of social units and less unique. This is associated with transformations in the definition of self (Brewer, 1991). Adams and Crafford (2012) and Kreiner et al. (2006a) refer to individual identity and collective (social) identity, as well as to the strong social demands and tension associated with shared collective identity. It is as if one must negotiate one's different identities in order to find balance in identity, to fit in and to belong.

Much of what human beings do is done in the service of belongingness and to be part of something greater than themselves, which is a fundamental human motivation, hence the need to belong influences interpersonal relationships and social identity. Identity is thus inherently social and is co-created between individuals (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Kreiner et al., 2006a, 2006b). The image of concentric circles in **figure 3.4** below illustrates the contextual nature of personal and social identities (Brewer, 1991, p. 476).

Figure 3.4

Personal and social identities (Brewer, 1991, p. 476)



In addition to personal and social identity, there is also organisational identity. This is grounded in social identity (Haslam et al., 2017). When a person perceives that the organisation has the same qualities and characteristics as her own, she can identify with the organisation as a social group by having a cognitive connection, which is referred to as organisational identification (Dutton et al., 1994). Identity issues in a work context arise specifically when an individual enters an organisation and tension develops between her personal and social identity (Kreiner et al., 2006a). According to Watson (2016), organisational identity is not the property of the particular organisation and it is socially constructed among members inside and outside the organisation who form a perception of what the organisation 'is like'. It is thus based on perceptions and not set in stone (Van Knippenberg, 2016). Furthermore, Watson (2016, p. 137) states that:

... individuals in the identity work which they necessarily do throughout their lives, in order to maintain a coherent sense of who and what they are, engage with organizational identities, utilizing them as resources for general social sensemaking, personal self-identity maintenance, and prompts to action.

In addition to organisational identity, work identity as a concept plays a critical role in the development of a personal identity and it contributes to the establishment of psychological links between people and their work, where they spend considerable time and energy (Adams & Crafford, 2012). Furthermore, identities are not fixed, but flexible, therefore individuals have multiple identities, which include the application of boundaries (some are mental, some are physical and some are temporal) between these identities (Kreiner et al., 2006b). Kreiner et al. (2006b, p. 1319) state that "boundaries in an identity framework then are not fixed but are socially constructed and prone to re-negotiation." Moreover, identity adjusts and evolves owing to different influences to which the individual is required to adapt because circumstances change in society, organisations, occupationally and globally (Askew & Carnell, 2011; Kreiner et al., 2006b; Watson, 2008).

Identity work is a form of sense-making, thus making sense of identity in situations of dynamic complexity and an overwhelming pace of change in social contexts, changes in groups and networks in which people and their identities are embedded

(Brown, 2015; Howard, 2000; Moore & Koning, 2015). Sense-making and identity work are regarded as intersubjective, as people make sense of themselves through their external worlds and thus through their relations with others (Brown, 2015; Howard, 2000; Moore & Koning, 2015). According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1165), identity work refers to the ways in which human beings are continuously “engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness.” Furthermore, identity work is an ongoing process during crises or transitions (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). Brygola (2011) explains that a threatened identity seems to be concerned with a conflict between different personal needs and also between personal needs and social expectations. A threatened identity is therefore not a stable construction, but continually undergoes changes (Brygola, 2011), hence when identity is threatened it undergoes transition and a process of personal transformation. The intrapersonal processes that are applied in identity work are self-verification, assimilation and accommodation, as well as evaluation. In the process of *identity verification*, a person confirms and verifies her self view with feedback from others (Stets & Cast, 2007). *Assimilation* refers to the absorption of new elements into the identity structure, whereas *accommodation* means adjusting the existing identity structure to create space for new elements (Brygola, 2011). Through the *evaluation* process, the relative worth of potential additions to identity is affectively judged and has a value attached to it (Brygola, 2011).

Transpersonal psychology takes it further to include a transpersonal identity. In the context of transpersonal identity, a shift occurs beyond the established notions of identity (Collins, 2008), hence the self expands based on the integration of mind and body in organismic wholeness (Vaughan, 1985; Walsh, 1992). Instead of being separate, isolated and an independent individual entity, the sense of self becomes an integral part of a larger system by merging with all that is and therefore related to everything (Elmer et al., 2003; Vaughan, 1979, 1985, 2010; Law, 2017). According to Vaughan (1985, 2010), the self in transpersonal identity is conceptualised as an ecosystem existing within a larger ecosystem, where the self shifts from a separate entity to an entity of complete interdependence and embeddedness in the totality. In addition to transpersonal identity, personal growth and development happen from a

place of dependence, through independence to interdependence (Vaughan, 1985; 2010). Daniels (2002, p. 5) refers to common assumptions of the transpersonal and transpersonal identity as: “Transpersonal identity involves a developmental achievement; This achievement entails going beyond the experience of both egoic and existential (authentic) identity; Transpersonal identity is associated with the realisation of modes of functioning and experience that have distinctly spiritual qualities”. Particular spiritual qualities can be recognised as characterising transpersonal identity. These are identified by Vaughan (1985, p. 28) as “compassionate, loving, wise, receptive, allowing, unlimited, intuitive, spontaneous, creative, inspired, peaceful, awake, open and connected.”

According to Collins (2008), our identity can never provide a final account of who we are and Vaughan et al. (1996) explain that the personal self will always feel incomplete until the individual begins to sense that she cannot be truly whole until awakened to the wholeness of a deeper, transpersonal level of interconnected identity, hence the universal self. This implies that human beings are interconnected with all beings and a greater whole, and not just isolated individuals (Friedman, 2018; Pappas & Friedman, 2007; Vaughan, 2010). According to Stelter (2014), third-generation coaching has a less goal-oriented agenda, but a more profound and sustainable focus on values and identity work. How people perceive themselves and who they are in the world, thus self-identity, is central to coaching (Askew & Carnell, 2011) and the self is central to personal transformation (Wade, 1998). Identity work relates to the psychological paradigm of transpersonal psychology owing to the individual’s situatedness in the world (Hartelius et al., 2013b).

3.3.1.2 Integral coaching

Integral coaching as a meta-theory relates to the principles of transpersonal psychology and it entails deep work with the self and transformation and integration of the whole person. Development of the self happens not only horizontally, but also on a vertical level.

The integral coaching model of New Ventures West was adopted from Ken Wilber (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). New Ventures West is an institution that has been

providing integral coaching training and programmes for over 30 years (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). The three core models of integral coaching are the four quadrants, also referred to as the four human domains (including all dimensions of a person's life), the ten ways (coaching at the appropriate depth) and the six streams (appreciating all forms of competence) (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). For the purposes of this study the focus was on the six streams model of the integral coaching model. The premise of the six streams model is that humans develop along multiple lines or streams of development (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). Ken Wilber identified a magnitude of streams, which were all experimentally validated, but New Ventures West focuses on only six of these streams, as these show up most often in coaching and are regarded as central to the effectiveness and fulfilment of the coaching client (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). The six streams identified by New Ventures West are cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integrating. Therefore, the integral coaching process involves deep work, which is not only rigorous cognitive work. The six streams are explained by Flaherty and Handelsman (n.d.) as follows:

Cognitive: the ability to make observations in a particular field (e.g., business, philosophy, cooking) and then synthesize these observations into a coherent understanding.

Emotional: the ability to discern our own emotional states, our feelings in this moment, the background emotional tone of our lives, and our emotional responses to particular events (e.g., being challenged). Also, the ability to discern the emotional state of others, even when they themselves are oblivious to it or denying it.

Somatic: the ability to observe what is happening in our bodies (e.g., energized, tired, heavy, open, tight) and to tap into this somatic wisdom as we respond to the present moment.

Relational: the ability to initiate and sustain mutually satisfying relationships. This includes the ability to listen deeply, communicate profoundly, and support others' intentions while maintaining one's own dignity.

Spiritual: the ability to create a life dedicated to the benefit of everyone – not only ourselves or our families, companies, or tribes. This includes active engagement in a community dedicated to serving others with wisdom and compassion.

Integrating: the ability to undo all the ways we compartmentalize our lives so that our commitments and values show up in all of our words, actions, and relationships.

The term integral is deeply entwined with growth-to-goodness assumptions (Stein, 2014). The integral approach to coaching makes use of transpersonal states and perspectives to address issues in any context, personal and/or interpersonal and/or spiritual (Dängeli, 2021). Integral coaching facilitates the emergence of a new way of being by transcending and including one's current way of being into a larger, more systemic way of seeing, thinking and doing (Hunt, 2009; Jakonen & Kamppinen, 2015). When the coachee becomes aware of her current way of being while simultaneously becoming aware of new ways of seeing and relating to a topic, this signals the beginning of sustainable change (Divine, 2009; Frost, 2009; Hunt, 2009). According to Frost (2009), the focus on being a discipline that enables the coaching client is central to the integral coaching model (numbering added for clarity): (1) to become aware of their current approach to situations; (2) to see new possibilities; (3) to build sustainable new competencies to achieve deeply meaningful outcomes. Therefore, along with clients' awareness and insight, there will be a need to develop new competencies (new muscles) to be able to live in expanded and more supportive ways (Flaherty, 2010; Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.; Hunt, 2009). Additional terms that are part of integral coaching are self-correcting and self-generating. Self-correcting refers to the client having the capacity to observe discrepancies between what she intends and the actual outcomes and then bridging the gap. Self-generating implies that the development of competence does not become final, but is a continuous process, as the client has to be able to renew herself continuously by using resources from without and within (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). Further to integral coaching, the coach lets the client engage in new activities, practices, self-observations and exercises on a regular basis to build the competencies (muscles) needed to support the coaching topic (Flaherty &

Handelsman, n.d.; Frost, 2009). Hence the coaching client moves through cycles of development that build awareness and develop new competencies in a way that the client realises, manifests and sustains (Hunt, 2009). Thus, integral coaching work focusses on a stable 'new' way of being that includes healthy aspects of the 'current' way of being, which happens over time and denotes a developmental shift, whether vertical or horizontal (Frost, 2009). Aspects of the current way of being could prevent clients from moving forward and sustaining change in the domain of their coaching topic (Frost, 2009).

In addition to integral coaching, transpersonal coaching involves a holistic and integrative approach to support client growth and transformation from limiting self-constructs and beliefs into whole new ways of being, as well as an enhanced sense of meaning and purpose in life (Dängeli, 2021; Law et al. 2010). Transpersonal coaching creates space for transformation to happen and to generate willingness to integrate clients' new awareness into the context where it is most meaningful to them (Dängeli, 2021). Moreover, this approach includes the body, mind, relationships and spirituality (Dängeli, 2021).

3.3.2 Positive psychology theories

Three theories I identified that support the positive psychology paradigm will be discussed in this section. These are: (1) flourishing – a framework for well-being; (2) salutogenesis; and (3) PPC. Personal transformation has a direct connection with positive health, optimal human functioning and well-being, which includes meaningfulness and purpose. The three theories will be discussed in the section that follows.

3.3.2.1 Flourishing: A framework for well-being

Well-being as a concept is pertinent in the positive psychology framework. According to Dodge et al. (2012), well-being implies that psychological, social and physical resources are available to a person when needed to address psychological, social and physical challenges in life. Well-being generally refers to “optimal psychological functioning and experience” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 142). It has been

derived from two general perspectives, namely hedonic well-being, also referred to as subjective well-being (SWB) and eudaimonic well-being, also referred to as PWB (Keyes et al., 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Flourishing as a concept brings hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being together, as it focusses on both (Huppert, 2009; Keyes, 2002; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016). Passmore and Oades (2014) differentiate between these two concepts by explaining that hedonic well-being refers to short-term well-being similar to cash flow, which is excellent to have but is short-term based, whereas eudaimonic well-being is more sustainable and can be viewed as an asset that is more long-term based. Seligman moved away from theories of happiness and proposed a new theory of well-being, which reveals the nature of flourishing (Dodge et al., 2012; Seligman, 2011). His model of flourishing refers to five components of well-being, which are building blocks of flourishing and give rise to human flourishing, namely positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment, which are represented by the acronym PERMA (Goodman et al., 2018; Seligman, 2011). Seligman's PERMA model integrates components of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Goodman et al., 2018). Furthermore, Rothmann (2013) summarises the dimensions of flourishing, adapted from Keyes (2007), into three main themes, namely emotional well-being (hedonic well-being), PWB (eudaimonic well-being) and social well-being, as explained in **table 3.2** below. Rothmann (2013) integrates a variety of theoretical flourishing frameworks as well as aspects of both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Table 3.2*Dimensions of flourishing (Rothmann, 2013, p. 127)*

Dimension	Definition
<i>Emotional well-being</i>	
Positive affect	Is energetic, cheerful, and good-spirited
Satisfaction with life	Shows general satisfaction and happiness with life overall
<i>Psychological well-being</i>	
Self-acceptance	Holds positive attitudes toward self/own personality
Personal growth	Is ambitious, seeks to maximise own potential
Purpose in life	Has meaning and purpose in life
Environmental mastery	Changes and manages personal environment to suit own needs
Autonomy	Has socially acceptable internal standards and values as guidelines in life
Positive relations with others	Establishes trusting interpersonal relationships
<i>Social well-being</i>	
Social acceptance	Is positive towards and accepting of diversity in people
Social actualization	Believes in potential of others (individual, groups and societies)
Social coherence	Finds society and social life meaningful and comprehensible
Social contribution	Regards own daily activities as adding value to society and others
Social integration	Experiences sense of relatedness, comfort, and support from community

Flourishing is a key concept in positive psychology and goes hand in hand with optimal functioning of people and thus high levels of SWB and PWB (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Grant & Spence, 2009; Linley & Harrington, 2005; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The operational definition of flourishing requires the presence of a range of characteristics, including positive emotions,

engagement and interest, meaning and life purpose, positive relationships, self-esteem, self-determination, vitality, optimism and resilience (Huppert & So, 2009; Seligman, 2011).

Keyes (2002) differentiates between flourishing and languishing. “Adults with complete mental health are flourishing in life with high levels of well-being. To be flourishing, then, is to be filled with positive emotion and to be functioning well psychologically and socially” (Keyes, 2002, p. 210). On the other hand, adults with incomplete mental health are languishing in life, with low well-being (Keyes, 2002). Hence, languishing is described as emptiness and stagnation, constituting a life of quiet despair, and people in despair describe their lives as ‘hollow’ or ‘empty’ (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Keyes, 2002). Languishing, however, does not mean the presence of a mental illness, though mental health is more than the mere absence of mental illness (Keyes, 2002). According to Lomas and Ivtzan (2016), SWPP explains that flourishing includes not only experiencing positive emotions, but also embracing the complexities in life, balancing the good and bad in life, the positive and the negative. Eger (2017, p. 224), who was a prisoner in Auschwitz, is one of the last survivors of the holocaust and was a student of Victor Frankl, explains how complexities in life are embraced by stating that “suffering is inevitable and universal. But how we respond to suffering differs.”

Moreover, flourishing is to live a life of goodness, growth and resilience, as well as to live within an optimal range of human functioning (Frederick & Losada, 2005, Seligman, 2011). Coaching is a change methodology ultimately aimed at enhancing well-being and functioning (Grant, 2003). The findings of Grant (2017) and Grant and Spence (2009) affirm that coaching as an intervention enhances flourishing, not only for the individual, but also workplace performance and well-being. In addition, when individuals flourish, health, productivity and peace follow (Seligman, 2011). Flourishing is explained as the ultimate end-state in psychology (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016), which is the top end of the spectrum of PWB (Huppert & So, 2009). This again is significant in the paradigm of both transpersonal and positive psychology, which aims for optimal functioning. Flourishing is therefore relevant pertaining to the personal transformational value of coaching, as it enables a person to grow through good times and through the struggles of life.

3.3.2.2 Salutogenesis

Salutogenesis relates to positive psychology (Joseph & Sagy, 2017) and is a predominant meta-theoretical orientation in the field of positive psychology. It was introduced by Aaron Antonovsky in 1979 and is the study of health improvement and health promotion and therefore of what creates health (Antonovsky, 1996; Becker et al., 2010; Eriksson & Lindström, 2008). Salutogenesis focuses on the origins of health and wellness (Latin *salus* – health; Greek genesis – *origins*) (Breed et al., 2006). One of the key constructs within the salutogenesis meta-theory, which was also introduced by Antonovsky, is sense of coherence (SOC) (Breed et al., 2006; Lindström & Eriksson, 2005). It will be discussed under meta-constructs later in this chapter.

According to Becker et al. (2010), salutogenesis includes methods to create, enhance and improve physical, mental and social well-being. Antonovsky differentiated between salutogenesis (positive health) and pathogenesis (negative health) (Becker et al., 2010). Salutogenesis is also referred to as total health (ease) and pathogenesis as ill-health (disease) (Lindström & Eriksson, 2005). Hence, Antonovsky's focus was not on what causes disease, but rather on what creates health, especially in dire circumstances. The development of salutogenesis included in studies by Antonovsky of holocaust survivors (Becker et al., 2010). In this regard, Strümpfer (2005) argued that Antonovksy's construct of salutogenesis should be broadened to fortigenesis, referring to the origins of strength. For the purposes of this research project, I prefer referring to the concept of salutogenesis, because it is widely known and researched and because coaching models have been developed based on the salutogenic perspective (Grays et al., 2014; Haubold et al., 2016).

It happens that regardless of the fact that some people are faced with severe difficulties, they stay healthy, while other people do not have the capacity to manage stressful situations (Eriksson & Lindström, 2008). Antonovsky's original idea was to focus on the resources and capacity people have to create health instead of focussing on risks, ill health and disease (Lindström & Eriksson, 2005). The general resistance resources formulated by Antonovsky to maintain and develop health are "ego identity, knowledge, intelligence, social support, cultural stability and preventive

health orientation” (Eriksson et al., 2007, p. 684). People with these kinds of resources at their disposal have a better chance of dealing with the challenges of life (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007). Salutogenesis as a theory is relevant to personal transformation in that it focusses on developing the strengths that develop resilience in the face of adversity, and it relates to the overall well-being of a person.

3.3.2.3 Positive psychology coaching

Positive psychology coaching as a meta-theory relates to the principles of positive psychology where the focus is on increasing wellness from both a hedonic well-being and eudomainic well-being perspective. Transformation from this point of view has an impact on the optimal functioning of an individual.

Coaching offers a platform within applied positive psychology that involves purposeful change in normal, nonclinical populations (Grant, 2005; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Green & Palmer, 2019). Therefore, PPC is a scientifically rooted approach to helping clients to increase optimal functioning and well-being, enhance and apply strengths as well as to improve performance and achieve valued goals (Boniwell et al., 2014; Green & Palmer, 2019; Linley & Harrington, 2005). Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) refer to PPC as the vehicle to enhance clients’ life experience, work performance and well-being. Boniwell et al. (2014, p. 157) explain that “at the core of positive psychology coaching is a belief in the power of science to elucidate the best approaches for positively transforming clients’ lives.” In the PPC approach the coach views the client as ‘whole’ and the focus is on strengths, positive behaviour and purpose (Boniwell et al., 2014). Moreover, coaching is described as a natural home for positive psychology, as it is an ideal medium through which the science of positive psychology can be applied (Boniwell, et al., 2014; Grant & Cavanagh, 2007; Seligman, 2007). In the light of this, Oades and Passmore (2014) define PPC as:

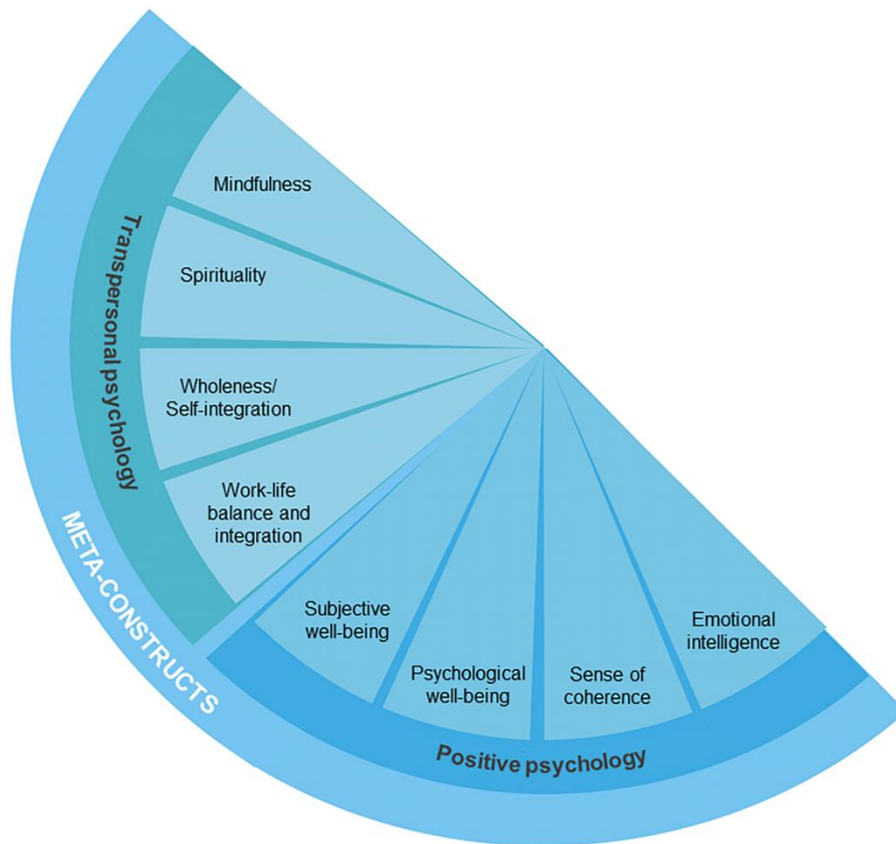
Coaching approaches that seek to improve short term well-being (i.e. hedonic well-being) and sustainable well-being (i.e. eudaimonic well-being) using evidence based approaches from positive psychology and the science of well-being and enable the person to do this in an ongoing manner after coaching has completed.

3.4 META-CONSTRUCTS

The meta-constructs are derived from the meta-theories. Both meta-theories and meta-constructs are aligned with the data analysis, because these unfolded over time as I progressed with the study in an iterative manner - by reading the transcripts several times, thereafter analysing the data using Atlas-ti (which is a qualitative data analysis program) and Microsoft Excel and continuing my reading of relevant literature.

The constructs as discussed below are seen as an integral part of this study. A summative graphic visual of the relevant meta-constructs is provided in **figure 3.5**, and denotes the constructs within both the transpersonal psychology and positive psychology meta-theories. The constructs related to transpersonal psychology are mindfulness, spirituality, wholeness/self-integration, work-life balance and integration. Additional constructs that will be discussed pertaining to positive psychology are SWB, PWB, SOC and EQ.

Figure 3.5
Meta-constructs



3.4.1 Transpersonal psychology constructs

The constructs mindfulness, spirituality, wholeness/self-integration, and work-life balance and integration will be discussed in this section, which contributes to personal transformation. These all relate to transpersonal psychology, as the focus is on becoming more aware of the self and present in the moment through mindfulness; on holistic wellness, awakening and becoming more compassionate through spirituality; on the integration of body, mind and spirit through wholeness/self-integration; and on finding balance in life through work-life integration.

3.4.1.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness dates back to ancient times, with its roots in the Buddhist tradition (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003; Khoury et al., 2017). Different mindfulness practices are associated with almost all spiritual traditions, such as Christian centring prayer and Buddhist meditation (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001). Therefore, mindfulness is a practice, not a religion (Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003; Williams & Penmann, 2011).

Mindfulness practices help people to cope with physical and psychological realities in day-to-day challenges (Cashwell et al., 2007, Lavretsky, 2010; Pagnini & Langer, 2015; Schmidt, 2004). It is a practice for the development of attention, awareness and compassion for oneself and for others (Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Khoury et al., 2017; Schmidt, 2004). Kabat-Zinn (2001, p. 25) defines mindfulness as “a practical way to be more in touch with the fullness of your being through a systematic process of self-observation, self-inquiry, and mindful action.” Moreover, mindfulness is the art of conscious living by being fully aware (in-the-moment awareness) and engaged in the present (in the here and now), and thus being ‘awake’ (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003; Lavretsky, 2010; Pagnini & Langer, 2015; Passmore, 2018; Schwartz, 2018; Walsh, 1999; Williams & Penman, 2011). It therefore creates a platform that cultivates self-awareness and insight into thoughts, feelings and behaviour (Goble et al., 2017; Passmore, 2018).

The practice of mindfulness allows for a mental or physical ‘pause’, a process of ‘stepping back’ or even stopping the wandering mind, which is most often on autopilot, to become still, thus encouraging reflection for a moment to consider a personal or work situation or make informed choices (Passmore, 2017; Schwartz, 2018). Furthermore, the practice of mindfulness, meaning actual engagement in the discipline, invites embodied engagement (Depraz et al., 2000; Williams & Penman, 2011), including the body in mindfulness practices. Khoury et al. (2017) emphasise the central role the body plays in mindfulness practices, such as mindful eating, mindful walking, mindful breathing and formal mindfulness skills, to mention a few. According to Khoury et al. (2017), embodied mindfulness is therefore a mechanism

to change. As human beings we live in our bodies. Hence mindfulness includes the head and the body, as the body influences how we think, feel and behave and therefore our way of being (Williams & Penman, 2011). Walsh (1999) and Williams and Penman (2011) also refer to human beings being aware of their bodies; thus having a relationship with our bodies will improve our lives.

Furthermore, mindfulness is referred to as a spiritual practice, which could be formal, such as disciplined meditation, or informal, such as paying mindful attention when doing something as simple as washing the dishes (Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001). It is described as being non-judgmental (Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003). Practising meditation is explained by Lesser (1999, p. 91), who says that it “is to learn to walk the middle path between every one of life’s extremes.” Therefore, mindfulness relates to spirituality, and becoming mindful and quiet could lead to a “deepened sense of spirituality” (Cashwell et al., 2007, p. 71). Cashwell et al. (2007), Kabat-Zinn (2001) and Williams and Penman (2011) explain that being mindful and connecting to the spiritual becomes a way of being and not a way of doing. Furthermore, mindfulness enhances emotional self-regulation and well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Garland et al., 2015; Ryan 2009; Schwartz, 2018). Self-regulation, among others, could be addressed during coaching, as coaching contributes to different outcomes (Grover & Furnham, 2016). Using mindfulness during coaching plays a central role in helping people to change their behaviour (Schwartz, 2018). Hayes (2002) emphasises that mindfulness and spiritual traditions foster behaviour change.

According to Garland et al. (2015), practising and applying mindfulness contributes to flourishing, meaning-making and having purpose in life, which are characteristics of eudaimonic well-being. This will be discussed under the positive psychology constructs. Mindfulness is becoming increasingly relevant in IO psychology and widely recognised by psychology practitioners (Schwartz, 2018). It is a construct related to transpersonal psychology, as it includes contemplating, becoming self-aware and present, and connecting with the self and the universe. Davis (2003) refers to mindfulness as an example of a transpersonal practice. Mindfulness also refers to the theory of well-being, as it fosters self-endorsed behavioural regulation that is important to the enhancement of well-being (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Mindfulness is a platform for becoming more self-aware and present, which initiates change in how a person presents herself not only on a cognitive level, but also emotionally and somatically. Therefore, mindfulness as a construct should improve through coaching and facilitate personal transformation.

3.4.1.2 Spirituality

“The word ‘spiritual’ is reported to have been first used in the fourteenth century and comes from the Latin word spiritus meaning breath; associated with breathing and wind” (Gibb, 2014, p. 51). Spirituality is a wide and universal phenomenon (i.e., available to all people) and may be interpreted in divergent ways (Cacioppe, 2000; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kourie, 2009; Mohan & Uys, 2006). Laabs (1995) states that spirituality is not about converting people, nor is it about influencing peoples’ belief systems. It is about knowing that we are all spiritual beings having a human experience. Brown (1999) explains that spirituality is the heart of human life and the subtle dimension of being a soul. It gives experience fullness and immediacy so that one feels more in contact with each moment as one lives each day (Brown, 1999). Spirituality is essential and the core of holistic wellness (Cashwell et al., 2007; Chandler et al., 1992; Myers et al., 2000). Moreover, spirituality is defined by Cashwell et al. (2007, p. 67) as including three different concepts, namely mindfulness, heartfulness and soulfulness:

... spirituality as a developmental process that is both active and passive wherein beliefs, disciplined practice, and experiences are grounded and integrated to result in increased mindfulness (nonjudgmental awareness of present experience), heartfulness (experience of compassion and love), and soulfulness (connections beyond ourselves).

The expression of spirituality is more private and personal than public, as in the case of religion, and it is also developmental in nature, which means a person’s spiritual life could change over time (Cashwell et al., 2007; Hinterkopf, 1994). For some people spirituality and religion complement each other, whereas for others spirituality is separate and outside the context of religion, as it is not formal, structured or organised (Cacioppe, 2000; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kourie, 2009; Hill & Pargament,

2003; Hinterkopf, 1994; Laabs, 1995; Mitroff, 2003; Mohan & Uys, 2006). According to Pargament (1999), a person could be spiritual without being religious or religious without being spiritual. Furthermore, spirituality is a search for the sacred, as it implies a relationship with something intangible beyond the self, and attests to the greatest of human capacities (Cacioppe, 2000; Mariano, 2013; Mitroff, 2003; Pargament, 1999; Walsh, 1999). The sacred is not only out there, but also found in the everyday so-called ordinary things of life (Mitroff, 2003). Religion, on the other hand, is a search for significance; it is more static and has to do with the institutional side of life, with rituals that could restrict human potential (Pargament, 1999). The search for significance (religion) could also lead to the sacred (Pargament, 1999). Experiencing the sacred occurs by means of spiritual practices and this leads to awakening, which means knowing the true self (Walsh, 1999). In contrast, Taylor and Egeto-Szabo (2017) state that awakening experiences happen mostly outside the context of spiritual practices and traditions.

Furthermore, Taylor and Egeto-Szabo (2017) describe awakening as transcending from a normal state to a state of intense awareness; transformation takes place in this state of intense awareness. Moreover, interfaces exist between spirituality and personal transformation. Taylor and Egeto-Szabo (2017, p. 48) describe the after-effect of an awakening experience as a primary shift that takes place as “a fully-fledged or personal transformation, similar to the ‘awakening’, ‘liberation’ or ‘enlightenment’ described by various spiritual traditions.” Kourie (2009) explains that spirituality is not only a medium for personal transformation, but also for societal transformation. Spiritual leaders transform themselves, others and their organisation (Fairholm, 1996).

It appears that though not all people are spiritual, spirituality is central in meaning-making, purpose and self-actualising (Martela & Steger, 2016; Mohan & Uys, 2006; Park, 2013; Schnell et al., 2013). Spirituality is linked to purpose, meaning and self-actualising. Vaughan et al. (1996) explain that in a study of Abraham Maslow he found that self-actualising and self-transcending people did have a spiritual orientation to life, but were not necessarily formally religious. Pargament (1999, p. 6) refers to spirituality as “a search for meaning, for unity, for connectedness, for transcendence, for the highest of human potential.” All life events are seen in the

perspective of a spiritual journey and this is what gives people meaning and purpose in their lives (Amundson, 2001; Mohan & Uys, 2006; Pargament, 1999). Baird (2012) states that spirituality leads to a sense of meaning and purpose in life, as well as well-being. Maslow (1968) describes people who are developing spiritually as transcendent self-actualisers. According to Gibb (2014), spirituality is seen as fundamental and an important component of the process of identity development and self-actualisation. Spirituality contributes to the well-being of a person (Lavretsky, 2010) and according to Reutter and Bigatti (2010), initiates and enhances PWB. Hamel et al. (2003) explain from a transpersonal viewpoint that spiritual meaning is more than just part of overall well-being; it is the very essence of the human being.

According to (Walsh, 1999), spiritual practices have benefits on a psychological and physical level and by applying them consistently over time these spiritual practices “work their transformative wonders on our hearts, minds, and lives” (p. 5). Walsh (1999) explains that spiritual practices lead to transpersonal growth/development, which is beyond conventional growth/development. Walsh (1999, p. 23) uses different metaphors of transformation that guide and describe spiritual growth: “Awakening, Dehypnosis, Enlightenment, Uncovering, Freedom, Metamorphosis, Unfolding, Wholeness, Journey.” Spiritual well-being is considered the epitome of health and is described as “an overall sense of personal fulfilment and satisfaction with life, a sense of peace with oneself and the world ... a sense of unity with the cosmos of a personal closeness to God, or with nature” (Bloomfield, 1980, cited in Cowley, 1993, p. 528). Spirituality transcends the material aspects of life and gives a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to the universe (Fairholm, 1996, Myers et al., 2000). The construct of wholeness will be elaborated on in the next section. According to Kamitsis and Francis (2013), spirituality has a positive impact on PWB and is experienced in and through a sense of connectedness with nature.

In the light of the personal transformational value of coaching, spirituality fosters personal growth and development on a deeper level to reach self-actualisation; it also focuses on meaning in life and connectedness with the universe. Coaching should therefore facilitate growth in these spheres of being, if it is said to have personal transformational value.

3.4.1.3 Wholeness/Self-integration

Spirituality is seen as a channel for people to find unity and wholeness, both individually and in society (Kourie, 2009; Kabat-Zinn, 2001). According to Goble et al. (2017), engagement of the whole person is necessary for transformative change to take place. Strozzi-Heckler (1997) explains that to be whole is to integrate body, mind and spirit, as the whole is larger than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, Strozzi-Heckler (1993, p. 79) states that by “working through the body, we can contact the totality of our being.” It ties in with the philosophical foundations that underpin integral coaching, which are based on integral theory, pragmatism, ontology, linguistics, biology and adult development theory (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.).

Brock (2014) explains that integral theory, which was originally developed by Wilber, refers to the transpersonal, systematic and holistic philosophy related to the body, mind, heart and soul. “Based upon the work of many theorists including Plotinus, Aurobindo, Habermas, Maturana, and Wilber, integral theory is the bold project to include and account for everything in human life, leaving nothing out” (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). Wilber (2006, cited in Brock, 2014, p. 46) defines integral as:

... integral simply means more balanced, comprehensive, interconnected, and whole. By using an integral approach – whether it’s in business, personal development, art, education, or spirituality (or any of dozens of other fields) – we can include more aspects of reality, and more of our humanity, in order to become more fully awake and effective in anything we do.

Mindfulness practices have the possibility to influence well-being and happiness positively (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Ryan 2009), enhancing a balanced mind (Schmidt, 2004) and fullness in life (Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001), hence mindfulness contributes to wholeness. Coaching is a medium that leads to transformation, integration and wholeness (Gourov & Lomas, 2019, Orem et al., 2007). Wholeness therefore encompasses everything, hence the personal transformational value of coaching should be relevant to the development of the whole person in the cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integral context.

3.4.1.4 Work-life balance and integration

Work-life balance and integration are important for the health and well-being of an individual, but also for job performance and to make meaningful contributions to work, family and a well-functioning society (Halpern, 2005; Morris & Madsen, 2007; Oades et al., 2005). The requirement for work-life balance is a reality, bearing in mind the stressors in life that confront us on a daily basis. This in itself affects meaning and purpose in work and life. Work-home conflict arises in the absence of work-home balance, therefore work-home balance is a much sought-after phenomenon to balance work and other life demands optimally (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Kreiner et al., 2009; Nord et al., 2002). Amundson (2001) and Kreiner et al. (2009) suggest the setting of boundaries to give shape and identity to people's life and to enable work-home enrichment. Grzywacz and Carlson (2007, p. 466) define work–family balance as “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains.” Satisfaction should be evident in both work and family domains, otherwise balance becomes problematic (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007).

According to Oades et al. (2005), work and life are not separated, but integrated, making work-life integration a more desirable end than work-life balance, as the concept of balance is more general (Oades et al., 2005). Furthermore, according to Morris and Madsen (2007), the individual has to identify different responsibilities and demands, set boundaries and make resources available to integrate the domains of work and life. Grant and Palmer (2015) emphasise that coaching aims to help people create conditions that will allow them to flourish, develop and attain personally meaningful goals in their work lives and personal lives.

The personal transformational value of coaching would be evident if, through coaching, people realise that they are not involved in only ‘home’ or only ‘work’, but that it is important to balance and integrate their personal and work lives for optimal functioning.

3.4.2 Positive psychology constructs

Positive psychology constructs will be discussed in this section. Both SWB and PWB are constructs underpinned by a meta-theory, namely flourishing; SOC as a construct is underpinned by the meta-theory salutogenesis and EQ relates to well-being and flourishing.

3.4.2.1 Subjective well-being

Subjective well-being is associated with the hedonistic approach to well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Waterman, 1990; Whitehead & Bates, 2016). Subjective well-being and hedonia therefore require positive effects to be maximised and negative effects to be minimised (Diener et al., 2003; Peppe et al., 2018). When taking the hedonistic approach, “enjoyment may be expected to be felt whenever pleasant affect accompanies the satisfaction of needs, whether physically, intellectually, or socially based” (Waterman, 1993, p. 679). This approach involves pleasure; it is based upon how good one feels about one’s life and tends to be more individualistic (Waterman, 1993; Whitehead & Bates, 2016). In addition, Wong (2011, p. 70) describes hedonic happiness as “the kind of life that emphasizes *eat, drink, and be merry*”, therefore as seeking pleasure or seeking relaxation. Hedonia, or hedonic happiness, is also described as a subjective experience of pleasure (Waterman, 2008). Hence the focus of SWB is on life satisfaction and happiness.

Subjective well-being is concerned with how and why people experience their lives in positive ways, including a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life, giving rise to the positive emotion emanating from feeling good about ourselves, experiencing pleasure and having fun (Diener, 1984). Furthermore, SWB is referred to as pleasure attainment and pain avoidance, where people feel many pleasant emotions and fewer unpleasant emotions and are therefore satisfied and happy with their lives (Diener, 1984, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2001). From this perspective, according to Deci and Ryan (2008) and Diener (2000), well-being is considered subjective, as the focus is on people who evaluate for themselves the degree to which they experience a sense of wellness. The concept of SWB has frequently been used interchangeably with ‘happiness’ (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Diener, 2000; Ryan

& Deci, 2001) and the 'good life' (Diener, 2000; Waterman 2008). It is consequently "most often interpreted to mean experiencing a high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of satisfaction with one's life" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 1). According to Keyes (2002), SWB represents more public and social criteria of how people evaluate their functioning in life.

Research has indicated that coaching can enhance both SWB and PWB (Green et al., 2006; Leach et al., 2011). According to Field et al. (2013), coaching addresses SWB, which is related to people's life satisfaction and their evaluation of important domains of life, such as work, health and relationships. Coaching should facilitate life satisfaction and the way in which people evaluate themselves in terms of their sense of wellness and where they find themselves in life, if it is to have personal transformational value. Psychological well-being as a construct will be discussed in the section that follows.

3.4.2.2 Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being is also referred to as eudaimonic well-being (Bauer, et al., 2008; Whitehead & Bates, 2016). It dates back as far as the ancient Greek philosophy of Aristotle (Bauer et al., 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Sihvola, 2008; Waterman, 1993). Psychological well-being is associated with a good condition mentally and physically and with effective functioning (Huppert, 2009; Peppe et al., 2018). Referring to psychological health, Elmer et al. (2003) explain that it does not imply merely the absence of pathology, but instead the presence of well-being and self-actualisation. Keyes et al. (2002) claim that PWB emphasises engagement with the existential challenges of life, as well as personal growth and self-fulfilment. Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 10) states that "within the business coaching context, the coach helps the client to articulate existential concerns such as freedom, purpose, choice and anxiety, and to identify and replace limiting paradigms with empowering paradigms, thus leading to positive change." This brings about alignment between existential change and deep personal transformation and well-being. Huppert (2009) states that PWB does not require individuals to feel good all the time, as painful emotions are a normal part of life; it is about the ability to manage these emotions in order to sustain long-term well-being. In addition to PWB,

Wong (2011, p. 75) explains: “The psychology of well-being serves as an umbrella term for happiness, health, flourishing, and optimal functioning at both the individual and national levels in both positive and negative conditions.” Psychological well-being is very personal, as it represents private and personal criteria for the evaluation of one’s functioning (Keyes, 2002).

Psychological well-being includes six distinct characteristics/core dimensions (numbering added for clarity), namely (1) *self-acceptance*, therefore the ability to like ourselves, including our good and bad qualities; (2) *positive relationships* and how we get on with others; (3) *environmental mastery*, therefore our ability to shape our environment to satisfy our needs; (4) *personal growth*, therefore to actualise oneself and realise one’s potential; (5) *autonomy*, which implies a sense of control and self-determination over our lives; and lastly (6) *purpose in life*, having a sense of direction and the contribution we make to the world (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Leach et al., 2011; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995).

Eudaimonic well-being emphasises meaningfulness, purpose, personal growth and achieving one’s full potential, leading to a more enduring and sustained kind of happiness (Bauer et al., 2008; Deci & Ryan, 2008; Waterman, 1993; Whitehead & Bates, 2016). According to Waterman (1993), adopting the eudaimonic approach means that one lives in accordance with one’s daimon or ‘true self’. This view places the focus on meaning in life, direction in life, where life activities are congruent with a person’s deeply held values, self-realisation of unique potential, as well as the extent to which a person is fully or holistically engaged in life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Waterman, 1993). Wong (2011, p. 70) defines eudaimonia as “a lifestyle characterised by the pursuit of virtue/excellence, meaning/purpose, doing good/making a difference and the resulting sense of fulfilment or flourishing.” Eudaimonia is also viewed as meaning plus virtue and therefore underpinned by moral/ethical well-being (Waterman, 2008; Wong, 2011). Hedonic happiness and eudaimonic happiness are closely related (Wong, 2011; Deci & Ryan, 2008). Deci and Ryan (2008, p. 3) explain the overlap between hedonic and eudaimonic approaches as “if a person experiences eudaimonic living he or she will necessarily also experience hedonic enjoyment; however, not all hedonic enjoyment is derived

from eudaimonic living.” Wissing (2020) emphasises that the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches should be viewed as complementary.

Coaching contributes to the PWB of a person and how she engages in life (Grant et al., 2010; Green et al., 2006; Leach et al., 2011; Spence & Grant, 2007). The outcome of coaching has to do with PWB and the coaching process facilitates the pursuit of PWB. Boyatzis et al. (2012) emphasise that coaching supports eudaimonic well-being and therefore a person’s development and growth. They suggest that coaching gives rise to well-being and change. Broski and Dunn (2018) explain that well-being informs transformation. Therefore, personal transformation manifests in enhanced PWB.

3.4.2.3 Sense of coherence

A meaningful life, broadly stated, is a life that matters and has significance for the person living it (Heintzelman & King, 2014; King et al., 2006). In addition, a meaningful life is explained as having *significance*, *purpose* and *coherence* (King et al., 2006; Martela & Steger, 2016). *Significance* as meaning in life focusses on whether one’s life is inherently valuable and a life worth living, which connects closely with eudaimonia (Martela & Steger, 2016). Heintzelman and King (2014) affirm that meaning is reflected in the science of PWB and that meaning in life also represents eudaimonic well-being. Purpose and meaning are quite often used synonymously (Heintzelman & King, 2014; Martela & Steger, 2016); however, *purpose* as meaning in life refers to having direction, aims and goals in life (Martela & Steger, 2016). *Coherence* as meaning in life refers to how one makes sense of the world by interpreting it cognitively, hence in a clear and logical way (Martela & Steger, 2016). Antonovsky introduced the concept of SOC, which is a salutogenic concept, as a way to view life as comprehensible, manageable and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1996; Eriksson & Lindström, 2006, 2007, 2008; Eriksson et al., 2007; Grays et al., 2014). In Antonovsky’s view of life, SOC in the sense of being comprehensible, manageable and meaningful is also applicable in terms of coherence of meaning (Heintzelman & King, 2013; Martela & Steger, 2016). Sense of coherence is not only applicable on individual, but also on group and societal level (Eriksson et al., 2007).

Eriksson et al. (2007, p. 684) explain the three dimensions of SOC (comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness) as:

(1) comprehensibility, which refers to the extent to which one perceives the stimuli that confront one as consistent, structured and clear; (2) manageability, which is the extent to which one perceives that the resources at one's disposal are adequate to meet the life's demands; and (3) meaningfulness, which refer to the extent to which one feels that life makes sense emotionally.

It is challenging to find meaning in life in the midst of suffering. Life will always be difficult and it reminds me of a book written by M. Scott Peck, which starts by saying, "life is difficult" (Peck, 1990, p. 13). Frankl (1985, p. 88), who survived the Nazi concentration camp, Auschwitz, stated after World War II that "if there is a meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete." Eger (2017, p. 314), who also survived Auschwitz, states the following about purpose and meaning: "Our painful experiences aren't a liability – they're a gift. They give us perspective and meaning, an opportunity to find our unique purpose and our strength." Wong (2012, p. xiii) refers to research into meaning as "a complex business" and says that there is no theory or research paradigm that could discover the "whole truth about meaningful living." Further to this, Wong (2010, p. 2) refers to certain questions related to one's philosophy of life and worldviews to make sense of life: "Who am I?" "How can I be happy?" "What should I do with my life?" "How do I make the right choices?" "Where do I belong?" "What is the point of striving when life is so short?"

By focussing on the relevance of meaning-making in coaching, the third-generation coaching approach focusses on meaning-making and reflection on values (Stelter, 2014). Meaning-making and the integration of new perspectives are therefore integrated in the coaching process by means of co-creation by the coach and coachee (Stelter, 2007, 2014). Should this not happen, meaning-making becomes a superficial conversation that does not affect the coachee's understanding of reality and life practice (Stelter, 2007). When understanding and integrating the way one

feels, thinks and acts, things become meaningful for the coachee (Stelter, 2014). By telling stories, meaning comes into play for the coachee in the world in which she lives and new stories gradually take shape (Stelter, 2014). Furthermore, people make sense of their lives by creating life stories, which also helps them to find purpose (Bauer et al., 2008). Du Toit (2007) refers to coaching as enhancing a sense-making process where a person engages in understanding and integrating change and new experiences.

An SOC promotes well-being and quality of life (Eriksson & Lindström, 2006, 2007; Nilsson et al., 2010; Sjöström et al., 2004). According to Eriksson and Lindström (2007, p. 939), quality of life is defined as: “Personal well-being or satisfaction with life, as well as physical and material well-being, relations with other people, social, communal, civic activities, personal development and fulfilment, positive mental health, a degree of goodness, and is related to health.” They furthermore describe it as physical, mental and social well-being. In addition, there is a link between SOC and positive psychology in that both contribute to well-being (Joseph & Sagy, 2017). In the light of the personal transformational value of coaching, SOC as a construct creates empowering dialogues to enforce the strengths of people (Lindstrom & Eriksson, 2005) and facilitates a process for the individual to return to a sense of wholeness (Grays, et al., 2014). This is done in the context of comprehensibility by making sense of stimuli in the environment, manageability by coping with the demands of the environment and meaningfulness by making sense of life demands emotionally (Breed et al., 2006; Sjöström et al., 2004).

3.4.2.4 Emotional intelligence

Emotions play an important role in everyone’s life and therefore attending to emotions in coaching, working with them and making sense of them are important in coaching (Cox, 2017; Sims, 2017). Working with emotions during coaching has been proven to enhance EQ (Grant, 2005). Therefore, emotional responses elicited during coaching presents the motivational moments that initiate change. Not only cognition, but also emotional regulation are important factors in changing behaviour (Lawton, et al., 2009), as is social support (Chiaburu et al., 2010; Franz, 2010; Martin, 2010; Orehek & Forest, 2016).

Strayer (2002, p. 49) states that “emotions are always about something” and Ackley (2016, p. 271) confirms this by saying: “what matters is, by definition, based on emotion.” Emotions permeate everything people do and form the basis of human behaviour (Pearlman-Shaw, 2016; Sieler, 2003). Sieler (2003) refers to the important role emotions play in individual, team and organisational performance and therefore in business and life processes. Ellis and Ryan (2005) and Pearlman-Shaw (2016) state that thoughts, emotions and behaviour do not stand alone, but have a direct impact on one another, while Williams and Penman (2011) describe emotions as bundles of thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations that consequently involve the body in emotions.

The concept of EQ was introduced about 25 years ago and is regarded as one of the pillars of leadership development (Ackley, 2016). Business leaders came to understand that business success is not only about financial performance and the ‘hard side’ of the business, but also about the people side or the ‘soft side’ (Ackley, 2016). According to Goleman (1998), who describes EQ as a different way of being smart, it was proposed in 1990 by two psychologists, Peter Salovey and John Mayer. Goleman (1998, p. 317) defines EQ as “the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.” Goleman’s (1998) EQ model includes five basic emotional and social competencies: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Emotional intelligence is therefore the concept that is used for the intelligent use of emotions, including the ability of a person to manage her own emotions and to influence the emotions of other people (Ackley, 2016). According to Ackley (2016), three different EQ models exist (Salovey, Mayer and Caruso; Goleman and Bar-On), as well as different EQ assessment tools that are used in coaching.

Matthews et al. (2017) argue that an emotionally intelligent individual has lower levels of stress symptoms, hence a calmer temperament (internal), a support network (external) and strategies for regulating negative emotional responses to stressful events (transactional). Kets de Vries (2014, p. 11) states that “nothing is more central to who we are than the way we express and regulate emotions.” Cox (2017) and David (2005) in turn suggest that EQ is closely linked to emotional

regulation and goal attainment. Emotional regulation is the way in which a person expresses, influences and deals with her emotions in a particular situation (Matthews et al., 2017; Gross, 1998), thus how emotions are managed, e.g. by changing them directly or suppressing them in a particular situation (Matthews et al., 2017). Emotional regulation includes managing both positive and negative emotions (Matthews et al., 2017; Sims, 2017). According to Matthews et al. (2017), emotional regulation is also closely related to the construct of coping. They differentiate between emotional regulation, which is mainly restricted to the moment, and coping, which includes both changing the emotion in the situation and a broader focus, such as opportunities for self-improvement over time.

Fredrickson and Joiner (2002) refer to positive emotions that increase emotional well-being and broaden a person's perspectives, whereas negative emotions have a narrower impact on perspectives. On the other hand, negative emotions, such as distress, trigger the need for meaningful change, as the individual becomes aware of and explores what needs to change (Adams & Marshall, 1996; Strayer, 2002). Emotions are integral to the human experience and integrating challenging and difficult aspects of human experience into understanding of well-being and flourishing (Sims, 2017; Wong, 2011).

In the leadership context EQ plays a central role in the self-awareness and performance of leaders, as well as in transformational leadership, as leadership contributes immensely to the general well-being of organisations and nations (Bratton et al., 2011; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Phipps et al., 2014; Sosik & Megeria, 1999). Transformational leadership differs from transactional leadership, as it results in higher levels of individual, group and organisational performance (Bono & Judge, 2004; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The transformational leader is a person who stimulates and inspires (transforms) followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes and effects positive change by caring for her followers (Bono & Judge, 2004; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Coaching is a medium to enhance transformational leadership (Cerni et al., 2010; Harper, 2012; Odendaal, 2017).

Emotional intelligence relates to positive psychology, as the goals in positive psychology and EQ are to assist an individual to attain a higher level of personal

happiness (Ellis & Ryan, 2005). In addition, EQ is relevant to the personal transformational value of coaching, as the acquisition of emotional knowledge promotes self-awareness, self-regulation, behavioural change, personal growth and development, as well as improved/more effective relationships.

3.5 PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

In conclusion to this chapter, personal transformation is the core psychological construct of this thesis, and therefore it is important to have a holistic understanding of what personal transformation is. In my research I wanted to understand the lived experience through the lenses of the coachee and even more in terms of the personal transformation that the coachee experienced as a result of coaching. I explain what personal transformation is specifically as seen from the transpersonal psychology paradigm and the positive psychology paradigm. Personal transformation is explained in two sections: (1) from self-awareness to change in behaviour; and (2) the transformational value of coaching.

3.5.1 From self-awareness to change in behaviour

From a transpersonal psychology paradigm I believe that change has to dig deep if there is to be real change in behaviour. It is therefore accompanied by a change of self and working with the transpersonal identity. Awareness is the precondition for an ultimate change in behaviour, followed by commitment to sustain the change in behaviour (Nowack, 2017; Prochaska et al., 1992). According to Becker (1992, p. 8), “awareness makes us efficient and effective participants in life.” Honsová and Jarošová (2019) refer to awareness as the root cause of something, or something that is unknown to the coachee, and starting to address that. Personal transformation starts when a person is making space for herself for deep attention to self-enquiry. Creating this space starts the self-awareness process, which is the ‘starter button’ of personal transformation and over time gives birth to new behaviour (Brown, 1999; Strozzi-Heckler, 1993). The aim of coaching is to help a person create self-awareness and insight into behaviour, which leads to change in behaviour and ultimately sustaining the change in behaviour over time (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018; Hawkins & Smith, 2014; Joo, 2005; Law & Buckler, 2020; Nowack, 2009,

2017; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011). Cox and Jackson (2014) and González (2003) emphasise that transformational change is a gradual process. Moreover, coaching is not necessarily outcomes-based, as it is a process of enabling a person to come to a place of readiness to explore and discover the path to meaning, growth and transformation (González, 2003; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). These transformative events allow the coachee to challenge previously held views on her life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2012). Since changing behaviour and sustaining it over time can be difficult and challenging, (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018; Nowack, 2009, 2017), readiness for change is highly important (Grant et al., 2009; Nowack, 2009, 2017; Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011).

Coach-client compatibility (chemistry), a trusting relationship and safe space are critical for enhancing self-awareness and behavioural change (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018; Joo, 2005). Nowack (2009) suggests not only relying on the awareness and insight of the coachee to start the process of behavioural change, but also to make use of multi-rater feedback interventions, such as using a 360-degree feedback assessment, as it has much value to maximise the insight and awareness of the coachee. Hence, “the ultimate goal of feedback is to help translate awareness into successful behavioural change” (Nowack, 2009, p. 282). Furthermore, one of the purposes of 360-degree feedback is to leverage on the strengths the coachee already has and then to focus on potential areas of development as well (Grant et al., 2009; Joo, 2005; Nowack, 2017).

Behavioural change is relevant within the transpersonal psychology paradigm, as it all starts with a moment of insight and self-awareness (Hartelius et al., 2017; Maslow, 1962). These significant moments of self-awareness become the vehicle to behavioural change and personal transformation. In **table 3.3** below, Passmore and Whybrow (2007, p. 162) refer to the change cycle as adapted with permission from Prochaska et al. (1992), which demonstrates the readiness of the coachee to change specific behaviour and eventually to maintain the change.

Table 3.3

Change cycle (Passmore & Whybrow, 2007, p. 162)

Stage	Behaviour
Pre-contemplative	The possibility of change has not been considered by the coachee.
Contemplative	The coachee is considering the benefits and disadvantages of change, resulting in ambivalence.
Preparation	The coachee is making preparations for action.
Action	The coachee is making attempts to change.
Maintenance	Successful change in behaviour has occurred, and has been maintained for six months.

The change cycle as depicted in the above **table 3.3** is based on the transtheoretical model of behavioural change, which views change as a process that people engage in to progress through the stages of change over time, rather than a once-off event (Coulson et al., 2016; Ekberg et al., 2016; Middelkamp, 2017). De Franco and Pease (2019) and Middelkamp (2017) refer to 'relapse' as a sixth stage where a person could relapse into previous behaviour and return to the earlier five stages of the transtheoretical model of behavioural change.

3.5.2 Transformational value of coaching

Wade (1998) describes personal transformation as a process that is multi-dimensional as well as circular and expanding. Therefore, each transformation brings the individual to higher levels of being (Wade, 1998). Coaching is described as a medium that contributes to personal transformation and change in behaviour (Brockbank & McGill, 2006; Carey et al., 2011; Fielden, 2005; Hanssmann, 2014; Koroleva, 2016; Paige 2002). As such, personal transformation in a coaching context refers to the experience of a shift in thinking, feeling and behaviour, resulting in coachees functioning differently in their particular way of being in the world. Webster-Smith et al. (2012, p. 8) refer to the work of Orem et al. (2007), stating that "the purpose of coaching is individual transformation" where the focus is on possibilities instead of problems. According to Kets de Vries (2014, p. 6), "effective leadership coaches contract with their clients with the objective not only to improve

their clients' performance, but also to guide them on a journey toward personal transformation and reinvention.”

Transformation emerges when integration of learning does take place. Adult transformative learning and the way adults perceive, think, decide, feel, and act by means of their frames of reference could be changed to allow for new possibilities and enable them to adapt better to the world around them (Mezirow, 1991). Habits have an influence on what makes people become stuck in behaviour and play an important role in meaning-making (Mezirow, 1990). Furthermore, Hawkins and Smith (2014) argue that transformational coaching frees the coachee from her 'stuck' perspective; they describe it as “a shift in the room” (p. 241), a physical embodiment that evidences a break-through moment. These break-through moments are the typical moments of epiphany or 'a-ha' moments.

The viewpoint offered by Ingersol and Cook-Greuter (2007) expresses the expectation that transformation will facilitate deep change. The authors describe transformation as a vertical process, not a horizontal one, where the client starts to see a new and different view of looking at the self and a change in perspective. Horizontal development is about enriching a person's current way of meaning-making, lateral growth and transferring information (doing), hence a content-driven process of adding more knowledge, skills and competencies (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Gauthier, 2010; Odendaal, 2017; Petrie, 2014). Fielden (2005) refers to transactional coaching, which is primarily concerned with competencies, skills and techniques. In contrast, vertical development is described as a process of transformation that includes a more integrated perspective of meaning and being in the world (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Odendaal, 2017; Petrie, 2014). In addition to vertical development, Moze (2018) describes transformation as more than a change in perspective, which is a lateral move; it is a vertical move that integrates greater truths and allows people to live life from a new way of knowing rather than just seeing it from a different perspective. Braud (1998) explains other forms of knowing in transpersonal psychology: being and doing are explored, which are beyond (trans) the conventional. According to Moze (2018), the purpose of transformation is to improve personal and collective well-being, largely through improved relationships with oneself and others. Furthering the conceptualisation of vertical transformation,

or deep change, representing development in the coaching context, in its deepest sense refers to transformations of human consciousness (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Gauthier, 2010). In this regard, Ren et al. (2018) refer to personal transformation as existential transformation, which is also a process where deep change takes place. According to Ren et al. (2018), personal transformational includes a number of processes, such as mindfulness, being present, self-acceptance, authenticity, strengthening of professional identity, broadening of spirituality and development of resilience (Ren et al., 2018).

Fielden (2005) refers to transformational coaching where the focus is on shifting individuals' views, values and sense of purpose. According to Fielden (2005), the three core skills for facilitating effective transformational coaching are building awareness, building commitment and building practice. Therefore, coaches need to go beyond the transactional model, which is primarily concerned with competencies, learning skills and techniques, and move to a transformative model, which is focused on shifting individuals' views, values and sense of purpose. Transformation of human consciousness is akin to changes in worldview, and is more powerful than any amount of horizontal growth and learning (Gauthier, 2010). The metaphor of climbing a mountain, as explained by Susanne Cook-Greuter, serves as an illustration for vertical development where one can see more of the territory that has already been traversed and once at the summit it is possible to see behind the shadow side of the mountain - to uncover formerly hidden aspects of the territory and make relevant connections (Gauthier, 2010). Hence, in the context of coaching, vertical development is a deep transformational process and the result of transformation that takes place at its fullest. In addition, personal transformation implies a process of change in perspectives and changing our being in the world (Eschenbacher, 2019). Mezirow (1991, p. 167) explains perspective transformation as:

the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective.

Hawkins and Smith (2014) refer to transformation as something that happens on multiple levels (multi-levelled perspective) simultaneously, such as a combination of physical, psychological, emotional and purposive elements that leads to a change in perspective. However, for the change to be truly transformational, it should be embodied, which implies that the coachee is not only able to think and feel differently, but also to do differently (Hawkins & Smith, 2014). Therefore, a shift in behaviour needs to take place to enable holistic change; it becomes both a new way of doing and a new way of being. The effects of transpersonal experiences could lead to different ways of 'knowing', which can have a direct impact upon ways of 'being' and 'doing' (Collins, 2008). Hamel et al. (2003) explain that there should be congruence between being (what the 'I' is in relation to the self) and doing (what the 'I' does). Reconnecting with the self takes place when a person is creating space for inner work, to find the essence of being, the true self (Brown, 1999, Strozzi-Heckler, 1993).

Transforming the self through the coaching process influences and inspires transformation not only on an individual level, but also on an organisational level in terms of different aspects, namely cultural, social, emotional and cognitive ones (Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Stout-Rostron (2009b) explains that learning from experience is essential for individual and organisational transformation, while Biswas-Diener and Dean (2007) refer to coaching as a powerful force that transforms the lives of people. Anderson and Braud (2011, p. xvii) refer to personal transformation as:

Personal transformation involves a qualitative shift in one's lifeview and/or worldview ... Transformation may manifest as changes in one's perspective, understandings, attitudes, ways of knowing and doing, and way of being in the world. It may be recognized by changes in one's body, feelings and emotions, ways of thinking, forms of expression, and relationships with others and with the world.

In the light of the above, the personal transformation value of coaching results in deep multi-dimensional change, because it happens on a holistic level.

3.6 SUMMARY

Coaching is regarded as a vehicle to attain personal transformation and behavioural change. To understand personal transformation as a goal of coaching, I found it useful to think about relevant schools of thought in psychology that explain why personal transformation and behavioural change are needed and how psychology theorises and conceptualises transformation. After the literature review, this chapter could therefore be summarised as follows:

- i) Transpersonal psychology is foundational to understanding of personal transformation in the context of optimal functioning, well-being and developing as a whole person, which is underpinned by identity construction, identity work, transpersonal identity and integral coaching.
- ii) Positive psychology is fundamental in developing and enhancing well-being, which is underpinned by flourishing, salutogenesis and PPC.
- iii) Research has shown that transformation is enhanced by applying transpersonal psychology constructs such as mindfulness, spirituality, wholeness/self-integration and work-life balance and integration.
- iv) Positive psychology constructs, namely SWB, PWB, SOC and EQ, contribute to well-being and personal transformation.
- v) Personal transformation is the key psychological construct that brings about change on a higher level of being by means of turning points, expansion of the self and unfolding of human potential.

I found that writing this chapter helped me to understand parts of myself and some experiences I had. Many questions came up for me. Who am I and who am I not? What is the reason for my existence? How do I live life? How do I shape up in life? What is my 'way of doing' and my 'way of being'? What does PWB mean to me? I remain curious about how all these questions will unfold for me, not only at the time of writing the thesis, but also as a human being going forward. The review of literature within the paradigms of transpersonal and positive psychology steered me towards a particular understanding of personal transformation, which evolved during my writing. Van Manen (2014, p. 20) states: "To write is to reflect; to write is to research. And in writing we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot

predict.” It reminded me of Heidegger’s philosophy of ‘being and becoming’ (Van Manen, 2007; Vagle, 2014).

The table below summarises transforming of the self from doing, to learning, to being and finally to becoming.

Table 3.4

Becoming – transforming self

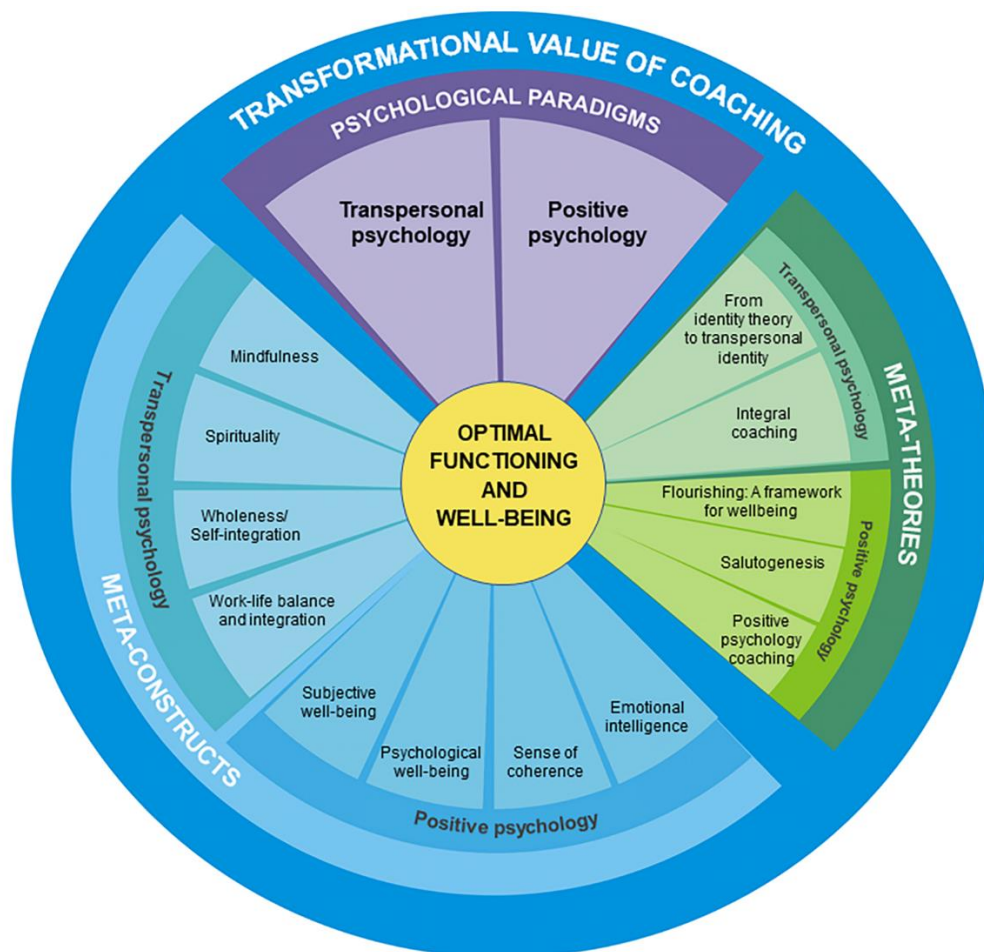
Source: Adapted from Weiss (2004) in Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 241).

Doing	Accomplishing tasks and goals
Learning	Developing competences
Being	Understanding meaning
Becoming	Transforming self

I believe that I will find myself in the cycle of becoming for a long while to come. Nevertheless, at this point my understanding of the literature has merged into a theoretical framework of what personal transformation will entail. This is summarised in **figure 3.6** below.

Figure 3.6

The personal transformational value of coaching based on literature review



3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the psychological paradigms, meta-theories and meta-constructs and explained where coaching fits into the field of psychology. Writing this chapter was challenging; it was necessary to identify the different meta-constructs, but even more so to identify them and to know when to stop, as I could continue adding some more constructs. On the other hand, it was stimulating and inspiring, as I could see how the different concepts (puzzle pieces) started to fit together and form a picture with its own story. The iterative process between the theory and data helped me to identify the constructs. In the next chapter I shall introduce the textural description before presenting the coaching stories of each research participant.

CHAPTER 4: TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION: A PRELIMINARY HOLISTIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The focus of the previous chapter was on demarcating the psychological paradigms, meta-theories, meta-constructs and literature review. In this chapter I present the textural description in the form of written descriptions of what happened for the research participants, to gain understanding of what they experienced with the phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2013). It relates to the first stage of my IPA data analysis by developing preliminary holistic understanding of the data by repeated reading. In other hermeneutic phenomenological analytic strategies, such as that described by Lindseth and Norberg (2004), it is referred to as naïve reading, which is about repeated reading to gain holistic understanding. It is also similar to the first stage of analysis as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006), where they refer to the researcher immersing herself in the data by repeated reading. Therefore I shall demonstrate how I present the textural description in this chapter, namely by means of describing the participants' coaching stories to the reader. According to Creswell (2013), the textural description of data analysis includes verbatim examples. I applied a limited number of verbatim examples in Chapter 4 and did not go to the extent of applying verbatim examples as explained by Creswell (2013), as this chapter is merely a summary of each participants' story and it was necessary to limit the length of the chapter. I used more verbatim examples in Chapter 5 to support the various themes. Verbatim data reflecting each participant's full narrative, is, however, available from the researcher and will be stored for five years. Without the participants I would not have been able to conduct this study; they guided a substantial part of my learning on this journey. Telling their stories in a personal manner reveals my subjective impressions of them in the context of coaching. Contextualising research participants is central to any type of research. Moreover, each participant's story helped me to make meaning of their narratives individually and as a whole (Crowther et al., 2017; Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). In the sections that follow each participant will be introduced in chronological order, starting with P1 and ending with P7. I will conclude the chapter with evidence of holistic understanding by means of a textural description of all participants' stories.

4.2 INTRODUCING THE PARTICIPANTS

Each of the seven participants will be introduced and a holistic overview of who participated in the study will be provided. The seven participants in this chapter will be referred to as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7.

The table below provides a summary about each participant.

Table 4.1

Participant information

Participant Pseudonym	Primary Document Number (Transcribed Interview)	Position	Race	Gender	Age	How Coaching was Initiated
P1	Participant 1	Heading up a global corporate company in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-Africa Industry: Entertaining	White	Female	49	By HR
P2	Participant 2	Leader at a global corporate company Industry: Beverage - Information technology	White	Male	37	By business
P3	Participant 3	Heading up a business unit at a global corporate company Industry: Financial services	White	Female	43	By P3 Voluntary
P4	Participant 4	Heading up a contact centre at a national company Industry: Telecommunications	African	Female	45	By P4 Voluntary
P5	Participant 5	Credit risk position at a national company Industry: Transport	African	Male	31	By business
P6	Participant 6	Chief financial officer at a global corporate company Industry: Financial services	White	Male	40	By business
P7	Participant 7	Senior business analyst at a national company Industry: Financial services	Indian	Female	38	By business

As explained in Chapter 2, semi-structured interviews were the main research method I used to gather data and each of the interviews was transcribed by a professional transcriber. Interviews were conducted between February and March 2017. By reading and re-reading the transcriptions I became more familiar with each participant, which enabled me to write their stories. I wrote an account of the background of each of the participants, followed by their coaching stories.

4.3 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 1

Participant 1 is not a born South African, but a Canadian who married a South African, and they have one child. Her qualifications are a BSc in Civil Engineering, which she obtained at the University of Waterloo in Canada, and an MPhil in Environment and Development, which she obtained at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.

Participant 1 is an ambitious woman who has been working in a global corporate company for 18 years and who has made her mark in the entertainment industry. She has worked in four different countries. During her childhood her family regularly moved to different countries. At the time of the interview she was managing approximately 30 people. Her international colleagues gave P1 informal feedback on how they saw her on a behavioural level, which was rather negative. For example, they described her as aggressive and abrupt, as well as referring to other aspects she did not pertinently mention. The colleagues' feedback convinced her that she needed to do self-exploration in order to address her behaviour, but coaching was not an immediate option for P1. To address the problem, she suggested a formal process, namely a 360-degree questionnaire to receive feedback from colleagues on different hierarchical levels in the organisation on her behaviour. However, the HR section recommended coaching to P1 in addition to the 360-degree review to address aspects of her behaviour.

In a process of 360-degree feedback or multi-rater feedback managers, peers and team members provide anonymous feedback to the person identified, entailing a combination of qualitative and quantitative information (Nowack 2009; Nowack & Mashih, 2012). It is used for diverse purposes and interventions, such as executive

coaching, performance evaluation, talent management and succession planning (Nowack & Mashih, 2012). According to Stout-Rostron (2009b), the use of 360-degree feedback surveys is a method to identify emotional, behavioural, cognitive and performance-related issues. One of the purposes of using 360-degree feedback in coaching interventions is to provide information to coaches to enable them to highlight strengths and potential areas for development, in addition to initiating and motivating change in behaviour (Bracken et al., 2016; Nowack, 2009, 2017; Nowack & Mashih, 2012).

Participant 1 was initially resistant to coaching, as she was unfamiliar with it and did not regard herself as the “*self-help*” type. Furthermore, her perception about coaching was that it was designed to address what is not going well in the workspace. The input from HR was to consider coaching as a gift, not only as something related to the work environment. It was not in her framework to work with the self either in her private capacity, or in working hours or company time. Despite her initial resistance and being sceptical about coaching, P1 agreed to participate in the coaching process to address the feedback received from her colleagues. Her 360-degree feedback was received before coaching commenced. She acknowledged both the positive and negative feedback she received from the 360-degree results. Despite the negative feedback, which she described as hard to accept, the breakthrough for her was that colleagues and subordinates regarded her as important enough to take the time to give her valuable feedback. This made her realise that she had to take the time to self-reflect and to do “*self-helping*”.

Before coaching started, HR provided her with three coach profiles. She conducted chemistry sessions by means of one-on-one interviews with each of the three possible coaches. Coaching only commenced and continued after P1 had selected a coach. A minimum of ten face-to-face coaching sessions took place. Two three-way feedback sessions were provided to the business. For privacy purposes, the coaching sessions took place at the premises of the coach and not in the office of P1. At the beginning of the coaching programme it was structured every two to three weeks, and thereafter every six weeks, then later every two to three months over an 18-month period. The company paid for the coaching sessions.

Though P1 had a chemistry session with her coach, she still experienced some sense of uneasiness about what she would discover about herself during the coaching sessions and about talking about herself and her behavioural concerns on a personal and professional level to a so-called stranger. P1 initially approached the coaching programme in a structured manner, yet soon realised that this approach was not going to work at all to address her behavioural concerns. *“... and I would arrive with the coach saying, okay right, here are my three points I’d like to discuss today – boom-boom-boom.”* Coaching does not have a set agenda and does not rationally equate to a logical flow of events such as: problem, solution and action plan, with a time line to address the problem, hence the initial discomfort that P1 experienced at the beginning of the coaching programme. However, through coaching P1 started to engage with a different and unfamiliar process of exploration of the self and by doing so something unfolded for her.

Participant 1 came aware of how she used to live a life of functioning mostly on a cognitive level and was not even aware of the human being as an emotional being, with bodily reactions. She consequently addressed concerns in business and on a personal level in a concrete, structured and transactional way. However, as soon as she started to allow herself to approach coaching in a fluid and explorative way versus a linear way, she shifted from discomfort and anxiety to exposing herself to other possibilities of being. *“Well, I think it evolved for sure, certainly for me at the beginning I ... (pause) it took me a while to get comfortable with the sort of fluid nature of coaching ...”* Furthermore, P1 allowed herself to be vulnerable and to explore sensitive issues. Working with behaviour is not only a concrete and transactional process, but an evolving and transformational process, and it unfolded as the coaching process continued for P1. *“So, I think that was a bit of an evolution to try and get used to that.”*

Coaching took P1 to an emotional level and to a place where she had to investigate what was really going on for her on a behavioural level. *“And so we started exploring a lot of that, it’s what’s inside.”* She noted that it had been hard for her, coming from a global work experience and kind of ‘know-it-all’ attitude on a technical level in her industry, to work on a deeper level inside herself all of a sudden. She identified some of the root causes that played out in particular forms of behaviour at work and

in a personal capacity, such as her own insecurities, fears, need for affirmation and the responsibility to progress in life. Naming these root causes was a profound moment of awareness and an emotional experience for P1, which contributed to her readiness to move towards change. She was not used to allowing herself to have emotional experiences, particularly at work. She questioned how a woman in a senior position in a global corporate company could show emotions, even cry. Her perception was that feelings and showing emotion at work were completely unacceptable. Assessing the situation made her realise that most people in business are not emotional.

Somatic awareness was also something very unfamiliar and new to P1. Through coaching she became aware of her body language, which could be regarded as either energetic or terrifying by other people. Participant 1 was unaware of either her bodily reactions or of the impact of her body language on people around her. When people experienced her as terrifying, she disconnected from many people, which had a negative impact on her relationships, yet she was not even aware of it. Participant 1 shifted on a behavioural level as she embodied herself differently by slowing down her fast pace and becoming more composed. This resulted in her being more approachable in both a personal and professional context and had a positive impact on her relationships and how she engaged with people. Even on a social level P1 started having conversations with the person in charge of the vegetable shop, which never used to happen. *“I’ve definitely become ... more engaged with people, more willing to listen, kinder, more thoughtful. I mean, other people say that, but that’s what I feel, and seeing the reward of it ... like little ridiculous things.”*

Participant 1 discovered that her personal and work life could not be separated, nor her thoughts, emotions and behaviour. She was touched by the fact that as a human being her thoughts, emotions and behaviour are inter-connected. Coaching was life-changing for P1 and resulted in personal transformation. Vertical development took place as she integrated new perspectives (Odendaal, 2017; Petrie, 2014). *“I think that’s one of the big things about coaching – very practical changes you make and then some really big, earth-shifting, much more subtle changes that comes out of it.”* She referred to the change in her as a *“material*

difference” that affected her life on a daily basis as she transformed to a new way of being. According to Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 238), “being emphasizes the activity rather than the goal. Being in becoming emphasizes who the person is rather than what the person can accomplish.” Therefore, it is not only about the doing, but also the being of a person.

4.4 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 2

Participant 2 is married and has three children. He has not obtained a specific formal qualification from a tertiary institution but has different IT qualifications, which support his work in his career as a programmer. He completed a Programme in Management Development at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) in South Africa, and is planning to apply for admission to a Master in Business Administration (MBA) programme.

Though P2 does not regard himself as a corporate person, at the time of the research interview he had been working for a global corporate company for three years and saw his work as an adventure. In addition, he was in a leadership position in the IT department with various lines reporting to him. Together with other business leaders, P2 was enrolled by the company for a business partnering course. Through this course all the attendees were exposed to compulsory coaching with allocated coaches and a generic coaching programme.

Although the coaching was compulsory and generic, P2 wanted to continue with it as he came aware of the effect coaching had on his life and its value. He had a serious need for deep introspection, self-discovery and getting to know himself in terms of who he was, what in his life he needed to address and where to go next in his life by having a plan. Furthermore, P2 wanted to improve his life and to achieve what he was supposed to achieve in life, which relates to self-actualisation. However, this time round he wanted coaching that would not be compulsory and focus on generic development, but would be individualised and organic. He requested his company to assist him by providing him with a coach. *“I need a coach and if you want me to be great in your company, get me a coach.”*

Before the non-compulsory coaching started, chemistry sessions took place by means of one-on-one interviews with a panel of possible coaches. It happens that organisations do have a pool of external coaches with different skills sets and experience and therefore different coaches for different needs of coachees (Tulpa & Hennessy, 2016). At the time of the research interview he had completed eight coaching sessions over a period of 12 months, with two sessions to follow. All the sessions were face-to-face coaching and took place every four to five weeks, either in a private space at his office or at GIBS. The company paid for the coaching programme. For P2, coaching was a tough process of self-exploration that took him to many different places. Thinking back to the research interview, my experience of P2 was that he re-lived the coaching journey and he was ‘fully in his body’ as he shared his experience of the transformational value of coaching on a personal and professional level.

Coaching is an emerging and evolving process, not a once-off event or method to attend to quick fixes in human behaviour. Thus, new insight, self-awareness and self-reflection for a coachee do not happen only in the coaching room, but even more between sessions, which migrate into change in behaviour and transformation. P2 internalised his self-awareness not only on a professional level, but also on a personal level “... *and a surprisingly large amount of this self-awareness and conversation and learning about self-awareness revolves around family as much as work.*”

Participant 2 experienced coaching as an emotional experience that made him feel vulnerable and therefore coaching was not a purely intellectual experience for him. He allowed himself to work deeper and to the core of who he was and to explore how emotions triggered transformation for him.

The whole thing has been an emotional thing. It's not an intellectual thing that's happening, it's the application of intellect to my emotion – that's what it is actually. I think the whole thing is an emotional journey ... I've been on a year-long journey of applying intellect to emotion and from that self-awareness driving changed action.

A theme that was evident for P2 was his curiosity about himself, “*who am I*” and to re-connect with himself, which relates to identity work. Askew and Carnell (2011, p. 77) state about identity work: “If we agree with the idea that self-identity is the construction of an ongoing ‘story’ about the self – a story that continually integrates events that occur in the external world – self-identity at work is a crucial focus within coaching.” Coaching enables the reconstruction of identity (Askew & Carnell, 2011) for P2.

He gained new insight into the wholeness of the human being, including himself and others. In his context, a whole person means to be one person, implying that work and home cannot be separated. “*I’m one whole person all the time, whether I’m at work, or I’m at home, I’m me.*” Participant 2 became aware of how he engaged with people by not looking at them only from a work context, but seeing them as whole people and accepting them for who they are when they are not at work. He recalled that he started to look through different lenses at relationships as he became more selective about those on whom he was spending his time and energy, therefore he distinguished between significant and superficial relationships. In his family context, deep change happened for him on a relational level, since he was more supportive, applying his values and spending quality time with his family, for example around the dinner table. Creating space to self-reflect on his behaviour helped him to become more aware of how he conducted himself, such as his tendency to procrastinate and to avoid conflict. It gave birth to new behaviour for P2. This space of self-reflection referred to was hard work and did not happen by chance for him.

During the coaching programme P2 came to crossroads in his career due to an acquisition in the business. Coaching equipped him on a personal level to make a decision on a professional level and that was to stay at the company and to capitalise on the opportunity. Participant 2 was aware of the fact that he would not know immediately how the decision would play out in his future life and what the end result would be. What was more significant was that P2 made the decision based on who he was and what was important to him. He had to fall back on his own resources, as he had to work through the fact that being a rebellious student, he had left the university in his first year and did not develop his career in the more traditional way. However, he was still very successful in his career in a different way

and came to peace with that. This was the way he had to travel through life to make him who he was at that stage. As a result of coaching, P2 was promoted after the acquisition by another company.

A coaching tool that contributed significantly to P2's transformation was the application of mindfulness meditation practice with the core focus on his breathing, which he started to do on a daily basis for 5-20 minutes. Mindfulness meditation assisted him to become more focussed, being in the moment and connected to what he was doing, both at home and at work. *"I find the less I'm meditating, the longer it takes me to switch gears."* Kabat-Zinn (2003) provides an operational working definition of mindfulness as being "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment" (p.145). On a somatic level there was a definite shift for P2 when he became aware that the body and mind are integrated and not separate functions. He also made time for running to stay fit and healthy. He realised that it is not the big changes that make a difference in life, but attending step by step to small changes that evolve over time to big changes. This concurs with the fact that transformation is an emerging process and change happened for him over time.

Spiritually P2 sees the world as being inter-connected and he became more aware of the physical world around him, such as when he was running, or meditating. Vagle (2014, p.28) refers to human interconnectedness with the world as a given. Transformation happened in how P2 created space for meditating, breathing and connecting with nature, such as using his senses while he was running. This space has a spiritual element in it, a sacred space of re-alignment, connectedness, being centred and grounded with who he is. "Faith or spirituality speaks to our underlying values and drivers, often being a search for something greater than we are. 'Who am I and why am I here?', is ultimately a search for meaning and purpose in life." (Stout-Rostron, 2009b, p. 239). I came across the art work of Piet Grobler in an art gallery (see **figure 4.1** below) during the time I was writing up the story of P2, and I could not be more surprised at how appropriately the painting summarises what P2 said:

There's a really deep connection for me about the ... the connection to who I am as person and how all of this is over and in and around that, but that's the ... you have to be at the centre of that universe that you're in and everything else is somehow in orbit around that – that's I think... I'll end up somewhere there.

Figure 4.1

Art piece – Who am I?

(From: *All the wild wonders*, compiled by Wendy Cooling, Published by Frances Lincoln, UK)

Watercolour

Artist: Piet Grobler (2017)



4.5 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 3

Participant 3 is married and has one child and two stepchildren. She holds a chartered accountant (CA) qualification and works in the financial services industry. At the time of the interview P3 had been working for a global corporate company for 17 years and was by then heading up a new business unit with about 30 people reporting to her directly. She is a feminine, soft-spoken woman, but has a strong presence.

She recalled that she was not thriving in her life and described herself as having been an unhappy person, not only in her career, but in her life as a whole. Before coaching P3 recognised that she was not in a good space and felt as if life had ended for her. It was a difficult time in her life, which left her with a feeling of being paralysed. Furthermore, other people had a poor perception of her. Participant 3 realised that she needed help to revise her life, but she did not know how to address it on her own. Someone at work recommended coaching, which she started to explore.

Participant 3 selected her coach according to what she had read on paper and the person met her criteria. The criteria she set were that the coach should be a woman, with life experience but not with a perfect life, experience in the financial industry to understand the world where P3 found herself, as well as being bold. Thereafter a chemistry session took place with the coach and P3 was happy with her decision. She did not even look at other coaching profiles. At the time of the interview she was still on the coaching programme, which had lasted for two years and stretched over ten sessions. Coaching took place every six weeks in a private space at her office and was face-to-face. The business paid for the coaching.

Confronted with her life story through coaching became a process of self-discovery, which changed her whole life. She had never considered working internally. She became aware that she was so occupied with what was going on in her life externally that she hardly focussed on what was happening internally. This resulted in awareness of how she presented herself, or putting it differently, the impression she gave in her interactions with people, the way she spoke and her body language in

both a personal and professional capacity. *“I think it’s a lot of being around, realising that the way I show up, is it only about me?”* As the coaching process progressed, it was a liberating experience to go through her whole life story.

Identity work was also evident in the coaching journey of P3 where she worked with *“who am I”*, which resulted in redefining and connecting with who she was, therefore accepting herself for who she was, and seeing who she was as valuable. A few times during the coaching programme she became resistant and wanted to give up as she was confronted with her true self. *“It’s really hard because there’s this constant battle with your own self and the way it is.”* According to Simpson (2016), human beings do have a deep-seated need to feel seen and acknowledged.

In her personal capacity, P3 had a difficult life. This was mirrored by a difficult work life. The role of women in the world of work was a theme in the coaching story of P3 and how to cope with being a woman in the work environment, which is mainly male-dominated in her area of responsibility. She described herself as not only a feminist, but as a *“massive feminist”*. There was initially a form of denial, which migrated into embarrassment when she became aware that at work her body language was aggressive. She ascribed it to the fact that at work she was usually one of only two women in a senior leadership team of males, which could explain her aggressive behaviour, but this could have been an excuse because of the discomfort of being confronted with how she presented herself. As P3 explored her behaviour through the coaching process she referred to her behaviour by means of a metaphor, where she saw herself as warrior in a battle, which could relate to her aggression.

In the work environment she had the tendency to get overly involved and she came to realise how emotionally exhausting it was. Consequently, she became aware that she was successful in her career and did not have to prove herself by getting overly involved, but would do better to re-calibrate what she needed as a person and to focus her energy on that. Transformation happened for P3 when she started to reframe and attach meaning to her emotions, which resulted in a change in perspective (such as reframed fear to be curious, antagonism to be interested) and it helped her to respond differently on an emotional and somatic level. Coaching helped P3 to name her emotion in a particular situation and to figure out where it

came from, instead of ignoring it or allowing emotions to cripple her. Self-integration happened for P3 where she became aware of polarities in life, such as *“I am dark and light ...”* without trying to hide the dark side. She realised that life did not involve the dark side only, or the light, but both.

Participant 3 only started to become aware of herself and to learn how to present herself in life as an adult. *“I actually have to learn how to behave.”* She then realised the importance of a role model by taking it back to her childhood; she did not have parents who were role models on how to conduct oneself and whom she could imitate, whereas for other children who had parents who acted as role models the correct behaviour came more naturally. As a result of this awareness, she started to observe not only the behaviour of other people, but also her own behaviour. Participant 3 learnt how to behave in a socially appropriate manner; instead of pushing people away from her, she rather had to attract people through her behaviour. Behaving in an appropriate manner not only influences a person on a personal and professional level, but also on a social level, which contributes to the creation of a happy world, which is where P3 wanted to be.

On a relational level P3 noticed how many shallow relationships she used to have. A shift occurred when she constructed meaning in her relationships and started nurturing the important relationships in her life. By redefining who she was, she could redefine both the important and shallow relationships in her life. Furthermore, when differing from other people, she redefined differences as good instead of bad. When growing up, P3 used to be the responsible person in the family. This situation in her upbringing made it difficult for her to ask for help and support when she needed it. Rather than it being difficult for her to ask for support, it could have been more about not knowing how to ask for support. Change started to occur when P3 had to build a network of support during the coaching programme, which was quite hard for her, as owning and doing everything on a personal and professional level were so deeply embedded into her personality. Transformation happened when she actively started to use her support system at home and at work. She shifted from *“I’m all alone”* to *“I’m so supported”*.

As a result of coaching P3 was one of the founders of a process to initiate, conceptualise and start up a successful new business unit at the financial institution where she is employed. It took her nearly 16 years to realise this opportunity and she wanted employees to flourish in this business unit, including herself. The office space where P3 works on a day-to-day basis is different from the norm and invites creativity. The furniture includes bean bags and on one of the desks was a collection of Lego blocks. Though people were seriously busy working when I entered the office space, it did not feel at all as if I was in a corporate office. Coaching changed the way P3 thought about people in that she developed a high tolerance for different perspectives and different truths.

So we both have the sphere of the world that it's all made up, like you make up reality the whole time – even money is ... you know, someone made up that we need currency or someone made up manners. We both have this very strong belief system that the world is made up by people's views, and so then we could make this up.

The coaching journey for P3 evolved from initially fixing a few things in her life, to wanting to grow as a person and to become a better human being. This relates to eudaimonic well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Waterman, 1993). Becoming a better human being is to become more conscious and more integrated as a human being (Renesh, 2018).

4.6 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 4

Participant 4 is the youngest in her family of five children. She has two sisters left, as both her parents, her brother and one sister are deceased. Being single, with no children, she has assumed the role of grandmother for the children in her extended family. She worked her entire life in the same telecommunication industry. Participant 4 started her career in a contact centre as a call centre agent and worked her way up to senior manager and regional manager. At the time of the interview she was working as a national manager of customer care in the same contact centre where she had started her career. Participant 4 has two people reporting directly to her; however most of the people working in the contact centre (N=±1800) are

outsourced to a private vendor, for which she is mainly accountable. She has a degree in industrial psychology and a diploma in management. The industry and her job are not really her passion, but life took her where she found herself then in her career. She regretted that she had not followed her passion, which was HR. Even in the research conversation she did not display much energy, which might be an outflow of her work dissatisfaction.

Participant 4 volunteered to be coached when she was approached by an already accredited coach who furthered her studies in coaching, and needed a person who was willing to go through a coaching programme voluntarily as part of the coaching training and writing up of an assignment for coaching training and examination purposes. No chemistry session took place, as P4 already knew the coach, since they used to work together at some time in their careers. Even though P4 voluntarily participated in the coaching programme, it came at the right time in her life. She attended ten coaching sessions at intervals of three weeks in an eight-month period. No management feedback took place and no costs were involved, as coaching was voluntary and P4 attended coaching in her private capacity in a private space at her office.

Though P4 volunteered to be coached, she also had an inherent need for coaching at that time in her life, which encouraged her to volunteer for the coaching programme. Participant 4 realised that taking up the opportunity to volunteer for coaching could be a risk, as she knew the coach from a previous working relationship, and having to expose herself to someone she knew created discomfort for her, even though participating in coaching was her own choice.

At the time of coaching P4 experienced stress in her life on both a personal and professional level. She felt as if she had lost herself and described her life as being on *"auto-pilot"*. Coping with stress was an important theme in her coaching programme, as she seemed to be a person who put herself under unnecessary pressure. *"... if anything killed me I think it was the stress."* A process started for P4 where she reconstructed her life and started doing things differently. She realised she did not need to be a superstar by doing everything in a family and work context. *"I don't have to be the hero."* Participant 4 was unfair towards herself by trying to be

everything for everyone at work and in her family, as she wanted to fill the gap in everyone's life after the loss of her father and to compensate by being the breadwinner. It was as if she wanted to play the role of a 'saviour' for other people in her life and needed to be in control all the time, which contributed to her stress levels.

It was empowering for P4 when she realised that she could ask for support, which affected several areas of her life. Instead of controlling and doing everything herself, she started letting go of things, which lessened the feeling of being overwhelmed. She became more effective because she was not taking the responsibility for doing everything herself and it helped her to live a more integrated life in which she could attend to other important things in her life, including her own well-being. As a person in a leadership position, P4 realised the importance of asking for support in order to authorise other people in their roles. All this improved her life on an emotional level, as life was not so difficult anymore.

Participant 4 used to immerse herself in her work. Transformation happened for her when she became aware that on the one hand her busyness was because she was immersing herself in her work to prove to herself that she could cope, which contributed to her stress and had a negative impact on her work-life integration. On the other hand, it became an excuse not to deal with her personal concerns that were causing her discomfort. She had in fact become her own worst enemy. Coaching helped P4 to deal with her personal concerns and to get herself "*back on track*" with a change in perspective by looking differently at the same things that were happening in her life. By spending time with nothingness versus busyness by means of meditating helped her to become quiet and contributed to her spiritual growth.

Change happened when P4 started re-prioritising her life and setting boundaries within her family structure about when to help financially and when not. Instead, she made her family responsible for financial decisions without her making all the decisions. In addition to boundary management, in a work context P4 set clearer limits on when to work and when to stop working. She could also reflect on the importance of resting. "*And the importance of resting; the process of everything – of*

life and its challenges – it's okay to rest.” Another aspect she considered when she reflected on her stress levels was self-awareness about how she as a leader presented herself in stressful moments.

Participant 4 started to construct meaning by applying time differently, focussing on loving herself again and going back to what she loved doing, such as spending time on socialising with family and friends, going for dancing and swimming lessons and applying mindfulness practices. As a result of these she found joy in life again and slowly moved back to work-life integration and attending to her health, which she had neglected for a long time. All this contributed to reducing her stress levels on a somatic level and allowed her to focus on her relationships. A shift therefore happened when she took ownership of her life again. *“So I just re-... re-owned or... yeah, you know, re-found myself again. Just starting doing things that I enjoy and ... being, you know being content again.”*

The outcome of coaching for P4 led to a change in perspective, enabling her to re-own her life. Coaching had an impact on all areas of her life and she even considered going through coaching again because of the different perspectives and possibilities it provided in her life.

4.7 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 5

Participant 5 is married and has one child. He holds a mechanical engineering qualification, which was obtained from Wits University, and started studying for an MBA in February 2017 at GIBS. This is a two-year programme. In a career context he did some consulting work and first ended up in management consulting, then in business development and credit risk in the transport industry. He had been employed for nearly three years at the company he was working for at the time of the research interview.

Participant 5 moved from a specialist position (credit analyst) to a leadership position (business development) with people reporting directly to him in a new business unit. The focus was on business development and sales and coming from a specialist position, P5 realised that he needed help in managing people. His mentor at that

time advised him to go for coaching and also recommended a specific coach. After a chemistry session with the coach, P5 started with the coaching programme. At the time of the research interview P5 had been in the coaching programme for just over 12 months. He had attended at least ten coaching sessions; coaching took place every two and a half to three months. Though the business was paying for his coaching sessions, no management feedback was required, as it was regarded as a process particular to the coachee. Participant 5 was calmer and more focussed during the coaching sessions when these moved from the office to the premises of the coach, and took place on a Saturday instead of a weekday. At the office he always used to be rushed and could not focus during a coaching session, as he had to run to the next meeting or needed to get out of the boardroom where coaching used to take place because of other scheduled meetings, which distracted him.

The new business unit did not perform well enough and a business decision was made to close it down. It was the biggest failure in his career, as P5 felt that he was not good enough to make it a success. He experienced it as being “*fired*”. Looking back at his track record in terms of his previous two jobs at other companies, the pattern in his life was that when times got tough and he was confronted with difficulty, P5 rather ran away by resigning and never saw the matter through. Coaching made him realise he could not resign from his company at the time he experienced this extreme difficulty of the failure of a new business unit he had started. Transformation happened for P5 in that he did not resign after the business area he was responsible for closed down; he faced it and saw it through, which demanded a lot of courage from him. At first it was very difficult for him to accept that the business unit was not successful; however, coaching enabled him to talk without shame about his failures, and consequently to make peace with his so-called failures and to be less judgemental towards himself.

It made P5 aware that he led and managed people reporting directly to him from a place of structure and rigidity instead of taking up the role of an encouraging leader and stretching the sales team by presenting them with a future vision to meet their sales targets. He could see the link between his inflexible behaviour at work and his personal life, as he sometimes literally calculated what he should be doing and what his wife should be doing in the household. A golden theme was clear: P5 was

looking at numbers and structure versus being more flexible in his approach to life. Therefore, transformation happened as coaching enabled him to become aware of his behaviour in both a personal and professional context. In addition, completing the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) assessment, which measures thinking preferences in people, helped P5 to see how he typically approached situations from the head and he gained insight into the fact that his preference was being an analyst rather than driving sales outputs. This made it clear to him why the business development position was so hard for him and why he fit better in the credit analyst position.

Coaching was very emotional for P5. *“... but for me the coaching journey was emotional above anything else.”* He wrestled with himself, which helped him to gain more insight into his way of being, which helped him to re-define who he was and to accept himself for who he was. *“So, emotionally I would say it’s the whole journey that’s led me to be more comfortable with who I am.”* As a result of being at ease with who he was, he started to deal with criticism more constructively in a personal and professional context. Furthermore, it was not such a big issue for him anymore that everybody had to like him. Consequently, his life became more pleasant on a relational level.

In his attempt to make a success of the new business development functionality, his body took strain because he was not sleeping enough and not exercising on a consistent basis. Consequently, on a somatic level P5 realised his body felt tired and heavy and it made him aware that he urgently had to look after his body. Although he was not ill, his body did not feel well. As a result of coaching and new insight on a somatic level, he started to get into an exercise routine again, which instead of taking more time out of his day, made him more effective.

Coaching came at the right time and was life-changing for P5. The coaching journey was consequently of much more value to him in challenging times than it would have been when his life was running smoothly.

... I think the coaching process is much richer because of a lot of difficulty, I guess, that I went through ... So it was very difficult for me. It was a very difficult time. It was ... at the time it felt to me like it was the single biggest failure I'd had in my career. So yeah, it forced me to think about a lot of stuff.

Moreover, life was not stopping or on hold while P5 was on the coaching programme. It was disappointing to P5 that his company did not necessarily see the value in coaching, as the company is very number-driven and it is difficult to quantify coaching in numbers. Therefore, there were mixed feelings in the company about coaching; however, P5 continued with his coaching programme.

4.8 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 6

Participant 6 is married and has one child. His wife and child form an important part of his life. On a personal level, he used to play hockey and tennis and run marathons, including the Comrades marathon, which he completed a few times. He referred to running as his main sport. Participant 6 enjoys a wide range of reading and doing things at home. He has had a few close friends since secondary school who are still his friends. He is working as a chief financial officer (CFO) for a global corporate company with a successful track record. He is very driven, working under pressure and responsible for financial performance, innovation and digitisation in various countries, with two people reporting to him directly and 45 reporting indirectly. Two weeks before the research interview he started heading up an additional global business unit in the company. Participant 6 obtained different qualifications, such as a CA qualification, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants qualification, MBA and an Advanced Management Programme (AMP) qualification. Furthermore, he obtained these qualifications in different countries, such as the United States of America (Columbia), Europe (Spain) and South Africa. Horizontal development took place over time for P6 through which he could gain more knowledge and skills, but there was a gap in his vertical development. Despite being highly qualified, he received feedback from an executive in the company who told him to start feeling “*more comfortable in my own skin*”. Though he has excellent qualifications and technical skills, knowledge and experience, something was lacking

in his behaviour. In addition, his manager wanted him to be a happier and more satisfied employee, because being a happy employee would make him a better employee. Another expectation that was set for P6 was to make the transition from a technical focus (transactional level) to a leadership focus (transformational level), and from a CFO to a good CFO and even to a chief executive officer (CEO) of a particular business unit. This could be summarised as shifting from good to great, but also instead of being in the traditional accounting role, to become a strategic partner for the chief executives with whom he was working. Therefore, a coaching intervention was suggested to P6, to which he was receptive.

A chemistry session with his coach took place before coaching started. At the time of the research interview P6 had been in the coaching programme for two years and had attended at least 12 coaching sessions. The company initially paid for the coaching programme. He referred to coaching as “... *it's in its second phase now*” and hence he started to pay for himself, since he wanted to continue with the process, as he noticed that coaching was a long-term and evolving process. Coaching took place every six weeks, either at his office or at the office of the coach. Feedback to business was provided by him and the coach after the tenth to twelfth session.

Though his manager had certain expectations about the purpose of sending him on a coaching programme, P6 found it difficult to articulate what he wanted from coaching; this difficulty could have stemmed from his lack of self-awareness: it was as if he did not know what he did not know. Participant 6 used to function mostly in his head, taking cognisance of numbers and performance. Through the coaching programme he started to become aware of how he appeared to other people and how they experienced him, which were miles away from numbers and performance. Self-awareness was a central theme in his coaching programme, including acting on it and living the change in behaviour. Furthermore, P6 was under the illusion that he enjoyed his job, until he went through coaching and realised he was not particularly happy and did not really enjoy job satisfaction. Work formed a big part of his life, resulting in P6 separating work from his personal life. He was always involved in work, constantly working under pressure and being available for work purposes at any time of day or night. Separating his work and personal life at all times became

very difficult for him to sustain. Coaching helped him to integrate his work life and personal life, which helped him to decrease his stress and anxiety. Participant 6 started to arrive at home less stressed, which had a positive impact on his relationship with his wife and son, as he approached his family life more purposefully.

Coaching allowed P6 to self-reflect and to gain insight into how he used to appear to others. There was an internal focus on working with 'self' and why he was doing what he was doing. During the coaching programme EQ was addressed and transformation happened when he got cooperation from people through the way he behaved from an EQ point of view, instead of his old way of telling them what to do. In addition to coaching, different events in his life were like building blocks, which enabled P6 to change his behaviour. He was nominated to attend an AMP course in Columbia, where the focus was on leadership. As he was already engaged in the coaching programme, it gave him a better foundation of leadership than other delegates on the programme. What was noticeable in P6 was the fact that he could notice the difference coaching had made in his life when he attended the AMP.

Participant 6 had the intellectual capacity to work with complexities and had a quick mind. As a result of that he could become too sharp-witted for other people, with a tendency to put people down if they were not in agreement with him. Coaching made him aware of this behaviour and its impact on other people. He started to change it to become more empathetic and to slow down his pace when necessary. Moreover, P6 started to acknowledge and notice people as human beings and not as objects. He realised that it did not matter what his cognitive abilities were or how good he was at his job; it was his behaviour and how he appeared to others that would make people respect him, follow him and want to be part of what he was doing. People in his team used to view him as intellectual and that scared them, although it was not necessarily his intellect, but the manner in which he engaged with them that scared them. Conducting himself in an acceptable manner invited contributions from his team instead of limiting their inputs because they were scared of how he would react. That on its own was a huge shift for him.

He was very dedicated to keeping a journal, which became an integral part of his coaching journey. It helped P6 to self-reflect on his behavioural patterns and what happened for him with his *“head, heart and body”*, as well as what he could have done differently. The focus was on becoming aware of his feelings and how these affected his relationships and interactions with people around him, especially when he was not emotionally in a good mood. The other focus of *“head, heart and body”* was for him to become more aware of his body and bodily responses. Webster-Smith et al. (2012, p. 10) refer to the *“head, heart and hands of transformative learning”*. The head represents gaining knowledge, the heart represents intelligence of the heart and the hands represent taking action in response to the learning that took place.

Keeping a leadership journal in the morning before work on what was happening to him concerning his *“head, heart and body”* was very meaningful, as it informed P6 about where he found himself and grounded and settled him for the day. In the evening he recapped what had happened during the day concerning his *“head, heart and body”*, for example what had upset him or what he had accomplished. Using a journal is a way to reflect on the self and/or another person and even an imagined other person (Hiemstra, 2001). According to Hiemstra (2001), the potential benefits of journalling are personal growth and development, intuition and self-expression, problem-solving, stress-reduction and health benefits, reflection and critical thinking. Furthermore, journalling is a reflective process to help a person to revise her thinking, emotions and behaviour/actions on an ongoing basis to find meaning in specific events or experiences (Boud, 2001; Hiemstra, 2001; Lowe et al., 2013).

Somatically, P6 became aware of his physical triggers and feelings, such as outbursts or when he disengaged in his dealings with people. All of these were serious concerns for him and were addressed in his coaching programme. Furthermore, on a somatic level P6 had a life-changing experience. He was never aware of his body and the importance of breathing, especially essential breathing. He used to see his body as something functional and as an object instead of a true human being of which he was part. Participant 6 became aware of his shallow breathing, which used to get even worse when he was anxious about something. Transformation happened when he became more aware of his body and realised

that behaviour all starts with the body. Coaching helped P6 with conscious embodiment and how to become aware of the sensations of his body, for example when people upset him and what to do with these sensations before they resulted in inappropriate behaviour. He consequently started to respond to people in a more acceptable way and appeared differently to them, since he was calmer and applied EQ. In addition, P6 came much more aware of not only his body signals, but also the body signals of colleagues and group dynamics in the board room. Participant 6 used to do competitive running. During the coaching programme he started to run less and rather do yoga to help him to slow down his pace and to become more aware of his body. It was not easy for him because of his competitive nature.

In a work context there was a vast shift for P6 on a relational level. He opened up a bit more towards colleagues and because he became more accessible, they started to understand him better as a person. *“So people do realise I’m not as much of a monster as I thought I was. So I think that’s been a big turning point.”* Another change on the relational level occurred when the business started seeing him as part of the executive team and not merely as their accountant, as they used to see him. From a leadership point of view P6 took up his role to become a strategic business partner and stepped out of the master-servant role. A shift also occurred for him when he gained not only the competence but also the confidence to articulate what he expected from his team.

The coaching programme was of value to not only transition in his career, but also to becoming more ‘comfortable in his own skin’, which was an evolving process. There was indeed progress compared to where he had found himself before the coaching programme. Participant 6 was brought up to compete and be the best. Transformation happened when he did not define himself anymore as the fastest runner or being the best in what he was doing. He still competed, but it was not how he defined himself anymore. Since P6 was used to be the best in so many things, he found it extremely difficult to talk about anything personal or related to his feelings and felt vulnerable when doing this. This made him realise that he was not always the best, and probably close to the worst when it came to emotion. Unfortunately, wrong perceptions about coaching existed in the business, as some senior people referred to it as a fixing process, thus once a person has completed a number of

sessions, he or she should be 'fixed'. "... *surely you are fixed now?*" Participant 6 was very self-aware and clearly understood that there would always be something on a behavioural level to attend to and to work through in life for him.

Lastly, P6 became more 'comfortable in his own skin', a happier person and more at ease with himself; he enjoyed his work more than he used to and consequently experienced job satisfaction. He previously thought that if he did a good job, the rest would take care of itself, but as a result of coaching P6 realised that more than that was at stake. It is actually about how people conduct and present themselves on a behavioural level in a personal and professional context, and then only will the rest take care of itself.

4.9 STORY OF PARTICIPANT 7

Participant 7, who completed her degree in KwaZulu-Natal, held a CA qualification. Since entering the labour market she had worked in the financial sector. At the time of the research interview, P7 was a senior business analyst in the business project environment, attending to the needs of the stakeholders and finding solutions. She had a reporting line of five people. During the research conversation she described herself as not only a professional career woman, but also a wife and a mother. Participant 7 is married and has one child.

She did not put her hand up to be coached, but coaching could not have come at a better time in her life. Coaching came about for P7 when she was randomly selected to participate in a job profiling exercise in a certain job category from different clusters in the company where she was employed. Part of this process was psychometric assessments. The results of the assessments were discussed with her. Though she scored above average on the assessments, the development area identified for her was resilience. Her manager suggested coaching and a coach who was experienced in coaching specifically resilience-building to assist P7 in exploring the underlying areas that limited her from building resilience and to receive some tools that could help her in this process. Her manager was familiar with coaching and to him coaching was not a quick fix, but a process. "*It's not like go listen to a seminar and then come back and we hope your problem go over, your issue goes*

away.” In effect, P7 was in a fortunate position, as there was no pressure on her to change overnight.

She selected a coach from a few coach profiles received from HR. She selected a coach on paper, whereafter a chemistry session took place with the coach she had selected and she immediately knew she had landed with the right coach. Participant 7 attended at least 12 coaching sessions over a 14-month period. Coaching sessions took place once a month at her office in a private space. Feedback on the coaching process was given to HR. Participant 7 regarded her company as an employer who is looking after its employees and appreciated the opportunity to participate in a coaching programme. At the time of the interview P7 had been working for nine years for her employer.

A large part of the coaching programme evolved around the challenge for P7 of being a mother, a wife and a professional career woman and her resilience in these situations. As a development area, resilience for P7 meant being more resilient in certain situations and to remain resilient in how she was performing at work. Another aspect needing attention was a vicious circle in which she pushed herself at work to perform well, but it was as if she could not sustain her level of resilience and then had to build up resilience again to get to the next task. As a result of coaching there was a moment of awakening for P7 when she realised how she not only over-committed herself to her work, but was also a perfectionist and a people-pleaser wanting to make sure that she was good enough and to prove herself. Participant 7 could recognise the link between her childhood and the fear of not being good enough. This behaviour did not serve her well and she ended up close to burn-out instead of applying work-life integration.

Being a perfectionist, P7 realised the benefits and the consequences of this characteristic. The benefits were providing work ‘right first time’ and not only quantity work, but also quality work. However, the consequences of that were the tremendous pressure she put on herself in terms of her personal and professional life, insisting on completing tasks and being unfair and intolerant towards other people, expecting them to do things exactly as she would have done them. Transformation happened when P7 constructed meaning of what the impact of her

perfectionism was on relationships and how it created unnecessary conflict. It made her realise that she had to allow people in her personal and professional life to assist her where necessary and what was even more important, to allow them to do it in their own way and in their own time, as long as the end result was achieved, although it might not be as good as if she had done it. Consequently, P7 became more tolerant towards other people. It was hard for her to analyse her behaviour as a perfectionist. This, however, made her aware of the impact of her behaviour on herself and others. She went to the core of her being as a perfectionist and realised how she limited herself in many ways.

Another consequence of her dedication to her work was that she did not want to disappoint colleagues when they approached her for assistance; she preferred pleasing them. Transformation happened when P7 realised she could not commit to everything and please everybody. She thus received a wake-up call to set clear boundaries, as having no boundaries resulted in over-working and a negative impact on her work-life integration. Participant 7 became bold, speaking up and having courageous conversations with her manager, such as re-negotiating timelines without damaging the relationship. By doing that she set boundaries, which were a strong theme in her coaching journey.

Participant 7 realised that whatever she committed to in her personal and professional life should be out of choice and because she wanted to do it, not to please anybody else. Change happened when she started becoming someone who stood her ground rather than a people-pleaser and it was very empowering for her to start saying 'no' or to re-negotiate a request when it was necessary. It resulted in her creating more capacity to focus on what she was supposed to do and decreased the day-to-day pressure, as P7 was not over-loading herself unnecessarily. The result was that she felt more relaxed. Participant 7 distinguished saying 'no' from 'setting boundaries'.

We all think boundary means saying no. It has actually got very little to do with that. It's about telling someone what's okay with me and what's not okay with me, you know. And that's very different from saying no.

She could integrate the fact that it was not only about taking responsibility for setting boundaries, but also about honouring her own boundaries by being serious about the boundaries that she set, as well as saying 'no' or re-negotiating where necessary without feeling guilty about it. In addition to work-life integration, P7 realised it was to her own detriment that she skewed the balance in her life by not using people in her team optimally. Instead of upskilling them where necessary, she took work away from them by doing it herself. Participant 7 realised that she had fallen into the trap of a transactional manager by becoming too involved in the operational tasks, as it gave her a sense of control, instead of being a transformational leader. Transformation happened when she started using a model where she categorised her staff in terms of their skills, such as those to whom she could delegate work immediately, those about whom she needed to be selective in terms of what she delegated and cases where she would be mainly responsible for doing the work without any assistance.

Journalling and self-reflection between coaching sessions was integral to the coaching journey for P7, helping her to look at the same issues through different lenses and to analyse behaviour to see clearly what was really going on in her relationships with others. It made P7 realise that it is not about changing people around her, but about changing herself. Coaching identifies for a client where she has control and where not, such as controlling one's own behaviour versus trying to control someone else's behaviour (Stout-Rostron, 2009b). This happens over a period, as it is an emerging process, and that equipped P7 to become more aware of her relationships in a personal and professional context and how she engaged with people.

Somatically, P7 came more aware of her body language, her breathing and her habit of sighing from time to time. She started looking after her body by getting up from her desk a few times during the day, as she could not sit behind her desk all day. In moments of feeling overwhelmed with work and when her stomach tightened up, she took a break from her desk by walking outside in the office garden. When confronted with difficult situations in the office she learned to catch herself in time before she responded. By doing that, she gave herself the opportunity to compose herself and to look at the situation differently. Consequently, P7 became more tuned into her

body by listening to her body, for example when she was tired and disengaged from a situation or felt nervous. This awareness enabled her to take time out daily, not only on a cognitive level but also on a body level.

Coaching was a rich process for P7 and the internal space she explored in the process made her realise that she would not have been able to make the shift by herself by reading a book or attending a seminar. Looking back at her coaching experience, it was not a planned process, but an evolving process that transformed her life in both a personal and professional capacity. Moreover, it was an emerging process that would continue. Participant 7 described it as an awareness that would be there forever, which was aligned with competence in coaching to self-correct and self-generate, as well as the outcome of coaching as long-term excellence (Flaherty, 2010).

4.10 HOLISTIC OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS' STORIES

Across the stories of the seven participants, they engaged in coaching, whether compulsory or voluntary. Whether they resisted coaching or followed through, a process of self-reflection started even before the actual coaching. Whichever way this process commenced for them, the actual coaching could not start before the participants had established **openness** to engage in coaching. As such, they all reached a point of being ready to start with coaching. Most of the participants felt vulnerable when coaching started, but the process became one of **self-discovery** for them. During coaching, the process of self-discovery was difficult and challenging, because it exposed parts of the self that made them feel **uncomfortable and vulnerable**. However, for several of the participants, this difficult process steered them towards and culminated in **identity work**. The process further entailed that participants worked on an **emotional** level and started experiencing emotions of which they had not even been aware. Aspects such as fears and anxieties were addressed. In addition, processing of the self took place on a **somatic** level, where participants became aware of their physical bodies and coaching took place on a bodily level, such as breathing, body language and how they presented themselves. Insights into **relational** aspects opened up for the participants as well and these were addressed during coaching. Lastly, coaching

resulted in **transformation** of the self and change in behaviour for all of the participants.

Table 4.2 below is a summary of the preliminary interpretation of the holistic story line of each of the participants. The headings denote my preliminary interpretation (themes) of what the participants experienced before, during and after coaching. The content related to each participant is a brief summative description of the participant's experience regarding the theme constructed.

Table 4.2

Summary of preliminary interpretation of each coaching story

Preliminary interpretation of the holistic story line								
	Openness to coaching	Self-exploration	Discomfort and vulnerability	Identity work	Emotional	Somatic	Relational	Transformational
P1	Resist coaching	Explore self	Unease about exposing herself		Dare to work on emotional level and discover the root causes of behaviour	Gained new somatic awareness	Result in behavioural and relationship changes	Result in deep change of self and way of presenting the self
P2	Compulsory formal organisational coaching to self-chosen coaching	Need for self-exploration	Self-reflective space did not come easy	Re-connecting with the self in terms of who he is	Emotional experience and not an intellectual experience	Awareness as cues for connecting mind and body, and thriving in the moment (mindfulness meditation technique)	Insight into self and into relationships (work and life) Behavioural changes	Result in higher sense of self awareness and making self-congruent decisions, spiritual deepening
P3	Was dissatisfied with life and needed help	Process of self-discovery		Re-connecting with the self in terms of who she is	Delve into emotions to understand the origin, reframe emotions and meaning-making thereof	Awareness of how she presents herself personally and professionally	Changed behaviour by deepening important relationships, build network of supportive relationships	Result in integration of self and self-acceptance, self-knowledge
P4	Colleague requested her to participate in coaching which was voluntary	Deal with personal concerns and work-life stress	Exposing herself created discomfort	Lost herself and wanted to find herself again	Trying to cope with personal and work-life concerns	Attending to her health and stress levels by implementing work-life balance strategies	Re-prioritise life by setting boundaries, and letting others take responsibility A renewed focus on relationships	Result in SWB (happiness), better relationships and found herself again
P5	Wanted help as a leader and mentor recommended coaching	Wrestling with the self	Coaching happened during a difficult time which made him vulnerable	Re-define who he is	Deal with fear and anxiety of being a failure Coaching was an emotional process	Bodily awareness and care of the self increased	Increased courage to make difficult decisions, insight into personal- and work behaviour resulted in positive impact on relationships	Result in being less judgemental and critical towards himself, hence self-acceptance

	Openness to coaching	Self-exploration	Discomfort and vulnerability	Identity work	Emotional	Somatic	Relational	Transformational
P6	Coaching part of his career plan and leadership development	Explore the unknown in himself, increased self-awareness journey	Lack of self-awareness made him vulnerable and working with feelings	Working with self	Shift from head to heart functioning	Increased head, heart and body awareness and specific body awareness in terms of physical triggers and consequent feelings and behaviour Awareness of breathing	Stress decreased due to work-life integration which resulted in behaviour change and improved relationships	Result in being more flexible and accessible Change of thinking about people as human beings, not objects Increased self-confidence and more at ease with self
P7	Random exercise lead to aim to improve resilience and coaching was recommended	Increased self-knowledge which affects her own struggle with resilience		Different roles in terms of professional career woman, wife and mother	Constant proof of self and being good enough nearly led to burn-out	Awareness of her body language and signs in her body to change her behaviour Increased tuned into body	Increased tolerance with others Changing in behaviour and setting of boundaries increased work-life integration	Result in increased tolerance of self and others Changing of the self and way of thinking

4.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the textural description of the seven research participants' stories. I did that by showing my preliminary holistic understanding of what each participant experienced. In telling their stories I unravelled what transpired for them (*cf.* Creswell, 2013), including their background and lived experiences. I have to acknowledge that interpretation started already in writing up the coaching stories and guided me into the data analysis. The value of the textural descriptions helped me in presenting my preliminary interpretation of each coaching story, and in summarising the holistic story line of each participant in a table, my impression was that change and transformation happened for each of the participants, confirming the assumption I started with on this doctoral journey and leading me deeper into understanding of how this process manifests in the self.

In the next chapter I shall discuss the data analysis and introduce the various themes, sub-themes and categories.

CHAPTER 5: STRUCTURAL DESCRIPTION: A STRUCTURED THEMATIC CONSTRUCTION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the focus was on textural descriptions, where I described the coaching story of each of participant who was interviewed. Writing the stories gave rise to a structural description of how participants experienced the phenomenon (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2013), which is presented in this chapter. Therefore the purpose of this chapter is to present the four main themes and respective sub-themes to the reader, leading to a structured thematic construction of the findings. Moreover, this chapter relates to the second, third and fourth stages of my IPA data analysis. The second stage was transforming significant statements into emergent themes. The third stage was looking for the relationship and connections between the emergent themes, which culminated in the construction of themes and sub-themes. Stage four was writing up the research, where I combined the results and discussion of the themes and sub-themes by substantiating information with verbatim examples in order to describe the experiences of the participants. Verbatim examples were highlighted in blue to make them easier to read and to engage the reader (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006).

5.2 INTRODUCING THE THEMES

The process I followed to identify themes in the data started with loading the transcripts as primary data documents in the qualitative data analysis software programme, ATLAS.ti. Codes were allocated per interview transcription for each of the participants on both the hard copy transcripts and ATLAS.ti, which influenced and guided me in identifying different constructs in the writing of Chapter 3 (psychological paradigms, meta-theories, meta-constructs and literature review).

While writing Chapter 3, I went back to working with the data and decided to use a different approach from ATLAS.ti. This was a manual process where I compiled a spreadsheet in table format on Microsoft Excel. I went back to the transcriptions of each participant, re-read the data and started to identify codes that correlated with

codes in ATLAS.ti. Fresh, new codes were even identified. Therefore, an iterative process started to play out for me, moving forward and backwards with the data between the transcripts, ATLAS.ti and the Excel spreadsheet. It was a good process, as I looked in a new and crisp way at my data again. Changing my electronic approach to a manual one was a breakthrough for me, because as a result of that I not only verified the coding on ATLAS.ti and added new codes, but changed the way in which I engaged with the data. This process of coding and recoding, then analysing and refining the codes I had constructed, ultimately enabled me to construct four main themes from the data in line with my research objective, namely **to explore and deepen the understanding of personal transformation during coaching in order to describe the personal transformational value of coaching.** The four main themes were: (1) coaching as process, (2) coaching mechanisms, (3) processing the holistic self, and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context.

This process of exploration of the data made me think of a craftsman versus an artist. The craftsman has a plan with measurements, knows what the next step is in the process of crafting and a clear design of the outcome. On the other hand, an artist who is creating a piece of art also has a plan, but does not know exactly how it will unfold, as it is an explorative and fluid process. The outcome for the artist might be the result of a comprehensive experience.

The manual process was captured in Microsoft Excel as in **table 5.1** below, with the following headings: Theme, Sub-theme, Categories, Properties (verbatim information), Participant Number and Page Number (as on the respective transcribed documents I used in the data analysis).

Table 5.1

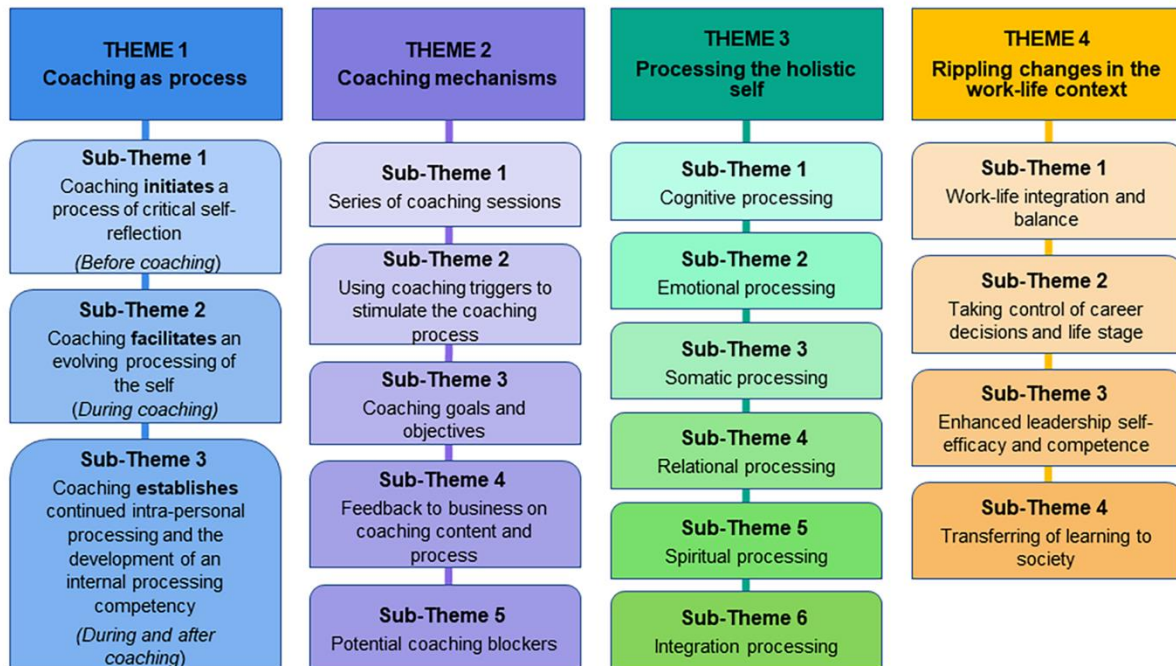
Format of spreadsheet – manual process

Theme			
Sub-theme	Categories	Properties (Verbatim information)	Participant Number Page Number

A summary of the different themes and sub-themes is set out in **figure 5.1** below.

Figure 5.1

Summary of themes and sub-themes



Each of the different themes, sub-themes and categories will be discussed in the sections that follow.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Coaching as process

In reflecting on the personal transformational value of coaching while immersing myself in the data, I was struck by the realisation that the participants did not necessarily know beforehand that coaching would be valuable to them. In fact, some of them did not even know what coaching entails. Yet, they all came to a point where they became aware of their need for personal growth, came across the coaching opportunity and decided to go for coaching, albeit for different reasons. Even though some participants had no idea of the potential value of coaching for them at that stage, in the course of their coaching sessions they were taken on a journey of self-exploration, which entailed establishing a trusting relationship with their coach and using the reflective space of coaching to explore their personal and professional behaviour. The participants did not all immediately engage with this exploration; it was rather a gradual process of self-reflection that went deeper into the self as the sessions continued. At the point of deciding to terminate the coaching

sessions, it also became evident to me that this 'working with the self', did not stop for the participants when their sessions stopped. It seemed to me that as a consequence of having engaged in coaching, the participants developed a self-processing skill that endured in them despite having discontinued the coaching. Participants in this regard reflected on how they continued to engage with the self in a self-reflective manner and to grow their self-awareness, which had a definite impact on their decisions and behaviour at work and in life.

To conceptualise theme 1, I deconstructed and re-constructed the data in **three sub-themes**, with their related categories. Sub-theme 1 explains how self-reflection and processing of the self begins even '*before*' a formal coaching programme starts. Thereafter, in sub-theme 2, coaching as a process further enlightens one on how processing of the self evolves '*during*' the course of the coaching sessions, when an intimate exploration of the self takes precedence as the focus of these sessions. Lastly, sub-theme 3 illustrates that even though the coaching programme and the coaching sessions come to an end, hence '*after*' coaching, processing of the self continues for the coachee.

A summary of the different themes, sub-themes and categories is set out in **table 5.2** below, whereafter each is discussed in detail, supported by verbatim information.

Table 5.2

Theme 1: Coaching as process

5.2.1 Theme 1: Coaching as process
5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Coaching initiates a process of critical self-reflection
Categories a) Recognising a need for personal development and growth b) Developing a readiness mindset to engage actively in coaching
5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Coaching facilitates evolving processing of the self
Categories a) Containment and holding a safe space to maintain and deepen processing b) Spiralling into the self: Wrestling with self-exposure c) Liberating the self: Pushing through discomfort to efficacious introspection d) Deep self-reflection: From self-awareness to behavioural change e) Meeting the essential self: Identity work f) Coaching is a fluid, organic and evolving process
5.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Coaching establishes continued intrapersonal processing and the development of an internal processing competency

5.2.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Coaching initiates a process of critical self-reflection

Sub-theme 1 pertains to the timeframe *before* the actual coaching sessions commence and describes how the potential coachee first recognises a need for personal development and growth, and then despite some experiences of discomfort with coaching being an unknown space, develops a readiness for coaching and decides to engage actively in coaching. The need for coaching was identified by all participants in relation to their need for some or other personal development and growth. The process underlying their realising a need for personal development and growth reflects a certain form of processing of the self and is initiated in the individual even before formal coaching between the coach and the coachee commences. Though not all of the participants were familiar with coaching as a concept, once there was understanding of what coaching entailed and what a coaching process offered, a readiness mindset developed with regard to participating in a formal coaching programme.

I identified two *categories* to conceptualise sub-theme 1, namely: (a) recognising a need for personal development and growth, and (b) developing a readiness mindset to engage actively in coaching. These sub-themes explained how participants were motivated to engage in a difficult self-exposing process to improve self-understanding and enhance personal development and growth.

a) Recognising a need for personal development and growth

Recognising the need for personal development and growth originated from different contexts for the participants. Some realised it on their own, some were made aware of it by the business and others by a combination of their own perception and prompting by the business. Participants who realised it by themselves felt the need for coaching because they wanted to understand the root causes of their behaviour, or undergo a transition in their role in the business. In cases where the suggestion originated from a business need, the participants were also recommended for coaching for developmental purposes.

Participant 1 realised the need for coaching, as she wanted to understand the root causes of her behaviour. She noted³: *"... because I'd like to understand, you know, what is the source of that feedback and also with my team here."* Participant 1 went on to voice the need for deeper understanding of herself: *"... but then we started to sort of go a level deeper on, you know, the root cause I guess of why I might be feeling a certain way which then results in a certain behaviour."* Some participants recognised the need for coaching as they made the transition from a specialist/technical position to a managerial/leadership position and needed help with growing into the new role. Participant 5 explained: *"So my mentor at (name of business), she actually recommended it and it's something that I said well, I'm going to need, because I was going from a specialist role to a leadership role."* Similarly, P6 emphasised his need for transition from a technical position to a leadership position: *"... but it was trying to sort of break out of just the pure technician stuff to some of the more, let's call it leadership stuff for want of a better term."* He also emphasised his need for personal change or transformation by saying: *"I've come*

³ Verbatim information provided in blue in Chapter 5 for ease of reading.

through a technical environment, all of a sudden you're being asked to do totally different kinds of things; you need to find a way to transition and this is a way to help and that was it." Furthermore, P6 acknowledged that he was too much of a perfectionist, which limited him in the transition from a technical position to a leadership position. This realisation contributed to his need for personal development and growth of his interpersonal skill set. He stated:

... rightly or wrongly, I still am a perfectionist – that's what it plus-minus is, but I guess as you get higher up, a lot of them do become minuses because things aren't always black and white. It is very difficult to land things exactly like you want them to land, when you have teams of 50, 100 – whatever those teams are doing it for you. It's not always going to be like you would do it.

Participant 6 described the need for an intervention to address his need for growth, as he said: *"And look, it was in the context of ... I don't know if I should say this to you, but look, there needed to be an intervention, and I don't mean that in a negative sense."* On a similar transition career path, P2 articulated that it was his need for professional development that made him explore coaching as a possible intervention to address that need: *"... made a transition ... from being a supporting function to being a steering function, ... different leadership mandate ... why I started exploring the topic of coaching with our HR team, to develop that aspect of my professional career."* His prior experience of coaching during a leadership course enabled P2 to link his need for personal growth and adjustment in his new role to a need for coaching. As such, P2 went so far as to demand from the business to continue with coaching, seeing himself as an asset for the business:

And when we did the Business Partnering course and there was coaching ... and then four follow-up sessions, made me see the value of it. And that's when I started to pursue it quite aggressively to say, I need a coach and if you want me to be great in your company, get me a coach.

He went on to say: *"I find it (after a coaching session) very moving, and then that got me thinking quite a lot, and then I came back fairly determined that I need to be coached; I need a coach to work with."* Participant 3 identified a need for coaching,

as she was not in a good space in her life (personally and professionally) and wanted to improve her life by means of self-development and personal growth: *"I was just in a very unhappy place in my career and my life path actually."* She continued to say: *"And then I found myself a single mother at 30 and I felt like my world ended and I had to re-look at everything ... so I focused on being a mom and getting my life back together."* As a newly divorced single mother, P3 identified the need for coaching, as she was aware that she could not improve her life without the help of someone else: *"I was really grappling with this, I can't be a mom all the time anymore, you know. I miss my career and I'm ready again and I didn't know how to do something about that, so I needed help."* A colleague suggested that she should go for coaching: *"And that's when someone (a colleague) said, why don't you go for coaching, because I really felt like I was just ... I don't know how to decide or how do you accelerate or ... actually didn't know what to do."*

In contrast with the other participants, P4 did not realise a particular need for coaching. She did not even think about coaching or sought it. Therefore, coaching found P4 purely because her coach was looking for people she could coach on a voluntary basis for the practical part of her coaching course. She explained: *"... actually she (the coach) came to me looking for people that she can coach, because ... it was the practical for her exams or for her qualification."* Participant 4 then volunteered to participate in the coaching programme: *"Yes, I volunteered."* and she did it in her private capacity: *"I was doing it in my private capacity."* Though P4 volunteered to participate in coaching, she emphasised that in fact she was not aware of how much she needed it to contribute to her personal development: *"So it really, it found me when I needed it, and I definitely needed it."*

The need for coaching was primarily identified by their business stakeholders for P1, P2, P5, P6 and P7. The initial need for coaching for P1 was, for example, identified by the business, mainly to address her disruptive behaviour and develop more approachable interpersonal competence. She reflected on the feedback received from colleagues: *"... I was starting to get sort of feedback – people saying, (name of P1), she's very difficult, or why is she so difficult and she's being a bit abrupt and, you know, various other things."* His business wanted P6 to develop by being more

at ease with himself, 'comfortable in his skin', and improving his work-life integration competence to reduce his stress levels:

... I need to start feeling, in his (the boss) words, more comfortable in my own skin. So I used to try to separate ... we talk about work, work-life integration now. I just try and very much separate both of them. They used to sort of spill into each other at sort of wrong times and create sort of way too much stress and anxiety ... I want you to be a happier employee. If you're a happier employee, you'll necessarily be a better employee. And that's sort of where it started ...

In addition to enrolling for a coaching programme for his personal development, P6 simultaneously attended a formal course on leadership of the self, as suggested by the business, which contributed to his personal growth. He explained: "*... again it focused on leadership of self and then it goes to the rest – which was nice because it's exactly what I was doing with (name of the coach).*" Participant 7 was randomly selected to participate in a role-profiling project at work, which included psychometric testing. When she discussed the psychometric results with her line manager, her area of development was identified as resilience. The line manager suggested that the medium of exploring and developing her resilience on a deeper level was to get a coach. So, again, thinking about and realising a need for personal growth and development initiated the need for coaching, as narrated by P7: "*... one area of development was my resilience ... And that's when he (line manager) suggests seeing a coach because for this type of development area, it's very important to understand the underlying areas and what tools you can use.*"

The transformational value of coaching was already evident prior to the commencement of coaching sessions, at the point of having the idea of coaching as an opportunity or alternative. Merely thinking about the possibility of engaging in coaching (whether initiated formally or informally, by the self/business/friends) initiates a sense of potential personal and professional growth. This sense is demonstrated in how participants recalled a need for personal growth and development, which they developed themselves or were made aware of by others, and then decided to act upon by participating in a coaching programme. Coaching

today has a different meaning and is not stigmatised as in the past in terms of what a person did wrong or coaching being remedial in nature. The focus has rather shifted to what a person has done right and the organisation that suggests coaching for an employee sees the person as having high potential and as an investment (Kets de Vries, 2014; Page & De Haan, 2014).

b) Developing a readiness mindset to engage actively in coaching

In order to be truly engaged in a coaching programme and to reap the fruit of the process, it is important for the coachee to understand the need for coaching, which leads to readiness for coaching, being in the right frame of mind to embrace the process fully. This concept could be applied in reverse as well. If she is ready for coaching, the coachee also realises the need to be coached and to be fully engaged in the process. I was therefore surprised that several of the participants did not know what coaching was or what to expect from coaching.

An example of a participant not being aware of what coaching entails was revealed when P1 said: *"... at the time, I didn't know a lot about coaching. I sort of felt it was a bit of a luxury."* This unfamiliarity with coaching resulted in some misconceptions about coaching being similar to therapy, further leading to some discomfort and resistance for P1: *"And I never would have really ... come on now, you know what, I don't do therapy, let's deal with the three action points, you know."* In addition, P2 said: *"So when I was on this Business Partnering course I'd heard of the concept of coaching and people had mentioned it to me before, but it sounded silly so I never pursued it or thought about it much."* Hart et al. (2001) and Ulrich (2008) explain that coaching is not therapy. The focus of therapy is most often to help those with some diagnosable pathology, while the focus of coaching is rather on individuals who are primarily healthy (Williams, 2004).

González (2003, p. 97) states, "coaching is perceived as a dynamic movement forward, a walking together in collaboration, until there is readiness for the client to fly, exploring and discovering the path to growth and transformation." Similarly, Cherry and Boysen-Rotelli (2016) refer to the willingness and readiness of the coachee to be coached. Such a readiness mindset seemed to have developed for

the participants prior to commencing with actual coaching, and is part of the processing in the self that is already active in the person prior to coaching. This is evident in P1's description of her tentativeness to start exploring coaching, as opposed to her initial resistance noted above: *"The HR guy said, consider it (coaching) a gift. So I really took that as ... that was really empowering to me because it was basically me, you know, wanting to maybe start exploring this."* Eventually her readiness developed in such a way that it enabled her to embrace the process fully: *"You can't go in and say, okay I'm going to just tick this box – you get nowhere; so I think you really have to be in a mindset where you really want to embrace the process. And I certainly was."* Participant 3 expressed her growing readiness for coaching as readiness to get help. She wanted to move forward, given her life circumstances at that point, and was at a point of being ready to get help: *"I miss my career and I'm ready again and I didn't know how to do something about that, so I needed help. And that's when someone said, why don't you go for coaching ..."* Similarly, P4 came to a point of readiness by knowing she needed guidance; she said: *"I offered myself, because at the time I knew that I needed that coaching ..."* and explained: *"Yeah, you need to be ready. As much as like for me it felt like a blessing that like, you know what, when I needed it, ... I would not have initiated it, but ... it walked up to me."* Developing a readiness mindset is therefore contingent upon processing in the self, becoming self-aware with regard to needing help (P3 and P4) or wanting to change.

It seems everyone around P2 was concerned about his life and career except himself, but then he realised that he did not know where he was going. Becoming aware that he wanted to change and needed a plan to do so facilitated the process for him in becoming ready for coaching. His readiness for coaching was reflected in the urgency of his expressed need for action: *"I was in a real state because, I need to get a plan. I need a plan, damn it, and I don't know."* Similarly, P4 expressed her need for change and thus for coaching: *"But I think at the time I just felt like okay I needed it; I needed, you know, that intervention."* She continues to emphasise that her own readiness made coaching open and of value to her: *"Yeah, the teacher arrived. When the student was ready the teacher arrived, or something like that. ... So it really, it found me when I needed it, and I definitely needed it."* Participant 7 explained not necessarily her own personal readiness for coaching, but in general

that a person who enrolls for a coaching programme needs to be ready and open to experience a process of transformation:

I always say, people should only go for coaching if they really and generally want to. You cannot force anyone to be coached. It will be a futile exercise. The person will sit there, listen, walk away and just check in their card every time. You need to be open to it and that's when you will really, really benefit from it. Just be open – no expectations, just be open to it.

Participant 2 also became ready for coaching during inevitable role transitions and organisational transformation, with which he needed help to deal: *"The timing was excellent, because we started this journey in the context of this big existential crisis of an acquisition by another company."* He had to make crucial career decisions, such as staying in a corporate position or resigning and starting to do consulting again, which he used to do before joining the corporate company for which he was working. He was thus forced to think about his career going forward and to investigate what was going on in the market at that time: *"Should you stay, should you go, should you do something completely different? ... Should I do something completely different? ... Shall I go back to consulting, contracting? So it created this great, beautiful, everything's up in the air situation."* Similarly, the need to adjust to change elicited in P5 a processing in the self, leading to readiness to engage with coaching. Moving from a specialist position to a leadership position was a very challenging time for P5. Coaching came at the right time for him, as he acknowledged: *"... and it's something that I said well, I'm going to need, because I was going from a specialist role to a leadership role."* In addition, P7 explained that coaching happened at the right time for her to engage fully in the process: *"So coaching almost happens when it's the right time to happen."*

Moving from initial resistance or tentativeness to readiness to engage in coaching is thus evident of the processing that happens within the individual prior to the coaching sessions. The intra-psychic processing, akin to any self-reflective process such as coaching, therefore starts before the actual intervention takes place. This intrapersonal processing is related to the transformational value of coaching, which

is already sparked by the idea and possibility of coaching. According to MacKie (2015), coaching readiness is an indicator of change and transformation.

The next sub-theme to be discussed is that coaching facilitates and develops processing of the self, which happens *during* the course of coaching sessions.

5.2.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Coaching facilitates evolving processing of the self

After the need for coaching had been identified and the potential coachee had become ready to engage actively with a coaching programme, the formal coaching process commenced. Sub-theme 2 focusses on the process nature of coaching, *during* the coaching phase where intimate exploration of the self takes place. This exploration of the self involves an intrapersonal process, which requires a sense of safety and trust in the coach and is characterised by pushing through initial feelings of vulnerability. It is a process during which the coachee is confronted with herself on a personal and professional level. This intrapersonal process stimulates thoughtful and deep reflection of the self to become more self-aware and guides participants in developing understanding of the self and their behaviour. Furthermore, in processing the self, participants reconnect with their essential self by means of identity work. The *during* coaching process is fluid and without a recipe and a specific structure. Therefore, processing of the self is described as an evolving process.

In order to conceptualise sub-theme 2, the following six *categories* were identified and are discussed: (a) containment and holding a safe space to maintain and deepen processing, (b) spiralling into the self: wrestling with self-exposure, (c) liberating the self: pushing through discomfort to efficacious introspection, (d) deep self-reflection: from self-awareness to behaviour change, (e) meeting the essential self: identity work, and (f) coaching is a fluid, organic and evolving process.

In this theme I will explain how the personal transformational value of coaching is reflected in the evolving processing of the self.

a) Containment and holding a safe space to maintain and deepen processing

At the start of a formal coaching programme it is common for the coach and coachee not to know each other. Processing of self-relevant thoughts and emotions only becomes possible when the actual coaching sessions commence, if the participants feel that they are contained in a safe space. A safe space allows for reflection and exploration, giving birth to new meanings and creative action (Bluckert, 2006; González, 2003; Stelter, 2009). Moreover, a safe space allows the coach to challenge the client and to lend support during the coaching process (Hanssmann, 2014; Passmore, 2010).

This aspect of coaching as a process was demonstrated in participants' need to be assured of the credentials and credibility of the coach: *"... for me to open up and to also be willing to take input from somebody, particularly on ... well, really on anything, I need to feel that that person has credibility in that space."* In addition to the credentials and credibility of the coach, P1 emphasised that the coach also needs to have relevant corporate and business experience as well as life experience:

... and this is quite tricky because you're talking about somebody who's going to talk about your business life, your business issues, your personal life. So I needed to know that the coach also had some level of similar background in terms of ... probably, you know, the coach, she comes from a personal space. She had been in the corporate world, she had been in that environment. I knew she understood business, so I felt there was going to be common ground there ...

Similarly, P3 was very clear about the experience of a coach: *"... someone that has experienced some stuff. So that just felt to me, I needed someone who hasn't had a perfect life, because I haven't by any search of imagination, and someone that would understand the world I'm in"*. Participant 7 selected her coach from different coaching profiles provided to her by the HR department in her company. She wanted to find a coach with experience in corporate companies, as well as experience in coaching on resilience. Participant 7 explained: *"She came across*

that she's a specialist with resilience building and she worked with big corporates and people in high positions, so I was like, that's interesting."

Participants' need to establish the credibility of the coach through credentials and experience in fact reflect their need to feel safe and contained by the coach. Feeling safe to express inner thoughts and feelings and to speak about potentially inexpressible feelings is essential to maintain willingness to continue the intrapersonal processing that commenced before the sessions, just on a much deeper and more exposing level. This enables participants to establish a connection with the coach, facilitating the intimate process of sharing self-reflective experiences.

This match between coach and client in the context of coaching is also referred to as chemistry between the coach and coachee and the initial session is frequently called the chemistry session to determine if they are compatible. It is appropriate for a chemistry session to take place between the coach and coachee before a coaching programme starts, to determine if there is a match between the coach and coachee including factors such as the level of experience and skills of the coach, as it complements the coaching process (Simon, et al., 2014).

Participant 1 said about the chemistry session and coaching relationship: *"... so we had a Skype call. So we had those discussions and from there I picked the one that I felt I had the best connection with."* She emphasised how the business experience of the coach contributed to her connection with the coach: *"I knew she understood business, so I felt there was going to be common ground there; whereas I think I don't know if I would have gelled with a coach so much who maybe didn't have some of that."* Participant 2 reflected on his chemistry sessions and how he finally selected his coach: *"... (business) sent us a number of CVs that they had matched to us individually ... we think these people will suit you ... then choose who to have chemistry sessions with and then we had the sessions and from there selected."* He further explained how quickly he made up his mind during the chemistry session to continue working with his particular coach: *"... it wasn't 10 minutes into the chemistry session that I decided, I'm sticking with the coach because she sort of somehow asked me three questions and we'd come to this conclusion that I've never had a plan ..."* Similarly, P6 received a number of coaching profiles from which he

selected a few coaches with whom to have chemistry sessions, whereafter he selected his coach. He reflected:

... Human Capital ... sent me probably eight or nine profiles ... I narrowed it down to three ... I spoke to ... them ... I actually thought (name of coach) was the best fit from the profile ... the conversation confirmed it.

The chemistry session P7 had with her coach went so well that she felt that coaching actually started during her chemistry session:

And HR then gave me a list of three or four names. ... So we decided to meet to see, you know, face-to-face, and you immediately get a sense of somebody when you meet them, can I actually talk to this person? Would I be comfortable, you know, talking to them? And yeah, we hit it off at day one. I think day one was probably supposed to be our introductory, but it was actually coaching 101.

A definite trust relationship and connection was established between P7 and her coach: *"It was a conversation that two individuals had, someone with a keen interest in the next person and someone who trusted the next person."* Participant 7 had a connection with her coach, which enhanced her trusting relationship with the coach: *"... it was great for me to meet somebody like her. It's not often that you meet people that you can actually connect with; that you can actually talk about things that you want to talk about."* The connection with the coach is further enhanced when the coach is truly present during a coaching session, as explained by P1: *"... because as a coach you have to be really present and if you're distracted then sometimes it may not work."* Conversely, P6 explained that a chemistry session should go both ways, as the coach also needs to have a positive connection with the coachee: *"But I guess there was a selection from her (the coach) as well, because it's not just one way. She did mention that she thought I'd be a unique challenge."* The relationship between the coach and coachee is further enhanced when the coach assumes the role of being independent, non-judgmental and objective. Participant 1 thoughtfully said:

I think one of the big values for me in a coach is that they are completely separate from your personal life. I mean, it's something completely independent and so therefore a very safe zone, but also somebody who has a bit of a distant perspective and you know they don't have any preconceived notions, they don't know the people you're talking about, it's not their role to judge, form an opinion necessarily, so that's really important.

In addition, P6 was clear about the importance of the independent role of the coach: *Also, she's a great sounding board when things do go wrong, which they do. It's nice to be able to someone who's independent, sort of calm you down before you walk into a meeting and do what you shouldn't do.* Participant 6 had a sturdy relationship with his coach: *"... our relationship became very, very close and still is. And I think that relationship now is, I don't have the words in my mouth, but I think that relationship's more of a partnership."* Participant 4's coach created a safe space during the coaching process, which contributed to a positive relationship between them and that enabled P4 to open up during her coaching session: *"The coach just made it comfortable to really open up. It was really, really easy to open up. I was, I guess scared to open up but otherwise it was really easy."* Participant 2 felt very strongly that chemistry sessions should not take place via telephone or Skype, but that the coach and the coachee should be physically present in view of the intimacy of the coaching relationship that will follow during the coaching sessions: *"But until you've had that physical meeting you haven't connected."* Moreover, P2 said about the intimacy of the coaching relationship:

I definitely prefer physical presence. I find this an incredibly intimate thing. I'm relying on an absolute privilege in terms of the conversation and what's shared and it's a very emotional and vulnerable thing, and I don't think that I got anywhere close on the telephone.

A strong coaching relationship that is established between the coach and client influences the effectiveness of the coaching intervention, as it allows processing to continue and to deepen within the client, because the person feels safe, contained and not threatened. The transformational value of coaching is therefore evident in the containment and safety that are created in the space between the coach and

coachee. The safe space that is created in the coaching relationship encourages the coachee to participate in the self-reflective process to reach a place of personal transformation over time.

b) Spiralling into the self: Wrestling with self-exposure

By enrolling for a coaching programme the participants went through an intimate exploration of the self, which made them feel exposed and vulnerable. The exploration entails an exposing of both their constructive and destructive behaviour, which for the participants did not come naturally at first. Askew and Carnell (2011, p. 124) say that “it requires taking risks and a willingness to be vulnerable and have one’s attitudes and assumptions challenged.” The words of P2 reflected this: *“I definitely prefer physical presence. I find this an incredibly intimate thing. I’m relying on an absolute privilege in terms of the conversation and what’s shared and it’s a very emotional and vulnerable thing ...”* Participant 2 also said: *“So I walked out of the first day of coaching feeling so, in the course, feeling so vulnerable and exposed but at the same time I thought, why haven’t you been asking yourself that question?”* Similarly P5 said: *“Yeah, but for me the coaching journey was emotional above anything else.”* Exploring the self also left P6 feeling vulnerable: *“As I said, just like the writing – at least the writing’s private. But now this is not private, you’re telling somebody else. I guess in a word it’s just, you have to be vulnerable and you have to actually be truthful.”* It concurs with the view of P4, who knew her coach from working together in a previous capacity, but she still took the risk to expose herself by undergoing coaching, which made her feel vulnerable: *“Not close, we kept contact; let me say we kept contact, so we know each other. Actually I think it was, I took that risk, like somebody, this person, knows me, you know, am I going to be, you know, open to this coaching?”*

Participant 6 found it intense and exceptionally difficult to explore behaviour on an emotional level, hence exposing himself by talking about himself and his feelings: *“And it still is – it’s incredibly difficult talking about anything that is personal or feeling-orientated. I still don’t like it. It’s easier now because I know (name of the coach) better, but I really don’t like it.”* As his coaching programme continued, it did not necessarily become easier for P6 to talk about himself: *“I still really struggle to*

talk about that sort of stuff. ... But yeah, for me it was hard and it still is." Talking about themselves left participants with discomfort, as they had to express intimate thoughts openly to the coach. Participant 1 stated: *"I was feeling a little bit uncomfortable about talking about myself the whole time; it's not my style."*

In exploring her behaviour, P1 described herself as more of a practical person, therefore making time for self-reflection and working with the self was something to which she was not used, which inevitably caused discomfort. She stated: *"... I'm just very practical, I just get on and do it action-orientated and I'd never taken the time to think that the idea of reflection, certainly introspection ..."* Participant 1 added: *"... I don't come from a place of lots of introspection ..."* Further to her discomfort, P1 said: *"I said to her, look, I don't really do self-help ..."* Participant 1 was initially uncomfortable talking about herself on a deeper level: *"... which at first was not very comfortable for me because I was sort of thinking, what are we getting out of this?"* She then went to a place of examining the root causes of her destructive behaviour and brought them to the surface, which was very courageous of her: *"... but then we started to sort of go a level deeper on, you know, the root cause I guess of why I might be feeling a certain way which then results in a certain behaviour."* Participant 1 further seemed to see the value of exploring her behaviour and emotions that remained beneath the surface:

... discussing the reasons for certain types of behaviour, and then you kind of again have to acknowledge that the root of them might be things that, you know, are afraid of or you're insecure about, or you feel inferior ...

Participants in this study indeed found it hard to delve into their own behaviour, but establishing the much-needed connection with the coach made them feel contained and safe and their willingness and efficacy to do introspection on ever deeper levels continued to grow. Participant 1 said: *"... just to really try and uncover certain things."* Participant 5 emphasised that he found it intensely disturbing to explore his behaviour and he explained how he wrestled with the process: *"It was hard ... for me it was the lack of understanding or the lack of appreciation of the deeper you go and the more you wrestle with stuff, it's just the better you come out on the other side."* To ultimately expose oneself in the coaching context also requires one to deal

with someone else's input into one's intimate thoughts about the personal and professional self. This was reflected on in an authentic manner by P1:

You know, for me – other people are different - but for me ... for me to open up and to also be willing to take input from somebody, particularly on ... well, really on anything, I need to feel that that person has credibility in that space; and this is quite tricky because you're talking about somebody who's going to talk about your business life, your business issues, your personal life.

Participant 1 explored what was going on personally (inside herself) and how it affected how she presented herself not only in a personal capacity, but also in a professional capacity (outside herself). She said: *"... poking a few people just to get some excitement. So it made me realise that it's very much linked to what's going on personally. And so we started exploring a lot of that, it's what's inside."* During the exploration phase P1 became aware that behaviour in her personal and professional life were inter-linked, as she reflected: *"And I'm more or less ... the kind of person who sort of separates work from personal life ... But actually, when you're thinking about your behaviours, I realised in these discussions you can't separate it."* Participant 1 further emphasised how she explored behaviour on both a personal and professional level: *"... you know, when we were exploring various business-related things and she would ask the question that wasn't ... maybe not directly related to what we were talking about business-wise but something a little bit more personal ..."* This concurred with the view of P4, who also explored behaviour on a personal and professional level, as she stated: *"It was meant to ... as much as like it was personal, I went on it at a personal level, but it was to ... the results, I knew that the result would impact on the professional level."*

Participants responded in the same way as they narrated how exploring initially functional aspects in the business later evolved to exploring behavioural aspects and the self, which helped them to gain insight in their behaviour: *"... the first bit ... was exploring those very sort of more functional things that got me into the coaching in the first place, and uncovering ... why I was behaving in certain ways that might not be ideal for people."* Participant 2 gave his perspective on the technical versus the human side of coaching: *"... it's a nice way to force you into slow and measured*

thinking about more human topics than technical or functional topics." Similarly, P6 explained: *"So, as I say, it started quite functional and had to become quite esoteric as we've gone on. But it all starts with that 'self' sort of thing."* Participant 6 also emphasised: *"You know, success ... sure there are functional things like my diary needs to be ordered, or whatever those things are, but a lot of it is 'why'. Why I do things."*

Exploring behaviour was not something totally new for P2. He was familiar with exploring his own behaviour and improving himself, which was an ongoing process for him as a human being. It formed part of his life's journey, which took him to many different avenues in his life. Coaching also aided his process of moving deeper, as P2 emphasised:

... I'm not a career corporate person, I'm on an adventure, so I'm always looking for ways to better myself, to learn more, to know more than I know yesterday, and I'm always trying to figure out what I don't know – both about the world around me but also most especially about myself. So I'm very introspective and it's a ... it's a very active part of my life working on myself ... In fact, it's been a complete journey of discovery that's gone to many different places ... I don't think that stops, that journey.

Exploring behaviour enabled him to do introspection about what made him feel stuck in his own life and to process what in his behaviour and interactions with other people he could change. Participant 2 said: *"I think you can do a lot of introspective work, but it's tougher to see through your own nonsense I think."* Though P2 was familiar with exploring his behaviour, in contrast with the above, it was the first time that he had sat with someone else in exploring his behaviour on a different level. He said: *"... this is the first time I had to sit down in a room with somebody, you know, get someone climb into my head with a bunch of questions and make me think about things that I had perhaps skirted around."* Participant 2 could see the link between what he was good at or not good at during the exploration phase:

... I think the big connection for me was ... there are a number of things I think that I could be inclined to think I'm better at them and I'm not. Or ... I could do a lot better at certain things ...

Discovering and getting to know the self is not a smooth process, as most people struggle with it. However, it is in this struggle with exposing the self that personal transformation in fact commences and continues, because the coachee engages in a process of increasing self-awareness. To discover by exposing the self is to start thinking more broadly than usual and is a process of experimenting to get to know oneself (Orem et al., 2007; Webster-Smith et al., 2012), hence my description of 'spiralling into the self'.

c) Liberating the self: Pushing through discomfort to efficacious introspection

Coaching triggers the coachee to do introspection and explore behaviour that facilitates personal transformation. Though exploring behaviour was a difficult process for participants, it enabled them to approach life and present themselves in a positive light.

Instead of remaining stuck in their experience of discomfort when doing introspection, it evolved into a liberating process, as P3 reflected:

I mean, hearing her (the coach) truth about the way I was showing up was really hard, you know; accepting that people are perceiving me in a really bad way. That was terribly difficult. But also ... I think to just keep on trusting in oneself ... But it's hard to keep confronting your own whole story ... But it's also liberating.

Introspection enabled P1 to apply a more explorative approach in her way of acting, as she emphasised: *"... yeah, those sessions of exploration for me also enable me more in my life to use a more explorative approach in how I do things."* As the coaching programme continued, participants became more used to the coaching process and this resulted in them becoming more curious, open, interested and braver to explore behaviour. It was evident in the opinion of P1: *"So I found I kind of ... yeah, it sort of started in a very positive way and I really embraced it, because I*

felt well ... yeah, let's explore what this is going to give, yeah." Participant 1 also stated: *"... you know, for me we started exploring quite wide areas which ... yes, I think that's when it became very interesting, yeah."* Similarly, it was initially hard for P4 to do introspection and to open up, but as coaching continued it became easier for her: *"I was, I guess, scared to open up but otherwise it was really easy."* This was confirmed by P2, who said: *"There'd be a little probing question that would say ... I really don't know what to do with that. Okay, you have to think more about that. If you don't know, let's think about that – what could be influencing it, you know."* Exploring behaviour brought P3 to a place of discovering her own needs, as she had neglected herself for years:

... I suddenly realised that I missed myself and that I'd lost myself ... uhm, in the work I was doing, and I was taking on quite a lot of what other people needed from me and I had forgotten what I need from me and ... so we started exploring what it is that I need for myself and what makes me happy and what gives me joy and energy and then focused on those things as well.

In exploring behaviour, P7 was confronted with herself being a perfectionist and she had to face the reality of the impact of this on herself and others: *"I think hearing some of the truths about myself that I wasn't very proud of. Things like it being ... you know, unpacked that I actually have a perfectionist streak in me ..."* However, pushing through the discomfort of looking at herself honestly helped P7 to realise the value of self-exploration and was essential for self-awareness. Participant 7 explained exploring behaviour as 'opening the window of your mind': *"If I can explain it in a sentence, it was almost like opening that window in your mind – that's what it was for me. It was opening that window."*

The personal transformational value of coaching became evident in how, through coaching, the coachees overcame their resistance to and discomfort with self-exposure and in fact started to feel more free as a result of enhanced self-knowledge. As coaching prompted participants to do introspection, they all started to transcend the difficulty of this spiralling into the self, and felt liberated by it, consequently developing continued willingness to process the self.

d) Deep self-reflection: From self-awareness to behavioural change

Self-awareness is associated with self-reflection on behaviour and is the starting point to gain insight in behaviour in order to change behaviour, therefore to bring awareness into action. According to Stout-Rostron (2009b), one of the first areas of focus in coaching is for the client to grow in awareness and consequently to change. Self-awareness entails gaining personal wisdom and new realisations by becoming more aware of what one as a person is saying or doing, how one is engaging with others and what needs to change in behaviour to be more effective. This develops from self-reflection as a starting point (Stout-Rostron, 2009b).

In processing the self, self-awareness became important for participants, as P5 reflected: *"I actually found myself being much more capable of bringing everything together about myself and gaining valuable insight about myself and why I do certain things in a certain way."* Similarly, P7 stated: *"As I said, a lot of the stuff that you learn is your thinking and your awareness that changes."* Participant 2 became aware of his behaviour in both a personal and professional context as he said: *"... and a surprisingly large amount of this self-awareness and conversation and learning about self-awareness revolves around family as much as work."* Moreover, his self-awareness was expanded in how he engaged with his children and wife. Participant 2 realised that he had to understand his behaviour in order to improve himself and to become a better-rounded person; as he explained: *"... my self-awareness allows me to be a better partner, a better father by being more conscious about things. Sure, I'm often still just a tired, grumpy guy who shouts and that happens ..."* He went on to describe his self-awareness concerning his relationship with his wife: *"So a lot of it has been about figuring out my role in our relationship around that – how do I support my wife appropriately and not go to my natural disdain for what she's now doing when I told her ..."* Similarly, P5 stayed open for feedback to improve his self-awareness, which spiralled into change in behaviour: *"... that I continue to work on even till today, is soliciting feedback and being able to take feedback and handle it. Yeah. And the feedback then is what brings about a change in behaviour."* Consequently he changed his behaviour in how he assisted his wife in the household: *"... need to start cooking. So it was one of those things where ... well, I thought I was okay, but it*

was one of the things where she (his wife) said, well, this isn't helpful, this behaviour isn't helpful – which has since changed."

In becoming self-aware P2 noticed that it was a process of uncovering behaviour layer by layer, and going deeper and deeper helped him to understand himself: *"I think self-awareness it's got many different layers, but it starts right at the beginning of not just happening by accident but being who you are on purpose, and then in doing so applying that you are on purpose in different circumstances."* Furthermore, it was through self-awareness that P2 realised that he was a procrastinator and not good at dealing with confrontations. Appropriate behaviour came more naturally for him in some instances, whereas in others it was more difficult to behave correctly: *"... Also, I mean, as much as I think I'm marvellous, I'm a terrible procrastinator. I know I would prefer not to have big emotional confrontations. So if I don't watch myself I could shy away from those kinds of things."* Deep self-reflection and self-awareness were vehicles that helped P2 to change his behaviour: *"I've been on a year-long journey of applying intellect to emotion and from that self-awareness driving changed action. I think that's what we've been doing."* Participant 3 was not engaged in exposing herself by undertaking self-reflection, which ultimately leads to self-awareness: *"So what started was a huge amount of self-awareness, which I never had had an opportunity to explore."* Self-awareness made it clear to P3 what was going on in her life, and how she appeared to others both at home and at work:

I think it's a lot of being around, realising that the way I show you up, is it only about me? So the way I show up affected that. It does at home and it does here. So if I show up in a specific way, whether I'm the boss or not, it does something to the team. If I show up in a different way it also does something to the team – and the importance of that, I think, for your whole life. That has become very important to me, which it wasn't before. It wasn't even something I was aware of before, at all.

Deep self-reflection helped P3 to notice which role she used to assume in a more male-dominated work environment and which role she should take up: *"... and she made me realise that I should choose where I want to have that kind of a role and where I just want to not ... So, all of those deep self-reflection just has been*

amazing." Self-reflection about her role models made P3 aware of how role models, such as her parents, affected her behaviour and what she imitated as a result of that. Therefore, she came to realise what behaviour she had to unlearn and what new behaviour to learn:

I have a very shouty, angry father and so when you grow up like that you don't have a role model that you can imitate. And so I think some people are really lucky that they model after a parent that teaches them these things and then it's just easy and it's natural. For those of us that don't, we have to learn it. And that's been a huge awareness for me. I actually have to learn how to behave.

In adapting to new behaviour, it was significant how P3 realised that it was better to attract people instead of pushing them away:

I have to learn how to behave at the ripe old age of 40-whatever, and that we will continue learning how to behave and learning how to behave is so important in everything ... behave in such a way that no-one wants to be around you.

Deep reflection on the self and becoming much more self-aware was life-changing for P3: *"... life-changing thing because it just created this self-awareness, and the journey that I've been on with her has been all about my self-awareness ..."* Participant 3 could as a result of her self-awareness notice how she was perceived in what she was saying (her words) and in body language: *"... my self-awareness ... the words I use, the way I show up, my body language, how I speak, how I interact, the battles I choose to fight, those I don't. What's important to get involved in, and what's not ..."* Moreover, the coaching programme helped P3 to create awareness how she came across to other people on an interpersonal level. She was not aware that she presented herself as violent until her coach pointed it out to her: *"I don't want to say aggressive ... almost like a warrior. I was very in this ... battle. And I didn't realise. ... so you're presenting quite violently. I was like ... it's impossible. Like, how can that be?"* On the other hand, P4 became aware that because of the

loss of her father, she wanted to fill the gap in the family to compensate for the loss and assumed all responsibility in the family, which was not healthy:

I was losing my father ... wanted to compensate ... fill the gap in everyone's life and wanting to be that hero, wanting to save everybody. ... and actually not achieving much because I wanted to do everything on my own.

Participant 6 processed that self-awareness was a major theme in his coaching programme and a change in behaviour happened for him as a result of his self-awareness: *"And a lot that actually in fairness was self-awareness ... actually if I had to break it down to anything, it was self-awareness ... difficult to understand its worth, but there have been real changes in me in the last two years."* He was very upfront about the responsibility, when becoming self-aware of one's own behaviour, for doing something about it. Participant 6 said: *"Because it's one thing to be self-aware, it's another thing to act on it – if that makes sense. ... We used the word 'own' a lot – to own it I guess maybe is the way."* It was evident how P6 not only became self-aware in terms of his behaviour on an intrapersonal level, but also on an interpersonal level, where he became more tuned to other people, typically at work in the boardroom: *" ... more aware of what everyone else in the room is doing, it's aware of how you play into that because it's not always the same tone, it's not always the same message - and that's been incredibly powerful for me."* Similarly, self-awareness helped P7 to work on an intrapersonal level and to do introspection: *"Yeah ... just things about your awareness being expanded and you being able to know yourself better."* In addition, self-awareness became an ongoing process for her: *"And even though I would leave the coaching session and a week would go by and life would go on and work would go on, that awareness stayed on ..."* Participant 7 used to be a people-pleaser who struggled to set boundaries, resulting in taken on too much work. She realised that she did it all to herself. However, she could trace it back to her childhood when she never felt good enough. Participant 7 explained:

And that made me realise that ... I have this streak to over-please ... and that comes through right from your childhood. All the way from your childhood – that if you don't feel like you are good enough, then you're doing something wrong. But that's where boundaries come in because sometimes you don't need to please everybody ... But are you really doing it because you want to, or are you doing it because you want to please somebody?

Further to self-awareness, P7 started to integrate the difference between pleasing people versus doing something out of free will: "*... that was like a gob-smack for me because once I heard it ... then everything that I did I kind of looked at it and I realise, damn, I'm doing it to please someone; I'm not doing this because I want to.*"

The transformational value of coaching was demonstrated when participants were confronted with deep self-reflection, specifically in how they progressed from self-awareness to change in behaviour.

e) Meeting the essential self: Identity work

Defining who one is and reconnecting with the essential self, which is the 'who am I', were very prominent for participants in this study. This related not only to personal identity, but for some of the participants also to their work identity.

Participant 1 wrestled with defining who she was and how she used to label herself: "*Yeah, I found that quite interesting because I had a certain definition of me, what I am. And then you sort of ... in a way you migrate, you know, to how you define yourself.*" She also said: "*So you get labelled and when you label yourself ... so it was interesting to see in that Enneagram that sure, the label that I put on myself was very present ...*" Ultimately P1 redefined who she was with the help of coaching and the Enneagram questionnaire:

... I found that Enneagram thing quite helpful. And I kind of liked they just sort of ... yeah, I also liked then being able to redefine myself in a certain way ... not fundamentally, but just being able to understand it.

Similarly, P3 worked with understanding of who she was as she noted: *"So it was almost, who am I, what do I want from my life, how do I focus?"* It was similar to P2 who was indeed in a process of finding out who he was and what his values were: *"I think in the first couple of sessions actually, I think there was a bit of just, who is (name of P2)?"* He also stated: *"... and the first part of our sessions together was about, well, who am I? What is important to me? What does matter to me? What are my values?"*

The question of 'who am I' ties in with P5, who found it hard to be confronted with himself during the coaching process and to come to terms with his true self:

... it was coming face-to-face with me and who I am and the way that I behave, and realising that it's actually a different person to what I've also led myself to believe ... having to crawl out of your own skin ...

He regarded it as a continuous process: *"I think it's a lifetime process."* Participant 6 used to define himself through being the best and the fastest, as running formed a huge part of his identity: *"... in the running circles there's no-one faster than me – I used to define myself by those things."* During his coaching programme he refrained from entering to run popular marathons, which was hard for him: *"... this year ... but I'm not going to run Comrades, I'm not going to run Two Oceans, I got myself away from the entry forms. ... it's very difficult for me to do that."* As a result of that, P6 could establish a new identity by redefining himself: *"Now obviously I'll compete with them but it's not how I define myself anymore."* This was further illustrated by P6 when he noted the influence of his upbringing that urged him to be the best and how it continued in his life and the work environment. He said:

... I won't lie – it's hard, because we're all brought up like that. ... Look, I didn't go to a private school but I went to an all-boys school which was incredibly competitive but that's it. So you go to school and what do you do? You compete against each other the whole time. You go to university you compete. You go to your first job ... so you want collaborative team environments, but we measure all of us individually. That's why I say I think

it's just silly the way the whole thing works. But again, you also have to play that game otherwise you don't get ..."

It became clear to P4 that she neglected herself by giving too much of herself to other people: *"... we picked up that like I was also maybe just giving too much – either of myself, my money, you know, to family and ... yeah, mostly to family."* By finding time for herself she met her essential self and owned it: *"... finding time for myself again. I think re-discovering myself. I think for me the biggest thing was re-discovering myself and knowing that making time for different aspects of my life ..."* Participant 4's feeling that she had found herself again led to a feeling of satisfaction: *"So I just re- ... re-owned or ... yeah, you know, re-found myself again. Just starting doing things that I enjoy and ... being, you know, being content again."* This was similar to P6 who came to a place of owning who he was. He was able to describe his characteristics, even if he did not like all of them:

So I like power, I like influence, I like control – and that's also moved for me, I know it, and it is what it is. ... And I like that; it's just how you use it. But I own it; I never used to be able to own it. I used to think those words were very ... I still don't like those words, but anyway that's me.

Participant 2 explained how he lost his identity. Using a metaphor, he referred to himself as a chameleon who adapted easily: *"And I am a bit of a chameleon like that. So if you throw me in a pot somewhere, I adjust very naturally. But I think possibly you do that with a bit of loss of identity too."* However, in the process of adapting his identity easily to meet the needs of others he did not take care of himself and actually lost his identity. Participant 2 said: *"I was having a moment of realisation of loss of personal identity, where I was looking more for what other people were describing I needed rather than what I knew I needed ..."*

A variety of people, more specifically her father and sister, had an impact on the life of P1 and shaped who she became, including the forming of her identity: *"But I think for me it was also in a way acknowledging the role of other people in shaping who we are. It's such an important thing, yeah."* Participant 1 recognised herself in her father who had passed away and it was very meaningful to her when she

discovered that: "*... he was a huge person in my life and so the idea of kind of talking about him ... why he was important and what it was about him that I see in myself. That was a really important set of sessions.*" Furthermore, the family dynamics between P1 and her sister played a prominent part in the forming of her identity, as the role she took up in her family life was the opposite of her sister:

I remember when my sister and I were kids ... she's the one who reads, she's the studious one ... therefore I migrated to the opposite because she had taken that role. So you get labelled and when you label yourself ...

The coaching process enabled P1 to come to terms with who she was and owning her essential self, irrespective of the family dynamics: "*I kind of embraced a few traits that I didn't quite realise I was that person.*" Coaching contributed to P2 not only finding himself again, but also moving from self-doubt and having an inner critic to self-acceptance and becoming reconnected with who he was as he said: "*So yeah, it's reconnecting with my own ... I'm owning who I am and now I'm applying that consciously.*" Participant 3 also came to a place of self-acceptance and being content with her essential self: "*... that realisation that who I am is okay. In fact, who I am is valuable.*" It became clear to P2 that he needed a plan for his life to know where he was heading, but it was deeper than that, as he first needed to find himself again in terms of his identity before he could have a plan for his life, which indeed empowered him: "*... to begin to think that I needed a plan, when maybe what I needed was to reconnect with who I was so that I could be me again and think in the way that I think about things.*"

The personal transformational value of coaching was demonstrated in participants who met and connected to their essential self. This happened by processing the connection and relationship with one's authentic self, the 'who am I' and therefore meeting with one's identity and owning it.

f) Coaching as a fluid, organic and evolving process

Coaching is neither a structured, prescriptive or fixed process nor a process with an agenda or recipe with clear-cut answers; it is a fluid, organic and evolving process. Further to this, it is not performance-driven and therefore cannot be passed or failed, as it is an experiential process. It is within the experiential and evolving process that transformation happened for the participants.

At the beginning of the coaching programme it was quite clear that P1 was action-orientated and preferred a very structured way of working: *"We've had a really interesting discussion but I'm used to saying, alright here's the issue, here's three ways to fix it, go off and try this one next week and let's come back and discuss, I'm used to that. Action-oriented."* Participant 1 had to get accustomed to coaching being an unstructured and organic process: *"We moved away from structure where it used to be easy, quick ..."* However, it took P1 a while to get used to the fluid nature of coaching: *"Well, I think it evolved for sure, certainly for me at the beginning I ... (pause) it took me a while to get comfortable with the sort of fluid nature of coaching ..."* Because of her structured way of doing things she wanted to have agenda points: *"... I would arrive with the coach saying, okay right, here are my three points I'd like to discuss today – boom-boom-boom ..."* It was then that P1 realised the value of wandering in the coaching process, as that allowed for exploration, which is unstructured:

... some view where you're going, but it's better when you allow yourself to meander and to follow a meander ... because the more things are explored then you'd be willing to if you were single-mindedly focused on your agenda point.

As the coaching programme progressed, P1 became more comfortable with the fluidity of the coaching process: *"So I think that was a bit of an evolution to try and get used to that."* She could later even enjoy the evolving process of coaching: *"... let's deal with the three action points, you know."* (Laughs) *"But that really evolved for me and I really embraced it."*

Similarly, P2 confirmed that coaching was an evolving process and was fluid in nature: *"But I think it was less the actual questions themselves than the process."* Moreover, because of the fluidity of coaching, it can't be prescriptive, as explained by P1: *"Yeah, I think the one thing for me though is that because it's not a very prescriptive process, is it? It's not a process where we say, okay look, you've got a broken arm, now we're going to fix it."* Participant 2 emphasised the fluid nature of coaching: *"My topic has changed – not every session, but it's fluid. It's been quite a constant journey."* and P3 said: *"Yeah, it's all a process."* Similarly, P6 explained that coaching is an evolving process: *"I guess you always want these things to go faster and improve quicker but it's obviously all a process ... it's not a destination."* Participant 6 was of the opinion that there is always something to work on and that contributes to the evolving process of coaching: *"... And there's always going to be something and sometimes it might be more intense and sometimes less, but I think there's always something you need to be working through ... it evolves."* Participant 7 confirmed the fluid nature of coaching: *"... and the coach has those tools to share with you, because nothing was planned or rehearsed – and that's why it came across so strongly to me."* Coaching is therefore not a check-list exercise, which in fact will be a limiting experience. Participant 1 said: *"You can't go in and say, okay I'm going to just tick this box – you get nowhere; so I think you really have to be in a mindset where you really want to embrace the process. And I certainly was."* It is therefore a journey of discovery with many different avenues, which emphasises that coaching is an organic process. For some, the journey of discovery is an ongoing process, as explained by P2:

You don't do coaching and tick a tick box. I see value in this. What I've been doing in the year has changed so dramatically from what we discussed in the first session. In fact, it's been a complete journey of discovery that's gone to many different places ... I don't think that stops, that journey.

Because coaching adopts an explorative approach, the coach facilitates the process and consequently does not give advice or answers to the coachee. It is rather a process of enquiring by asking challenging questions. Participant 1 said: *"... it's not a very directive approach, it's more of an exploratory approach ..."* Participant 2

emphasised that the coach does not provide answers: *“One who doesn’t tell me stuff, one who just asks really good questions.”* Similarly, P5 said:

The thing that actually helps me be able to now draw those kinds of insights for myself is because of the nature of the coaching relationship isn’t where I’m given the answers, but whereby (name of the coach) is challenging me to go and find the answers for myself.

Moreover, in the evolving process of coaching it did not always bring some participants to a place of clear-cut answers or a definite solution to a specific concern. Participant 1 explained: *“... much more of a sort of meandering dialogue, which at first was not very comfortable for me because I was sort of thinking, what are we getting out of this? Because we’re going to come out without a conclusion.”* Similarly, P2 realised that coaching is not only about finding answers: *“Not, what are the answers?”* Participant 1 explained the risk of not coming to a conclusion: *“There’s a risk there isn’t a conclusion and I feel ... sometimes it’s now with me, we’ve identified a few things that uhm ... that are sort of harder to deal with, that I need to resolve, you know ...”*

The transformational value of coaching is demonstrated by being an evolving process that has taken place for participants, hence not a ‘tick-list’ process. It is within this fluid and organic process that processing of the self took place.

Sub-theme 3 will be discussed in the section that follows.

5.2.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Coaching establishes continued intrapersonal processing and the development of an internal processing competency

In sub-theme 1 and sub-theme 2 it was discussed how coaching initiated and facilitated the intrapersonal processing of the self. In sub-theme 3 the focus is on how coaching establishes continued intrapersonal processing of the self. Coaching is a vehicle of mechanisms and processes; however, the mechanisms come to an end at some stage, but the process continues, and this is what this theme is about. Therefore, coaching facilitates personal transformation by means of the intrapersonal

processing competence that was developed by coachees *during* coaching to continue *thereafter*.

From my conversations with the participants I found evidence that even when the formal coaching programme came to an end, the process and processing elicited through coaching continued long after the actual coaching sessions had stopped. For me this is indicative of vertical development, over and above horizontal development that results from coaching. Both horizontal and vertical development are important for growth and development (Cook-Greuter, 2004; 2007). Horizontal development involves increasing new knowledge and skills, whereas vertical development enables an individual to make meaning of life and experiences, adopting different perspectives of life and increasing her level of self-awareness (Cook-Greuter, 2004; 2007). Vertical development allows for continued internal processing competence. The value of the coaching process is demonstrated in the continuation of self-reflexive practice, which is evidence of the intrapersonal processing competency that was developed during coaching and maintained thereafter. For some of the participants the coaching programme was still proceeding at the time of the research interviews, and even in them intrapersonal processing competency had developed. Hence, internal processing competency entails continued processing of thoughts, feelings and behaviour in relation to the self and others.

After coaching, P7 continued to live according to the learning and insights she gained from it and maintained this approach. She emphasised: *"Things that I still do today, even though I'm not doing coaching anymore, that I take with me, because I found so much of benefit in it."* Furthermore, P7 explained the sustained outcome and learning of her coaching experience: *"And then what I got out of that and what I still keep with me up until today. I still remember the things she said, ... it's like she's become a little voice in my head – that's how it's become."* As a result of coaching, constant awareness of behaviour was triggered for P7: *"I always tell everyone, you know these things, I'm sure you've read it somewhere. The difference when you have a coach, you become aware of it. And not just aware for that hour that you're there, forever."*

The internal processing that happened for P4 came about by looking at life from a different perspective: *"I think time and again we need that in our lives, somebody who'll help you just to ... you know, to look at things differently."* She also explained how a different perspective opened new possibilities to life for her: *"Or as a person engages you then you start also questioning yourself, you know. So, it really opens your mind. Yeah, it opens your mind to other possibilities in life."* She also spoke of how a different perspective helped her to deal with concerns in her life: *"... it just gave me perspective of, you know, how to ... to deal with my own issues actually ... you know, what to do to get myself back on track."* The shift in perspective for P4 happened in all areas of her life: *"... even though I do it privately but it's going to impact on my life, all areas of my life."* The internal processing competency helped P6 to flourish as person by becoming a happier person and finding enjoyment in his job. He explained: *"But look, I mean, (name of his manager) point about you need to be a happier person - I am also a happier person. ... Three years ago, for me it was always down-side."* Participant 2 also noted that coaching is an ongoing process and that he needed a coach for the rest of his life to stay in the momentum of self-development and intrapersonal processing:

Well, I figured now, I think I need a coach for the rest of my life. I think because as long as you are a human and you want to be better at being you, you need a coach. Yeah, I will forever and a day now have a coach.

This is similar to the view of P3 who valued the personal growth that happened for her as a result of coaching. She stated: *"I just think that the conclusion really is that this is such a powerful mechanism of personal growth."* In addition, P3 said: *"I think coaching is the biggest gift a person can give oneself."* The internal processing competency that was developed by P4 helped her to engage differently with life after coaching. She would even enrol again for coaching; as she explained: *"I'll continue doing it actually."* Participant 4 developed the internal competence to live a more balanced life and to cope better with life: *"... definitely coping better with stress ..."* Coping better with life included for P4 life in a personal and professional context. She remarked: *"It was meant to ... as much as like it was personal, I went on it at a personal level, but it was to ... the results, I knew that the result would impact on the professional level also."* Coaching was a constant grappling process for P5: *"... you*

have the pressures of life on you and then you need to go and wrestle with yourself and find things out about yourself that you don't want to find out and ..." Because of that he developed an intrapersonal processing competence of deep reflection:

Because normally when the mistakes come, that's when the deep reflection comes and that's where I think a lot of value in the coaching process is unleashed. Had I not had lots of difficulties or challenges I had at work last year, I don't think I would have had as much value out of the coaching session as I do now. ... I think coaching is very valuable when you are actually going through a very challenging time either personally or professionally.

Participant 7 realised that she needed to change in order to be a change. She said:

And that's what the thing for me in coaching is. I never changed anybody around me except myself. And all the people that used to frustrate me and used to get on my nerves and situations that used to get on my nerves, they still happen till today; the only thing that has changed is me and how I look at those situations and, you know, how I react to them.

Participant 6 wanted to continue with coaching for a second phase because of the processing that happened for him as a result of coaching: *"Subsequently I've re-signed with (name of the coach). The organisation actually aren't paying for this part of it although they probably will in the end. I just find it incredibly valuable."*

Some participants experienced the coaching process as watered down towards the end of the formal coaching programme implying that coaching had a shelf life for them, which is an indication that they had reached a point where they did not need to continue with formal coaching sessions. These participants seemed to have built competence and were ready to maintain the intrapersonal processing competence they had acquired during coaching. Participant 1 felt that coaching did have a shelf life and that the coaching sessions with her coach started to run down: *"I feel like we're slightly petering out in that sense. I think that's not a personal reflection on everything. We dealt with what we were originally dealing with and together we've come to the end of that particular journey ..."* In addition, P1 said: *"... there might*

be a final life to a session, of certainly if you're doing it frequently – maybe the ideal may be to come back a year from now and do a bit of a ... you know ..." Similarly, P2 said about the coaching relationship coming to an end: *"There may be a big contextual shift, there may be a big personal shift and then you might look for someone with a different type of personality."*

Coaching as a process was explained in this theme to illustrate how it initiates a process of critical reflection (*before coaching*), facilitates evolving processing of the self (*during coaching*) and establishes continued intrapersonal processing (*during and after coaching*). Though any coaching programme comes to an end, because of the result of the process and its mechanisms some participants wanted to continue with it. The process and mechanisms in the coaching context go hand in hand and set each other in motion.

Theme 2, coaching mechanisms, will be discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Coaching mechanisms

Coaching as a *process* was discussed in theme 1, whereas coaching *mechanisms* will be discussed in theme 2. The coaching process cannot happen without coaching mechanisms, and the mechanisms will be senseless without the process, as these are integrated. Coaching mechanisms include the pragmatic operational flow of coaching, how it runs its course and its practicality. It is the coaching mechanisms that allow the process to be facilitated. The coaching mechanisms include **five sub-themes**, namely (1) a series of coaching sessions, (2) using coaching tools to stimulate and maintain the coaching process, (3) coaching goals and objectives, (4) feedback to business on the coaching content and process, and (5) potential coaching blockers. All these aspects in coaching mechanisms, by which coaching as process is facilitated, are important to prompt the processing process the coachee undergoes during the coaching sessions.

A summary of the different themes, sub-themes and categories is set out in **table 5.3** below, whereafter each will be discussed in more detail and grounded in verbatim data.

Table 5.3

Theme 2: Coaching mechanisms

5.2.2 Theme 2: Coaching mechanisms
5.2.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Series of coaching sessions
5.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Using coaching tools to stimulate and maintain the coaching process
<p>Categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Questionnaires b) Models/frameworks c) Homework d) Metaphors/distinctions e) Books/articles f) Journalling g) Electronic media h) Practices i) Fun during coaching
5.2.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Coaching goals and objectives
5.2.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Feedback to business on coaching content and process
5.2.2.5 Sub-theme 5: Potential coaching blockers

5.2.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Series of coaching sessions

The process through which a coachee enrolls for a formal coaching programme includes a series of coaching sessions. In a formal coaching programme the number of coaching sessions varies from person to person, but in this study all participants attended at least eight coaching sessions. The number of coaching sessions attended by the participants adhered to the inclusion criteria, which stipulated a minimum of six coaching sessions (see Chapter 2). It is more likely that behaviour will change after a series of coaching sessions than after one or two coaching sessions. The table below provides information on the range of coaching sessions,

number of coaching sessions, whether the coaching programme had been completed or was still proceeding, and where coaching was taking place.

Table 5.4

Coaching session information

P#	Range of Coaching Sessions	Number of Coaching Sessions	Completed/ Progressing	Venue of Coaching
P1	Ranges from every 2-3 weeks to every 6 weeks to every 2-3 months	At least 10	Continuing (1 session left)	Office of coach
P2	Every 4-5 weeks	At least 8	Continuing (2 sessions left)	Business premises of coachee
P3	Every 6 weeks	At least 10	Continuing	Business premises of coachee
P4	Every 3 weeks	10 sessions	Completed	Business premises of coachee
P5	Ranges from every month to every 2,5 months to every 3 months	At least 10	Continuing	Initially business premises of coachee, then later office of coach
P6	Every 6 weeks	At least 12	Continuing	Varies between business premises of coachee and office of coach
P7	No consistent intervals, but the overall programme run over a period of 14 months	At least 12	Continuing	Business premises of coachee

Coaching facilitates personal transformation because it is a process in which a number of coaching sessions take place, spread over time; hence coaching is not a once-off event. Moreover, it is common practice for any person undergoing coaching to participate in a number or series of coaching sessions for transformation to commence, which is after all the purpose of coaching.

Sub-theme 2 will be discussed in the section that follows: Using coaching tools to stimulate the coaching process.

5.2.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Using coaching tools to stimulate and maintain the coaching process

Numerous coaching tools were used by coaches. Some tools complemented the facilitation of the coaching process and facilitated the transformational value of coaching. Not all coaching tools were used for each of the participants, but several were. It is also important to note that not all tools resonated well with the participants. Nine different *categories* were identified as coaching tools and will subsequently be discussed, namely: (a) questionnaires, (b) models/frameworks, (c) homework, (d) metaphors/distinctions, (d) books/articles, (f) journalling, (g) electronic media, (h) practices, and (i) fun during coaching. All the coaching tools are summarised in **table 5.5** below, with some verbatim information provided.

Table 5.5

Coaching tool information

Tool	Explanation	Verbatim Text
<p>Questionnaires</p>	<p>360-Degree A multi-rater feedback questionnaire could be used in coaching, as it provides a platform to coach from regarding behavioural aspects; it is completed by managers, people reporting directly to the person, peers and team members. It is also used to identify emotional, behavioural, cognitive and performance-related issues.</p> <p>Enneagram The Enneagram questionnaire gives perspective on how and why people behave in a particular way.</p> <p>Tailored Questionnaire Designed by Coach Depending on the coaching process, some coaches design a specific questionnaire to obtain more information from the coachee.</p>	<p>P1: "... what would be very good to do, for me, would be to do one of those 360 reviews; because I'd like to understand, you know, what is the source of that feedback and also with my team here." P1: "... we did the 360 right at the beginning before I even did the coaching sessions and when I got all that feedback, particularly the written feedback ..."</p> <p>P1: "... I found that Enneagram thing quite helpful ...I also liked then being able to redefine myself in a certain way ... not fundamentally, but just being able to understand it." P6: "... one of which came later, was the Enneagram, which is not a model per se but it's an interesting thing to look at." P7: "So we did the Enneagram and a lot of the pieces started fitting together."</p> <p>P7: "I had a questionnaire that she gave me that I had to complete and then it had different questions in it, and then as we went through those questions things, things you know surfaced."</p>

Tool	Explanation	Verbatim Text
Models/ frameworks	<p>Coaches use a model or a framework as a coaching tool to contextualise information for the coachee. Visualising a certain concept attaches more meaning to it and enables the coachee to integrate new information in her particular coaching programme better.</p>	<p>P1: "... that was like a triangle ..."</p> <p>P2: "... and played a lot with frameworks ..."</p> <p>P5: "... so (name of the coach) actually gave me this framework ... So it's the framework of, behaviour's what everyone can see and beneath that is mindsets and beliefs and beneath that it's values."</p> <p>P6: "... I like working on models ... It just works well for me. So (name of the coach) introduced me to a number of those ... the models that she showed me, they were just very good for different scenarios ..."</p> <p>P7: "... but she (name of the coach) drew things like the iceberg and what you see on top, you don't see what's happening underneath. And if you don't see what's happening underneath, you never know exactly what's on top"</p>
Homework	<p>Coaching homework is not something that is pre-packaged, as the content of a particular coaching session determines the kind of homework generated by the coach. Participants had to engage with the homework by means of practical application and reflect upon it between coaching sessions in preparation for the next coaching session. Transformation happens not only in the coaching room, but also between coaching sessions when the coachee engages with the coaching process.</p> <p>Homework as a coaching tool was significant for participants during their respective coaching programmes. As the participants engaged with the homework, it helped them to gain new insights, which then flowed into the next coaching session. Homework between coaching sessions should increase engagement with and adherence to the coaching process (Frisch, 2013).</p> <p>Homework as a coaching tool did not resonate with P1.</p>	<p>P2: "A lot of the homework has been sort of making the link to the next conversation."</p> <p>P3: "My homework this time around was to watch people that I feel are influential and figure out what I'm watching. ... it's a lot about how they're breathing and it's a lot about the eyes and eyebrows I figured out ..."</p> <p>P4: "That was sitting ... because like I was always stressing; it just reconnects, I think, the system or whatever, you know, it just puts everything back into its own place."</p> <p>P5: "... so I'd have to read a book or I had to read an article or complete a survey or an assessment of sorts ... or go and have a particular conversation with a particular person."</p> <p>P6: "... (homework) would be mainly what ... but very relevant to whatever we were discussing at the time."</p> <p>P7: "She left with certain questions that I had to go and answer and come back with answers at the next session."</p>

Tool	Explanation	Verbatim Text
<p>Metaphors/ distinctions</p>	<p>A metaphor represents or is symbolic of something else to transfer meaning or make a comparison. Using metaphors as a coaching tool helped participants to resonate with certain concepts and to deepen their understanding of a discussion point. Sometimes the coach referred to an applicable metaphor, and sometimes it was identified by the coachee herself during the coaching process. It is, however, important that the coachee needs to identify with the particular metaphor/distinction.</p> <p>Metaphors influence us every day in what we read and hear and the visual and symbolic nature of metaphors helps with sense-making (Emson, 2016; Parry, 2008). In coaching it is a potential route to help the coach and client to access the clients' unconscious mind to gain insight into her personal sense-making of situations (Emson, 2016). According to Emson (2016), a metaphor is a potential catalyst in transformation.</p>	<p>P1: <i>"And I really like that Scotsman, Bruce, whatever analogy, because I like that idea; I'd love to be that person that can say, okay that's where we're going, let's go."</i></p> <p>P2: <i>"And we've been playing a lot with the metaphor of being a fantastic tree or being a forest."</i></p> <p>P3: <i>"So it's valuable these analogies that she gives me, or the hurricane for (name of stepchild)."</i></p> <p>P4: <i>"... wanting to be that hero, wanting to save everybody."</i></p> <p>P5: <i>"And he (the coach) said, well it's not good, it's not bad, it's not wrong, it's not right – it just is. Uhm, don't attach goodness or badness to it."</i></p> <p>P6: <i>"So that's more the metaphor that I hold on right now – are you steering the boat in the right direction, not shuffling the chairs on the deck of the Titanic ..."</i></p>
<p>Books/ articles</p>	<p>Coaches referred to books and/or articles that coachees had to read to give them new insights or broaden their perspective on a certain aspect that was addressed in the coaching programme.</p> <p>However, it seems that reading books/articles was not as effective as some of the other coaching tools. For some of the participants (P1 and P4) reading was not their preference or they could not persevere to complete the reading.</p>	<p>P1: <i>"And she did give me advice on a book ... I started a couple of the books, but ... it's not my thing."</i></p> <p>P2: <i>"... most of it I haven't completed because I mean, the amount of books that I've been ... and I've written down the name of a book and this is a really great book for this ..."</i></p> <p>P3: <i>"And she has given me a book that we are going to read together ..."</i></p> <p>P4: <i>"She had recommended books but I didn't ... I wasn't up to it. I just didn't feel like doing it, and that was just me"</i></p> <p>P5: <i>"The name of the book is, What got you here, won't get you there ... The reason why he recommended it was because ..."</i></p> <p>P6: <i>"I used to get a lot of reading of articles, of books."</i></p> <p>P7: <i>"Always left with things to read, books to go read, things to go watch that I could ponder on for the next few weeks till I came back to my next session."</i></p>

Tool	Explanation	Verbatim Text
Journalling	<p>Journalling is a personal process of taking time out regularly to write and reflect on behaviour. As a result of capturing information regularly, participants were able to discover and identify certain themes of behaviour, feelings and emotions they wanted to address. Journalling is therefore different from keeping a diary. Some participants (P3 and P4) did not resonate well with journalling as a coaching tool.</p> <p>According to Orem et al. (2007), some coachees prefer journalling, as it helps them to write down their experiences and keep a record of what is happening for them. It is a collection of experiences of the coachee, such as thoughts, feelings and emotions, and presents the opportunity to use these for reflection purposes, such as becoming aware of certain patterns (Brockbank & McGill, 2006).</p>	<p>P3: <i>"She did ask me to journal but I didn't. (Laughs) I just can't. It's just not who I am."</i></p> <p>P4: <i>"I'm not good at that (journalling). I start and I stop, I start and I stop. So I'm not consistent. I'm not disciplined."</i></p> <p>P6: <i>"... I now have a journal, so every morning I write. ... And in the afternoon."</i></p> <p>P7: <i>"I had a journal which I kept. I wrote down those concepts; I still go back to it. A lot of personal stuff is in there as well, because where she left a concept, I then went and wrote about what I thought and ... you know, on my private life and my personal life what it means ... So that's very, very useful as well."</i></p>
Electronic media	<p>YouTube videos / TED talks / podcasts are typical electronic media used as coaching tools. These revealed a different kind of meaning to participants on a specific aspect that was addressed during coaching.</p>	<p>P2: <i>"... but I've had lots of, go watch this YouTube video, go listen to this podcast ..."</i></p> <p>P3: <i>"In the beginning she gave me a lot of ... Brené Brown to watch, which I must say, was very powerful ... the stuff she speaks about, which is being brave ... yeah, it was very powerful to me."</i></p> <p>P6: <i>"She's given me a whole lot of podcasts to listen to again, to prepare for ..."</i></p> <p>P7: <i>"So Brené Brown was one of them. Her TED talks I listen to a lot, so that was a good one."</i></p>
Practices	<p>A practice in the context of coaching involves the body; the coachee has to carry out and apply something repeatedly to develop or improve something such as mindfulness (to become more present) or do a relaxation exercise (to become more relaxed.)</p>	<p>P2: <i>"I've taken up a meditation practice."</i></p> <p>P4: <i>"She gave me relaxation exercises that I have to do, you know, those 20 minutes ... sitting exercises ..."</i></p>

Tool	Explanation	Verbatim Text
Fun during coaching	Coaching is something that participants take seriously; however, introducing some kind of fun as a coaching tool enhances the entire process.	<p>P2: <i>"And I've had a lot of fun with that. That's been an incredible amount of fun, actually."</i></p> <p>P3: <i>"... listen to my voice messages so that I sound less insecure, actually, in the words I'm using and rather just get my message across. I'm practising. So it's quite fun."</i></p> <p>P7: <i>"We had a very fun time together."</i></p>

Coaching tools refer to the prompts or techniques that the coach uses to get the coaching process going and to maintain processing during the sessions. The coach uses different strategies to prompt and facilitate processing. These strategies or tools enabled the participants in this study to gain self-awareness during the coaching process and to change their behaviour over time. Not all the coaching tools used by the coaches resonated with the participants. In such a case the mechanisms could be used differently to facilitate the process, as the coaching process cannot happen without the coaching mechanisms.

The next sub-theme to be discussed is sub-theme 3: Coaching goals and objectives.

5.2.2.3 Sub-Theme 3: Coaching goals and objectives

The transformational value of having a coaching goal is essentially what the coachee wants to develop and the reason why she wants to transform over time, personally and/or professionally. A formal coaching programme includes an individualised goal and/or objective towards which the coachee is working. Setting coaching goals and objectives during the coaching programme is not always straightforward, but forms an important part of the process, as it is usually a starting point to work from and develops or changes as the coaching programme continues. Sometimes businesses suggested certain objectives and sometimes these were formalised by the coachee herself. Some organisations saw the coaching goals/objectives as confidential

between the coach and coachee, while others wanted to be informed of the goals/objectives if they did not set these.

Coachees sometimes find it difficult to pinpoint the real issue on which they want to be coached or the objective of coaching. The initial problem a coachee brings to the coaching room is often not the real issue and the coach should rather explore an underlying issue (Askew & Carnell, 2011). The business suggested that P1 formalise her own coaching goals: *"And the HR team said, no, you know, this is much more holistic. You will set some goals, but frankly what you then talk about in your coaching session is your own business."* However, the business requested broad feedback on the progress with the coaching goals, without necessarily sharing the content of the coaching sessions. Participant 1 noted: *"I mean, you will meander and because the company's paying, at some point we'd like to really know that you did talk broadly about the goals, but actually what you talk about is completely confidential and it's for you."* In addition, P1 agreed with the business to work on certain coaching objectives: *"... at the beginning of the coaching, because we had a certain number of objectives that I had agreed with the company of what we were going to explore, we did primarily start just around those points ..."*

The coaching objectives of P2 were about him as a person and not about the technical aspects of the business: *"... or probing for that next level of thinking to take place, it's a nice way to force you into slow and measured thinking about more human topics than technical or functional topics."* He went on to say: *"... it was about ... me as a person, not the thing I was thinking about."* Participant 2 was very clear on what his coaching objective was: *"So I went in, my topic was, I need a plan."* Moreover, his objective evolved during the coaching programme, which confirms that coaching is not a process that is cast in concrete: *"My topic has changed – not every session, but it's fluid. It's been quite a constant journey."* The coaching objective for P3 was to feel valued and to add value where she found herself: *"... she (the coach) said to me, what do you want to achieve? And I said, I just want to add value and I feel like I can't, I don't know how."* Focussing on a specific goal later influenced other aspects of her life as well. Participant 3 explained: *"... but I do feel like I have real purpose now, and so all of a sudden the*

value is less relevant than the work that you're doing, which is probably fulfilling. And then all of the other stuff happens."

Business suggested coaching goals for P6, which were to 'feel more comfortable in his own skin' and to be a happy and satisfied employee by integrating work and life:

The reason it started was actually ... the boss I mentioned ... I need to start feeling, in his words, more comfortable in my own skin. So I used to try to separate ... we talk about work, work-life integration now.

Though it was one of the coaching objectives to 'feel more comfortable in his own skin', it was an extremely difficult process for P6. His words reflect this: *"... I'm still not comfortable, I won't lie. ... But where I was, was almost disbelieving. ... So, I'm more comfortable but I'm not, as I say, that calm ... I think that's just something I never will get to."* Though business suggested coaching goals for P6, he found it difficult at the beginning of his coaching programme to identify his own coaching objective and it took two sessions to express his objective: *"... we were just trying to eloquent what I wanted out of it and that was actually quite hard. To eventually land on something – that was actually quite a big ... only took two sessions or whatever it is ..."* However, as the coaching programme continued, the objective also shifted for P6: *"It did move quite quickly. So within that I had a very sort of distinct feel of what I wanted out."* The coaching topic for P7 focussed on building her resilience: *"I'm a mom to a six-year-old boy and he's in Grade 0 – very challenging being a mom and a wife and a professional career woman I think. A lot of my coaching revolved around that and my resilience to that."*

Coaching goals and objectives are something the coachee is working towards to foster personal growth and development and change in behaviour. These goals and objectives form part of coaching mechanisms and therefore enable coaching as process (self-reflection, processing of the self and continued intrapersonal processing) to take place and vice versa in order to facilitate personal transformation. Hence coaching processes and mechanisms should be synchronised, as one will be limited without the other.

The next sub-theme to be discussed is sub-theme 4: Feedback to business on coaching content and process.

5.2.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Feedback to business on coaching content and process

In most corporate organisations and specifically where an individual was identified and referred for coaching by business, the business sponsors and pays for the coaching programme. For that reason, the assumption could be made that the business expects feedback during the coaching process, or the end result of the coaching process, or the outcome of the coaching goal, if any specific goal was set, to ensure ROI. Businesses did not want feedback in the case of all the participants in this study, as in some instances the coaching process was regarded as a confidential process between the coach and coachee.

Though business paid for coaching for P1, it was considered as a gift to her and the business therefore expected no feedback: *"... because the company's paying, at some point we'd like to really know that you did talk broadly about the goals, but actually what you talk about is completely confidential and it's for you. And he said, consider it a gift."* However, P1 felt obliged and wanted to give feedback, as the business had paid for her coaching programme: *"... but in this case I felt a certain accountability because they paid for it and I felt, you know ... "* Participant 1 eventually gave feedback to the business. She remarked: *"I gave feedback; I can't remember exactly what I said, and I shared parts of it – not all of it – but parts of, you know ..."* Consequently, P1 felt satisfied about providing feedback to the business; as she explained: *"And that was good, ... it started off being driven by them (the company). It was important to for me also to know that they understood I saw value in it and that they perceived changes in whatever things."* Participant 1 used the feedback to the business as an opportunity to stand up for herself as a result of the confidence she had gained through the coaching programme and gave constructive feedback to the business on how she experienced its interaction with her, as much of that was based on perceptions rather than facts: *"So it gave me the confidence in a constructive way to go back and say, you know what... either stop doing that or if you're going to do it, do it from a position of facts and not ..."*

His business paid for coaching for P2; he stated: *"... they're paying. They're still paying."* Because the business paid for coaching, its expectation was that the tempo of coaching should be quick to show results. Participant 2 said: *"... I think there's an expectation that we should have been done with our sessions already, where I've used the pace that was necessary for me at the time, so we ... "* Furthermore, P2 felt that to get the best out of coaching, the coaching process should not be rushed. Participant 2 was of the opinion that coaching was his process of becoming a better person, hence the company should not interfere with this process. He stated: *"But there was a session where we had to like meet with the line manager to discuss expectations and all sorts of stuff like that."* Because the business was paying for his coaching, expectations were initially discussed with them: *"... because the company paid they tried to make it a company thing. So, at the start I needed to have a session with my line manager to discuss what their expectations were out of the coaching."* However, P2 deemed it unnecessary to report back to the business on his coaching process, for the simple reason that it was a personal and emotional process for him. He explained: *"I didn't feel it was their right to have expectations out of the coaching other than that they wanted me to be a better version of me. So I never had the session."* Further to the above, P2 felt very strongly about the fact that coaching was mainly about him as a person and therefore his sessions did not have anything to do with the business:

So it was, you know, fitting it into the structure of a corporate programme to me ... on something that is so personal and emotional and specific to me as a human. I can guarantee that nobody is having the same conversation anywhere in the world to what I'm having in my session because it's about me. And to now try and make it a thing that I've got to come and discuss with someone at the office, I thought that was nonsense. So I didn't like that.

Though the business paid for coaching for P5, they did not want feedback on the coaching process. However, the business was unfortunately not committed and persuaded by the coaching process, which was very disappointing to P5: *"... they just let the process continue. And as a result, I think that's probably why not everyone in the business is convinced that it's actually a good thing. There's actually very mixed feelings about it in the business ..."* The business did not buy into

coaching because it could not quantify the coaching process and its outcome in terms of ROI:

... (name of company) is a very numbers-driven organisation, so if you can't quantify something in numbers, then everyone assumes that it doesn't add value, or it doesn't have value ... the coaching relationship it's not something that you can quantify in numbers.

Participant 7 remarked that feedback on her coaching programme was provided to HR: *"Feedback was provided to HR."* In contrast to the other participants, neither business nor P4 paid for her coaching programme, as she volunteered to be coached in her private capacity. Her coach needed coachees to coach as part of practical examinations for obtaining a higher coaching qualification. Participant 4 noted: *"Yes, I volunteered."* Participant 3 was not identified by a business to go for coaching. She thus identified a need for coaching herself; however, the business eventually paid for her coaching programme. The coaching programme for P6 took place in two phases. During the first phase he and the coach reported back to the business on the coaching process. However, when he signed up for coaching again and was busy with the second phase, he did not report back to the business, purely because he then paid for himself. Participant 6 did not elaborate on what feedback was provided to the business: *"Yeah, we report back. Yeah, we did. We reported back to both (name of executives) at the end of the first ... I can't remember whether it was 10 or 12."*

Feedback to business involves taking stock of the coaching content and process, having purposeful conversations with the business regarding the development of the coachee and discussing any transformation that might have taken place for the coachee on a behaviour level, as well as addressing any other applicable concerns, with the consent of the coachee.

Sub-theme 5, namely potential coaching blockers, will now be discussed.

5.2.2.5 Sub-theme 5: Potential coaching blockers

Coaching seems to be a process of positive outcomes, but there are aspects during the course of a coaching programme that do not always work well and could be potential blockers of the coaching process. Though all the participants in this study experienced the coaching process as positive, some aspects encountered during the coaching programme did not work well for them; I labelled these potential blockers. However, these potential blockers for me related to transformational value, as they indicated a need to change something in the coaching mechanisms to further the processing. The transformational value of the blockers became evident when participants became aware of them and these blockers indicated to some of the participants that not everything pertaining to the coaching mechanisms worked well. This enabled them to explore what was needed to experience a better impact related to the content in order to facilitate transformation.

During the initial coaching sessions that P2 attended, the business communicated that the physical presence of the coach was not necessary and hence coaching took place by means of the telephone. It was important for P2 that the coach needed to be physically present during a coaching session: *"But until you've had that physical meeting you haven't connected ... I think the telephone coaching was not the same ...I could choose to connect or not connect on a particular conversation. So that didn't work."* He regarded coaching as an intimate thing and it had an impact on the connection between the coach and coachee, thus the importance of the coach being physically present. As discussed in theme 1 (sub-theme 2), the coachee needs a safe space to participate optimally in the coaching programme and the coach should be a container of such a safe space, which forms part of coaching as a process. Again, coaching mechanisms and coaching as process are interwoven. Participant 2 explained:

I definitely prefer physical presence. I find this an incredibly intimate thing. I'm relying on an absolute privilege in terms of the conversation and what's shared and it's a very emotional and vulnerable thing, and I don't think that I got anywhere close on the telephone.

The initial coaching sessions with a specific coaching provider, which was arranged by the business, was not real coaching for P2, as it was about questions and answers that were content-driven and not process-driven. The second coaching provider was different for him and more about real coaching. Participant 2 said: *"I think in the first coach programme sessions it was also not just ... it wasn't just coaching, it was ... you have to ask these five questions of yourself this week and come back with an answer."* Instead of business being in support of the flow of the coaching process over time (which is process-driven), it was expected that coaching be a quick fix process, which was unsettling for the participants. They felt uncomfortable when the business had the impression that coaching should be a quick process which had a negative influence on coaching as a process. Participant 2 based his discomfort on the following: *"... I think there's an expectation that we should have been done with our sessions already, where I've used the pace that was necessary for me at the time, so we ..."* Similarly, P6 emphasised his discomfort: *"I just think they (business) miss the whole point of the stuff because they are ... but you paid your 12 sessions, surely you are fixed now. It's like the way they speak."* It did not work well for participants to read books, as recommended by their respective coaches during the coaching programme. Participant 1 said: *"I started a couple of the books, but ... it's not my thing."* Participant 4 explained: *"She had recommended books but I didn't ... I wasn't up to it. I just didn't feel like doing it, and that was just me."* The coaching venue being at the business premises of the participants did not work well for all of them. Coaching mechanisms consistently relate to coaching as process; participants needed a safe space and containment for deep processing to take place. Participant 5 was derailed when his coaching sessions took place at his office:

So I'm constantly cognisant of the time and I'm going to try and be out by 5 to 8 and then I start drifting and thinking about the (sales) meeting and I don't think I'm adequately prepared for it ... and there's just too much happening.

Business meetings used to follow directly after his coaching sessions in the same room in which his coaching sessions took place, which further derailed him. Participant 5 explained: *"It was also in a meeting room which was booked, so the people who had an 8 o'clock meeting would also come and stand ... With a lot of*

distraction, it just wasn't working." Thus it interfered with P5 being present for the entire coaching session and the time was very restricted, as he and the coach could not go over the time slot at all: *"... meet for an hour just before work day. So there was almost like a hard stop at the end of the coaching process, and that didn't work."* Because of that, the venue of his coaching sessions then moved to the offices of the coach to address the problem. He felt safer there and could be more engaged in the coaching session, and if need be, they could run over time. Participant 5 said: *"And now we meet on Saturday mornings ... at 7 where we now will try and meet for an hour, hour and a half, but if it runs over then it runs over; it's not the end of the world ..."* Participant 5 referred to the dilemma where he felt his company did not support him or stand behind him when he slipped up and could rather capitalise in his development. He stated that it: *"... helps if you are in a space where the organisation actually does want to invest in you and invest in your development, because you sort of do need an organisation that's going to back you even when you make mistakes."*

Instead of referring to a blocker, P5 reflected on what he would do differently next time, which was to keep a journal: *"So I think with the coaching relationship, the one thing I would do differently in hindsight, I would recommend that everyone keep a journal, because you actually forget where you were when you began your coaching relationship."* By not keeping a journal (coaching mechanism), one could lose track of the progress (coaching as process) one had made. Participant 5 explained: *"And at the end of it all you might be tempted to think that it didn't actually add much value, whereas it actually did ..."* Thus, keeping a journal would have helped P5 to look back and see what progress he had made and what had changed for him as a result of coaching: *"... the reason why I wouldn't have been able to almost realise how much progress I'd made is because I didn't have a journal to page back to 2015 and see where I was at the beginning."* There was nothing in particular during the coaching process that did not work for P6:

... what was quite good about the way we approached it was, if something didn't work, we just moved on or tried something different. So we never got stuck in anything. ... there's nothing that I can think of that didn't work.

Participant 7 would prefer the intervals between coaching sessions to be shorter in order to keep the momentum: *"I would say the time between sessions could have been smaller. I would meet only once a month which then led to some momentum in the coaching sessions being lost."* This explains again how coaching as process was negatively influenced by coaching mechanisms (the duration between coaching sessions).

As with any process, certain aspects could unsettle its flow. In this study a few blockers were identified as part of the coaching mechanisms that had a negative impact on the coaching process. However, these set off a thinking process in which participants became aware or uncomfortable, indicating a need for something to happen differently in order to enable transformation.

Coaching mechanisms were discussed in theme 2, where I explained how mechanisms and processes are intertwined in the coaching process. Coaching mechanisms enable the coaching process to happen. The next theme to be discussed is Theme 3, which is processing the holistic self.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Processing the holistic self

This theme demonstrates working with the holistic self, which entails an integrated process. From the first theme, coaching as process, it became clear that coaching initiates a processing dynamic in and of the self. The nature of that processing dynamic finds its meaning in theme 3. The transformational value of coaching is evident in this theme, in particular with regard to how intra- and interpersonal change manifests and evolves in different, yet interrelated levels of being for the participants. Each of the levels of the self (cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integration) is discussed as it was constructed from the data, in the **six sub-themes** that follow.

A summary of the different themes, sub-themes and categories is set out in **table 5.6** below, whereafter each will be discussed in more detail, supported by verbatim information.

Table 5.6

Theme 3: Processing the holistic self

5.2.3 Theme 3: Processing the holistic self
5.2.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Cognitive processing
Categories a) Comprehensibility b) Meaning-making
5.2.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Emotional processing
Categories a) Triggering emotions b) Recognising emotions c) Owning and managing emotions
5.2.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Somatic processing
Categories a) Bodily awareness b) Reconnecting with and through the body
5.2.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Relational processing
Categories a) Meaningful engagement and connection b) Constructive communication c) Setting boundaries in service of constructive relationships d) Building a support structure
5.2.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Spiritual processing
Categories a) Experiencing an increasing sense of inter-connectedness b) Developing mindfulness as a practice c) From caring for the self to caring for others
5.2.3.6 Sub-theme 6: Integration processing

5.2.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Cognitive processing

Sub-theme 1 focusses on cognitive processing as an element of processing the holistic self. Cognitive processing is initiated in the coaching process. The kind of questions asked by the coaches triggered thought processes in the participants focussed on inter- and intrapersonal concerns rather than on their task-orientated

concerns, as they were used to hear. These thought processes were observed particularly in the way the participants comprehended and understood their behaviour and made sense of their lives in a personal and professional context. For me, this sense-making relates to how they tried to make meaning and find purpose in certain issues and circumstances in their lives. In this way, coaching helped them to process different thoughts, mind-sets and new perspectives concerning their lives.

As a result of cognitive processing that was inspired during the coaching process, participants dealt with issues from sense-making to meaning-making, to purpose in their lives and this became characteristic of the cognitive processing in which they engaged.

Two *categories* relating to the subtheme cognitive processing are discussed, namely: (a) comprehensibility, and (b) meaning-making.

a) Comprehensibility

The first category, comprehensibility, is an exploration process of wanting to understand underlying behaviour from a cognitive perspective. It entails an evolving understanding of the self and the refinement of certain experiences by making sense thereof from a logical and rational perspective, which helped the participants to integrate change.

Participant 1 received feedback from her team on her behaviour, which was experienced as difficult and abrupt. She wanted to understand her underlying behaviour: *"... because I'd like to understand, you know, what is the source of that feedback and also with my team here."* The kind of challenging questions asked by the respective coaches of P1 and P2 stimulated their thought processes to make sense of where they found themselves. Participant 2 said: *"One who doesn't tell me stuff, one who just asks really good questions."* In addition, P2 explained: *"... why haven't you been asking yourself that question? It's the right question to ask. Why had you never gotten to that point in trying to deal with that issue?"* It was the first time that P2 had someone who really asked him thought-provoking questions, which made him start thinking about his life in order to make sense of it:

... that this is the first time I had to sit down in a room with somebody and, you know, get someone climb into my head with a bunch of questions and make me think about things that I had perhaps skirted around. And that's when I began to realise the value of it and I sought it out actively after that.

Similarly, P1 explained how the kind of questions asked by the coach made her think and thus comprehend and process information in a rational manner: "*... but I think it's when ... I think what the coach does very effectively is sort of asking questions; it's not a very directive approach, it's more of an exploratory approach and I think...*" Participant 2 began to make sense of how he used to limit his thinking mostly to a work context: "*I think I limit my thinking of the world here quite a lot to just the work context. So, those are the sorts of questions that we covered that really got me thinking.*" Hence, coaching questions inspired P2 to broaden his cognitive processing from a work and technical context to that of a personal context by being more considerate about a person as a human being. Participant 2 noted: "*... or probing for that next level of thinking to take place, it's a nice way to force you into slow and measured thinking about more human topics than technical or functional topics.*"

Moreover, on a cognitive level P4 processed that she did not need to prove herself at work constantly. She realised that she did not need to know everything and have all the answers in a work context, and accepting that role was to her own detriment. Participant 4 explained: "*It's okay not to know, I don't have to be the hero and you know what, this is my job, I'm doing it because somebody trusts that I can do it ... , over-doing, over-stressing myself about doing it.*" Participant 7 processed how she needed to look through different lenses to gain a new perspective on how she approached life: "*I always looked forward to my coaching session purely because it gave me this avenue to look at things differently.*" In addition, she said: "*... the switch went on and you would think about it and you're like, maybe I should look at it differently, maybe I should change something.*" Participant 5 completed a particular assessment and the results helped him to understand his ways of thinking and his managing style: "*... I think on a cognitive level there's just understanding better how I think. We did a HBDI (Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument) assessment on brain dominance index. Yeah, it sort of helped me understand better how I think.*" In

a professional context, P5 made sense of how his leadership style was leading from a place of fear and how it limited him and the team: *"So, my mindset or my belief was fear ... I was almost trying to ... sub-consciously I was actually trying to legitimise my leadership position at that point in time."* In addition, in a personal context P5 recognised during coaching the need to change his way of thinking. This change was necessary for P5, since it affected how he supported his wife and their baby daughter and thus the household. He explained:

Yes. And then an even bigger shift for me I guess was, in order for me to be able to do that shift, the mindset shift that needed to happen for me was, I couldn't look at it in terms of, well I'm doing X-number of morning duty chunks and now I need to do one of the evening ones without an exchange of chunks. So I needed to have that mindset shift.

Coaching helped P7 to delve deeper and explore her behaviour below the surface, which eventually helped her to understand and integrate what behavioural patterns affected her life, therefore the above-the-surface behaviour, and the way in which other people perceived her. She noted: *"... but drew things like the iceberg and what you see on top, you don't see what's happening underneath. And if you don't see what's happening underneath, you never know exactly what's on top ..."* Participant 7 came to a place of understanding not only her own behaviour, but also to be willing to be open towards people around her:

You never know what's happening underneath the surface. And that was a very big lesson for me as well, is to always understand where the next person is coming from and to give ... to always allow them that benefit of the doubt that it's more than just you. There's always more than just you.

Participant 2 felt for many years that he was a failure, since he had not completed his university studies and wasted his parents' money, as he explained: *"Because I've always felt something is missing ... but at the same time I still feel aremorse about ... my poor parents had to pay back the bursary that I gave up and squandered a year's worth of money ..."* It was something that bothered him for a big part of his life: *"... and it's always plagued me my whole life, and I don't think I*

ever made peace with it. I'd always sort of just been running from it or pretending it wasn't there..." He, however, came to peace with that and made sense that it was part of his life's journey and shaped the person he had become, including that he worked hard to be successful in his career: *"... I have made peace with that and all of this that happened here, that made me who I am, is what is so successful now."*

Coaching facilitates personal transformation by making sense of one's life in a rational way by creating structure to understand one's context in life and one's own part in it.

b) Meaning-making

Comprehensibility flows into meaning-making, which is the process of discovering one's significance, gaining new perspectives by observing oneself differently and becoming aware of what motivates one in life. Participants had to assess where they found themselves in life and to make meaning of that. Meaning-making also relates to the concept of meaningfulness in the SOC construct.

On a cognitive level P4 gained perspective on how to deal with her concerns and consequently to address them instead of hoping they would disappear: *"It just gave me perspective of, you know, how to ... (pause) to deal with my own issues actually."* , P4 said: *"We're not dealing with our issues. We keep ourselves so very busy, because we don't want to deal with whatever we're facing in our lives."* Participant 4 started to observe and think differently on how she should provide for her family and thus to understand the logic behind addressing concerns: *"And I think during the coaching session I got to understand that I didn't have to ... uhm ... to give that money. I can still love them and not give them the money, and it's still okay ..."* There was a theme of loss that was evident during the coaching sessions for P4: *"We picked up that there was a theme throughout the coaching and it was a theme of loss – different phases, different aspects of my life, you know, with loss."* This insight helped P4 to deal with her life and changed her perspective as she said: *"And so it helped me to know, you know, what I'm dealing with in my life. It made it easier to be cognisant of ... maybe my behaviour also, you know, why I'm behaving*

in certain ways." The medium P7 used to make meaning of her day-to-day engagement with people and to look differently at situations was self-reflection:

So you often come to work every day, sit behind the same desk, engage with the same people, face the same issues, and you never really on your own go away and reflect. And have that opportunity to reflect but with some guidance on how you're reflecting. And I felt that when I went into these coaching sessions, be it an hour, hour and a half. I had that opportunity to look at things differently that were happening. ... So if I was having a little bit of conflict with another team member or my line manager, it was about looking at things differently.

Further to the processing of the self on a cognitive level, P1 made meaning of the inter-connectedness of everything: *"... and then you realise actually these things are very inter-connected and I think, you know, I never made that conscious link in my mind until we'd explored that, that I actually ... everything's inter-connected ... "* Understanding of her Enneagram results gave P1 insight on a cognitive level to make meaning of who she was: *"... I found that Enneagram thing quite helpful ... I also liked then being able to redefine myself in a certain way ... not fundamentally, but just being able to understand it."* Similarly, P2 could scrutinise on a cognitive level who he was and even had an epiphany in this journey of finding himself: *So where we're now in this coaching journey is to say, okay, so I've figured out now who I am ...* and *"I was having a moment of realisation of loss of personal identity, where I was looking more for what other people were describing I needed rather than what I knew I needed ..."* Ultimately P2 found his own identity and could work out who he was and what had value for him:

What is my role in this big, turbulent time? And that actually worked incredibly well because just starting with the foundation now saying, you know what, actually I know myself. I know who I am, I know what's important to me.

Coaching opened the mind of P4 and gave her perspective on how to deal with concerns in her life, which gave her a sense of relief: *"It was liberating ... it opened my mind, or actually re-opened my mind ... It just gave me perspective of ... how to deal with my own issues actually ... what to do to get myself back on track."* In addition, P4 stopped to check her emails over week-ends, which she would not have 'dared' doing before the coaching process. She therefore processed the importance of giving herself a break mentally. Participant 4 stated: *"And find that I haven't checked and it's like, look, I haven't checked, I'll go and check what is it; whereas before I would not even ... I wouldn't dare do that."* Furthermore, P4 integrated that she was cognitively much more focussed and efficient when she stressed less. Participant 4 said: *"Let's see, head level. Look, I think it clears ... obviously when you're not stressed you are able to ... you can focus, plan things that you want to do, you know."* Participant 7 processed new insights by intellectualising them: *"I think getting that knowledge. Like, feeling that light going on, that for me moved me a lot. ... I like understanding the finer things in life and ... I go beyond the surface on a lot of things."* Further to intellectualising information to make meaning of certain concepts, P7 reflected:

Certain words and terms and terminologies and phrases and concepts I knew before but I could never articulate it very well. Now I feel I can, and I often talk to people about it. ... Intellectually I think I grew in that sense.

Participant 2 made meaning of his life's journey, his career choices and who he was. The self-doubt he had was transformed into faith in himself. Participant 2 realised that he used to have guilt feelings and self-doubt because of not applying rules as expected by society, but then life took him where he should be at the time. Thus, he translated guilt to conviction that he would not be where he was at the time and that if he had not been a rebel in his youth, he might have got stuck in his career.

But I think that guilt translated into a little bit of self-doubt on this journey. So whilst I was doing a lot and progressing very fast, at the same time I was doubting whether it was ... because of me, or because I was now on the path I should have been all along? So, I would say the biggest shift here has been me recapitalising on my faith in myself.

This realisation freed P2 from guilt and led him to self-acceptance as he made peace with who he was and made meaning of what mattered to him as opposed to what society expected from him. Consequently, P2 could reconnect with his identity, his values and what he stood for and finally become the person he truly was. This is reflected in his words:

I now have very clear faith in myself because I've connected with who I am, my first step, I can now appreciate this whole journey for what it is. It makes a lot more sense and I got there not because of some mercy or some accident, it's because of who I am and the choices I'm making. So yeah, it's reconnecting with my own ... I'm owning who I am and now I'm applying that consciously.

Participant 6 gave meaning to his personal and family life as he introduced more structure and planning of goals to achieve within the family; as he explained:

Now we take those practices into our home. We have our family five-year goals, like what we want for (name of son) etc. etc. Some of those are money, some of them are other things but it's much more structured in that way.

The transformational value of coaching lay in how it helped participants to find meaning and direction in life. Participant 3 assessed the 'who' and 'what' she was and 'why' she was doing what she was doing: "... *but we don't take time for ourselves in the growth of who we are and what our role is in life and why we're here.*" Investing more time in herself helped P3 find direction and purpose in her life: "*And I think that's what coaching gives you – it gives you an insight into your purpose, that you would never take the time because we're so busy giving.*" Participant 3 further remarked: "*I'm still not there, I still have a lot to work through, but I do feel like I have real purpose now ...*"

Looking through the lenses of P3, the place where she made a difference and found meaning was in her leadership role, as she was prepared to ask challenging questions: "*And what shifted through my coaching is, that's the massive leadership advantage I bring ... especially in the world of banking no-one says why ... someone*

that's brave enough to go, really? You really think that's how it should be?" Therefore, instead of apologising or conforming to the majority, P3 started to face challenges and asking brave questions, which added to her willingness to invest energy in her leadership role. Consequently, coaching helped her to become very clear on what gave her meaning in life, which involved asking questions and authorising herself in doing so. Participant 3 thoughtfully said: *"And it's been that shift from apologising (when asking questions) for the way I am to literally just celebrating it as my purpose."* She also remarked: *"... having this place which allows me the freedom to go really, really far in terms of imagination and questioning ..."* In addition, if for whatever reason P3 could not attend a meeting, the feedback she received from her colleagues confirmed what gave her meaning and purpose, which was to ask question in meetings: *"we miss your voice in our exco's ..."*

Personal transformation is demonstrated in how participants found meaning and purpose by finding out what was significant for them in life. As a result of meaningfulness they were motivated to invest energy to change behaviour, facing challenges and seeing difficulties through.

In sub-theme 1 cognitive processing was discussed, where comprehensibility and meaning-making were addressed. Comprehensibility developed when participants were able to comprehend certain experiences and make sense out of these in a logical way. Meaning-making refers to the extent to which participants were able to find meaning and purpose and consequently feel motivated to face problems and see these as a challenge, instead of a burden to get through.

Sub-theme 2, namely emotional processing, will now be discussed.

5.2.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Emotional processing

Emotional processing was evident in the participants' ability not only to recognise feelings, but also to own them, whether it was a positive (e.g. happiness) or a negative emotion (e.g. sadness), and to know how to integrate these. Furthermore, their emotional processing included the ability to recognise the emotions of others as well. The transformational value of coaching lies in processing of emotions, as the

emotional level of being forms an integral part of the holistic self. The following *categories* are discussed: (a) triggering emotions, (b) recognising emotions, and (c) owning and managing emotions.

a) Triggering emotions

Working inside the self allows for accessing emotions of which a person was never aware or had previously denied. These emotions are triggered on an unconscious level and brought to the conscious, thus to the surface, where they are recognised. Once recognised, they enable a person to work with the emotions by examining them and eventually owning the emotions.

Emotions were triggered when participants worked inside the self. Participant 1 said: *"And then also, I mean for me, on the emotional side there were quiet times when we'd get quite emotional ..."* She allowed herself to show emotion, for example by crying. *"There was quite a lot of crying in those sessions, yeah."* It tied in with what P2 said regarding the processing of his emotions: *"I don't even remember what it was, but I remember the emotions quite a lot. I find it very moving..."* Moreover, it concurred with the experiences of P7, where emotions were triggered during the coaching sessions: *"So there were times that I cried. There were certain subjects that got touched on that took me back to my childhood and now we cry."* Participant 7 was prepared to examine her emotions and to bring them to the surface: *"So if I broke down for a reason there's a bigger reason behind it and you need to unpack that so that you can deal with it and move on – that kind of thing."* Participant 5 noted that working with the self caused him to be emotionally grounded and present in the midst of strong emotions, as he was stretched during his coaching journey: *"A lot of the stuff was really hard and I think a lot of emotional resilience is necessary because the extent of the insight that you gain is as far as you take it."* Working on an emotional level helped P5 to integrate who he was as a person and to accept himself for who he was: *"So, emotionally I would say it's the whole journey that's led me to be more comfortable with who I am."*

The transformational value of coaching triggered emotions in such a way that participants started to recognise their emotions and allowed themselves to experience these emotions.

b) Recognising emotions

By allowing themselves to experience emotions, participants gained more insight into their own emotions and the meaning thereof. There is value in acknowledging the existence of emotions by verbalising unsaid emotions, or put differently, giving names to the different emotions. Deep processing takes place in recognising and owning these emotions. It was extremely significant for P1 and P3 to bring their emotions to the surface and put words to them. Through coaching, this resulted in better understanding of their emotions on an intrapersonal level, which led to understanding themselves better. Participant 1 explained:

When you start to say things out loud that deep inside you sort of know are concerns or fears or insecurities then you verbalise them – that’s quite an emotional thing and in a way allowing yourself to be emotional like that, particularly in business there’s a lot of people who aren’t very emotional – is quite a lethargic thing and it’s like a release, which all sounds a little namby-pamby for me, but I realised the value of that in this process.

Similarly, P3 stated about allowing herself to have emotions:

Maybe accepting ... that emotion is actually okay – well, that shifted because that was something I’d never done before either. So I am not a person who cries and it’s again you sort of go, why? It’s okay to feel, it’s okay to feel sad, it’s okay to feel glad or ... again it’s just to name it ... and figure out and maybe just ride the emotion rather than hide it.

This is further reflected in the words of P1, who verbalised her emotions as she recognised them: *"... again it’s the verbalisation of those feelings that probably deep down inside you, you knew they existed but you never surfaced them. That’s quite an emotional thing."* To engage with himself on an emotional level rather than an

intellectual level was something new for P2. Emotions were unlocked for him, brought to the surface, and he was able to recognise his emotions. Participant 2 explained: *"This whole thing has been an emotional thing. It's not an intellectual thing that's happening, it's the application of intellect to my emotion – that's what it is actually. I think the whole thing is an emotional journey."*

Participant 1, P2 and P3 struggled with feelings of guilt. Participant 1 recognised that she had feelings of guilt because of not paying enough attention to her role as a mother: *"... guilt feelings of being a working mother ..."* On the other hand, P2 had guilt feelings about being rebellious and not completing his university course in his youth: *"I was a little bit of a rebellious youth, smoked too much pot, left varsity, fought with my parents and then they kicked me out and said, okay well, go, good luck then ..."* The guilt feelings included speculation about where he would have been if he had not been rebellious: *"And it felt like in a way I had now connected with what was the path I should have been on if I wasn't bad; and I felt a lot of guilt about that."* Further to this, P2 had guilt feelings about moving from a job in consultancy to a corporate career because this was what society expected from him: *"And I think a lot of that surfaced again in me very sub-consciously when I joined here, because it was almost like I was making an admission of guilt, you know."*

The transformational value of coaching was demonstrated in enabling participants to recognise and integrate their emotions, and to translate these to the situation in which they found themselves.

c) Owning and managing emotions

It was all very well for participants to recognise their emotions, but the value of coaching seemed evident in them taking the next step to address and take control of their emotions by owning and managing these. Understanding the core of emotions helped participants to deal with them and some participants 'befriended' their emotions.

By addressing his guilt feelings, P2 processed that being in the corporate company he was working for, in a particular job he enjoyed doing, was where he should be in

his career life at the time of the research interview, irrespective of his past. Participant 2 said: *"But so now I'm here and I think that guilt began to translate in some ways, along with all the learning and discovery – because I was really enjoying the corporate world, I've really enjoyed it."* Thus, instead of experiencing feelings of guilt, P2 processed making peace with who he was, where he found himself in life and being successful in his career: *"... I have made peace with that and all of this that happened here, that made me who I am, is what is so successful now."*

Participant 3 processed how emotions and words such as fear and guilt became part of her language and how all this actually limited her in her way of being: *"... so I've always had this massive fear of everything and how to use that differently, even the languaging of, I'm going to call it fear – and not to be crippled by that thing I called fear."* Furthermore, by owning these emotions, P3 started to deal differently about fear and guilt, translated these to a positive experience rather than a negative one and realised that feeling was a constant process. She said:

So a lot has been about shifting our own languaging, shifting our own perceptions and to really figure out the role of my two big evils, which are guilt and fear and how to channel them completely differently so that they're positive in my life rather than negative. I definitely haven't got it right yet; I don't know if I ever will, but ... yeah.

Another way P3 dealt with her emotions was to go a level deeper to understand why she was feeling a certain way. Instead of ignoring her emotions, she brought them to the surface and confronted her own emotions: *"... so it's to give those things a personality makes it much easier to deal with them. So, hi guilt, shoh, you're loud today – what's that about? Why am I feeling that? Do I need you here?"* As a result of the feedback received from her coach, P3 became aware that her voice gave a message of insecurity. She started to manage her feeling of insecurity and consequently addressed it by using her voice with more authority. She noted: *"... it was pointed out to me and now I actually listen to my voice messages so that I sound less insecure, actually, in the words I'm using and rather just get my message across. I'm practising."*

In addition, P1 noted that her feelings of insecurity and fears prevented her from allowing the team to shine, which is an essential leadership trait. She said: *"That was a big thing for me as well – sort of constant sort of feelings of insecurity and, you know, maybe that didn't let me really let the team shine. I think it's a very common leadership trait."* That was when the penny dropped for her. By exploring and processing her emotions, P1 overcame and managed her fears and insecurities and this enabled her to let her team shine: *"... that was also a penny-dropper. Sort of, just get over yourself, you know ... actually, you know, be confident with who you are and in doing so actually ... you know, let the team shine and that."*

Participant 1 felt emotionally overwhelmed by the 360-degree feedback she received from her team. She appreciated the time each person in the team took to give her feedback on the questionnaire and their honest and authentic feedback, which included positive and critical feedback: *"... we did the 360 ... and when I got all that feedback, particularly the written feedback, I was overwhelmed with the amount of time people would take to write stuff – both positive and more critical."* Though the feedback received was not easy for P1, it was evident that she owned it, and above all she was ready to do something about it: *"... try and resolve. So that was a huge thing for me with that. It was really understanding that people cared. Even though people had quite difficult things for me to acknowledge ..."*

Furthermore, by means of emotional processing, P1 could link her disruptive behaviour to her own insecurities: *"... certain behaviours I might be exhibiting at work are very much linked to either my own insecurities, my own need for affirmation, my own probably impossible feelings of ... having run my course."* She got in touch with and took responsibility for her own emotions by acknowledging and addressing her disruptive behaviour. Consequently, P1 developed her EQ by recognising not only her own emotions, but also the emotions of other people around her and developing the ability to differentiate between them. It concurs with the attitude of P6 when senior management expected him to address and improve his EQ: *"But the initial problem statement was, you have this much potential, find a way to get there. You're not going to get there by studying more, you're going to get there by unleashing a little empathy -EQ ..."* The transformational value of coaching was experienced when P6 developed his EQ and also became more empathetic with

others around him: *"And I've always had integrity but I think show it more now, I'm a little more empathetic to a point. ... So it moved, it changed."* In applying EQ, P6 engaged differently with staff in his leadership position: *"It's how you get people to buy into what you're doing, so they want to do it as opposed to telling them. And that was always the unlock and I think it has started to work."*

Participant 5 found himself in a place of extreme sadness because he did not have the opportunity to correct his mistakes in the establishment of a new business unit that did not work out well and he had to own that emotion. Participant 5 noted: *"So it's a pity and it's a source of lots of heartache for me. I would have actually loved to stay in the business and not have been pulled out ... I never actually got a chance to fix them."* Participant 4 used to stress easily, which affected her emotions. The coaching programme enabled her to manage and cope better with stress. She said: *"You know, if something is going to upset me I've got the ability of like looking at it and ignoring it and not allowing it to stress me."* Moreover, P4 explained thoughtfully that by letting go of things over which she did not have control, she could manage her stress levels much better: *"... not stressing about things that I don't have control over ... and instead of upset, I just let go ... for me it's learning to know when to let go and not want to always have the answers..."* In the context of emotions, P6 came to realise that he had very limited emotional vocabulary. He noticed it as he started to journal and had to reflect among others on his emotions. Through coaching his emotional vocabulary increased over time and it became easier for him to use emotional words to describe what he felt. Participant 6 explained:

When I started it was very difficult. Like the words I'd come up were always the same – if that makes sense. It's like a very limited vocabulary in terms of ... especially explaining heart things, incredibly limited vocabulary. I'm a little bit better now because now I can sort of recognise a bit better what I am feeling – if that makes sense.

The transformational value of coaching is demonstrated in how participants were empowered not only to own their emotions, but also to take control and manage these where possible.

The next sub-theme to be discussed is somatic processing.

5.2.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Somatic processing

Somatic processing does not stand alone and is another sphere or level of being in the processing of the holistic self. A human being does not consist of only a head (thoughts) and heart (emotions), but also of a body. The body was experienced by the participants as a form of intelligence that was influenced by how they tuned into the wisdom of their bodies and what they sensed from their bodies. Somatic processing was important to a few participants in their experience of sustained and transformative change. This sub-theme describes how, by developing bodily awareness and enabling a reconnection with and through the body, coaching demonstrates its transformational value. The two *categories* that are discussed under the sub-theme somatic processing are: (a) bodily awareness, and (b) reconnecting with and through the body.

a) Bodily awareness

Awareness on a somatic level (bodily awareness) is as important as awareness on a cognitive and emotional level. The wisdom of the body brought about different insight for participants in this study and they realised how the body influenced how they behaved and presented themselves in life.

It was during the coaching programme that P6 became aware for the first time of his body, specifically his body posture and breathing: *"... you can probably see I am still incredibly rigid, I still breathe quite shallowly especially when I get sort of anxious or whatever it is, etc. etc. but the thing is I now know. I never ever knew before."* Further to awareness of his body, P6 became aware that he was usually in a hurry: *"I met (name of the coach), I think it was on Monday and on Friday and I like ran in there because I was late from something and she was like, gee, calm down."* Though P6 was made aware of the fact that he had to slow down, it was difficult for him to act on it because his body was so used to be in a hurry: *"So I still struggle with that. I really do struggle to sort of like take things a little bit slower, breathe slower, take a moment. But at least I am sort of more aware of it now."*

Participant 6 was unaware that behaviour starts with the body. He used to run around and in order to slow down at a particular moment, his coach advised him to use a slogan. Participant 6 explained: "... *one or two words you actually need to start thinking about to stop sort of scrambling around and for me it's always this one – calm, and how do you get there.*" A very important body lesson P6 was taught by his coach was bodily awareness and focussing first on his body, then the rest would follow: "*And she always says to me, start with the body – which is interesting.*" These new insights about the body helped P6 to be more mindful of his body and more tuned into his body. Furthermore, P6 processed on a bodily level that he felt a sense in his stomach, a signal in the form of a physical feeling, which warned him when he wanted to act in a negative way, such as exploding or making people feel unworthy. Subsequently P6 became aware of the internal senses in his body: "*I know what that feels like. Like something will start in my stomach, I'm aware of it*" Moreover, P6 remarked: "*There are now physical triggers which come before anything else, then I know you just need to be careful what you're saying and how you say it and the tone you say it in.*"

Participant 6 further explained how his body alerted him in different ways to take control of his behaviour before displaying disruptive behaviour: "*The big thing for me is when people ... I don't know if they do it on purpose but when they start to wind me up I can feel it.*" The one physical trigger or sense he felt was in his sternum. Participant 6 noted: "*I can feel like an anxious sort of thing like in my sort of sternum, yeah.*" The other sense he felt was in his fingers, as P6 explained: "*I can feel that and sometimes I'll get like a tingling in my fingers. I never ever used to know. ... But I now know and I know then I need to be careful.* So it's an awareness thing." Participant 6 recognised his habitual patterns that formed over time and trapped him. He shifted from how he used to act by blowing up and raising his voice, to being much more in control:

... I used to just sort of blow up in these things. I don't anymore. ... you probably hear I very rarely raise my voice but there's other ways to make people know that what they're doing is not what you expect.

Another eye-opener for P6 from a somatic point of view was the impact of his body language. It did not matter how much technical knowledge and business outputs he could offer to colleagues; it was equally important to reflect the right image at work and deal with the consequences one's conduct had for other people. Hence, P6 realised clearly that if his behaviour and character were not in good standing, it damaged everything he might know and pushed people away. Participant 6 explained:

... they (staff) watch you and they take signals. They're watching you all the time, so you need to be very aware of how you show up and what you're doing, how you're doing it and etc. etc. – which I wasn't. I always just thought if you did a ... and I think it's still partly relevant – if you do a good job the rest will take care of itself. It's more than that.

... it's not like I do ... anything majorly different in terms of my technical stuff but it is exactly that. It's that showing up stuff, and it's amazing if you do it in the right way then people want to be part of what you're doing, as opposed to scared of what you're doing ...

Awareness of her body language made P1 aware how she used to distress colleagues: *"We talked a lot about that body language and the effect it has on other people where on one hand it could be energising, on the other hand it could be terrifying. Yeah, so we talked a lot about that."* In the processing of their somatic awareness participants gained new insight by adopting a fast pace, resulting in leaving people behind, therefore they had to slow down to not lose people. Participant 1 said:

... and linked to pace is also the very basic things of, ... when you're on a call with somebody, ... take the five minutes and just chat about the person, as opposed to launching straight into what you need to get done.

In relation to her fast pace, P3 realised she had to slow down by differentiating where she needed to get involved in business and where not: *"What's important to get involved in, and what's not; because at the time I'm a very high-energy person. I*

was involved in so much that I couldn't be good at anything, and ... just becoming aware of that."

Furthermore, P1 processed that her fast pace was a way to attend to various responsibilities in both a personal and work context. Because of the guilt she felt about being a working mother, the more quickly she could attend to work responsibilities, the more quickly she could attend to her family responsibilities. However, her fast pace did not serve her well and she had to allow herself to be a human being and not only a performance object. Participant 1 explained: *"... I've always been moving at such a fast pace ... for me that was also very linked to ... guilt feelings of being a working mother, ... I must be getting stuff done so I can get back ..."*

Awareness of her body language made P1 realise that she had a limited effect on other people, which freed her to use her body language as an enabler to connect with people. Participant 1 said: *"I think for me the practical things were about the use of vocabulary, about body language, about pace and the impact all of those things have on other people."* When unpacking the use of her vocabulary, body language and fast pace, P1 became aware of how it paralysed both herself and her team: *"When you sort of unpack them a bit you realise, actually you're not succeeding at anything ..."* Becoming present in her body helped P1 to be more aware of her somatic responses, resulting in behaving differently. Hence P1 started to use her body as a different form of intelligence:

And I remember our most recent session, last session was before Christmas, where the coach said, your body language is very different, your pace and all of that is still the same. You're still moving at the same pace, you've still got the same energy, but your body language is a bit different. And I can tell you that was not a conscious thing, it just evolved.

Moreover, as a result of slowing down her pace instead of being in 'pilot mode', P1 became more tuned into what was going on around her and became more relaxed: *"I mean, I tend to do everything at a pace – be willing to be a bit slower. But also then, not being ... just being a bit more relaxed and a bit more composed in a sense."* It

was life-changing for P3 when her coach pointed out to her what her body language represented as she embodied being violent: *"And she kept pointing out to me, you use these words, they're violent; so you're presenting quite violently. ... And I started realising it and I think that, for me, was the most amazing life-changing thing ..."* Furthermore, P3 practised using her hands, posture and voice differently. She referred to how she changed from 'demanding' attention to 'commanding' attention:

It's just like you would practise tennis, you can practice ... rocking up in a different way. You can practise commanding attention, which I never did before. I was always the opposite of that. I was demanding attention rather than commanding it, which is so much easier.

There was a shift for P3 from displaying a body ruled by fear and antagonism to acting from a place of curiosity and being interested in who people were: *"Where before I would show up with fear and uhm ... antagonism, now I kind of show up with curiosity and ... just interested in who they are really ..."* The coach informed P7 during a particular coaching session of her 'in the moment' body language, which was then further explored during the session: *"... she would see me starting to fidget or I would just have this blank look on my face ... So a lot of the body language was the ability for her to see it."* Coaching made P2 aware of how he presented himself and modelled his behaviour. He was inspired to set an example for his children on how to behave:

So, spending dinner time with them, sitting at the table with them. And it's not because being able to eat with a knife and fork being the ultimate skill, but they're going to learn from modelling my behaviour. They're not going to learn from me shouting at them about them not modelling the behaviour I want to.

Because of the difficulty P5 had in managing his time between work and home responsibilities, he processed the impact on his energy levels and thus his body: *"... and I was trying to be helpful at home but I needed to be at work for so many hours. So there was that whole difficulty about managing time and managing energy levels ..."*

The transformational value of somatic processing was achieved where participants became aware of their bodies and what they embodied. Bodily awareness and conscious embodiment helped them to change how they presented themselves in life, which resulted in people experiencing among others their body language differently.

b) Reconnecting with and through the body

Reconnecting with and through the body is the awareness and felt sense of the body, which enables somatic processing. It includes the relationship with the body and self-care of the body. Through the coaching programme participants not only became aware of somatic triggers and their concomitant emotional and behavioural consequences, but when becoming more attuned to their somatic form, started reconnecting with their bodies in various tangible ways.

Participant 2 reconnected with and through his body when he started running again and therefore looked after his health: *"... I've taken up running more actively again but I'm committing to goals in running, I'm not just ... or I'm trying. I'm committing to goals and then the plan is that the rest tails in behind it more effectively."* Participant 5 processed that for a long time he did not look after his body by means of doing exercises as he used to do. His reason for not exercising was the busyness of establishing a new business unit, but he realised that he seriously needed to get into an exercise routine again, as explained by P5: *"... because it was so busy, it was so crazy building a new business. I was doing no exercise and (name of the coach) said, you're going to need to exercise."* The effect of P5 taking up exercising again was that he noticed that he started to feel more energised and rejuvenated: *"I actually forced myself to get into an exercise routine. Yeah, and you actually do feel much better ... do some weight training twice a week and then I try to jog like 3 or 4 times a week ..."* Instead of exercise taking up his time, it actually made him more productive in attending to his day-to-day tasks, as noted by P5: *"You would actually think it takes up your time – it actually gives you more time, because I think I'm more efficient at doing stuff, I'm quicker at doing stuff."* In contrast with some participants who wanted to embrace running again, P6 decided to run less. He started doing yoga to slow down his fast pace and to reconnect with his body. Participant 6 said:

"I started doing yoga, but not to do yoga, I was doing yoga to be less into running. But then again, through that you start to understand, or you start to be more aware of your body." Participant 2 realised that the mind and body were one entity and through his lenses the body and mind were connected. He noted: *"But just in general physically though, I think the body and the mind are not separate things"*. On the other hand, P4 reconnected with and through her body by doing a sitting practice: *"That was sitting ... because like I was always stressing; it just reconnects, I think, the system or whatever, you know, it just puts everything back into its own place."* Participant 4 continued to exercise, which had a positive impact on her emotions: *"Exercise – I've always exercised, so I still continue exercising, but like I was ... yeah, I felt a bit ... yeah, happier just generally."* In addition, P4 reconnected through and with her body by applying different practices such as using her five senses, breathing and doing nothing:

Yeah, she didn't necessarily specify that I'm going to use all the senses but it was like, you know what, make time, prepare your food, no TV, sit there and eat it, you know – experience the taste, the textures, you know, the look of your food ... I think it's basically using all the 5 senses, really, of experiencing that. So that I still do and that one of sitting for 20 minutes. I was supposed to sit like, you know, still on a chair doing nothing – breathing, you know, just ... so you do nothing.

Participant 4's perception that she should know everything increased her stress levels, which had a negative impact on her body and health. The stress in P4's body affected how she carried herself and how she presented herself to the world, hence it influenced her way of being in the world. Participant 4 processed during the coaching programme that she did not need to know everything; this was to the detriment of her health: *"It's okay not to know... Yes, I still have to achieve, you know, the required outcome but, you know what, not at the expense of my health and everything else that is important in life."* Furthermore, P4 processed how stress held her body back and disabled her. However, she reconnected with and through her body when she went for dancing lessons and did body work; in doing that P4 was more focussed when she had to attend to work again: *"When I'm dancing I just dance and enjoy my time there and I'll get back to work – I'll get back to it when I get*

there." In addition to her dancing lessons, P4 went for swimming lessons to reconnect with herself through her body: *"I never missed my dancing lessons. Go dancing, you know. And do swimming lessons"*.

Somatic work includes being "comfortable in one's own skin" and having a renewed sense of feeling at home in the body. Participant 5 started feeling more 'comfortable in his own skin' and to be the person he was, irrespective of what people at work thought of him. He said: *"... so with the wrestling and going deeper, what it actually did for me was it just made me comfortable in my own skin. Like now I'm not as concerned as I used to be that everyone must like me."* Even after failing to establish a new business unit, P5 felt 'comfortable in his own skin', which helped him to feel less unsettled about the failure. He stated: *"It was a very difficult time ... it was the single biggest failure I'd had in my career ... that event probably made me ... it's probably one of the reasons why I'm much more comfortable in my skin now."*

Participant 7 reconnected with and through her body by actively creating time for herself: *"I need to walk around more ... when I feel overwhelmed ... this is a lot of work now, go sit outside under the tree. Just go sit there, go listen to some music. It's creating that me time."* Furthermore, P7 became much more tuned into her body and noticed her emotions in her body. When not feeling at ease, she would typically remove herself from a particular situation to compose herself: *"And the minute you feel uncomfortable with something, you need to remove yourself from that situation so that you can compose yourself. Understand it and then come back."* She would then typically centre herself instead of responding in a destructive manner, which took up unnecessary energy, as she explained: *"You'll be surprised, in that five minutes you centre yourself and you come back and ask yourself the question, your answer could be different or you look at things differently – or how you respond."* Participant 7 explained how her body was graceful and kind to her, but she was not used to listening to it at all times. She became much more aware of her body, as it essentially gave her all the required signals and answers. She thoughtfully said:

Yeah, you've got to use your body. Your body tells you all the time how you're feeling. It tells you when you're tired – that means you're disengaged now, which means you're wasting your time sitting there listening anymore. It

tells you when you are scared, when you're walking into a meeting and you can feel yourself churning – and the minute you feel it, that you need to do certain things ...

The transformational value of coaching was facilitated in how participants reconnected in various ways with and through the body. It started with bodily awareness, which spilled over into reconnecting with the body.

Sub-theme 4, relational processing, will be discussed next.

5.2.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Relational processing

In sub-theme 4 relational processing will be discussed. This includes how participants engage with other people, recognise them as human beings and initiate and sustain mutually satisfying relationships. For me, the focus here was therefore on 'we-ness' rather than 'me-ness'. Asking and giving support contributed to adequate relationships for most participants and setting boundaries created structure in their relationships.

The four *categories* that will be discussed are: (a) meaningful engagement and connection, (b) constructive communication, (c) setting boundaries in service of constructive relationships, and (d) building a support structure.

a) Meaningful engagement and connection

On a relational level, participants in this study engaged differently and more meaningfully with other people (personally and professionally) as a result of the coaching process. Not all relationships are necessarily meaningful, but participants at least developed a better ability to manage those relationships.

Participant 1 noticed how her engagements in a personal context did not have a positive impact, such as when she assisted her nine-year-old son with his homework. She realised she could have engaged differently with him, firstly by showing interest in him and then proceeding with the task at hand, as explained by P1:

Okay (name of her son), my nine-year-old, you're going to get your homework done today, let's sit down and do it now – versus saying, okay, we're going to do your homework, where do you want to sit? Okay, are you comfortable? Right. just taking a bit of time in the process and having a bit of a laugh and getting all set, as opposed to saying, let's just get this done so we can move on to something else.

Similarly, in a professional context her engagement with colleagues could be more personal. Participant 1 used to run into action mode immediately without establishing a relationship. However, she shifted by slowing down and attending to the person first and then to the task. Participant 1 said: *"... when you're on a call with somebody, you know, take the 5 minutes and just chat about the person, as opposed to launching straight into what you need to get done."* As P1 processed the importance of relationships and consciously addressing those by slowing down and acknowledging people, a shift in her relationships was noticeable: *"I mean, other people say that, but that's what I feel, and seeing the rewards of it ... like little ridiculous things."* She recognised the difference it made and that attending to relationships was indeed significant in her life: *"I think those sorts of things have changed and that's in me material difference in ... just every day."* A practical example was how P1 made time to have a conversation with the owner of the greengrocer's where she did her weekly shopping, whereas previously she would not even have noticed him: *"I go to the same little corner vegetable shop every weekend probably, and in the past I would whizz in, whizz out, ... hardly have a conversation with the guy who runs it. And now we have conversation every time."* Participant 1 could even verbalise and internalise the interaction with the owner of the vegetable shop as a "human relationship", as she remarked:

And he tells me all his issues. But actually, there's something in that. That's just a human relationship, whereas in the past ... I was like, okay, work and I've got to get the groceries, I've got to get home ...

Participant 1 became aware that truly connecting to people and making time to have conversations changed her relationships, even if these were not lengthy conversations, but at least checking in with a particular person and listened deeply.

She explained: *“Yeah, I think that, you know, for me in sort of getting a bit more ... resolution in what was driving behaviour, I’ve definitely become ... more engaged with people, more willing to listen, kinder, more thoughtful.”* Similarly, P3 became more conscious of how she engaged with people. By acknowledging people and having real and meaningful conversations with them she started to build relationships instead of constantly having provocative relationships, as she used to have. That made an immense difference in her day-to-day relationships, as P3 noted: *“... a lot of what I’ve learnt is to ... recognise the person that I’m having the conversation with. ... how to have different conversations with different people ... very strong relationships before they were very confrontational.”* It was difficult for P3 to realise that people perceived her in a negative way, but sensing and internalising that helped her to address her relationships with people: *“... I mean, hearing her truth about the way I was showing up was really hard, you know; accepting that people are perceiving me in a really bad way. That was terribly difficult.”* Though P6 had the ability to work with complexity, it became clear to him that he was sometimes too quick for people and made them feel unworthy, which had a negative impact on his relationships. He stated: *“I get complexity very, very quickly but I move very, very quickly through scenarios and when people don’t go with me, I sometimes make them feel quite stupid. And it was never intentional but I just wasn’t aware of it.”*

Participant 1 did not always connect with the team who reported to her and was not open to their inputs. As a result of relational processing, she realised that it could not be only her ideas that counted. By listening and becoming more open to the inputs and ideas of other people she engaged and connected with her team, which in fact added more value to the business. Participant 1 said: *“... where I personally changed is in a willingness to listen, a willingness to be open to other ideas and understanding that actually we don’t need to get from A to B at 100 miles an hour ...”* An important value in relationships is admitting when one is wrong. That was not something P1 was used to and doing that influenced her engagement with her team positively: *“Being less, in my case, a need of being the one that has the answer ... still do, but, you know, listening more ... being willing to admit and the power of admitting you’re wrong.”* The 360-degree feedback tool and Enneagram gave P1 new insights on what behaviour to change in a relational context. She had the

tendency to assume the front position if something was to be done and in the process she left her team behind. What P1 realised about relational processing was that empowering her team had a positive effect on her relationship with them, as she explained: *"... but I need to make sure that everybody else also feels part of that journey and is empowered and have a role and it's with me. And I think that combination with the 360 and the Enneagram ..."*

There was an improvement in the communication style between P5 and his wife, which contributed positively to a more meaningful relationship: *"... there's certain things you kind of don't talk about, but me having said, can you please let me know how I can be more helpful in this area, it sort of made communication a little bit easier ..."* Moreover, his relationships at work reached a level of maturity in respect of how P5 was dealing with criticism from colleagues. He became more relaxed in these relationships; as he remarked: *"I'm so much more able to handle criticism and I care a lot less about stuff I used to care about a lot, such as ... oh, this person doesn't like me because he didn't greet me today."* It was similar to the experience of P6, who came to a place of acceptance in his relational processing that not everyone would appreciate his leadership style and others would be attracted to it: *"And also, that's also something I've learnt – I don't need everybody to follow me. I'm very comfortable that some people don't like me, I actually don't have an issue with that."* He became aware of how he damaged relationships at work when snapping at people, which also limited their inputs and contribution. Participant 6 noted: *"... because you can say-say-say and then somebody does something and you snap at them – he's not going to do it again. So you're right, it's exactly what you said. And it's just an awareness not to do that anymore."* Furthermore, P6 acknowledged and processed the extremely negative impact of treating people with disrespect, which resulted in damaging relationships with people at work. Coaching helped him to improve his relationships in such a way that he even referred to it as 'a big turning point'. It was clear that P6 navigated his way through damaging relationships to establish mutually satisfying relationships:

With guys at work, our relationship is very, very different and that's been a big one – whether it's with the business guys downstairs or finance here. I think people actually understand me a little bit more. I've allowed them in a bit

more. I still like to have boundaries but they aren't as bad as they were. So people do realise I'm not as much of a monster as I thought I was. So I think that's been a big turning point.

On a personal level, the relationship between P6 and his wife shifted to another dimension as he became a more pleasant person at home: *"Then, at home ... I like to think I'm a little bit of a nicer person ... I still bring work stress home too much, I know, but I'm a little better. I definitely am better at that."* Similarly, P7 remarked that her relationship with her husband and child had become more meaningful:

On a personal level I was able to see my relationship with my husband and myself a bit differently. Also how I react to my child differently. ... personal relationships are much more complicated than a relationship with your boss ...

The Enneagram questionnaire, which was used as a coaching tool for P7, contributed to the relationship between her and her husband, as she was comfortable to share the results with him. She remarked: *"For instance, the Enneagram results I sent it to my husband, so he reads it as well, so he also understands now my make-up, how do I function ..."* In the work context P7 noticed she had to stand her ground and have the courage to have courageous conversations with her manager, which changed the relationship to a positive and more meaningful engagement. She explained: *"I think my boss and I understand each other better. ... My relationship with him has changed. ... having courageous conversations with him about things that I wasn't happy with. ... You need to have courageous conversation with people."*

By acknowledging being a perfectionist P7 started to process how it influenced her relationships to the detriment of not only herself, but also her colleagues and her family. The positive side of being a perfectionist was that she was efficient and able to complete quality and quantity work; as she remarked: *"So the benefit is, I mean, it's awesome to be a perfectionist, you get so much done, people will come to you if they want things right the first time ..."* On the other hand, the negative side of being a perfectionist was that P7 was intolerant with people at work and at home, which

damaged rather than built relationships. Participant 7 realised she should be kinder to other people to allow them to complete a task in the way that is working for them. She said: *"... being a perfectionist you will not have as much empathy and tolerance to people either in your team or in your work life, or personal life, that don't always do things the way you think it should be done."* Moreover, her perfectionism caused unnecessary conflict at work: *"And that was a lot of the conflict that I had and the discussions that I had when I actually looked at my relationships again – why do I struggle with this person?"* Furthermore, on an intrapersonal level P7 realised that she was the one who needed to change, not other people: *"That's coaching for me, not so much as changing other people; actually, you'll never change other people around you very often."*

The importance of establishing and having meaningful relationships became more real for participants during the coaching programme. Meaningful relationships played an essential role in the well-being of participants. Participant 4 made time to spend with her friends again. She stated: *"So, just going back and seeing, you know, my friends – spending time with my friends. I couldn't be happier by doing that."* Participant 2 realised that when building relationships in a working context he also needed to understand people outside their work context to get the full picture of a person: *"I think the two go very hand-in-hand - establishing real, meaningful relationships with people in the work context, needs me to get out of the work context with them to."* It was insightful for P3 when she realised that it is more meaningful to have fewer authentic relationships than many shallow relationships:

And, whereas before I had ... massive networks of huge, shallow, very shallow relationships, and I think through this journey it's come right in and much deeper. So nurturing important relationships rather than having this "fomo" (fear of missing out) of having to, you know, know everyone but only that much.

Coaching facilitated personal transformation, as participants changed the way in which they connected and engaged with people in a personal and work context, which ultimately made their relationships more meaningful.

b) Constructive communication

Participants came to understand that the way language is used in a relational context could either be constructive or destructive, and using it differently began to make a difference in their relationships in a personal and professional context.

Participant 1 focused her language on herself as the manager and not on the overall team. Consequently, she changed her vocabulary from 'I' to 'we' and 'us', which empowered her team and influenced relationships positively. Hence the concept of 'we-ness' opened up for her, as she noted: *"I'm now really very much in the team here. I don't like the word 'I, my project, I did this, my meeting'. No, 'ours, we. We did this.' ... That kind of vocabulary, you know, I'm very conscious."* Furthermore, using language differently was something P1 referred to as the penny dropping for her and was a practical thing she could change in her relationships: *"I think for me the practical things were about the use of vocabulary, about body language, about pace and the impact all of those things have on other people."* It tied in with P3, who realised that she should use language differently in a relational context in order to communicate more constructively. She said: *"... but sometimes we also need to change our languaging and go, that's not the right thing for my family or myself. ... the languaging to help me cope with what I was doing, which was very, very powerful."*

The transformational value of coaching was demonstrated when participants became aware of the impact of the way they communicated with others. They started to work towards maintaining a more positive tone in their communication and felt that this enabled better mutual understanding and enhanced the quality of their relationships.

c) Setting of boundaries in service of constructive relationships

A boundary implies that a person is setting or creating a concrete structure indicating how she prefers to operate and then sustaining the boundary that was set. A boundary could be established by saying 'no', or by saying 'yes, but not now'. There are many more ways of setting boundaries in a relational context that will be discussed below.

Setting more constructive boundaries in relationships indeed helped P3 to deal with difficult relationships, such as the relationship with her step-child (verbatim information not provided because of the sensitivity of the information). Participant 4 had to set boundaries in the extended family context to show that she actually cared for them: *"... maybe just giving too much – either of myself, my money ... mostly to family. ... loving people is not about giving all the time. There are times like say no – it might also be a sign of love."* Moreover, P4 set boundaries with her family by starting to say 'no' to certain things. That set her free to make time for herself and her friends and hence to do the things she enjoyed doing, as she noted: *"... learning to say 'no' for some of the things because I was more the breadwinner ... making time for myself ... So out of that I had to make time for those things that I enjoy the most."*

Participant 7 went through various processes in setting boundaries in her relationships at work. Initially it was something she consciously had to attend to, as she was so used to saying 'yes' to requests; as she explained: *"I still catch myself saying yes when I want to say no. But it's not like you're going to get it right all the time. The thing is to change the behaviour."* However, once she permitted herself to set boundaries and say 'no' where it was applicable, she had a sense of relief. Participant 7 said: *"Also, what's very fascinating is, the minute you realise that you can say no and it's okay to say no, it's very empowering."* Another situation of setting boundaries by P7 was actually not saying 'no', but where she re-negotiated in terms of business requests and timelines; she remarked: *"You're not saying no, you're just saying it a bit different. You're re-negotiating it."* Furthermore, P7 explained that setting boundaries is not necessarily saying 'no', but stating what is possible or impossible in a certain context: *"We all think boundary means saying no. It has actually got very little to do with that. It's about telling someone what's okay with me and what's not okay with me, you know."* Participant 7 was used to please people across relationships, which had an impact on her outlook of 'have to' versus 'want to' do something for someone. She realised it was the wrong attitude to do things for other people and then to expect something in return:

And in any relationship, the more you do things to please people, the more you're eating a little bit into yourself and your self-esteem and your love for

the next person, and eventually you're going to expect that person to pay you back or they owe you something when actually, they didn't even know you're doing it because you're pleasing them.

In establishing more meaningful relationships in his social sphere versus superficial relationships, P2 became more selective with whom he spent his time in his private capacity. Participant 2 therefore set more clear boundaries:

I need three or four friends and I think in this last year I have grown much better at not committing my time to acquaintance, but committing my time to my friends ... I say no to more things and I say yes to the things that matter more easily. So ... and I think that focusing time on those relationships and then coupling that with an ability to focus your attention in that time, that that makes quite a big difference actually.

Coaching facilitated personal transformation, as participants applied various ways in setting boundaries in service of developing constructive relationships with others.

d) Building a support structure

Coaching helped participants to build a support structure that enabled them to rely on people in times of need and asking for help or inputs in a personal and professional context instead of trying to attend to matters all by themselves.

Participant 3 used to battle with work responsibilities by taking everything on herself, which added immense pressure to her life. Coaching inspired P3 to ask for help and support in the business, which was initially very hard for her; however, it had a positive influence on her relationships. Participant 3 explained: *"So asking for help was one of the hardest things for me ..."* Being the eldest of four children, she never used to ask for help and P3 could trace where her sense of responsibility came from: *"... I'm the eldest of four and with parents who loved to have fun when I was younger; so this huge responsibility gene in me ... I never was taught to ask for help because that's not how it was ..."* However, once she stuck out her neck and asked her team for support, the value thereof was much more than she would ever

have expected: *"... so rewarding because as soon as I asked for help I would get way more than I was expecting all the time. So it wasn't just like once, it was every time - from the most unexpected places."* Asking for support contributed to a shift in relationships at work, as P3 noted: *"And so that, I think, in terms of my leadership journey was probably the most powerful thing ever, and I think that's how those relationships have begun ... began to grow so differently."* The same happened for P3 in a personal context; after she identified her support structure she initially found it incredibly difficult to ask for support and to make use of people: *"So rather than owning everything, figuring out which friend to phone for everything. In the beginning ... I was finding it really hard."* As time went on, P3 came to a place of not being as independent as she used to be, but acknowledging the support system with which she was surrounded in a personal and professional context: She noted:

... Before I had coaching, when I was a single mom, my story was I'm all alone and I had to do everything myself – so the story I told. And now my story is, I'm so supported – and that's spiritual, and that's in relationship and that's in my work and my family and my husband and everyone, my friendships.

In addition, instead of feeling responsible for making family decisions all by herself, P4 started asking for help from the family and thus used them as a support structure: *"Even within the family ... wanted to be the one to make decisions. Now at home I just leave things and say, you know what, it's not the end of the world. Other people can also make decisions."* When P4 sensed feeling overwhelmed, she asked the family to help: *"... if I'm overwhelmed I shout for help."* Moreover, instead of trying to know everything and doing work on her own, P4 progressed to asking for support not only in her personal life, but also in a business context and therefore built her support structure: *"And also asking for help where I don't know or where I'm overloaded. ... Mostly ask for help, because I think there was a time when I thought I can do everything."*

Personal transformation was demonstrated in how participants not only noted the value of having a support structure in a relational context, but also learnt to establish and use their support structure as and when needed.

The next theme to be discussed is spiritual processing.

5.2.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Spiritual processing

Spiritual processing occurs when a person sees life as bigger than herself and where there is inter-connectedness between living systems and things. Being spiritual includes the ability to live a life dedicated to the benefit of everyone. Wisdom, compassion and the ability to become peaceful versus the busyness of life are also included in spiritual processing. The three *categories* under the sub-theme spiritual processing are: (a) experiencing an increasing sense of inter-connectedness, (b) developing mindfulness as a practice, and (c) from caring for the self to caring for others. Stout-Rostron (2009b, p. 239) explains that often people “turn to faith or a spiritual journey” when they start asking themselves questions of “who am I and why am I here”?

a) Experiencing an increasing sense of inter-connectedness

Being spiritual includes being inter-connected to the wide web of life connecting all people, all living systems, such as the global ecosystem and all things. For some people it is seeing the oneness in all things and the existence of inter-dependence.

Participant 2 referred to his engagement/relationship with the universe and how everything in the universe is inter-connected. Because of this inter-connected system, P2 became more aware of how he engaged with the universe. He noted: *"I think it's really about being more conscious in your engagement with the universe, you know. When you're doing something, being more conscious of what you're doing and why you're doing it."* Taking time out for running took P2 to a place of connecting spiritually with the universe and the physical world around him: *"Because I can easily run for an hour ... But you're very physically aware and in tune with your environment ... so it's definitely, definitely more aware of my physical world around me."* Furthermore, P2 was very clear about the inter-connectedness of the universe and everything: *"I think the universe is a big and complex thing ... And I think there is broader inter-connectedness to everything."*

The above complements how P3 processed inter-connectedness and spirituality when she realised that she was not alone in this world, as she used to think, but needed people as support in both a personal and work context. Participant 3 processed being supported by people around one as spiritual:

Before I had coaching, when I was a single mom, my story was I'm all alone and I had to do everything myself ... And now my story is, I'm so supported – and that's spiritual, and that's in relationship and that's in my work and my family and my husband and everyone, my friendships.

In addition to the inter-connectedness of everything, P1 remarked: "... and discussing that and then you realise actually these things are very inter-connected and I think, you know, I never made that conscious link in my mind until we'd explored that, that I actually ... everything's inter-connected." Similarly, P5 processed how his way of being was influenced by the inter-connectedness of everything. "... way of thinking and that kind of joining the dots together about my own values, my own behaviours and everything, and just getting it to align and figuring out why I react in certain ways, ..."

The transformational value of coaching was demonstrated where participants experienced an increasing sense of inter-connectedness of things and with the universe; for some it was spiritual.

b) Developing mindfulness as a practice

Mindfulness is regarded as a spiritual practice. It is a method of paying attention to the here and now and being in the present moment. There are different ways of practising mindfulness and these were evident in the participants' coaching experiences.

As suggested by his coach, during his coaching programme P2 started meditating as a mindfulness practice to assist him in being more grounded and present in what he was doing. He explained: "*He says, you're all over the show, you're everywhere; you've told me 15 different things and unfinished thoughts and stuff and all these*

things are bugging you all the time, you should look into this. That's when I started."

Another reason why P2 decided to take up mediation as a practice was that he needed to make certain changes in his life and meditation would help him with that. He said: *"So ... (pause) I'm trying to make lots of small changes in my life that hopefully will add up to quite a big difference. Silly things like, I've taken up a meditation practice."* Participant 2 referred to his mindfulness practice as: *"Mindfulness meditation"*. This practice included focussing on his breathing; as he explained: *"... it's a breathing focused mind form of meditation."* Moreover, it took P2 several minutes, which helped him to become more present. He said: *"I was up at 20minute sessions. I started again. I did 10 for a while now, and I'm on 15 minutes again now."*

Developing and applying mindfulness as a practice was the vehicle for both P2 and P4 to become quieter and more present. Road-running in nature helped P2 to develop this practice; as he said: *"Yeah, and the running particularly ties very nicely with the meditation and the mindfulness."* Similarly, P4 became quiet by means of meditation. *"I've always meditated – not religiously either, but it also helped me to get back; because like now I'm still continuing. My 20 minutes weekly, I try to do, you know, a few days."* Mindful meditation helped P2 to be more focussed and more present in the moment, focussing on what he was doing:

I find the less I'm meditating, the longer it takes me to switch gears. I think if I wasn't meditating now, the first 15 minutes of this conversation I would actually still have been thinking about work stuff that's been going on and, you know, towards the end of the session I'll start thinking about, okay this next thing. But it's aiding my ability to say, right, I'm going here now, close this door and we're in this passage now and there's a door on the other side and we'll get out and we'll get onto the other side.

Mindful meditation added value for P2, not only in being present at work, but also at home, as he explained:

Most days when I come home I'm not done, you know, work's not done yet ... but it's allowing me to say, okay, now we're eating dinner and it's bath time and it's bed time. And when the kids are in bed then I'll go and I'll pick it up and I'll do a little bit of work or whatever. It's helping me to manage that.

Similarly, P4 became aware of the value of being in the present moment and applied various relaxation practices suggested by her coach, such as sitting practice, lying down and eating mindfully by using her five senses. *"She gave me relaxation exercises ... sitting exercises or the lying down... eating consciously, ... look at the colours, the texture ... Be in that moment."*

In this category spiritual processing happened for participants in developing and applying meditation as a practice, which enabled them to become focussed and present in the moment, therefore instead of having a 'full mind', to become 'mindful'. This demonstrates the personal transformational value of coaching, as coaching enabled and practised their mindfulness competence and ability.

c) From caring for the self to caring for others

Pausing from the busyness of life and becoming still is a way of creating space and time for oneself. It includes caring for the self and being compassionate towards oneself. By being compassionate to oneself, one could also become compassionate towards others.

During the coaching programme P4 realised that she physically had to halt the busyness of life to find time not only for herself, but also for her family and friends; as she noted: *"... I allowed myself to stop at time from doing things – work. You stop here, I'm going to do something else that I enjoy ... And it was fine; nobody died, you know, that I stopped working."* Creating time for herself and taking a break from attending to work matters was very empowering for P4; she remarked: *"... it was empowering, like you know what, there's more to life, and I'm in control of this whole situation ... If I don't stop, you know what, nobody's going to stop me ... So it was very empowering."* Moreover, P4 would typically make time for doing her sitting practice, lying in the sauna or bath, or even doing nothing, to care for the self, which

was rejuvenating for her, as she noted: *"... I use different methods. Either sit do nothing, the bath weekly, the gym definitely weekly also ... lavender oil bath and then I just do that for 20 minutes – quiet, breathing ... I call it, yeah, 'my time'."* Making time for herself included quiet time, which contributed to her spiritual growth, as she remarked: *"... I think the 20 minutes, you know, time off, time to myself, quiet time that would have contributed to my maybe spiritual growth."*

Similarly, creating time and caring for himself was a spiritual experience for P2:

I think for me the spiritualism comes in into the space – as I create space in my life to do activities that give me time and space, like being out in the road running and appreciating nature and the quiet and the breeze and the heat or the cold ...

Participant 3 emphasised that as a woman she was not attending to her own well-being and health, as she was trapped in many ways by attending to the needs of others. This resulted in forgetting about herself; as she explained: *"Especially as woman, you know. I think we spend our whole lives using our energy to give to others – that's how we're programmed – but we don't take time for ourselves even in the little things, exercising or just time-out ..."* Participant 3 made the connection that she needed more time for herself, and after attending to her own needs she could then focus on the needs of others, hence being compassionate by starting with the self in mind and then circling it out to others.

Coaching facilitates personal transformation, as participants could move from a place of busyness to a place of quietness. In addition, participants developed in allowing themselves to display kindness and compassion to the self. By caring for the self, participants built the capacity to care for others as well.

Spiritual processing was explained in this theme to illustrate the development of spiritual awareness and agency. The next sub-theme, integration processing, will be discussed below.

5.2.3.6 Sub-theme 6: Integration processing

Integration processing is the last sub-theme under the theme processing the holistic self. It involves understanding of how a person's life is segmented, but also integrated; compartmentalised, but also whole. Put differently, processing of the whole person brings to the fore that a human being is an integrated being. This therefore implies bringing one's whole self to life.

Participants in this study processed that work and personal life are not separate, as these form one entity, which contributes to the integration and wholeness of a human being. It is evident in the words of P1:

And I'm more or less ... the kind of person who sort of separates work from personal life, and I don't ... I mean, I'm sure I talk about my kids with these guys, but I don't bring all my personal things to work. I kind of separate that. But actually, when you're thinking about your behaviours, I realised in these discussions you can't separate it. And so I think the coaching for me evolved from starting at trying to address certain things that were making my work life not ideal, to actually talking much more about me holistically as a person ...

Participant 1 processed that as a human being she was not compartmentalised, but a composition of parts and hence a whole person; as she stated: *"...started to delve into, not just business areas but in personal areas, and that's really where I think for me a big penny dropped about the whole person as opposed to, you know, any one part of you."* During the coaching programme it was the first time that P1 was confronted with a human being as a whole person: *"I think for me that's what the coaching did. Because I've never been in an experience where I've addressed that."* Similar to P1, the whole person was internalised by P2: *"... I'm one whole person all the time, whether I'm at work, or I'm at home, I'm me."* From a leadership perspective, P2 realised that he had not been seeing himself as one whole person, and that he also had that view of colleagues at work; therefore, thinking about people as a whole person was not something to which he was used: *"I think the two go very hand-in-hand – establishing real, meaningful relationships with people in the work*

context, needs me to get out of the work context with them to. It needs me to think about them as a whole person."

The experience of P3 tied in with 'wholeness', as during her coaching programme the coach contributed to holistic change in her life: *"... she (the coach) changed my whole life. Like, my whole life."* Participant 2 processed how coaching was a complete and holistic process: *"Because I don't think coaching is a one-off thing. ... In fact, it's been a complete journey of discovery that's gone to many different places ... I don't think that stops, that journey."* Participant 5 came to a place of accepting things for what they were and integrated the polarities in life: *"And he (the coach) said, well it's not good, it's not bad, it's not wrong, it's not right – it just is. Uhm, don't attach goodness or badness to it."*

This theme dealt with integration processing, hence the holistic self. The transformational value of coaching facilitates and maintains processing on different levels with and about the self, namely on a cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational and spiritual level. The participants, through coaching, not only processed the self on these levels (which implies holistic processing); in addition they became more aware of their being as an integrated manifestation of various selves.

The next theme will address the rippling changes in the work-life context.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Rippling changes in the work-life context

This theme explains the rippling changes in the work-life context. As a result of engaging with a coaching programme, the participants related many examples of how they approached lives and their careers differently, how their leadership self-efficacy grew and how they became more confident to transfer some of what they had learnt and gained through coaching to the broader spheres of their work and personal lives. Like a spiral, change is sparked within and from such deep inner change, a different way of thinking, doing and being evolves and curves or spirals into the outer world of the coachee, affecting the lives of others with whom the coachee engages. Transformation as a spiralling dynamic is metaphorically reflected in the idea of a stone in a pond, with rippling waves circling outward in

bigger waves. The rippling changes evidenced in the participants' narratives in this study are discussed under this theme, which includes **four sub-themes**, namely: (1) work-life balance and integration; (2) taking control of career and life stage; (3) enhanced leadership self-efficacy and competence; and (4) transferring of learning to society.

A summary of the different themes is set out in **table 5.7** below, whereafter each is discussed in detail and grounded in verbatim information.

Table 5.7

Theme 4: Rippling changes in the work-life context

5.2.4 Theme 4: Rippling changes in the work-life context
5.2.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Work-life balance and integration
5.2.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Taking control of career decisions and life stage
5.2.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Enhanced leadership self-efficacy and competence
5.2.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Transferring of learning to society

5.2.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Work-life balance and integration

To live a life of work-life integration is wider than only living a balanced life. It is the ability to create more synergy between all areas of life in a fast-paced and ever-changing world. This could include work, home/family, the community, personal well-being, health, et cetera. All participants recognised the importance of living a life where the flow regarding their work-life integration would be smoother. Participants in this study referred more often to the concept of work-life balance and not necessarily to work-life integration.

Seeing himself as a whole person, P2 integrated work and life, whether he was at home or at work: "... *what absolutely hit home to me is that I'm one whole person all the time, whether I'm at work, or I'm at home, I'm me.*" Moreover, P2 became more conscious of how he was spending time with his family in the re-orientation of his work and life:

... how do I apply more consciously my values into our family life, in terms of the children and (name of his wife) and I in terms of the time and the quality of the time we spend together and in terms of the things we do together?

Coaching made P4 realise from a wellness point of view that work should not control her life as it used to do. She was aspiring to having a more balanced life concerning her personal and work life, as she explained: *"... for my own well-being ... I think balancing, having a kind of a balanced life, you know, including making sure that everything is catered for in my life. Not everything, but yeah, a lot of things are catered for."* Furthermore, P4 came to a place of gaining new insight and changed her perspective about her personal life and her work life in the sense that it does not involve the one or the other, but both: *"I think for me it was that change in perspective about work, especially about work – work-life, you know."* Participant 4 came to the conclusion that because work had become everything to her, it had absorbed her life in such a way that it caused an imbalance between her personal life and work life. It therefore had a negative impact on her well-being and increased her stress levels. She remarked: *"Work should not be everything ... if anything killed me I think it was the stress."* In addition, P4 realised she had to live a more balanced life and live life differently by doing things she enjoyed: *"... I think for me it was rediscovering that balance ... was very, very important. I think it was something that I had lost, totally lost ... doing the things that I enjoy the most – again ... "* More importantly, P4 gave herself permission to rest, which contributed to living a balanced life: *"And the importance of resting; the process of everything – of life and its challenges – it's okay to rest."*

Participant 3 referred to times that she felt she neglected her family. She consequently came aware of the importance and urgency to re-organise her life to become more balanced. Participant 3 said: *"So in the last few weeks it's been actually, yes, you could get a bit louder, I've really been letting my family down - thank you for being here, let me just adjust my priorities."* Participant 7 acknowledged that work-life balance was a huge challenge for her. A huge focus during her coaching programme was simultaneously being a wife, a mother and a professional in a corporate company and how to build resilience in all the different roles she was responsible for at home and at work. She noted: *"I'm a mom to a six-*

year-old boy ... very challenging being a mom and a wife and a professional career woman I think. A lot of my coaching revolved around that and my resilience to that."

There was a very clear theme in the coaching programme of P7: How she allowed work to take over her life by being overly attached to her work. It in fact absorbed her whole life, which influenced her work-life balance negatively. She said:

... an underlying theme. ... it was about how I handle work ... I over-attach my worth to it. ... You will never have a life, you'll never have any balance in your life and you'll never have the ability to explore other avenues in your career. So, you over-individualise yourself with your work – that's basically it, yeah. That, for me, always came up over and over again in different instances.

However, it became clear to P7 that it was possible for her to live a more balanced life by setting boundaries, but more importantly, to respect the boundaries she created and not to fall back into the trap of work-work-work; P7 remarked: *"But the thing is, everyone can have work-life balance. The only person standing in your way is you, because you have to set those boundaries, you have to honour them."* Participant 5 found it hard to manage his time between work and home responsibilities. Even with the best intentions to integrate work and life, it remained a challenge for him, as he stated: *"Because the year began and then this business was being built and I was trying to be helpful at home but I needed to be at work for so many hours."*

Work-life integration was one of the coaching objectives of P6, as he used to separate work and life, which resulted in feeling anxious: *"... work-life integration ... I just try and very much separate both of them. They used to sort of spill into each other at sort of wrong times and create sort of way too much stress and anxiety."* As the coaching programme continued, P6 started to apply work-life integration on a daily basis. He would, for example, not follow a specific schedule, such as working from 08:00 to 16:30. In contrast, he would attend an early breakfast meeting and arrive later at work. Some days P6 would be at the office until late and on other days he would leave early to spend time with his family. He explained:

... so it's difficult to break it between personal and this, because it's such a big part of my life and I really enjoy it ... I had a breakfast meeting ... which was quarter to 7, so I only rocked up here at like 9 o'clock and sometimes we work until 10 at night, sometimes we leave at 4 but you're always involved. I mean, my boss doesn't stop working and I guess neither do I. So you always ... it's a big part of life.

The transformational value of coaching resulted in re-orientation towards work-life balance and integration for most of the participants. Coaching facilitated thinking differently about work-life balance and integration and not seeing it as separate entities, but bringing these elements together.

Sub-theme 2 will subsequently be discussed.

5.2.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Taking control of career decisions and life stage

Coaching helped participants to gain more direction in their career decisions and enhanced their understanding of where they found themselves in life. It furthermore enabled participants in terms of the kind of decisions they had to make in taking control of their lives and/or careers again. For many of them coaching came at the right time to make certain career-relevant decisions.

It was evident that P1 was not sure of exactly where she found herself in her life at the time of the research interview. She therefore tried to understand from a work-life context what interfered with her life and what was important to her. She remarked: *"... the coaching for me evolved from starting at trying to address certain things that were making my work life not ideal, to actually talking much more about me holistically as a person and what I find important ..."* Hence, she started by understanding in which life stage she found herself and what would be the next steps for her going forward; as P1 said: *"... where am I sort of in my life stage and thinking about the future and a different future probably and how to ... you know, for me we started exploring quite wide areas ..."* Participant 1 was in a process of exploring on what to spend time for the rest of her career. Ageing brought a new perspective on how she viewed her life and career going forward and thus what the next step in the

rest of her life and career context would be. Participant 1 explained: *"... that are sort of harder to deal with, that I need to resolve, you know, about how to make my next 20 years count as much as my last 20 years? You know that's a pretty complicated subject ...?"* It became clear that P1 was in a transitional phase, given her career and how she internalised that what was important earlier in her career was not important anymore. This did not make her less ambitious career-wise, but was evidence of a shift in perspective to find out what was really important to her. She noted: *"... take a bit of time and acknowledge those things that are actually ... aren't so important anymore; and that doesn't mean that you're less ambitious or you've given up or you're more ambitious or whatever it is."*

Coaching came at the right time for P2 in relation to his career. He had to make a crucial decision about his future career, namely whether to continue with his current corporate career after acquisition by another company or to resign and start doing consulting again. Coaching therefore helped P2 to make an informed career decision and he realised that in terms of his career he was in the right position and at the right company. He decided to stay on at the company he was working for at the time of the research interview. Participant 1 remarked: *"And it worked incredibly well, because I landed, I think, probably the perfect role for me for now, and in what I think is probably the perfect company for me."* To illustrate how he felt that he was in the right position, he used the metaphor of being planted in perfect soil conditions for optimal growth. He stated: *"I'm a seed and I've now landed in the perfect soil with the perfect nutrients and the perfect temperature."* In contrast to P2, P7 noted that she was trapped in her career because of being in a specialist position: *"... started off with having no banking experience and then now almost a specialist, very difficult to come out of banking now because you've been specialising for the past nine years."* At the time of the research interview P7 was not clear on what her next step was in her career, but she was acutely aware that being in a specialist position was limiting her at that stage in her career.

As P2 started to become more attuned to his personal needs, strengths and values ('who am I'), it helped him to make appropriate and relevant career decisions. More importantly, he could take career decisions that were aligned to his values rather than necessarily what was important to other people: *"... starting with the foundation*

now saying, you know what, actually I know myself. I know who I am, I know what's important to me. When options started appearing and conversations started happening I could be very clear and direct." Being in the position to make a critical career decision did not scare him; in fact, it excited P2, as he explained:

The timing (of coaching) was excellent, ... You know, it was this beautiful existential crisis. Should you stay, should you go, should you do something completely different? Do you care about what you're doing? Why should I come here every day? Should I do something completely different? ... It makes sense, I've had the experience now. Shall I go back to consulting, contracting? So it created this great, beautiful, everything's up in the air situation.

Moreover, P2 realised that in being different from what society expected from him and being different from the norm was not wrong as such. He actually gained more from being different than from conforming. The rebellious behaviour of P2 and being different added to his advantage in exploring career possibilities, as he noted:

It's all the hard hours I worked as a junior programmer, working almost for free on projects for many years that got me lots of connections and lots of insight and the technical expertise that I could then begin to couple with intelligence and strategic thinking capability to begin changing the nature of what I did to become more complex and more general. So it's all part of the journey. That's like my university of those years.

Participant 3 was not at a good place in her career. She had reached a dead end. Coaching helped her to look differently at career opportunities and resulted in opening up a career opportunity for her, as she noted: *"... and I was stuck in my career and this opportunity came up in the ... November, October and I don't think I would have even thought about it without her (the coach)."* The coach helped P3 to gain clarity on her career and what her next step should be. Looking back, the answer to the next career step was obvious, but P3 would not have recognised it without going through the coaching process: *"... choose where to go with my career, ... what's my life, what's my career? ... so obvious, here's what I'm going to do, it's*

this. ... I would never have worked any of that out in my own." Coaching gave P3 the courage to take over a leading business unit from a previous leader. She subsequently rose to the next level in her career; as she said: *"... when he decided to go back to mainstream business, I don't know if I would have put my hand out to take it over from him if I didn't have her (the coach). No, I wouldn't have, actually."*

A golden theme in the life of P5 when it did not go well in his job and things got too much was to leave the particular company instead of facing whatever the problem was. He was tempted to leave his current company because of a feeling a failure after launching a new business unit that was not successful. With the help of coaching, however, he took control of his career and stayed with the company, facing the failure and his colleagues. This was an incredible shift in his career history, as he explained:

... I actually wanted to resign back then ... the previous two times in my previous two jobs I actually resigned round about the time where I hit some very big difficulty and I've never actually faced it and seen it through. It would have been very easy for me to just resign and leave and then no-one here will ever see me again. It took quite a lot of courage for me to be walking in the corridors every day, seeing people ...

The transformational value of coaching resulted in a re-orientation towards taking control of career decisions and life stages. Some participants explored different career avenues; others made informed career decisions or even took a courageous step in their careers.

Sub-theme 3, enhanced leadership self-efficacy and competence, will be discussed next.

5.2.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Enhanced leadership self-efficacy and competence

Coaching resulted in participants becoming aware of their leadership style and their engagement with colleagues. This resulted in them approaching leadership differently, which had a positive impact on their business efficacy.

The leadership traits of P1 improved in many ways. She was used to be so focussed on her own ways of doing and carrying on by herself that P1 left her team behind without necessarily being aware of that, until she was made aware of it that a good leader lets her team shine by empowering them. Participant 1 remarked: *"And also figuring out, ... the best type of leader is someone who actually empowers the team to do those things and actually stands back and let them shine."* In this context she became very conscious of how she used to use her vocabulary and internalised this knowledge, determining to use language differently by not referring to "I" but "we" and "us", which had a positive impact on empowering her team. She explained: *"I don't like the word 'I, my project, I did this, my meeting'. No, 'ours, we. We did this'."*

Moreover, it was an eye-opener for P1 to empower her team. Doing that resulted in her team shining instead of her taking all the credit for satisfying business objectives; as P1 remarked: *"... let the team shine. I think it's a very common leadership trait. And when I kind of realised that ... (pause) that was also a penny-dropper."* In addition, P1 shifted from being operational (transactional) to being more strategic (transformational) and holistic in her leadership approach and she encouraged her team to contribute to business ideas, which she was not used to doing. Participant 1 said: *"And that power gives everybody confidence to have ideas."* Similarly, P3 worked with the concept rather to empower her team than to do work all by herself as she used to do, which is very limiting to team work, as she noted: *"And then the rest sort of the last year has been more about, how do I lead a huge team of people when I always working by myself? ... how do I manage just what I have here."* She furthermore empowered people in her team to make them feel free to ask challenging questions, as that, according to her, was what not only her team, but also the business needed. Participant 3 remarked: *"... having this place which allows me the freedom to go really far in terms of imagination and questioning, it means that I have like this group of people that feel they can do it too, which is beautiful ..."* This ties in with P7, who stated that instead of continuing to do everything by herself, she up-skilled her team and consequently empowered them: *"So I had to slowly but surely invest a little bit more time to bring these people up to speed ... because I need to get them to do it. Otherwise I might as well just have a one-man team."* Participant 7 made the link that an effective leader focusses on the

strategy (transformational areas) of the business and is not constantly involved in operational (transactional) matters: *"Yeah, because you're also reducing the stress in yourself and you're allowing yourself to do the things you should be doing as a manager. Managers shouldn't do, managers should manage."*

The 360-degree feedback questionnaire and the Enneagram type of P1 gave her insight into her leadership traits, not only into what to develop, but also insight into her positive traits and how to benefit from them: *"And I think that combination with the 360 and the Enneagram, you know, the sort of really positive elements that came out, and then the ... but how do I really make sure I capitalise on those positives, really helps."* Consequently, P1 had to think more strategically on how she would lead and empower her team to get the best out of them. She used the analogy of Robert the Bruce (movie character), which made it visible to her to how to influence her team at work in a positive way and to have the vision to take people with her to meet business expectations on a global level. She became that character by taking on the positive characteristics of the character, as noted by P1: *"... but his (Robert the Bruce) sort of vision – let's get people go and he takes the army."* This resulted in empowering her staff, as P1 said: *"... but I need to make sure that everybody else also feels part of that journey and is empowered and have a role and it's with me."* Moreover, P1 internalised that in addition to having a vision as a leader, she also needed to be an inspirational leader: *"And that trait of saying to people, 'we can do this and looking forward and saying, we're going to get this done', is really a positive thing, but I need to get people in my boat when I do that."*

A leader should be able to acknowledge colleagues and subordinates by listening attentively. The way P1 started to engage and interact with people changed and it enhanced her leadership style. She said: *"... I've definitely become ... more engaged with people, more willing to listen, kinder, more thoughtful. I mean, other people say that, but that's what I feel, and seeing the rewards of it ... like little ridiculous things."* Participant 1 therefore gave her staff a 'voice' and let them feel seen and heard. As P1 developed more leadership skills and insights during her coaching programme, her local and international business colleagues noticed and experienced constructive changes in her leadership behaviour. Participant 1 remarked: *"And they then talked about what they perceived to be changes in the*

way I was behaving ... important for me also to know that they understood I saw value in it and that they perceived changes in whatever things."

As a result of coaching it became clear to P2 that not completing his university studies did not make him unsuccessful in his career. In fact, in his case it actually made him successful and taught him leadership skills and other skills he would not necessarily have had, as he noted: *"... taught me to be a bit more bold than many corporate type people and a bit more brave and a bit more outspoken."* Coaching improved the development and leadership skills of P2 in many ways, which led to a promotion for him: *"... so coaching has helped me land a promotion in the meantime too."* He gained insight enabling him to take up his role as a leader by authorising himself in his leadership role to determine what was necessary for him to leverage on opportunities in business that came his way; as P2 said: *"... how do I be the best me to really capitalise on this? How do I really capitalise on this monstrous opportunity?"*

Being in a leadership position, it was important for P3 to create a space where people enjoyed doing their work and through coaching she authorised herself to create that space where people could flourish in their jobs: *"... so I'm a campaigner for creating space where anyone can thrive, and I've never been able to do that in my life in the company. So, running this business gives me a chance to do the things ..."* From a leadership development context, P4 became stronger as a leader. She noted: *"I became more ... maybe more firm."* In addition to the coaching programme, P5 enrolled for his MBA degree to enhance his leadership skills: *"... And since I've been back in credit I then e-mailed the guys and I said I'm ready to start this year. So I actually just started on Saturday ..."*

The coaching programme gave P5 immense insight into his leadership style. His default leadership style was providing structure and he was comfortable in that style, but what was expected from him as a leader in his role of managing a new business unit of sales people was to provide more encouraging leadership by having conversations with the sales staff and supporting them in that context. Participant 5 said: *"So I brought structural leadership in a time where they needed more symbolic and more encouraging leadership. So that's basically one of the insights I got*

yesterday." This is similar to the experience of P6 who also gained new insight into his leadership style. His style used to be linear and was transformed into a more flexible leadership style when he allowed his subordinates more freedom and space to meet business objectives, as long as these were met. Participant 6 explained: *"And it's not going to be linear to get there. The guys are going to have to find their own way, just make sure they get where you want them to go ... So that's sort of how it's moved."* There was a big shift, like day and night, in the leadership style of P6. The business did not merely see him as the accountant anymore, but as part of the executive team and in a partnership relationship. Participant 6 therefore navigated his way from a transactional to a transformational leader, as he noted: *"... it's interesting to watching over three years where they very much saw me as their accountant to now it's totally different. I'm very much part of that executive team now ... Now it's very much more a partnership..."*

Coaching helped P6 gain competence and confidence, which enabled him to engage more optimally with colleagues on an executive level and to express himself better: *"That's part confidence, it's part competence ... I can do that now, where I didn't really have the confidence or the ability to articulate that two years ago."* Participant 6 could confidently say that he moved forward in his leadership role, not only because of coaching, but because of different contributing factors:

Yeah, that's a big shift and it has to continue being that. I know I need to be better but I am like day ... it's like day and night to what it was, definitely. And it's not all the coaching, but it's a big part of it. It's all of ... when you build them all together.

Furthermore, P6 was very aware of the fact that some people would be attracted to his leadership style and some not, even taking into consideration that he had improved his leadership style, as he explained: *"I'm also cognisant that there are certain people that will be attracted to my form of leadership. ... So I'm a bit more ... I think I always was authentic, I think I show up much better."* Participant 6 signed on again for coaching in his personal capacity as additional support in transition to different leadership roles. He remarked:

Subsequently I've re-signed with (name of the coach). ... but the big thing now is to help me really think and transition from being a CFO – and quite a good CFO – to being a CEO ... But there are opportunities now to run one of the businesses in country and stuff, so how do you start to think about that transition? So it's just a transition in my career and she helps me through that.

The transformational value of coaching is evident in how the coaching process for the participants resulted in a re-orientation towards leadership self-efficacy and competence. Participants who were in leadership positions engaged differently with staff and were more aware of how they could change their leadership behaviour to let their staff flourish. Some participants started to shift their leadership style from being a transactional leader to a transformational leader.

The sub-theme of transferring of learning to society, will be discussed next.

5.2.4.4 Sub-theme 4: Transferring of learning to society

The effect of coaching seems to involve more than only the coachee as a person. The rippling changes that happened for the participants expanded to the bigger society, such as giving back of their learning to the community and their families.

The rippling effect of coaching resulted in participants who wanted to be role models for others in terms of their behaviour, and to transfer their learning in a personal and professional capacity to society. The words of P1 reflected: *"... at home and here ... you know the real sources of value that I can add ... willing to take time ... just try to pass some of those skills on that I've learnt over the years."* It ties in with P2, who had a need to transfer well-rounded behaviour to his family:

So, spending dinner time with them, sitting at the table with them. And it's not because being able to eat with a knife and fork being the ultimate skill, but they're going to learn from modelling my behaviour. They're not going to learn from me shouting at them about them not modelling the behaviour I want to.

Participant 7 explained that coaching was a way to address the complexities in one's life and she recommended coaching to colleagues in response to her positive experience thereof:

So after I got coached, I met a lot of my friends in the bank and I said to them, think about getting coached; if you're struggling with something ... the way I see it is, if you're struggling with something, that means you should be coached, you know. If you see a need for something and you don't know how to handle this, it's not something you can learn by picking up a book, then you should see a coach and they can help you.

She was of the opinion that coaching should be expanded within organisations, schools and universities, therefore, in society:

I would just like coaching to become more prevalent in organisations. And not just organisations, I think if children get coached in school and in high school when they are of ... and even at university ... you know, at those ground levels, you're actually able to change them much quicker before ... so you have top programmes and ground programmes – people that come into those little short-term internship before they become permanent employees. I mean, coaching needs to be a big part of that year for them, a big part.

The transformational value of coaching resulted in re-orientation towards transferring learning to society. Participants wanted to give back what they had experienced in terms of their growth and development.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I unravelled the participants' coaching experiences to reveal the transformational value of coaching. The transformational value of coaching was constructed upon four themes, namely (1) coaching as process, (2) coaching mechanisms, (3) processing the holistic self and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context. Ultimately coaching is a medium that contributes to personal transformation and change in behaviour. It happens over time and is an emerging process. Vertical

development is the result of coaching where a new space opens up for participants and where maximum transformation can take place. Thus, coaching is not only about improving knowledge and skills (horizontal development), but is rather a transformational process to live life in an entirely different way (vertical development). I could best describe coaching as resulting in a deep transformational process that moved the participants in this study to a new way of thinking, doing and being in how they presented themselves in life.

In the next chapter the findings will be discussed and a conceptual framework aligned to the study's research objective, will be presented.

CHAPTER 6: COMPOSITE DESCRIPTION: INTEGRATION AND ESSENCE OF THE FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this research was to describe the personal transformational value of coaching through an exploration of how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee. In the previous chapter the focus was on the structural analysis of the data by conceptualising and structuring the themes, with the aim of conceptualising the personal transformational value of coaching. In this chapter, following integration of the findings (Chapter 5) and the psychological paradigms and meta-theoretical basis (Chapter 3), I present a composite description of the personal transformation value of coaching. This is the culmination of my thesis and the theoretical contribution that I am making in response to the research objective as formulated in Chapter 1.

Firstly, in this chapter I provide an integrated conceptualisation of each of the main themes and their sub-themes and synthesise their meaning in relation to the psychological paradigms and meta-theories presented in Chapter 3. Secondly, I present a conceptual framework to summarise the primary findings and explain the interrelated dynamic of the themes to address the research objective and answer the research question. Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009) confirm the importance of integrating the conceptual framework with the research question and making a connection between the two. Imenda (2014) and Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009) also refer to the integration of the theoretical and empirical findings as a model or conceptual framework. For the purpose of this study I refer to a conceptual framework of the transformational value of coaching. This will serve as the integration of theory and empirical data, modelling the relationship between theories and conceptual conclusions, in order to give meaning to the research findings and to answer the research question, and therefore ultimately to contribute to the body of knowledge (Leshem & Trafford, 2007; Trafford & Leshem, 2012).

6.2 INTEGRATION OF LITERATURE AND FINDINGS TO ESTABLISH CONCEPTUAL MEANING

I was unfamiliar with the skill of conceptualising and was challenged to overcome the fear of “will I ever get there?” In this regard, I was comforted by Trafford (2008) and Trafford and Leshem (2012) who refer to the challenges doctorate students have with conceptualising their thinking and in doing so, demonstrating doctorateness. Mouton (1996) concurs that the researcher has to conceptualise and integrate her thinking and contribute to a body of knowledge. Writing up the findings in a composite description after being so deeply involved in the thematic analysis required me to take a step back by deeply reflecting again on the research objective and the literature foundations of the study. Doing so reflects the iterativeness of the data analysis process. It helped me to achieve clarity and to progress towards integrating the findings conceptually and holistically (White et al., 2014).

As I went back to my literature review, I re-read the structural findings in Chapter 5 repeatedly, while continuing to read relevant literature. I moved between theory and findings in this way in an iterative manner and with a consistent hermeneutic orientation, consequently making conceptual adjustments to both Chapters 3 and 5. In this process, I started working towards constructing an integrative conceptual framework to describe the research phenomenon comprehensively. By connecting theory with practice, a conceptual framework integrates and clarifies the research topic under investigation (Trafford, 2008). Trafford and Leshem (2012) describe the writing of a thesis as a process that is not linear, but holistic, and also refer to the “interconnectivity of parts” (p. 156). Their description alludes to the principle of the hermeneutic circle and the way I repeatedly moved between the theory and empirical parts of the research reflects my enacting of this principle.

The research objective was to deepen understanding of the personal transformational value of coaching. The preliminary literature review presented in Chapter 1 gave background about what coaching entails and built on the expectation of its transformational value, because it was clear that the knowledge domain of coaching points to the behavioural change it is intended to facilitate. I entered the study with an expectation that coaching has personal transformational value

because of my own experiences in both the positions of a coachee and a coach. The research aim that I set out to reach was thus based on the hypothesis that coaching has personal transformational value and the central research question was to explore *how* coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee. Therefore, the study aimed to contribute to the knowledge field by conceptualising the nature and scope of the personal transformation that coaching facilitates. The findings entail four main themes, which were analytically constructed from the stories of participants, namely (1) coaching as process, (2) coaching mechanisms, (3) processing the holistic self, and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context. In this section I provide an integrated conceptualisation of each theme, because these themes essentially describe the personal transformation experiences of the participants and inform the hypothesis that coaching has personal transformational value.

6.2.1 Coaching as process

Coaching as process denotes the personal transformational value of coaching, because it *initiates* (before coaching), *facilitates* (during coaching) and *maintains* (during and after coaching) intrapersonal, self-reflective engagement with, and processing of the self.

This process of critically engaging with the self begins '*before coaching*' sessions actually start and continues to processing of the self during the coaching programme. Ultimately, the value of coaching from a personal transformational perspective is relayed in the sense that coaching establishes sustained continuous processing of the self after coaching has ended. From a transpersonal psychology perspective, personal transformation is a consequence of processing the self by means of self-exposure, self-reflection, self-awareness and working with the self. Developing such personal awareness helps the individual to engage in meaningful identity work (Brown, 2015). Moreover, processing of the self results in 'a-ha moments' or turning points (De Haan et al., 2010) that brings about change in the self. The scene is set for personal transformation already before coaching starts, because participants move from an initial resistance, not feeling ready for coaching, to becoming ready to participate in a coaching programme. Thus, in essence, as part

of the dynamic underlying the process of *becoming* ready, coachees already start to engage with the self, prior to commencement of any sessions. For coaching to open various developmental moments for the coachee, the coaching client needs to be ready for coaching to be fully engaged in the process (Hanssmann, 2014; Johnson, 2007). Personal transformation is in this way already initiated when the mindset of the coachee changes to open herself up to the idea of coaching, because she succumbs to a need for personal development and growth (Griffiths, 2005; Longhurst, 2006; Orem et al., 2007). The phenomenon of psychological growth and development, as contained in the transpersonal psychology paradigm, is explained by Vaughan et al. (1996) as triggered by transpersonal experiences. According to Buss (2000) and Haybron (2007), humans naturally strive for happiness, well-being and growth as human beings and as such a need to engage with the self comes to the fore even before coaching starts. The positive psychology perspective includes the two broad views of well-being, namely SWB (hedonia) and PWB (eudaimonia). Green et al. (2006) and Leach et al. (2011) affirm that SWB and PWB can be enhanced by coaching. Applying the positive psychology paradigm to the changes in the self that start even before coaching commences denotes how engaging with the idea of coaching already encourages personal growth, to actualise one's potential and to flourish (Rothmann, 2013). Similar to such an eudaimonic effect, thinking about starting a coaching programme has an effect on hedonic well-being, as the potential coachee starts to feel relieved and judges the upcoming intervention (coaching) positively as something that will fulfil a personal need. Koroleva (2016) refers to the coachee being aware of issues and a need for change before coaching has started, followed by being ready for coaching as process to facilitate growth and change.

The '*during coaching*' process becomes an evolving processing of the self in which behaviour is explored. By exploring behaviour the coaching client exposes the self, which results in heightened self-reflection, self-awareness and active identity work. Such identity work becomes an evolving process that aligns to personal transformation, as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm. In this paradigm, and in the integral coaching approach, behavioural change is dependent on deep self-reflection and self-awareness (Carey et al., 2011; Fielden, 2005; Hanssmann, 2014, Koroleva, 2016; Page & De Haan, 2014; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Furthermore,

coaching stimulates identity work where clients discover who they are and connect with the true self in constructing answers to the “who am I” question (Brown, 2015; Kreiner et al., 2006a, 2006b; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Askew and Carnell (2011), Stelter (2014) and Wade (1998) refer to identity work and the relevance thereof to personal transformation. The personal transformational value of coaching seems to be centred on the fact that it provides a focused space to do identity work, working with the self in relation to various contexts, namely the individual, social, professional, leadership and the organisational context (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003).

Gourov and Lomas (2019, p. 11) confirm that knowledge of the self remains an important pursuit and refer to a maxim inscribed at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi that states: “Man, know thyself, and you are going to know the gods”. A need for coaching is also inspired by a need for working with the self and finding out more about the self. This becomes a continuous and evolving process during coaching. Most of the time during the coaching programme is spent on facilitating this process of working with the self. From the data it was evident to me that during coaching the focus is on exploring behaviour as a starting point in order to change behaviour. A change in perspective and behaviour is ultimately what coaching is about (Flaherty, 2010; Grant et al., 2010; Jarosz, 2016; Kauffman & Hodgetts, 2016; Peel, 2005; Stelter, 2007; Stout-Rostron, 2009b). Identity work from a transpersonal psychology perspective was also evident in the data, which reflected that coaching allowed participants to become less isolated and to expand themselves by becoming more compassionate towards others and more interconnected with a greater whole, namely the cosmos and the universe (Davis, 2003; Friedman, 2018; Hartelius et al., 2013a; Hastings, 1999; Valle, 1989). In the transpersonal psychology paradigm this process of self-expansion is referred to as developing a transpersonal identity (Vaughan, 1985, 2010) when one is engaged in radical self-transformation (Collins, 2008; Valle, 1989).

The *‘during coaching’* process creates discomfort for clients, yet SWPP perspectives emphasise that it is in personal discomfort that personal growth and development are initiated. Gourov and Lomas (2019, p. 12) affirm that engaging with challenge and discomfort provides “great potential for growth, healing, insight and

transformation". The exploration process and wrestling with self-exposure are not daily, common practices, but part of an unfamiliar process that creates discomfort for the participants and elicits feelings of vulnerability. According to Brockbank (2008), transformation is facilitated when trust and openness are evident during the coaching process, and where the client is willing to take risks. Some participants found it incredibly difficult, while others were more comfortable. From a positive psychology perspective, discomfort during the coaching process should be embraced, as SWPP recognises both the 'bad' (the wounded self or the shadow) and the 'good' (Gourov & Lomas, 2019; Lomas & Ivztan, 2016; Sims, 2017). Western (2012, p. 9) refers to coaching as the merger between the 'wounded self' and the 'celebrated self', as it helps the coachee to 'celebrate the self'; it is in this celebration that growth, change and transformation takes place personally and professionally. Discomfort during the coaching process is an essential part of the process, as this is where a movement takes place from wrestling with self-exposure to growing into becoming a fully functioning human being (Russo-Netzer, 2017; Wong, 2017), therefore an evolving process that takes place towards personal transformation and the well-being of the coachee.

Ultimately, with coaching as process, the personal transformational value of coaching is conceptualised as establishing a continuous internal processing competency, which is an ongoing enabler of transformation and growth. The establishment and development of this competency takes place *during and after coaching*. The internal processing competency refers to the development of competence in a way that enables the client to be aware of, analyse and respond appropriately to intra- and interpersonal dynamics in an ongoing and sustainable way, both in the course of and after the conclusion of the coaching programme. The internal processing competence then becomes a continuous process without an end state. Rooted in the transpersonal psychology paradigm, integral coaching invites vertical development, which is a process of deep self-transformation that includes a more integrated perspective of meaning and being in the world (Odendaal, 2017; Petrie, 2014). Vertical development from a transpersonal psychology perspective relates to how coaching bestows the ability to self-correct (implying that the coachee is not dependent on a coach) and the capacity to be self-generating over the long term (implying that the coachee renews herself continuously from without and within)

(Flaherty, 2010). Moreover, vertical development is the process of accessing a new way of being and living in a new and different way (Ingersol & Cook-Greuter, 2008). Hence, coaching shapes the coachee to live differently in the world, as it creates awareness of where to shift her way of being, but also embodies a new way of being (Jakonen & Kamppinen, 2015; Lazar & Bergquist, 2003). From the data it was evident to me how participants changed their behaviour, which changed others' perception of them. It is in the reflective dialogue, where the horizon for the client is expanded, that transformation takes place (Brockbank, 2008) and the coachees' competence to continue to work with the self in a self-correcting and self-generating manner continues independently of coaching. The coachee's ability to renew herself continuously (by means of self-correcting, self-generating and developing new competencies⁴) is initiated by the coach creating awareness for the client during the coaching process (Flaherty, 2010; Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.; Hunt, 2009). Moreover, integral coaching as situated in the transpersonal psychology paradigm relates to both horizontal and vertical development, where horizontal development refers to lateral growth and vertical development to deep transformation (Frost, 2009). Hunt (2009) and Jakonen and Kamppinen (2015) explain that integral coaching triggers the development of a 'new' way of being by transcending and including the 'current' way of being into a larger, more systemic way of seeing, thinking, doing and being in the world.

Personal transformation involves intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal aspects. The transpersonal psychology paradigm views personal transformation as the development of a deeper nature of identity and being (Davis, 2003; Valle, 1989). Transpersonal psychology recognises transpersonal experiences (Grof, 2008), which include exceptional human experiences (Davis, 2003; Grof, 2008; Hartelius, et al., 2017). This was evident in how some of the participants in this study underwent coaching. Coaching as process seen from the transpersonal psychology paradigm thus facilitates significant and meaningful life-shaping and life-changing transformative experiences (Hartelius, et al., 2017, Maslow, 1962). From a transpersonal psychology perspective, coaching initiates, facilitates and enables an awakening experience where the coachee transcends from a normal state to a state

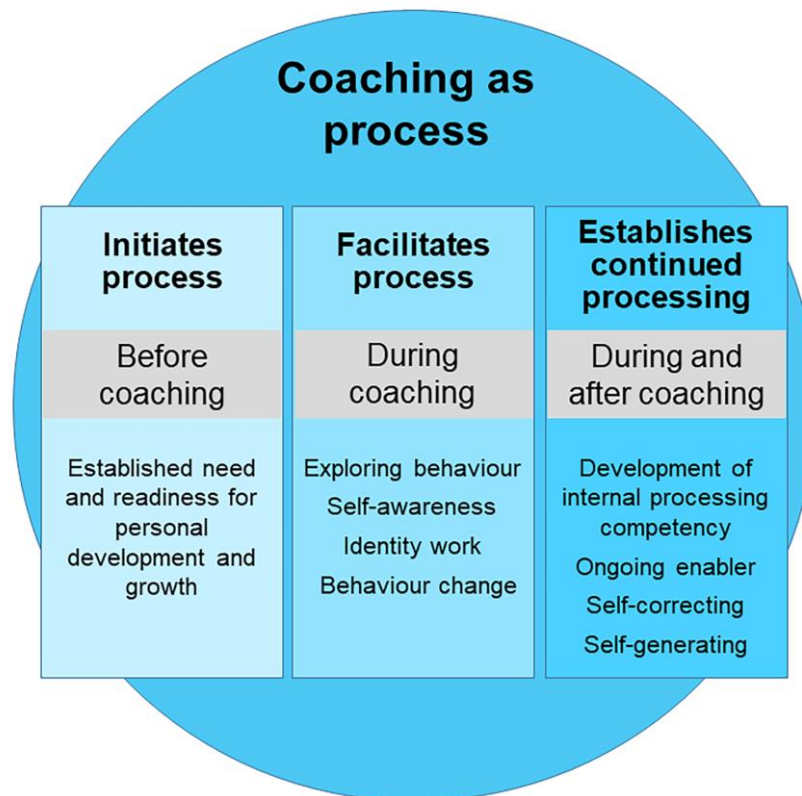
⁴ See Chapter 3.

of intense awareness in which transformation takes place (Dängeli, 2021; Taylor & Egeto-Szabo, 2017). Transpersonal psychology informs identity work and the ongoing processes of creating and re-generating a sense of self and processing the self from an integral perspective (Collins, 2008; Vaughan et al., 1996). Flourishing, salutogenesis and PPC theories on well-being, which are encapsulated within the positive psychology paradigm, were evident of the personal transformational value of coaching as it was seen and experienced by participants in the way they functioned and dealt differently with challenges in life by taking control of situations (Eriksson & Lindström, 2007; Keyes, 2002). Second wave positive psychology describes that in some circumstances it is necessary to suffer and struggle in order to grow, develop and ultimately to flourish and that well-being integrates both positive and negative experiences for a fully functioning life. It is an ongoing process and owing to the dialectic nature of the positive and negative experiences (Ivtzan et al., 2017), which is realised through coaching, internal competency to deal with these experiences is built. Seligman et al. (2005, p. 410) concur that the intent of positive psychology is not to replace human suffering, weakness and disorder, but to supplement these and have a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience, namely “the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between”.

The figure below summarises coaching as process.

Figure 6.1

Coaching as process



In summary, the processing of the self *before, during* and *after* coaching implies an intrapersonal dynamic that the coachee may not always be aware of while consciously engaging with coaching. However, through coaching the coachee becomes increasingly aware of this working with the self. Coaching as process thus also relates to how personal transformation manifests on not only a conscious level. Coaching as process means that in the coaching context, personal transformation manifests in seeking out and engaging with personal change through the process of identity work. This identity work process manifests as a conscious endeavour where the coachee engages with self-exploration, self-reflection and behaviour change. Nevertheless, the processing of the self is also an inevitable unconscious dynamic entailing deep, vertical change in one's way of being. Evidence of the unconscious dynamic that runs concurrent to the conscious coaching engagement is found in the self-transformative dynamic that happens already before coaching starts, continues during coaching and stretches into the person's way of being as a self-generating capability, long after coaching. In this perspective, coaching is a medium to access

unconscious knowledge and feelings about the self, followed by the integration of the unconscious and conscious knowing and working with the self. Lee (2014, p. 22) refers to the coaching process as “making the unconscious conscious, to increase self-awareness, to understand the subtle ways in which coachees can limit themselves, and so learn how to approach new challenges with more awareness and freedom”. Moreover, Western (2012) refers to depth analysis in coaching where work is being done “beneath the surface” (p. 33) to reveal the unconscious and conscious processes in a given context, allowing an individual to liberate herself, and ultimately bringing about transformation of being. Furthermore, the transformational value of coaching is an ongoing process leading to renewed self-awareness and self-reflection occurring through cycles of development of new competencies (Hunt, 2009). Coaching therefore establishes a continued intrapersonal processing capability or the development of an internal processing competency. The way in which this internal processing competency is initiated in coaching is the focus of the next theme.

6.2.2 Coaching mechanisms

Coaching mechanisms highlight the pragmatic aspect of coaching, denoting the coaching activities, tools and techniques used by the coach to initiate and facilitate personal transformation. Coaching mechanisms initiates the coaching process; for example, coaching as process cannot commence without a series of coaching sessions. Furthermore, coaching mechanisms maintain and enable the coaching process, which is fundamentally a description of its transformational nature. Both coaching mechanisms and coaching as process are therefore important for coaching to demonstrate its transformational value.

There is no standard set number of coaching sessions, but a series of coaching sessions seems necessary for transformation to happen because conscious, repetitive working with the self over time is beneficial to the deep inner work that takes place during a coaching programme. Baron and Morin (2010) and Peräkylä (2019) agree that a minimum number of coaching sessions are required during a coaching programme to enhance self-efficacy and that these should be spread over time.

Applying their experience and discretion, coaches use various coaching tools to stimulate and complement the coaching process and help clients to integrate information (Bachkirova et al., 2014; Cox, 2013; Herd & Russell, 2011). The coaching terms 'frameworks, techniques, tools' have been used interchangeably in coaching literature (Herd & Russell, 2011), but for the purposes of this study the term 'tools' will be used. Coaching tools include, among others, awareness practices such as mindfulness meditation practice and breathing, which facilitate personal transformation. The data provided clear examples of how various coaching tools were used to stimulate and maintain the coaching process.

Coaching goals and objectives define what the coachee wants to address during the coaching programme (Kemp, 2005) and thus goal-setting directs the programme. In cases where a business sponsors the coaching programme, feedback to the business is most likely to happen. Coaching is transformational, provided the coaches are not giving advice, that they are using a non-directive process, and that the client is fully engaged in the process and takes ownership of the focus and purpose of coaching (Brockbank, 2008). Potential coaching blockers were noted in the data, which confirmed that not everything works well during a coaching programme. These blockers are, however, not necessarily detrimental or unnecessary, because they in fact act as indicators that something else should be attended to if continued transformation is to be facilitated effectively.

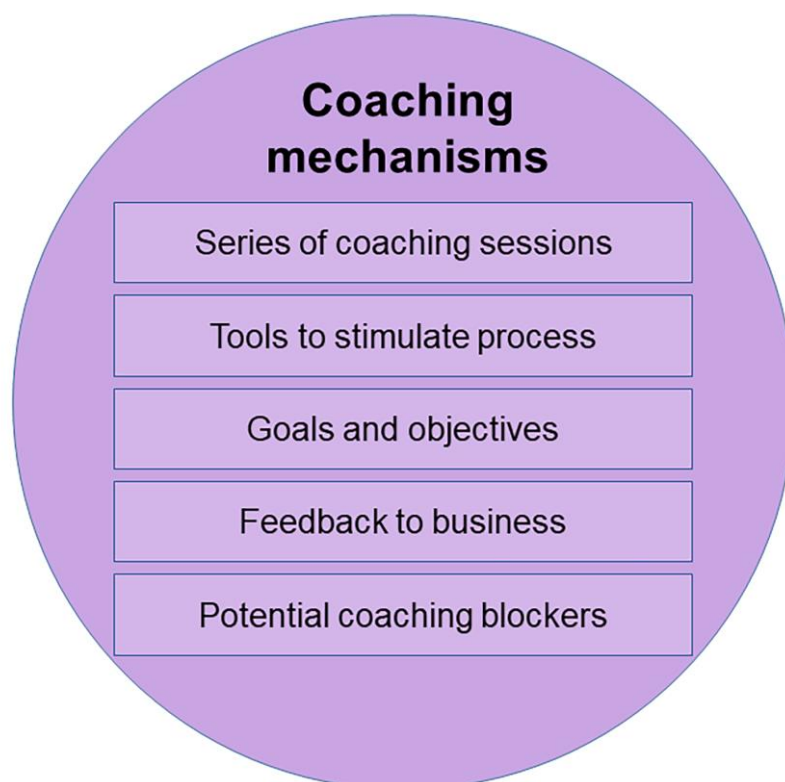
The coaching tools encapsulated by the theme coaching mechanisms, when seen from a transpersonal psychology perspective, act as triggers to work with the self on a deeper level of being, which stimulates personal growth and change in behaviour. Hence coaching tools create a platform that prompts the practices of living consciously and being fully awake, engaged, and present in life, as reflected in the transpersonal psychology construct of mindfulness (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003; Lavretsky, 2010; Pagnini & Langer, 2015; Passmore, 2018; Schwartz, 2018; Walsh, 1999; Williams & Penman, 2011). The different tools used by the coach, as seen from the transpersonal psychology paradigm, furthermore triggers the spiritual aspect of being human, which is the search for meaning and purpose, as explained in the construct spirituality (Amundson, 2001; Mohan & Uys, 2006; Pargament, 1999). Consequently, coaching

mechanisms as seen from a positive psychology perspective are applied to empower the coachee with a range of tools and techniques to become a fully functioning person (Grant & Spence, 2009; Passmore & Oades, 2015). This is necessary as, according to Frederick and Losada (2005) and Seligman (2011), the construct flourishing refers to living within an optimal range of human functioning and to live a life of goodness, growth and resilience. Empowering the coachee in this manner through the application of coaching tools relates to the emphasis on intrapersonal strength in the positive psychology paradigm and strengthens the coachee's resourcefulness in being in the world (Berg & Szabo, 2005). Grant and Spence (2009) and Kauffman (2006) confirm that the coaching orientation in the positive psychology perspective relates to client strength and wholeness.

The figure below summarises coaching mechanisms.

Figure 6.2

Coaching mechanisms



In summary, coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee from a transpersonal and positive psychology perspective in that the coach provides a safe

and non-judgmental space for the coachee and encourages the coachee to become self-aware and explore behaviour on a deep and intimate level. For coaching to take place in a safe space, a well-established and trusting relationship between the coach and coachee is necessary, which complements the coaching process and is essential for deep work (Boyatzis & Jack, 2018; Joo, 2005). In this safe space coaching mechanisms become a platform for self-exploration and serve as the container that allows coaching as process to take place; it thus operationalises the coaching process. Coaching as process is therefore operationalised through coaching mechanisms to initiate and maintain transformation, and such transformation happens from a whole person perspective – as described in the theme to follow.

6.2.3 Processing the holistic self

Processing the holistic self directly aligns to the phenomenon of personal transformation as contained in the transpersonal psychology paradigm in several ways. In the transpersonal psychology paradigm, whole person development includes physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health (Williams, 2012; Valle, 1989; Vaughan, 2003). The six streams of development in integral coaching (which is rooted in the transpersonal paradigm⁵), namely the cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integral (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.), affected the construction of ‘processing of the holistic self’ because these levels of being and the coachees’ engagement with all of them during coaching were noted in the data.

Processing the holistic self as seen in the positive psychology paradigm highlights the importance of being holistically engaged in optimal PWB and effective functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Participants in this study evolved towards salutogenesis and flourishing, which are both meta-theories in the positive psychology paradigm, by becoming well-functioning individuals in the context of SWB (emotional well-being/hedonic well-being), PWB (eudaimonic well-being) and social well-being. This holistic well-being relates to Seligman’s PERMA model where both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being are integrated (Goodman et al., 2018).

⁵ See Chapter 3.

Moreover, the meta-theoretical framework encapsulated in PPC denotes helping clients to increase optimal functioning and well-being (Boniwell et al., 2014; Green & Palmer, 2019; Linley & Harrington, 2005). Russo-Netzer (2017) refers to not only 'well-being or happiness' of a person but also 'whole-being', hence the importance of the whole, namely spiritual, physical, intellectual, relational and emotional components that make up a full and fulfilling life.

Processing of the holistic self includes the following sub-themes, which are discussed below: Cognitive processing, emotional processing, somatic processing, relational processing, spiritual processing and integration processing. All of these are concepts are relevant to integral coaching in the transpersonal psychology paradigm. Working on all these levels in coaching further denotes a 'whole-being' approach to achieving well-being in all its facets – emotional, psychological and social (as denoted in the positive psychology concept of flourishing).

Cognitive processing: The transformational value of coaching is demonstrated in cognitive processing by working with the self on a deep level towards understanding of the self, which is a fundamental intrapersonal endeavour in the transpersonal psychology paradigm. Working towards understanding of the self reflects the process of identity work and engagement with the question of 'Who am I'? Wilber (1979) refers to this question as the most vexing of all human questions. According to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) and Watson (2008), identity work is an ongoing process. In this process the coachee makes sense of her identity in various life contexts, in relation to the external world and relations with others (Brown, 2015; Howard, 2000; Moore & Koning, 2015). The construct mindfulness in the transpersonal psychology paradigm is referred to as the art of being fully aware, awake and present in the moment (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001, 2003; Lavretsky, 2010; Pagnini & Langer, 2015; Passmore, 2018; Schwartz, 2018; Walsh, 1999; Williams & Penman, 2011). From the data it seemed evident that participants became more mindful and 'awake' in how they behaved and presented themselves in various contexts. Cognitive processing does have an impact on behavioural change, as explained by Askew and Carnell (2011, p. 122): "The coachee does the work of reflective learning. The coachee, too, is the one who

makes the changes to how they see themselves, how they see the world, what they believe and how they act.”

The transformational value of coaching is further demonstrated in cognitive processing by means of comprehensibility and meaning-making. From the data it was clear how participants gained insight and new perspectives in their behaviour and how they conducted themselves within the demands of everyday life. Hence the construct SOC as seen in the positive psychology paradigm highlights how participants comprehend, manage, find meaning and make sense of life experiences as a result of coaching. Meaning-making is, according to Stelter (2007), considered one of the main objectives in the facilitation of a coaching process. Stelter (2009) refers to the way in which the meaning-making process evolves in the interplay between action, sensing, reflecting and speaking. Furthermore, Lazar and Bergquist (2003) refer to making sense of one’s life and the fundamental values of meaning that are expressed through choice and action in a coaching context.

Participants made sense of life experiences, including the interplay of both positive and negative life demands, the good and bad times in life as referred to in SWPP (Sims, 2017; Wong, 2011). Moreover, according to the SWPP principle, human beings are by nature meaning-seeking and meaning-making creatures who constantly want to make sense of their experiences in real life, which cannot be based only on the positive, as it has to include the totality of human experience, namely the coexistence of positive and negative experiences (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2016; Wong, 2017). The construct SOC, which is a salutogenic concept in the positive psychology paradigm, explains the capacity to deal with complexities in life and in the midst of suffering to find meaning (King et al., 2006; Martela & Steger, 2016).

Emotional processing: Emotional processing consists of triggering emotions, recognising emotions and owning and managing emotions. Coaching initiates and facilitates the surfacing of emotions that participants may have been unaware of and establishes the competence to continue to work and engage consciously with emotions by bringing them to the surface instead of denying them. Emotional health as referred to in the transpersonal psychology paradigm is one of the aspects of human nature that contribute not only to optimal functioning but also to wholeness

(Valle, 1989; Vaughan, 2010). Identity work, from a transpersonal psychology perspective, entails working with emotions below the surface (Brown, 2015; Kreiner et al., 2006a; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Winkler, 2018) and integrating these with consciousness. It starts with recognising both challenging and positive emotions, which flows into owning the particular emotions, and lastly consciously managing and responding to emotions versus impulsively reacting to them. Positive psychology, especially SWPP, incorporates the ability to work with both positive and negative emotions for growth and development instead of suppressing emotions (Lomas & Ivztan, 2016; Sims, 2017; Wong, 2011). In the positive psychology paradigm, EQ is a key construct denoting intra- and interpersonal relationships (Goleman, 1998). Denoting the personal transformational value of coaching, emotional processing enables the coachee to develop EQ on an intra- and interpersonal level, thus not only from within but also when engaging with other people. Askew and Carnell (2011) explain that instead of the coach attempting to manage the emotions of the coachee, she should rather use feelings and emotions in a transformative way. The transformational value of coaching is demonstrated in the way in which coaching initiates and facilitates the development of EQ. Moreover, EQ is related to emotional regulation by managing both positive and challenging experiences that enhance PWB and flourishing (Matthews et al., 2017; Sims, 2017; Wong, 2011).

Somatic processing: Coaching initiates and facilitates somatic processing by allowing awareness of the body and creating wisdom of the body in the coachee. The importance of an embodied awareness and knowledge of the self stems from an essential assumption underlying deep change, as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm (Davis, 2003; Taylor & Egeto-Szabo, 2017; Valle, 1989). Conscious embodiment takes place as the coachee is processing what she displays through her body language, and in this way, coaching establishes the competence of becoming physically aware of body signals that prepare the body for responding. Furthermore, somatic processing demonstrates reconnecting with and through the body. Bodily awareness enables a person to have a relationship with the body, which improves well-being (Walsh, 1999; Williams & Penman, 2011). The meta-construct mindfulness as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm includes embodied engagement, which contributes to personal transformation and integration

of the body, hence embodying a 'new way of being' and appearance as a result of coaching. Jakonen and Kamppinen (2015) explain that the 'current way of being' never disappears; through coaching it is broadened into more expansive ways of thinking and acting.

The positive psychology paradigm explores what leads to self-actualisation and what transforms a person's life (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Linley et al., 2006; Wong, 2011). The break-through moments, also referred to as 'a-ha' moments and moments of insight, lead to transformation (Honsová & Jarošová 2019). From a somatic perspective, bodily accompaniments and other sensations are involved in these 'a-ha' moments (Longhurst, 2006). The difference between an 'a-ha' moment and just knowing something new is that the 'a-ha' moment is a sense felt in the body and could be associated with relief, peace, calm, excitement and inner knowing or intuition (Longhurst, 2006). According to Longhurst (2006), 'a-ha' moments can be experienced not only in the body, but also in the mind, the soul, the spirit or a combination of all of these, which then becomes an integrated and holistic experience.

Relational processing: Whole person psychology is seated in both the transpersonal and positive psychology paradigms and includes working with the self in relation to others. The transformational value of coaching is also demonstrated in serving as a vehicle for relational processing. This fourth sub-theme, relational processing, describes how coaching initiates and facilitates meaningful engagement and connection with the self and others, constructive communication, interpersonal boundary management, and building useful support structures. Through such relational processing, coachees gain new insight into relationships and build their interpersonal competence, which ultimately contributes to their well-being both personally and professionally. According to Brown (2015), Howard (2000) and Moore and Koning (2015), people make sense of themselves through their relationships with others. The setting of boundaries plays an important role in sustaining interpersonal relationships (Kreiner et al., 2006a). Relational processing is not only about the 'me', but also about 'we' (Kreiner et al., 2006a, 2006b). This resulted in identity work for the participants, which included both 'who am I' (personal identity) and 'who are we' (work and social identity) in the world. Transpersonal

identity from the transpersonal psychology perspective includes the self being a separate entity but also the self shifting from independence to an entity of interdependence and emerging in totality (Vaughan, 1985, 2010). Consequently, relational processing enables building of a support structure in the personal as well as professional life of the coachee and in this way, coaching enables the coachee to become interdependent. This implies that when in need of a support structure, the coachee will know who these people are and in what context they could be of assistance. Transpersonal psychology emphasises that humans are integrally interconnected, interdependent, and mutually supportive (Hartelius et al., 2007). Positive relationships and the way in which a person is getting along with others are some of the distinct characteristics of PWB as embedded in the positive psychology paradigm (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Leach et al., 2011; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). In addition, relationships relate to a person's SWB, as seen in the positive psychology paradigm (Field et al., 2013). The meta-theoretical construct, flourishing, as situated in the positive psychology paradigm, explains social well-being as having social coherence and a meaningful social life (Rothmann, 2013). Furthermore, both SOC and EQ as positive psychology constructs require managing relationships with others effectively for one to be regarded as well-functioning. The personal transformational value of coaching lies in how coaching enhances relational processing, which leads to well-established relationships with the self and others, ultimately contributing to the coachee's psychological, subjective and social well-being.

Spiritual processing: Spiritual processing as a sub-theme describes how coaching initiates an increase in the sense of inter-connectedness, develops mindfulness and facilitates becoming more compassionate with the self and others. Spiritual processing is akin to the transpersonal psychology paradigm in which growth towards wholeness is emphasised. Such wholeness includes the physical, emotional and mental capacities of a person, as well as her spiritual capacity (Vaughan, 2010). The construct spirituality as rooted in the transpersonal psychology paradigm explains that spirituality triggers sacred and awakening experiences, which initiate personal transformation (Anderson, 2015; Mitroff, 2003; Taylor & Egeto-Szabo 2017; Walsh, 1999). Mitroff (2003) explains that experiencing the sacred is found in the everyday so-called ordinary things of life and is therefore not necessarily only a mystical experience. Brown (1999) describes spirituality as the heart of human life.

Inter-connectedness is a fundamental component of spirituality, implying that everything is inter-connected with everything else (the self, others and the universe) (Fairholm, 1996; Mitroff, 2003; Myers et al., 2000). In addition to inter-connectedness, which is also underpinned by transpersonal psychology (Davis, 2003; Grof, 2008), Mariano (2013, p. 62) defines spirituality as “the essence of being and relatedness that permeates all of life and is manifested in one’s knowing, doing and being; the interconnectedness with self, others, nature and God/Life Force/Absolute/Transcendent”. Spiritual processing includes developing mindfulness, a practice that was evident in the data. According to Hayes (2002), mindfulness as a spiritual practice fosters change in behaviour. The transformational value of coaching includes caring for the self and caring for others and it was evident in the data that participants were becoming more compassionate to themselves and others. The construct spirituality, from the transpersonal psychology perspective, includes experiencing heartfulness by being compassionate (Cashwell et al., 2007). Mindfulness as a practice is a medium that assists in the development of compassion for oneself and for others (Cashwell et al., 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2001; Khoury et al., 2017; Schmidt, 2004).

According to Wissing (2020), spirituality has become a stronger focus in more recent positive psychology perspectives. Hence, spirituality contributes to the well-being of a person (Lavretsky, 2010) and initiates and enhances PWB (Reutter & Bigatti, 2010). Spirituality therefore relates to self-actualising; Vaughan et al. (1996) refer to a study of Abraham Maslow indicating that self-actualising people demonstrate a spiritual orientation. Through coaching, enhanced spirituality fosters personal growth and development on a deeper level, which is essential to self-actualisation and holistic wellness (Maslow, 1968; Gibb, 2014). Maslow (1962) refers to a peak experience as a temporary episode of self-actualisation; it is the so-called peak experiences, also described as ‘a-ha moments’ (De Haan et al., 2010; Honsová & Jarošová, 2019), that lead to ‘turning points’ and ultimately bring about change and transformation (De Haan et al., 2010).

Integration processing: This sixth sub-theme completes the conceptualisation of how coaching enables holistic processing of the self. Goble et al. (2017) explain that whole person engagement is necessary for transformation. Coaching initiates and

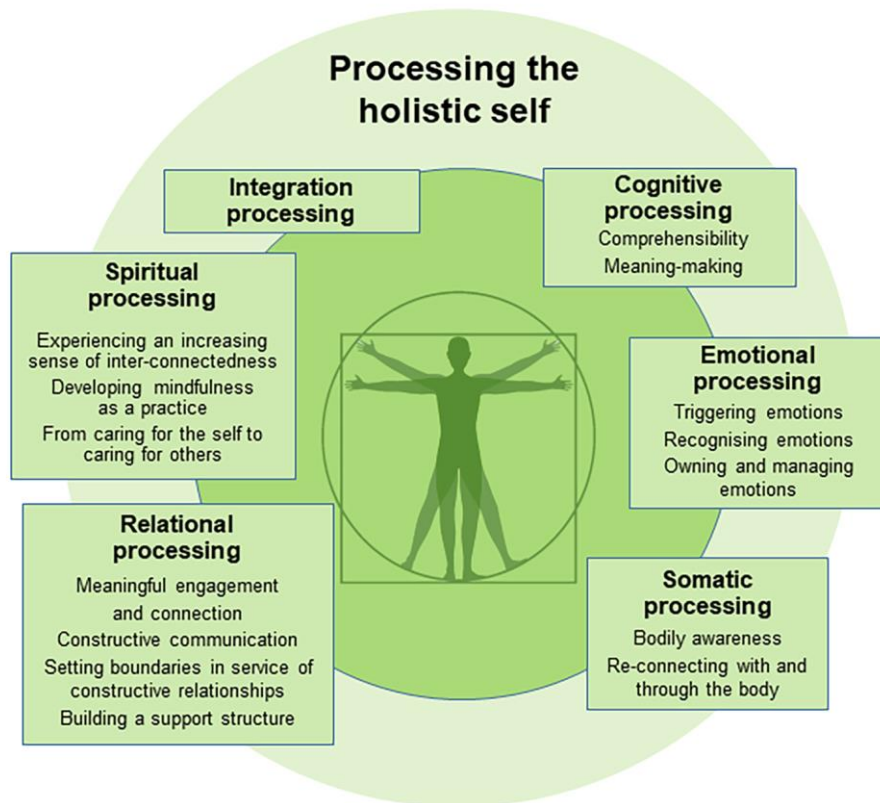
facilitates integration processing, as coaches approach life not from a compartmentalised and segmented point of view, but from a more integrated perspective of being in the world. The transpersonal psychology paradigm addresses the whole person in relation to body, mind, emotions, spirit, community and culture (Vaughan, 2003) and includes growth towards wholeness and optimal functioning of a human being, which comprises a balanced integration of physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual health (Valle, 1989). The construct wholeness/self-integration as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm is explained by Strozzi-Heckler (1997, p. 34) as: the “whole is larger than the sum of its parts”. To be whole is thus to integrate body, mind and spirit. In addition, integral coaching describes integrating as ‘undoing’ ways of doing in a compartmentalised manner (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d). Transpersonal psychology denotes wholeness of a person and this implies integration of all six streams of human development, namely the cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integration streams (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.), as explained in the integral coaching meta-theory.

Positive psychology coaching views the client as whole and pursues the improvement of both hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being (Boniwell et al., 2014; Passmore & Oades, 2014). Optimal functioning is supported by the positive psychology paradigm and the flourishing meta-theory in this paradigm ascribes well-being to psychological, emotional and social well-being (Keyes, 2007; Rothman, 2013). The personal transformational value of coaching is demonstrated in the way in which coaching facilitates integration of all aspects of the self, hence the whole person, and how in doing so, flourishing is enhanced.

The figure below summarises processing of the holistic self.

Figure 6.3

Processing the holistic self



In summary, change and transformation are not one-dimensional, but multi-dimensional, as they happen on multiple levels (Hawkins & Smith, 2014). Valle (1989) and Vaughan (2010) refer to how multiple levels of the self, namely physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual, are used to become aware of the self, to change and grow towards wholeness. Similarly, the multiple lines or streams of human development as referred to in integral coaching are cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integrating (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.). Furthermore, vertical development and change are manifestations of processing of the holistic self. Cook-Greuter (2004), Odendaal (2017) and Petrie (2014) describe vertical development as a process of transformation that includes a more integrated perspective of meaning and being in the world. In addition, processing the holistic self manifests in a salutogenic life orientation, which ultimately creates and strengthens wellbeing and a flourishing individual. Becker et al. (2010) refer to salutogenesis as the enhancement and improvement of physical, mental and social well-being.

Moreover, Clements (2016) and Stork (2021) refers to transpersonal psychology as integrating aspects of the mind, body and spirit into a broader and more holistic view of human wellness and flourishing. Flourishing from a positive psychology perspective relates to optimal functioning of people and high levels of SWB and PWB (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Grant & Spence, 2009; Linley & Harrington, 2005; Palmer & Whybrow, 2007; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). According to Waterman (2013), PWB is also referred to as flourishing, which includes functioning well and becoming one's best self. Similarly, Grant and Spence (2009) note that the focus of coaching is on helping the coachee to flourish and thus to move from 'good to great'. Therefore, the transformational value of coaching lies in enhanced processing of the holistic self, which ultimately leads to flourishing. Such flourishing extends into the rippling effect of self-change, beyond the self, as noted in the theme that follows.

6.2.4 Rippling changes in the work-life context

Rippling changes in the work-life context, as a consequence of coaching, lastly also substantiates its transformational value. The findings describe the rippling effect of coaching on work-life balance and integration, agency in career decisions and life stage, enhanced leadership self-efficacy and the transfer of learning to society. The transpersonal psychology paradigm emphasises not only the normal functioning of a person, since optimal functioning also comes to the fore, including the ultimate capabilities and potential of a person (Valle, 1989). In addition, the integral coaching model enables coaching clients to become aware of their current situation in order to see new possibilities and to build new competencies to achieve specific outcomes that matter deeply to them (Frost, 2009). From a positive psychology perspective, personal transformation means that the well-being of an individual is increasing, which includes enhancement and growth of the positive aspects and functioning of human nature (Dodge, et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2011). Hence, because the coaching client indicates agency to change certain aspects in the work-life context, the rippling effect of such changes is a collective consequence of coaching and substantiates its transformational value.

According to this theme, coaching facilitates transformation because it changes the way in which the coachee attends to *work-life balance and integration*. The personal transformational value of coaching lies in helping coachees realise that they are not a result of only 'home' or only 'work'. Rather, coaching helps them to see the importance of balancing and integrating their personal and work lives for optimal functioning. Sparrow (2007) agrees that coaching acknowledges the value of a holistic life and the whole person, which includes addressing work-life balance. The construct work-life balance and integration, as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm and positive psychology paradigm, explains the importance of integrating work and life, as this contributes to a well-functioning individual, family and society, as well as job performance (Halpern, 2005; Morris & Madsen, 2007; Oades et al., 2005, Wissing, 2020).

Coaching enables coachees to look differently at their career and life stage and to take control of where they find themselves in life and also where they want to *spend the rest of their lives from a career perspective*. From a transpersonal psychology perspective, an individual is in constant engagement with self-invention, which results in becoming a participant in the larger transformative process, living purposefully and evolving towards a meaningful end (Hartelius et al., 2013b). The construct spirituality, as seen in the transpersonal psychology paradigm, is explained as being central in meaning-making, purpose and self-actualisation (Martela & Steger, 2016; Mohan & Uys, 2006; Park, 2013; Schnell, Höge & Pollet, 2013). In addition, from a positive psychology perspective, purpose in life, which is one of the six core dimensions of PWB, confirms having a sense of direction and contributing to the world by living meaningfully (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Leach et al., 2011; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The construct SOC as seen in the positive psychology paradigm affirms taking control of decisions in life and living meaningfully (Antonovsky, 1996; Eriksson & Lindström, 2006, 2007, 2008; Eriksson et al., 2007). From a work-life perspective it was noted in the data how participants found meaning and purpose in taking control of their career decisions and life stage.

The personal transformational value of coaching is demonstrated in the way in which coaching *enhances leadership self-efficacy and competence*. Coaching helped participants to understand that their engagement with employees should not only be

transactional and to achieve financial performance in the business. They realised that the way in which they engaged with employees in the business was critical and developed a more transformational leadership orientation by developing a caring mind-set, and by becoming more interested in the general well-being of their subordinates. As a result of coaching, participants enhanced their leadership self-efficacy through the development of EQ, which is a construct in the positive psychology paradigm. Grant (2005) explains that coaching has been proven to enhance EQ. In addition, EQ is considered one of the pillars of leadership development (Ackley, 2016). In addition, EQ emphasises that financial performance (the 'hard side') is not the only key to business success. It is therefore necessary to attend to the people side (the 'soft side') of doing business as well (Ackley, 2016). Emotional regulation, which refers to the way in which a person is dealing and expressing emotions in a particular situation (Gross, 1998; Matthews et al., 2017), improved for the participants as a result of coaching. Lawton et al. (2009) explain the importance of emotional regulation in changing behaviour. Emotional intelligence in the context of leadership contributes to the application of transformational leadership where leaders inspire and empower their followers to flourish at work, resulting in individual, group and organisational performance (Bono & Judge, 2004; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Green et al. (2006) and Leach et al. (2011) explain that coaching enhances SWB and PWB. The constructs SWB and PWB, as seen in the positive psychology paradigm, contributed to enhanced leadership self-efficacy and competence. Participants came to realise the importance of SWB by attending not only to their own well-being, but also the well-being of followers in domains of life such as work, health and relationships (Field et al., 2013). Moreover, empowering followers in their specific work context contributed to flourishing and optimal functioning of followers from a PWB perspective (Wong, 2011).

The focus of positive psychology is on enhancing healthy and flourishing individuals, groups, organisations, families and a society (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Grant, 2007; Grant & Palmer, 2015; Gloss, 2012; Seligman, 1999, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). As a result of the rippling effect of coaching, it was evident in the data that *the outcome of growth and development was transferred to society* and consequently the effect of change as a result of coaching became bigger than

the individual coachee. The personal transformational value of coaching and the rippling changes in the work-life context therefore depends on the way the coachee extends her changed orientation and competencies to society as a whole and enables potential societal transformation. Transferring of learning to society, as seen from a transpersonal psychology perspective, is explained by Hartelius et al. (2013b) in terms of transformative psychology consisting of both personal transformation and social transformation. Rothmann (2013) refers to social well-being as a dimension of flourishing, as seen in the positive psychology paradigm, which regard adding value to society and others in the performance of daily activities. According to Brockbank (2008), transformation happens for the client both personally and professionally, thus the individual, organisation and society benefit from the process.

The figure below summarises rippling changes in the work-life context.

Figure 6.4

Rippling changes in the work-life context



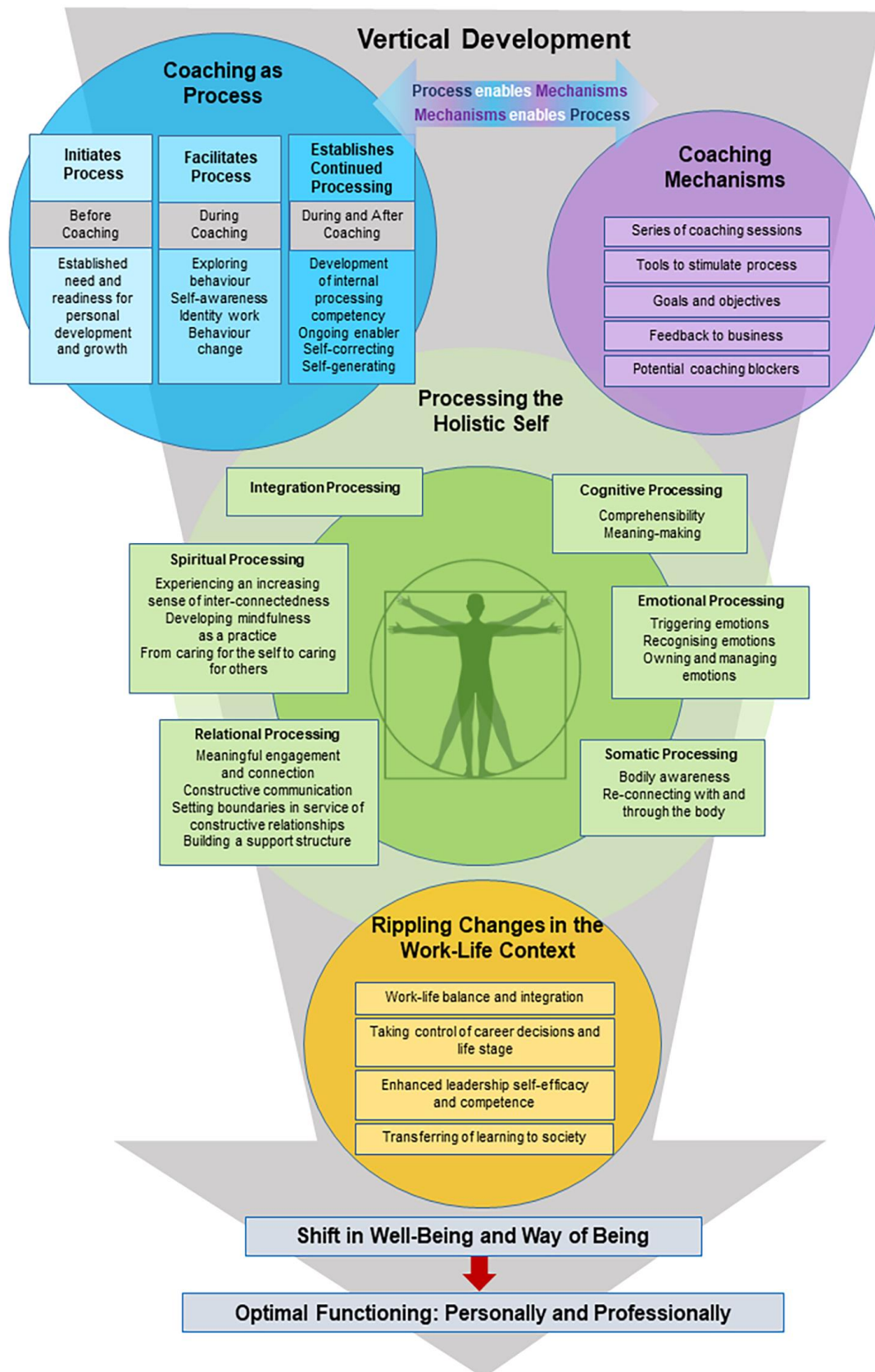
In summary, the personal transformational value of coaching is a spiralling process of self-expansion. The value of coaching has a rippling effect in that the coachee's work-life domains flow into one another and become an integrated way of attending to both 'work' and 'life'. Coaching is a medium to ascertain career and life stage and ultimately to take control of these. Furthermore, coaching prompts EQ in leadership behaviour and spiralling from transactional to transformational leadership, which influences extraordinary outcomes of followers in individual, group and organisational performance (Bono & Judge, 2004; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). The transformational value of coaching happens not only on an individual level, but also on a larger scale and has a spiralling effect of learning affecting society. It thus becomes inter-transformational and a process of self-expansion by having a broader impact on society. Coaching therefore benefits not only the individual coachee, but also organisations and society (Blackman et al., 2016; Lazar & Bergquist, 2003).

6.3 SUMMATIVE FRAMEWORK DEPICTING THE PRIMARY FINDINGS

In the previous section, data and theory were integrated in the discussion of the four primary themes that were constructed in the structural thematic analysis phase and presented in Chapter 5. The framework presented below in **figure 6.5** summarises the four themes in an integrative manner.

Figure 6.5

Four-theme framework: The personal transformational value of coaching



In the figure above, the four themes can be summarised as follows: (1) coaching as process, (2) coaching mechanisms, (3) processing the holistic self, and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context.

Coaching as process reflects the fact that coaching as a process entails self-reflective processing, which already starts before the actual coaching sessions, commences and continues throughout these sessions, engaging different levels of self-processing, and most importantly, endures after the actual coaching sessions have taken place.

Coaching mechanisms explain that coaching mechanisms allow for the process to be facilitated through actual coaching sessions, coaching goals and objectives, coaching tools that stimulate the coaching process, feedback to business and potential coaching blockers.

Processing the holistic self demonstrates how coaching initiates and facilitates a process of working with the holistic self, which means it is an integrated process. Processing the holistic self reflects multiple levels of processing of the self, namely on a cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integration level. In this way coaching is a multi-dimensional process dynamic and includes everything about the participants in their inner and outer worlds.

Rippling changes in the work-life context explain that when undergoing a coaching programme, its outcome results in a spiralling dynamic of intra- and interpersonal growth in a personal and professional context. Coaching consequently widens and touches many aspects of life, including the inner and relational life of the coachee, other people and life in general. Hence, coaching brings about change in a way that unfolds gradually and manifests in an ever-evolving process of transformation.

6.4 THEORISING AND CONCEPTUALISING THE PERSONAL TRANSFORMATIONAL VALUE OF COACHING

The composite description, which is the essence of the experience for all the participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994), is presented in this section and considers both the transpersonal psychology and positive psychology paradigms. This is followed by answering the research question and proposing a conceptual framework that describes the personal transformational value of coaching for the coachee.

The transpersonal psychology paradigm refers to **three streams**, firstly to a psychology of self-expansiveness (beyond-ego psychology), secondly to whole-person psychology (integrative/holistic psychology), and thirdly to psychology of transformative process (personal and social transformation) (Hartelius et al., 2007, 2013b).

Personal transformation as seen from the transpersonal psychology paradigm points to coaching as enabling firstly a *psychology of self-expansiveness* where the coachee expands herself to include not only herself and others, but also nature, the world and the mystery of existence by becoming an embodied participant rather than an observer. Secondly, coaching in this paradigm enables a *whole-person psychology* since it includes not only the person herself on an intrapersonal level, but also on an interpersonal level, which includes relationship and situatedness in the world and cosmos where human individuals are integrally interconnected with much larger contexts. Lastly, coaching includes a *psychology of transformative process*, which relates to human transformation where the coachee becomes a participant in personal and social transformation, living with purpose and evolving towards a meaningful end. In this view, the world is an interconnected whole, where individuals are empowered and embedded agents of that process and are capable of striving to cultivate personal, interpersonal and societal change in line with compassion, discernment and appreciation of differences (Hartelius et al., 2007, 2013b).

Coaching resulted in personal transformation evidenced in the way coachees developed a need for coaching (*coaching as process*), whereafter they attended a

series of coaching sessions (*coaching mechanisms*). Mechanisms used during coaching stimulated them to grow, develop and engage with the self (who am I) resulting in identity work and meeting the essential self (*coaching mechanisms, coaching as process*), which happened from a multi-level/multi-dimensional process perspective (cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integration processing) (*processing the holistic self*) and enabled the coachee to make changes in the work-life context (*rippling changes in the work-life context*). Subsequently, personal transformation manifested in not only lateral development, but also vertical development for participants. Vertical development is believed to facilitate deep change, as it includes a more integrated perspective of meaning and being in the world (Cook-Greuter, 2004; Ingersol & Cook-Greuter, 2007; Odendaal, 2017; Petrie, 2014).

The three streams in transpersonal psychology as explained in the previous paragraph relate to three themes of the empirical study, which is grounded in the transpersonal psychology paradigm. The transformational value of coaching as seen from a transpersonal psychology paradigm helped participants to:

- i) Self-expand by processing of the self through conscious and unconscious identity work (*Psychology of self-expansiveness, Coaching as process*);
- ii) Grow towards wholeness and integration of the self and being in the world by holistic processing of the self on all levels (*Whole-person psychology, Processing the holistic self*);
- iii) Change within the self with a rippling/spiralling effect towards others, work and society (*Psychology of transformative process, Rippling changes in the work-life context*).

Well-being from a positive psychology paradigm is multi-dimensional, as it encompasses emotional/subjective (hedonic) well-being, psychological (eudaimonic) well-being and social well-being. Personal transformation, as seen from a positive psychology paradigm, resulted in enhanced subjective, psychological and social well-being, leading to flourishing in both a personal and professional context.

Flourishing is a widened notion of well-being, as it entails the experience of positive emotional well-being (i.e., positive emotions and high life satisfaction), positive psychological functioning (i.e., self-acceptance, personal growth, purpose in life, environmental mastery, autonomy, positive relations with others), and positive social functioning (i.e., social acceptance, social actualisation, social contribution, social coherence, and social integration) (Keyes, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Rothman, 2013). Seliman's PERMA model refers to five components of well-being, namely positive emotions, engagement, relationship, meaning and accomplishment, which are building blocks of flourishing (Goodman et al., 2018; Seligman, 2011). Positive psychology emphasises psychological flourishing as a state of optimal functioning and enables not only individuals but also society to thrive (Keyes, 2007; Nelson et al., 2016; Wissing, 2020).

Wissing (2020) refers to **three phases** of the development of positive psychology. Phase 1 refers to *The first wave/decade (1998/2000-2010)*, which explains the focus of positive psychology on human strengths and potential and promotes optimal functioning versus pathology. Phase 2 refers to *The first half of the second decade (2010-2015)* and points out that positive and negative experiences of life are deeply interwoven and their interplay contributes to optimal human functioning. Phase 3 refers to *The latter half of the second decade (2015-2020)*, which is characterised by a more explicit focus on interconnectedness, spirituality and transcendence.

These three phases as explained by Wissing (2020) relate to three themes of the empirical study, which is therefore grounded in the positive psychology paradigm. The transformational value of coaching as seen from a positive psychology paradigm helped participants to:

- i) Grow as a result of self-awareness and identity work from the source/basis of coaching, rather than therapy where the focus is more strongly on pathology (ill-health) (*The first wave/decade, Coaching as process*);
- ii) Grow from the viewpoint of SWPP, which allows for liberating the self from both good and bad life experiences to develop towards flourishing (*The first half of the second decade, Coaching as process*);

- iii) Grow towards becoming an integrated human being, interconnectedness with the self, others, work, society and the cosmos, and transcend towards flourishing and becoming one's best self (*The latter half of the second decade, Processing the holistic self, Rippling changes in the work-life context*).

The table below summarises the interconnectedness between the themes from the empirical study, the **three streams** in the transpersonal psychology paradigm, and the **three phases** in the positive psychology paradigm.

Table 6.1

Interconnectedness between themes and psychological paradigms

Transpersonal psychology paradigm (Streams) (Hartelius et al., 2007, 2013b)	Themes Empirical study	Positive psychology paradigm (Phases) (Wissing, 2020)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychology of self-expansiveness 	Coaching as process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal functioning versus pathology (<i>The first wave/decade</i>) SWPP (<i>The first half of the second decade</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabler for psychological processes 	Coaching mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabler for psychological processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole-person psychology 	Processing the holistic self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interconnectedness, spirituality and transcendence (<i>The latter half of the second decade</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Psychology of transformative process 	Rippling changes in the work-life context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interconnectedness, spirituality and transcendence (<i>The latter half of the second decade</i>)

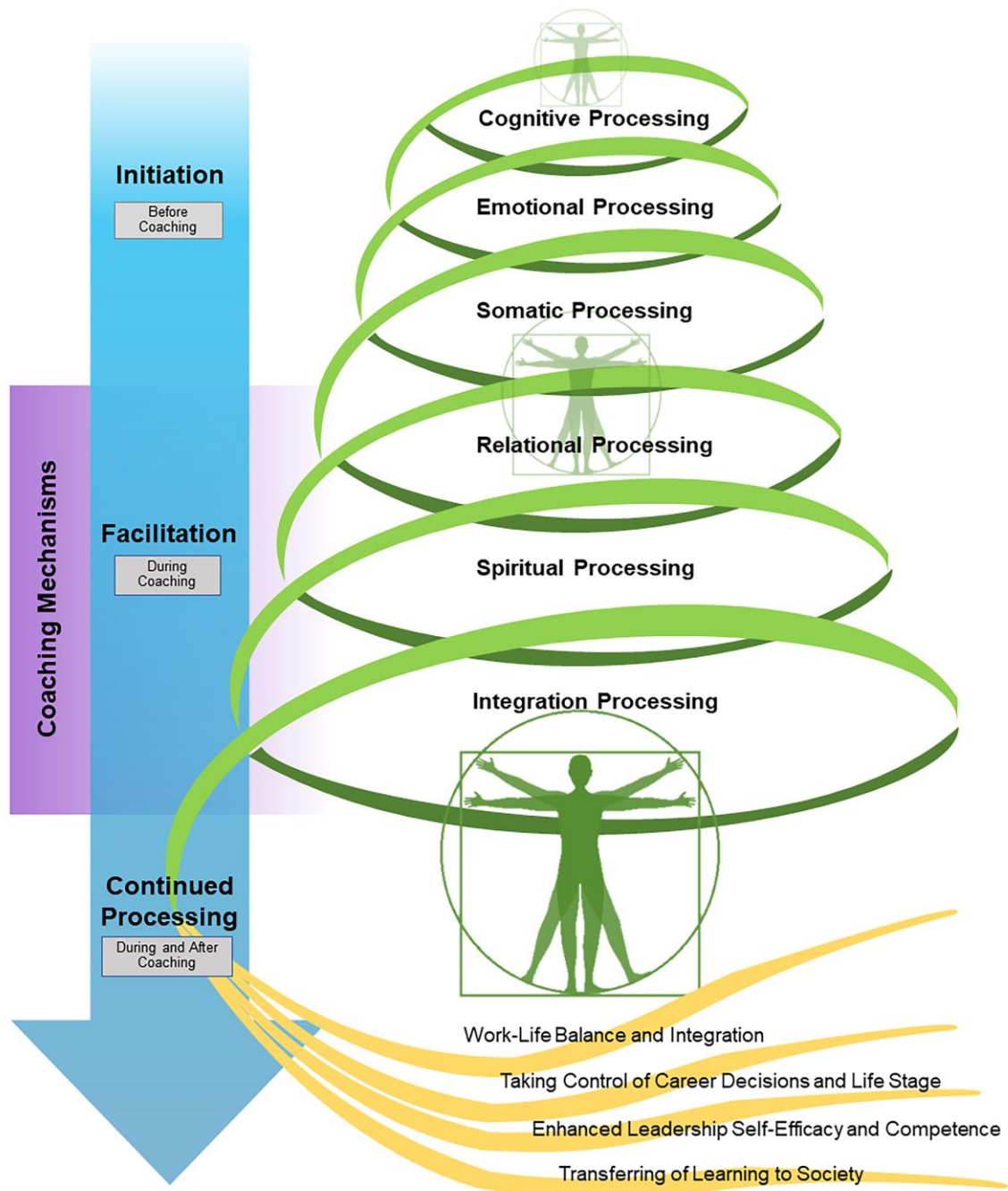
In the context of this study, the answer to the research question ('how does coaching facilitate personal transformation for the coachee?') is conceptualised as: **The personal transformational value of coaching is constituted in its potency to initiate, facilitate and maintain a continuous process of transforming higher levels of being towards flourishing.** Higher levels of the self represent that personal transformation is circular and expanding and therefore a continuous process, thus each transformation results in higher levels of being (Wade, 1998). Flourishing is explained as the ultimate end-state in psychology (Schotanus-Dijkstra et al., 2016) and regarded as the top end of the spectrum of PWB (Huppert & So, 2009). Similarly, Villieux et al. (2016) refer to psychological flourishing as an expanded conception of well-being.

Theorising the personal transformational value of coaching to answer the research question has led me to propose a **conceptual framework** describing the integrated dynamic of the primary findings. The conceptual framework is depicted in **figure 6.6** below, to capture the essence of the transformational value of coaching. Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009) explain that a conceptual framework is presented in the form of a figure. Hence, **figure 6.6.** below illustrates how processing of the self is initiated before attendance of actual coaching sessions, facilitated during the course of attending coaching sessions, and continues after a series of coaching sessions comes to an end. The application of coaching mechanisms by the coach prompts the process of self-exploration and processing of the self on multiple levels for the coachee, which unfolds in a circular process of self-expansion, producing a '*person-becoming*' dynamic that ultimately elicits change in the work-life context.

Figure 6.6

Conceptual framework: Transforming higher levels of being towards flourishing

Transforming higher levels of being towards flourishing



In the light of the above, the personal transformational value of coaching is reflected in transcendence of the self and therefore transforming higher levels of being towards flourishing. Personal transformation becomes a journey without a final destination and hence a continuous spiral process of self-expansion and transcendence.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the themes that emerged in Chapter 5 and the theoretical framework in Chapter 3 were transformed into the findings that were most compelling to me and were discussed. Writing up and integrating the findings of this study represented a long and arduous journey but these gave meaning to my study. The process resulted in answering the research question and the overall research objective of the study and meeting the essence of the reach study by concluding it in a conceptual framework. This chapter evoked much personal learning in conceptualising the overall research theme. In the next chapter, the conclusions, research contributions, limitations and recommendations will be presented, as well as the self-reflection of the researcher.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SELF REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCHER

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this last chapter of the thesis I finalise this study by accounting for how I met the research objective (to explore the lived coaching experiences of coachees in order to deepen understanding of how personal transformation is facilitated by the coaching process and thus to describe the personal transformational value of coaching). First I provide concluding notes on the findings and discuss the key contributions of the research. Thereafter, the limitations of the study are considered and recommendations are offered relevant to the primary discipline in which this study was conducted, namely IO psychology, including the sub-disciplines of consulting and coaching psychology. I conclude this chapter with my self-reflections as a researcher, presenting a reflexive and critical account of the trustworthiness of the study. By doing self-reflection I am talking about myself and as Mruck and Breuer (2003) explain, talking about oneself as the researcher may come across as indecent and self-aggrandising, unless it belongs to a science discipline. Reflexivity is a fundamental methodological strategy that is used in qualitative research to address researcher subjectivity (which plays a role throughout the research process), and in applying reflexivity, the trustworthiness of the research is enhanced (Cavalcanti, 2017; Dodgson, 2019; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017; Mruck & Breuer, 2003; Primeau, 2003).

7.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

Conclusions flow directly from the findings and should emphasise the contribution to knowledge in the area being studied (Anderson, 2010; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This research set out to expand the body of knowledge in terms of how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee. According to Fillery-Travis and Cox (2014, p. 451), research in coaching has been focussed on “the context, such as using organisational case studies; the benefits and outcomes of coaching; how coaching achieves certain outcomes for the client; the qualities, abilities or skills of the coach; and the improvement of coaching practice and models.” As discussed in

Chapter 1, whether and how coaching has a transformational impact is not adequately substantiated in research and more specifically, there is little evidence on what happens to the coachee during the coaching process. The study was presented as a hermeneutic phenomenological study exploring the lived experience of participants to explore how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee. The findings (as presented in Chapters 5 and 6) support the presenting of the conceptual conclusions (Trafford & Leshem, 2012) and in this section I integrate these conclusions in a way that is integrated with the value of the study. So, in summarising the conclusions of the study, I illuminate its theoretical, pragmatic and methodological contribution.

7.2.1 Theoretical contribution

The theoretical contribution of the study is grounded in the main themes that were constructed during the analytic phase of the study. A conceptual framework was developed that contributed to the field of IO psychology, consulting and coaching psychology by conceptualising the nature and scope of the way in which coaching facilitates personal transformation. Contributions to theory in qualitative research imply that no theory in itself offers a complete picture of any phenomenon (Paterson, 2008). The contributions that I propose below in relation to the research conclusions therefore offer one perspective on the personal transformational value of coaching – a perspective that was constructed in the context of this particular study.

Coaching facilitates personal transformation because the nature of coaching is a psychological process (Allen, 2016; Passmore et al., 2013; Passmore et al., 2018). Specifically, IO psychology aims to apply psychological principles, theory and research in understanding behaviour in the workplace (Cascio, 2015; Augustyn & Cillié, 2008; Coetzee & Van Zyl, 2015; De Kock, 2018; Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007; Veldsman, 2001) and optimises the functioning of the individual, group, organisation and society as a whole (Cascio, 2015; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010; Van Zyl et al., 2016). In addition, the fields of consulting and coaching psychology are underpinned by scientific theories and frameworks in psychology (Grant, 2011; Passmore et al., 2018; Simon et al., 2014; Vandaveer et al., 2016). Coaching plays a pertinent role in these psychological fields in the development of people in their roles at work as well

as their lives in general, hence in various life domains (Lowman, 2002, 2005). The conclusions noted below all describe in one way or the other how coaching develops and optimises the functioning of individuals in their larger work-life context, thus aligning to the stated objectives of IO psychology and consulting and coaching psychology. The theoretical contribution of 'how coaching facilitates personal transformation for the coachee' is demarcated with reference to the findings and main themes that were constructed in conclusion to the study.

- **Coaching initiates, facilitates and maintains processing of the self.** When the need for coaching is internally motivated, it may determine its personal transformational value. Nevertheless, even compulsory coaching, therefore externally motivated, leads to transformation and awareness of the need for further coaching. Working with the essential self and exploring behaviour on a deeper level prompts coachees to become self-aware of behaviour and work with their identities. The transformational value of coaching lies in the evolving processing of the self, which facilitates change in behaviour. Consequently the transformational value of coaching lies in the establishment of continued intrapersonal processing and the development of an internal processing competency, even after coaching comes to an end. Flaherty (2010, p. 11) refers to the intended outcomes of coaching as "long-term excellence, the competence to self-correct, and the competence to self-generate." The process of self-correcting implies that the coachee is not dependent on a coach and self-generates over the long term, which implies that the coachee renews herself continuously from without and within (Flaherty, 2010). Consequently coaching outcomes and the science of well-being become an emerging and ongoing process for the coachee, even after coaching has ended (Frisch, 2013; Oades & Passmore, 2014).

In summary: The transformational value of coaching lies in coaching that includes a 'before', 'during' and 'after' process. Before coaching actually starts, an internal and/or external need for coaching is established, which follows by attending coaching sessions, working with the self in exploring identity, self-awareness and behaviour, and resulting in the after-coaching process where processing of the self (identity, self-awareness, behaviour) continues by means of

an internal processing competency that was developed during coaching. Coaching as process results in an evolving process of growth and development for the coachee. The value of coaching as described in this finding, is an inherently psychological process, which contributes to establishing coaching as a psychological intervention, working with psychological constructs and processes. In this way, the study validates the applied value of coaching in IO psychology.

- **Coaching facilitates personal transformation in the context of using coaching mechanisms.** Personal transformation is facilitated by coaching mechanisms as a medium to operationalise coaching as a process and to start with a coaching programme through a series of coaching sessions. Coaching mechanisms are media that facilitate coaching as a process for the coachee by having specific coaching goals and objectives to be addressed during the coaching programme. The employment of coaching tools in the given coaching context stimulates the coaching process and facilitates transformation, as it supports growth and development and encourages change in behaviour (Richter, et al., 2021). Moreover, feedback to business provided by the coach and coachee during the coaching programme involves stakeholder/s in business in cases where they sponsor a formal coaching programme and makes the personal transformational and change process discernible to business.

In summary: The transformational value of coaching lies in employing coaching mechanisms that are necessary to operationalise the coaching process and to stimulate and maintain the coaching process. This finding contributes to the IO psychology and consulting and coaching psychology disciplines, by providing some practice guidelines of what mechanisms are important to initiate and facilitate the transformation that coaching is intended to achieve.

- **Personal transformation manifests during and through coaching as a multi-level, integrated intrapersonal process dynamic, in which the coachee continues to process the holistic self.** The transformational value of coaching lies in an integrated and holistic understanding and development of the self on multiple levels, namely cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and

integral. Flaherty and Handelsman (n.d.) refer to these multiple levels in the integral coaching model as the six streams of development. In addition, Russo-Netzer (2017) refers to understanding of humans from a holistic perspective and Dängeli (2021) and Sparrow (2007) explain coaching in the context of the holistic person to support growth and transformation. Furthermore, transformation becomes an expansion of the self and a spiralling process (Flaherty, 2010; Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.; Hunt, 2009; Wade, 1998), which transpires in the unfolding of human potential on an intrapersonal level, interpersonal level and a transpersonal level for the coachee (Davis, 2003; Hartelius, et al., 2013b). Therefore, processing the holistic self facilitates deep change and transformation beyond the personal.

In summary: The transformational value of coaching is multi-dimensional, as it lies in processing of the holistic self on multiple levels, followed by an expansion of the self on the intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal levels. As such, the study contributes to confirming and describing benchmark criteria of personal transformation against which the effectiveness of a coaching endeavour can be evaluated.

- **Coaching facilitates personal transformation beyond the intra- and interpersonal, as it has a rippling effect on change happening in the broader work-life context of the coachee.** The transformational value of coaching lies in flourishing and salutogenesis, namely the health and wellness of the coachee. According to Oades and Passmore (2014), coaching improves hedonic well-being (short-term well-being) and eudaimonic well-being (sustainable well-being). Hence, both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being help the coachee in becoming an optimally functioning person. The transformational value lies in the coachee integrating work life and personal life and becoming more balanced. Work-life balance and integration emphasises a well-functioning individual, work, family and society (Halpern, 2005; Morris & Madsen, 2007; Oades et al., 2005). Coaching helps the coachee to reflect on her career and life stage and to re-focus and re-frame where she wants to spend her life. Coaching facilitates the process for the coachee to take charge not only of her career development in an organisational context, but also development outside the

organisational role, thus outside professional activities (Castiello D'Antonio; 2018). In addition, the transformational value of coaching enhances the leadership self-efficacy and competence of the coachee and her approach to the demands of business life. Personal growth and development and learning from coaching sessions stretch beyond the confines of the coaching sessions by transferring them to the work environment (Tarragona, 2015). Transferring learning not only to the work environment but also to society further demonstrates the transformational value of coaching.

In summary: The transformational value of coaching lies in the rippling (spiralling) effect thereof personally and professionally and in coaching becoming bigger than the individual herself, resulting in transferring transformation of the self (personal transformation) to society (societal transformation). Ultimately the findings in this study legitimise the value of coaching in the broader IO psychology and consulting and coaching psychology disciplines.

7.2.2 Pragmatic contribution

This study has pragmatic value in that its findings will help coaches in the field of IO psychology, consulting and coaching psychology to have more confidence in coaching as a process. **The concept of coaching as a process** contributes to coaches becoming aware that coaching includes a 'before, during and after' process with which the coachee is engaging, and that the coach herself is mainly involved in the 'during' process, but stimulates the 'after' process and an internal processing competency. Not all coachees are familiar with exploring behaviour during coaching, hence the necessity for the coach to be comfortable with being unperturbed by the discomfort of the coachee and to have the expertise to facilitate the process of wrestling with exploring behaviour.

Coaching mechanisms as the medium to operationalise the coaching as process will make coaches aware of the importance of using coaching tools and techniques to stimulate the coaching process, and that coaching is not merely an intuitive process. Various coaching mechanisms are essential, since a series of coaching sessions need to take place to shift behaviour. The coach needs to facilitate the

setting of goals and objectives the coachee wants to achieve during the coaching programme to limit the possibility of getting distracted during the course of a coaching programme. There are factors that could stand in the way of the coachee following through on a coaching programme and the coach has to be cognisant of these and address them accordingly.

In addition, this study alerts coaches to the value of coaching on multiple levels and engaging with the coachee from a **holistic perspective** in becoming an integrated human being. Lastly, the research highlights the **rippling changes of coaching in the work-life context** to encourage coaches to apply coaching in such a way that the effect and outcome thereof will have an impact on the coachee on a personal, professional and societal level.

7.2.3 Methodological contribution

The methodological contribution allows other scholars to learn from the methodological approach I followed in applying IPA, specifically in presenting the analysis strategy in different chapters. I firstly applied IPA where I documented and presented all the stages that I used during the data analysis process (see Chapter 2, section 2.6.6). The detail of each stage followed, as it was documented and extended in three different chapters, namely Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. In Chapter 4 the textural description covers a preliminary holistic understanding of the data, followed by Chapter 5 as the structural description that includes a structured thematic construction of the findings. Chapter 6, the composite description, includes the integration and essence of the findings. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was initially used as a research method in psychology in the mid-1990s and is generally applied in health psychology, clinical and counselling psychology (Eatough & Smith, 2008; Noon, 2018; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Shinebourne, 2011). Because IPA is more often used in these disciplines of psychology, this study adds to the limited use of IPA in IO psychology research, in pointing to the value of an in-depth inquiry and robust data analysis applicable to and of value to IO psychology.

7.3 LIMITATIONS

According to Meltzoff and Cooper (2018, p. 5), “All research has strengths and flaws.” The study conducted in this case too contains limitations that should be taken into account. The effect of receiving coaching was not explored over a longer period and the study was limited in that it could not provide longitudinal data. Interviews took place after the conclusion of the coaching sessions/programme for two of the participants, which may have had an effect on the richness of their memory. However, it did seem that these two participants had a clear sense of their lived experiences of being coached. My personal biases and personal experience of personal transformation influenced the choice of topic, the formulation of the research objective and the findings owing to my exposure to being coached and doing coaching myself (see Chapter 1, section 1.2.2). Kalu and Bwalya (2017), Morrow (2005) and Ogden (2012) explain that the potential for bias enters the research initiative the moment a researcher chooses the topic, but that it is necessary to acknowledge any biases in the context of doing the research by means of reflexivity. In qualitative research the researcher should therefore be transparent about being biased rather than trying to suppress it (Anderson, 2010; Cavalcanti, 2017; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017).

Coachees were exposed to aspects of a particular coaching model (integral coaching) that may have biased the holistic coaching theme. All findings may therefore not be applicable to other coaching models. During most of the interviews participants were asked what had happened to them on a cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integration level and what is referred to as the six streams of development in the integral coaching model. The interview questions formulated thus demonstrate my proclivity towards the integral coaching model (the six streams model, which is one of the three core models of integral coaching⁶) and using participants who had been coached by certified integral coaches. I therefore acknowledge that I am presenting findings from my perspective, which is typical in hermeneutic phenomenological research (Crowther et al., 2017; Laverty, 2003;

⁶ See Chapter 3.

Lindseth & Norberg, 2004), and that there may be other perspectives with reference to the personal transformational value of coaching.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Emanating from this study, I offer pertinent recommendations for future research and for coaches in the field of industrial and organisational psychology, specifically consulting and coaching psychology, which will be discussed in the sections that follow.

7.4.1 Recommendations for future research

If this study were to be replicated in the future, some ideas should be taken into account for future research and from a research perspective I would recommend the following to people in this particular discipline under study: Firstly, it might be helpful to select only participants who are all still in a coaching programme for interviews, as their lived experience during the coaching programmes might be different from those after attending a coaching programme. Secondly, researchers could use a larger sample of gatekeepers than the four gatekeepers, who were also the coaches of the seven participants. Thirdly, a study where gatekeepers also fulfil the role of the coach, but are trained in a variety of coaching models, would be useful. Therefore, researchers should include diverse models of coaching and explore how these models might work within the framework of (1) coaching as process, (2) coaching mechanisms, (3) processing the holistic self and (4) rippling changes in the work-life context. Fourthly, longitudinal studies of the sustainability of changes in behaviour over time could be explored further. Fifthly, a study of how coaching facilitates personal transformation where participants are exposed only to virtual coaching would be valuable. Lastly, in cases where business was the sponsor of the coaching programme, the business sponsor and/or relevant stakeholders could be interviewed regarding their perspective on coaching and any change in behaviour of the coachee over time.

7.4.2 Recommendations for coaches to facilitate transformation

Firstly, it is essential for the coach to have a well-developed understanding of identity work and its relevance to transformation of the self. Secondly, coaches are not to underestimate the value of coaching tools and techniques to stimulate the coaching process and therefore the application of coaching tools and techniques during the coaching process. Thirdly, coaches need to be familiar with coaching on multiple levels (cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual, integral) to enable the coachee to grow towards wholeness continuously. This includes the facilitation of vertical development of the coachee as deep change, since transformation manifests not only in lateral development but also in vertical development. Lastly, the application of multi-dimensional coaching (intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal) is required to enable expansion of the self for the coachee towards personal transformation and societal transformation.

7.5 SELF-REFLECTION OF THE RESEARCHER

A reflexive approach to the research process is widely accepted in qualitative research and creates transparency during the process (Cruz & Tantia, 2017; Ortlipp, 2008). In terms of reflexivity, Vagle (2014, p.132) states that “post-reflex through a study is important to document, wonder about and question our connections/disconnections, assumptions of what we take to be normal, bottom lines, and moments we are shocked.” Hence, from early on in this study, I had to work on my awareness of what frames my own perceptions and personal beliefs and how it influences my research (Anderson, 2010; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Moreover, I had to be conscious of my own predisposition that coaching leads to transformation. Anderson (2010), Morrow (2005) and Haven and Van Grootel (2019) explain that qualitative research embraces subjectivity and consequently the qualitative researcher has a great say in generating findings from the data. Haven and Van Grootel (2019) argue that “Every result in a qualitative design is one that is an interpretation, subjective; it is influenced by the lens through which the researcher has interpreted the data.”

To account for and address the influence of researcher preconceptions, I provided an honest reflection of my interest in the study already in Chapter 1 and explained how I applied strategies to enhance trustworthiness, including the credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of the research findings. Following these quality criteria in Chapter 1, I referred to how my predispositions of personal transformation as the essential part of coaching influenced my research topic and methodology as a result of my personal experience of being coached and doing coaching myself. As such, I do not disavow the fact that I was furthermore also influenced in how I interpreted the data. To give due consideration and transparency to my role in this research, I now offer a self-reflexive account as part of looking back on this study. I elaborate firstly on my coaching story and its influence on this research, secondly on being a researcher in this study, thirdly on personal transformation as a result of this study and lastly on the self-reflection of the transcriber. In this self-reflection it is evident that how I resonated/identified and failed to resonate/identify with the lived experiences of participants influenced my meaning-making in this study. In presenting this, I acknowledge that I constructed meaning from the lived experiences of participants, which may have been otherwise constructed by another researcher. My biasness and personal experience relating to personal transformation influenced themes and sub-themes in the data-analysis process; however, all the themes and sub-themes were constructed from the data where I gave voice to the participants by adding verbatim data (see Chapter 5) and therefore the findings were co-constructed.

7.5.1 Reflection on my coaching story and its influence in this research

Interpretations of data in qualitative research may be biased for various reasons (Anderson, 2010; Neusar, 2014). Even though I may not always have been aware of my biases, I realise that my bias influenced me to be 'blind' to certain interpretations and to employ certain interpretive patterns as an extension of how I see the world, consequently what I 'see' and what I 'do not see' when interpreting the data. This section is a critical self-reflection on where coaching started in my personal capacity and how it influenced me in how I approached the research, what decisions I made and ultimately how I formulated the research findings. Through critical self-reflection, I saw that what happened to me during my coaching story happened to the

participants as well and vice versa. This provided some insight into how I influenced the research but also into how the research influenced me. Some of the themes in my personal coaching journey were very similar and aligned to those of the participants in the study. I only realised this as I started to analyse the data and discovered not only how I resonated with those themes, but also how I could have influenced the themes and findings, as their stories reminded me of my own coaching experience and how coaching facilitated personal transformation for me.

I attended a coaching programme by my own choice in my personal capacity long before the research project commenced and know that my personal involvement in coaching and the experience of being coached influenced me in how I interpreted the data. As with the participants, I identified with my own readiness for coaching before the actual coaching sessions started, which relates to the first theme, namely 'coaching as process'. Reflecting on the participants' readiness for coaching brought to the surface awareness of my own readiness at the time and led me to recognise that the process of personal transformation was triggered for me (and for the participants) even before our actual coaching sessions began. It seems that reflecting on the participants' readiness came to my conscious awareness first because I was engaged with the process of data analysis. Yet, I realise that my unconscious bias, rooted in my own experiences, played a strong role in leading me to this idea and understanding.

During the coaching programme and training I attended in 2012 and 2013 I became aware of new things in my life from a behavioural context that were empowering to me. As I was doing the data analysis and writing the stories of the different participants, I came to realise my own struggle with the process of **self-awareness**. At the time of my coaching, I was surrounded by people in my day-to-day life for whom self-development in a behavioural context was not of any importance, which differs from my view that self-development starts with self-awareness. For me, this belief was affirmed in my own coaching experience. Awareness is necessary to fulfil human potential (Whitmore, 2002). I found it hard to understand and integrate the fact that self-awareness and self-development do not exist for all people. Sometimes I found that even talking about self-awareness at social get-togethers made people uncomfortable, which created new consciousness in me of the valuable

dynamic of self-awareness. I now realise that my need to establish a grounding for this belief had an impact on the directions I took at the outset of this study.

I am further not blind to the fact it was difficult for me to wrestle with self-awareness, and that difficulty may have alerted me to other people also finding this experience hard. In addition, **self-awareness** was a big shift for me in terms of insight into my 'way of doing' and my 'way of being'. I started to approach myself, others and life differently. This is still an emerging process. Whitmore (2002, p. 33) explains: "I am able to control only that of which I am aware. That of which I am unaware controls me. Awareness empowers me." I therefore believe that each participant in this study was exposed to a process of initiating and developing self-awareness and that was the beginning of each one's personal coaching journey. Lech et al. (2018) confirm that the beginning of the journey of personal development starts with self-awareness and its significance.

During my coaching journey a new world opened for me in terms of 'who I am' in all of this. Thus, as for the participants, **identity work** was central in my coaching journey, which facilitated personal transformation for me when I entered the space of reconnecting with 'me'. Brown (2015), Kreiner et al. (2006a, 2006b) and Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) refer to identity work as an ongoing process in reaching the self. Further to **identity work**, being the middle child, I experienced many difficulties that I think featured only for me in my adult life, as I could not integrate them as a child. I could resonate with P1 when she explained that in her childhood she had to take up a different role from that of her sister, as they were different, and with P3 when she described herself as being different in her childhood. I see myself as being different from my brother and sister and I played a different role from theirs in the family context. This I only came to realise when I engaged with who I am and want to be in relation to others, during coaching. Identity work is also defined as revolving around two psychological tasks, namely *differentiating the unique self from others*, and *identifying with others*, which is motivated by the need to belong (Kreiner et al., 2006a). I could affirm myself as being different by acknowledging that 'who I am is okay', similar to P3. Further to **identity work**, it became evident to me in my coaching programme that as an adult working in the corporate world I had to authorise myself more in terms of who I was and in using my

voice. This resonated with P3, who was in the process of finding her own voice, and P4 and P7, who re-established boundaries in their lives. Personal transformation was demonstrated through coaching, where I used my voice in setting boundaries, instead of taking on too much and being the people pleaser that came so naturally for me. These boundaries thus aligned with how I was conducting the differentiation process in identity work (Kreiner et al., 2006a). The way P7 described and explained the setting of boundaries seemed quite familiar to me and her profound description influences me even to this day, to redefine boundaries in my own life. She stated: *“We all think boundary means saying no. It has actually got very little to do with that. It’s about telling someone what’s oaky with me and what’s not okay with me, you know. And that’s very different from saying no.”*

The words and stories of the participants in my study will stay with me and live within me for a very long time to come. All seven participants referred to **work-life balance** or the struggle between making time for both work and family life, hence **work-life integration**. I could resonate with the challenge to live a life of work-life flexibility and struggling to integrate work and personal life all the time. The transformational value of coaching was evident when I reviewed the stressors in my life and changed my orientation towards my work-life situation in order to find **meaning and purpose** again by taking control of my life in a personal and professional context, which came as a process. Stout-Rostron (2009b) states that the integration of meaning is possible for the coaching client when the coaching process focusses on intelligence quotient, EQ and spiritual intelligence. Coaching goes back to the basics of life, which are meaning and purpose. Stout-Rostron (2009b) states that finding meaning and purpose is central in coaching and coaching clients need to reconstruct meaning for themselves in both their personal and professional lives. In his book, ‘Man’s Search for Meaning’, Victor Frankl (1985) writes about meaning after spending several years in a Nazi concentration camp. Similar to Frankl, Edith Eger also refers to meaning in her book ‘The Choice’ (2017). I did not experience finding meaning and purpose in life as entirely straightforward and realised that it is a process, similar to what I constructed from the stories and experiences of the participants.

My personal coaching journey was an **emotional experience** at some stages. The emotional responses elicited during my coaching programme presented motivational

moments that initiated change for me. It was in the experiencing of emotions that insights and turning moments came to the fore to me (De Haan et al., 2010; Honsová & Jarošová, 2019; Longhurst, 2006). Both P2 and P5 referred to coaching as an emotional journey for them. I noticed that both P2 and P5 are males and their expression of an 'emotional journey' refer to my self-reflection about men and their emotions (see section 7.5.2.2). During the research interviews both P1 and P2 referred to being a **whole person**. Integral coaching taught me as a human being that I am a whole person. Being a whole person and not fragmented into parts (Strozzi-Heckler, 1997) was a profound new insight for me during my coaching programme and even now in my life. This concept of being a whole person, which includes cognitive, emotional, somatic, relational, spiritual and integral aspects (Flaherty & Handelsman, n.d.), and also being part of the whole (the cosmos), as referred to by Davis (2003), remains a crisp experience for me that continues and of which I am constantly aware. It revealed to me that I had to bring my whole self to life and my existence in the world, not only my 'way of doing' but also my 'way of being' (Jakonen & Kamppinen, 2015) in becoming an integrated human being. I visited an art gallery in 2018 and a piece of art reflected this experience of wholeness for me in the form of art as provided in **figure 7.1** below. As a believer, it symbolises for me Christ on the cross, wholeness of a human being in the universe and being satisfied with who I am.

Figure 7.1

Art piece – The spirit of wholeness (metal, antique silver head, copper, concrete)

Artist: Philippe Bousquet (2018)



Lastly, **personal transformation** happened for me not only during my own coaching process as a coachee; it was an emerging and ongoing process during coaching and continued after coaching sessions came to an end. This process of personal transformation continued and intensified from when I started my PhD studies until the present. I can describe it as finding that when I ‘entered’ this cycle of transformation the second and third time and every time thereafter, it became a

deeper, ever-evolving process. Consequently, I can say that through coaching and the self-awareness it developed in me, I experienced in my own life something of not only horizontal development, but also vertical development. Jakonen and Kamppinen (2015, p. 16) refer to transformation as an 'authentic developmental transition'. I am still very aware that transformation for me will be an ongoing cycle of authentic development.

7.5.2 Self-reflection on being a researcher in this study

In the section that follows I reflect on my role as a researcher, firstly, with particular focus on the role of researcher versus the role of being a coach, followed by a reflection on possible predispositions resulting from being a white female and the impact thereof on the research process.

7.5.2.1 Differentiation between the role of researcher versus the role of coach

After each of the seven research interviews and two pilot interviews I engaged in mindful and conscious self-reflection about what happened during each interview, the impact thereof and how it influenced me. I noticed that I was nervous when starting the research interviews because of not knowing what to expect and not wanting to make mistakes. Ortlipp (2008) explains that the thoughts, feelings, fears and desires of the interviewer do have an impact on the interview, and that the process of reflection helps to bring the unconscious into consciousness and thus open for review. By acknowledging what happened to the researcher during the interview process, transparency is created (Ortlipp, 2008). I realised that what was important was not only a well-prepared interview, but also the researcher being present and listening to the participant, and being flexible and fluid during the interview, hence my decision to conduct semi-structured interviews. As I continued conducting interviews with the respective participants, the process started to flow well. On reflection, I became aware that my initial nervousness was rooted in a desire to come across as helpful. This awareness furthermore made me conscious of how I take up my role as coach and that of researcher and interviewer, as well as the need to distinguish consciously between the two roles, to take up each separately when required.

Reflecting on my experience with the interviews made realise my tendency to be a coach. With my coaching background, I realised that it was not always easy to stay in the role of the interviewer and at times I consciously had to stop myself from assuming a coaching role during the interview process. The information that was shared by P3 during her interview prompted me to divert into a coaching role, specifically what she shared on how she was using her voice. Doing self-reflection after each interview developed in me a more consistent self-reflection, which I started to apply subconsciously during the interviews as well. I therefore became aware of my proclivity to coach while in the interview with P3 and could manage to stop doing it. However, I e-mailed P3 information afterwards about 'finding my voice', which I agreed to do during the interview. Similarly, during the interview with P6 he shared information about having a limited emotional vocabulary. I did not assume the role of coach during the interview, but afterwards sent him material via e-mail about emotional vocabulary, as I agreed with him. In both cases I copied the respective coaches of the participants in the e-mails; no further e-mail communication took place.

The genuineness and professionalism of all the coaches were evident from what the participants related to me. Subconsciously, I think I struggled not to compare myself as a coach with these coaches, who had such a profound impact on the participants' lives. I do believe that thinking on whether one would have responded or guided coachees in the same way is unavoidable and I questioned my own coaching competence as an accredited coach during my self-reflection.

7.5.2.2 Being a white female

My home language is Afrikaans and as a result of that I found it difficult to write and express myself in my second language. The way I dealt with this was to engage with a professional language editor to assist me to convey the message as intended. I am a white female and the language editor I employed to assist me with the language editing was also a white female. In addition, the transcriber I employed in transcribing the research interviews was a white female, as was my promotor for this study. When reflecting on my unconscious choice of language editor, transcriber and promotor, I realised I found comfort in working with them as I identified with them

being white females. Although the example of the language editor, transcriber and promotor may not seem particularly influential in the data analysis, it does point to potential gender role stereotypes that I harbour because of being female. As such, I suspected that I could potentially have been biased in how I attended to the data of males and females in the study. This caused me to reflect very specifically on how I heard the voices of male and female participants against personal stereotypical preconceptions.

I reflected on these gendered preconceptions. This included my perception that men, more than women, wrestle to engage on an intrapersonal level such as self-exploration, self-awareness, self-identity and meaning-making. From a hermeneutical phenomenological approach, biases and subjectivity are embedded and essential to the interpretive process (Laverty, 2003; Paterson & Higgs, 2005). However, when I reflected on my potential bias in terms of my beliefs about the characteristics of men and women, I reconsidered the data to reassess how I hear the voices of males and females. It became evident to me at the time that in the data both males and females in the study found it hard to engage with inner-work on an intrapersonal level. I explored another gendered predisposition, namely my assumption that men find it harder than women to get in touch with their emotions. Again, I went back to the data and it was evident in the study that through coaching male participants did get in touch with their emotions, and for some of the male participants it was even easier than for some of the female participants to speak about emotions, which made a lasting impression on me. Self-reflexive practice and reconsidering the data thus also changed some of my foundational, unconscious beliefs, as I became more aware and attuned to my own thoughts and how these related to my beliefs.

7.5.3 Personal transformation as a result of this study

With relevance to my research, Anderson (2015, p. 211) emphasises that transpersonal researchers and scholars are “willing to engage the Sacred in a journey of transformation – a journey that implicates both their understanding of the topic and themselves as human beings.” However, Anderson (2015) also warns that the risks in transpersonal research and scholarship are projection and narcissism.

Furthermore, Anderson (2015, pp. 212-213) explains four unique characteristics of transpersonal research and scholarship. Though I do not see myself as a transpersonal researcher as such but used transpersonal psychology as a psychological paradigm in writing up the thesis, in my self-reflection I could resonate with some of what Anderson (2015) described. The first characteristic is risking personal and professional transformation. Applying for admission to the PhD degree study in consulting psychology at UNISA, followed by starting with this research project, which took me through a journey of both personal and professional transformation, took me out of my comfort zone. The second characteristic is choosing a topic that has heart and meaning. I was attracted to the topic of my study because of my personal experience of transformation as a result of undergoing coaching in the role of a coachee. Anderson (2015) explains that researchers feel more strongly about their research topic when it relates to their personal experience and that transpersonal psychology tends to attract people who are passionate about making a positive difference in a field where their own lives were touched. The third is incorporating transformative ways of knowing. Painful experiences in life may turn out to be an important resource for the researcher. Clements (2016) explains from a transpersonal perspective that life should not just be about trying to avoid pain, sadness or tragedy; one should treasure both the painful and the pleasurable aspects of life. In my personal capacity I went through situations that I could describe as painful during the time I wrote up the thesis and just doing a PhD study was hard for me, but both transformed me to new ways of knowing and integrating what happened to me. Lastly, the researcher should understand that data and knowledge beyond personal awareness are out of sight and out of mind. I became aware of my own spiritual integration, which became much more prominent and real to me at the time of doing the research, and inevitably had an impact on my engagement with the research. Anderson (2015, p. 213) explains: "Therefore, I urge transpersonal researchers and scholars to acquire knowledge of several models of spiritual development and make an honest effort to be realistic about one's personal level of spiritual integration on the developmental spectrum. Humility is advised." In March 2018 I went on a spiritual mindfulness retreat to Dharamsala in India to experience spirituality from a different perspective in the context of Buddhism and how Tibetan monks and nuns practise spirituality. At the beginning of 2021 I enrolled for a spiritual programme, 'Viam Dei', underpinned by contemplative

theology with a focus on spiritual awareness, spiritual growth and inner transformation, which implies a continuous process of personal growth and transformation in the context of spirituality. My journey of personal transformation may have started with my decision to engage with coaching, but (as I have noted many times) the transformation continued during this PhD journey. I believe that my engagement with self-awareness and the need to explore new ways of doing and being consistently was initiated in my coaching experiences and deepened in doing this research to the point that seeking spiritual growth was a natural consequence and demonstrated the inevitable transpersonal nature of doing research.

7.5.4 The experience of the transcriber

In reflecting on the last theme in the findings, namely the rippling effect of coaching, I reminded myself of interaction I had with the transcriber. For me, this interaction affirmed the conceptual meaning ensconced in the last theme, demonstrating that the personal transformational value of coaching is of such a nature that it transcends the actual coaching sessions. The coaching stories of the participants and the theme of this thesis, 'the personal transformational value of coaching', touched the life of the transcriber, who transcribed the interviews conducted during this study. With the permission⁷ of the transcriber, I include her experience. In listening to each coaching story when doing the transcribing, she became aware of stagnation in her life and that she should make some changes in her life. In her own words: "*I now understand better and can definitely do with becoming 'unstuck' in a few areas of my life ... Your study has already touched somebody's life, even if it was in a rather indirect way – thank you*". This awareness motivated the transcriber to consider finding a coach to facilitate a coaching programme in addressing these changes she wanted to make:

⁷ Verbatim permission obtained from transcriber: "I hereby give my written consent to use the information below in your thesis as you see fit, and I hope that it will make a contribution to your research study."

Thank you very much that in a modest way I could be part of this project. It was very interesting, made me think a lot and touched something in my own life. I could do with a sounding board in my own life ... Many of us do not have the privilege of retirement, a pension and a cottage on the coast where we could sit watching the waves, but we do need guidance on how to act, what to do and where to go, and I think that coaching will be of great value in this market.

Even if she did not continue to find a coach, the coaching stories of the participants initiated a self-reflective engagement with the self by becoming aware of stagnation in her life and the need to do something about it. This is already an indication of a level of personal transformation.

7.6 CLOSURE

In this last chapter I have affirmed that coaching does have transformational value by describing the nature and scope of such transformation for the coachee. I discussed the research contributions and limitations and included recommendations, followed by my self-reflection as the researcher. I acknowledged my influence in the findings through the critical self-reflection that I offered and attempted to be transparent about my subjectivity about coaching, which also had personal transformational value for me. As a coach and in this study as a researcher, my experiences as a coachee consciously and sub-consciously pre-empted me to search for literature that informed my interpretations. However, in searching for personal transformation I could describe how coaching facilitates personal transformation through both the empirical study and literature review.

Much has been written on coaching as a vehicle for personal transformation and limited research from the perspective of the coachee substantiates such claims. There might be different interpretations about the transformational value of coaching; however, a hermeneutic phenomenological study allows for a context-specific co-construction of knowledge that contributes to the larger body of knowledge on coaching. As such, the co-constructed findings in this study demonstrate empirically

that coaching facilitates change and has transformational value, in line with the summative statement by Krapu (2016, p. 17):

As more and more people accomplish significant things in their lives as a result of coaching and even transform their lives in significant ways, coaching will increasingly be seen as a powerful methodology to effect change and growth in people's lives.

Regardless of whether coaching was a process of personal transformation for me, writing up my thesis was in itself an intense process of transformation with polar experiences of suffering (struggling with my competence as a researcher and PhD student) versus exhilaration and many 'aha' moments. The journey of personal transformation when working with the self remains an ongoing experience. Doing this study transformed my inner and outer landscape, my way of doing and my way of being in the world, and is a continuous process as I am continuing the transformational journey of my life. Therefore, I want to conclude this study with the painting of Vincent van Gogh – *Starry Night* (The Van Gogh Gallery, n.d.), as illustrated in **figure 7.2** below. Personal transformation is symbolised for me in the painting as a multi-dimensional, ongoing circular process integrating each part and the whole, resulting in expansion of the self, traversing to inter-connectedness with God, self, other and the cosmos, and as such becomes an intrapersonal, interpersonal and transpersonal process towards psychological well-being and flourishing.

Figure 7.2

Starry Night, 1889 by Vincent van Gogh



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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO GATEKEEPERS

Email sent on 2017-01-24 07:34 AM to one of the gatekeepers. The same email content was sent to all the gatekeepers.

Dear Coach

I trust you are well.

I am a Doctoral student at the University of South-Africa. The title of my research project is: *Coaching: Exploring the lived experience of the coachee*.

As part of the fieldwork I would like to interview consenting employees in various industries, who are in leadership positions and who completed a series of coaching sessions (minimum 6) with an accredited coach.

When assessing the coaching experience, I am going to use one style/school of coaching, which is Integral Coaching. As you are a certified Integral Coach, I would like to know if you could assist me in my research project by introducing possible participants who are in a leadership position and who recently (preferably within the last 18 months to 2 years) completed a minimum of 6 coaching sessions.

For ethical reasons it would be appreciated if the participant could give you consent to share his/her contact details with me.

Once you provide me with these contact details, I will contact the participant/s and providing more information.

The interview with each participant will take approximately 1 hour of his/her time and will be conducted between 08:00-17:00 (or after working hours depending on the availability and preference of the participant). There could be a possibility of a follow-up interview at a later stage, however, this will be communicated to the participant if necessary.

It would be desirable if the participant is based in Gauteng due to a one-on-one interview.

I have attached the information sheet for your perusal should you be interested knowing more about the study (however, I will give and discuss this form with the consenting participant/s).

It would really be appreciated if you could help me in gaining access to participants, in order to complete my studies and to contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of coaching.

Kind regards

Linda

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

DOCTORAL RESEARCH

INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT

Dear,

I, Linda Steyn, am a Doctoral student at the University of South-Africa. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled:

Coaching: Exploring the lived experience of the coachee.

The aim of the qualitative study is to: Explore and deepen understanding of the coaching experience from the coachee's perspective.

You have been selected as a research participant to this study, due to being in a leadership position and having completed a series of coaching sessions. Your contact details have been obtained with your permission from Julia Kerr who has coached you.

The result of this research is intended to contribute to the extension of the body of knowledge in the field of Industrial Psychology and to deepen understanding of coaching for the coachee.

The data collected will be used anonymously for fulfilment of the requirements for the PhD degree in Consulting Psychology, and for other purposes such as a research report, journal articles and/or conference proceedings. Data will be retained for a period of five years for future research or academic purposes.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time with no negative consequences. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this study. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the University of South Africa.

It should take approximately one (1) hour for the initial interview. It might be required to have follow-up interviews. The researcher will make use of an audio recording/s and will make notes of her views and experiences during the interview.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Industrial and Organisational Psychology Department, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you so wish.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact the researcher (number listed below).

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in this study, please contact me at any time (number listed below). Should you have concerns in the way in which the research has been conducted, you may contact my supervisor (number listed below).

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. I trust you are willing to participate in this study.

Researcher: Linda Steyn

Mobile: 071 462 3699

E-mail: linda@lindasteyn.com

Research Supervisor: Prof Antoni Barnard

Tel: 012 429 4217

Mobile: 082 375 2696

E-mail: barnaha@unisa.ac.za

University of South Africa, Main Campus
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria
PO Box 392, UNISA, 0003, South Africa
www.unisa.ac.za



This page is to be retained by participant

INFORMED CONSENT

I, _____ (full names of participant)
herby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I undertake to give a true representation of my perspective and/or experiences. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

This page is to be retained by researcher

**APPENDIX C: DATA SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT LETTER
TRANSCRIBER**

DATA SECURITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Title of Study: *Coaching: Exploring the lived experience of the coachee*

As a member of the research team or in the capacity of providing support to the research team in the above research project:

I, _____

(name and surname in print letters),

confirm that I will maintain the highest level of confidentiality and security with regard to any project data (quantitative, hard copies, recorded or electronic data) that I will have access to.

I understand that participants in the project are provided a guarantee that their data and personal information will be maintained securely and treated confidentially at all times and that the data that they provide as individuals (either in completing questionnaires or biographical data) will not be disclosed or made available to any person outside of the core research team and its support staff (core research team, statistical support).

Research team member or support staff member:

NAME AND SURNAME:

(please print)

Signature.....Date.....

APPENDIX D: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structured Interview Guide (Interview guide as prepared on 2017.01.13)

Krueger (2002) refers to different types of questions for a focus group. I used the different types of questions for the semi-structured interview in the table below not in a focus group, but on a one-on-one basis.

Types of question as influenced by Krueger (2002)	
<p>Introduction (To start the conversation)</p>	<p>Thank you again for your time and that you have agreed to participate in my study. As explained in the consent letter, this is a qualitative study on coaching: exploring the lived experience of the coachee.</p> <p>A qualitative study is typically to understand how you interpret and making sense of your experience of being coached, and thus to explore the phenomenon of the coaching experience in depth with you.</p> <p>Before we start, is there anything particular that is on top of mind for you, a question or something you would like to say?</p>
<p>Opening questions (To continue after the introduction)</p>	<p>Before we continue I'd just like to get to know you better.</p> <p>Please tell me more about yourself in terms of where you work, your (leadership) position. Have you been also in this position at the time you have been coached?</p> <p>For my background, could you please give me an indication of approximately how many coaching sessions did you have with your coach?</p> <p>How have you decided to engage in coaching? /</p> <p>What made you decided to engage in coaching?</p>

<p>Transition questions (Enable researcher to move into key questions)</p>	<p>Now that I know how you decided to go for coaching, <i>please tell me about your coaching experience,</i> and how it transpired for you.</p> <p>Probing questions to follow such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell me more? - What do you mean with?
<p>Key questions (Researcher to gain more insight of the coaching experience and to elicit more information)</p>	<p>Was there anything in particular that shifted for you on a behavioural level as a result of the coaching process?</p> <p>What is different in your way of being/in the way you show up at the moment, than previously?</p> <p>Probing questions to follow such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tell me more? - What shifted for you? - How did it shift for you? - When did it shift for you? - What do you mean with? - Were there any mediums that formed part of the coaching process e.g. journalling, reading, etc.? Tell me more. - What happened for you on a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cognitive level • emotional level • somatic level • relational level • spiritual level • integral level?
<p>Concluding questions (Researcher to summarise main points, and to ensure nothing in particular has been omitted)</p>	<p>Was there anything during the coaching process that didn't work for you, and why?</p> <p>To summarise</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to mention before we conclude the conversation?</p> <p>Thank the participant.</p>