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COACHING EFFICACY WITH ACADEMIC LEADERS:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

By

Deanna Lee Vansickel-Peterson

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

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Major: Human Science

Under the Supervision of Professors John DeFrain and Kathleen Lodl

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COACHING EFFICACY WITH ACADEMIC LEADERS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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University of Nebraska, 2010
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this psychological phenomenological research was to understand the efficacy of life coaching from the perspective of academic leaders. To date, not one investigation or attempt has been made towards the above stated purpose. This study includes a theoretical overview and a review of the coaching literature from Socrates (469-399 BC) to current day Humanistic theory presented in part by Roger (1902-1987).

This process included data collection from five academic leaders who have been coached for at least two years. Levels of analysis of 365 statements, quote and/or comments produced finding of efficacy in life coaching with academic leaders. These findings were identified and textural descriptions were organized into theme clusters, which resulted in five themes.

The significant themes showed that the effect of the coaching relationship and process enhanced the lives of academicians both personally and professionally by providing a safe place where they could freely express themselves and talk of issues that were otherwise too sensitive to bring to personal and/or professional relationships. This freedom allowed for exploration and awareness of self and values, which empowered them to make decisions, and engage in critical conversations, feeling confident. The deepening of self and value awareness provided needed insights for how boundaries produced a positive protective element needed to guard their time and energy so that they could freely and willingly do what most benefitted them, those whom they love and for doing what they loved. The implementation of boundaries acted as a container for leaders to explore the paradigms they operated from and identified what perspectives served them or hindered them, their growth and relationships. As perspectives were explored and challenged, leaders found themselves adopting new perspectives that created shifts, leading to empowerment. The coaching experience created such value to leaders that

they wanted to duplicate this feeling with other relationships in their lives, both personally and professionally.

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I dedicate this scholarly work to the participants in this research, who so willingly gave of themselves and their time. Your insights and experiences are treasures from your very being. The findings drawn from your shared experiences will advance the coaching literature. Many thanks.

I am indebted to the teachers, friends, parents and others from my youth. Without you, I wouldn't be here today! I am most touched by the love of my spirited daughters – Shanell and Madalyn. Thank you for being patient and occasionally asking, "When will you be done with this?" I am grateful to Sheena and Jamie as you epitomize God's grace in helping me with my girls. I am honored to be accompanied by the best friends in the world; Erica, Louise, Sarah, Scott, Sidse and Terrie, for truly seeing *me*, through your eyes, I have more clearly discovered my essence. I am most humbled by the strength of my sister Shawna, grateful for the wisdom of my great grandparents, touched by the love of my grandparents, inspired by the sheer willpower of my mom and thankful for the blessings of my brothers. Last but not least, most grown and challenged by my tribe – The Buffalo.

Deanna L. Vansickel-Peterson, Ph.D.

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Chapter One: Introduction and Overview

Definition of coaching

Life coaching is a process that emerged in the 1980s and has experienced significant growth, especially in the last decade (Hurd, 2008). Life coaching is akin to sports coaching. Whereby, the coach sees talents in his or her player that cannot be realized or actualized by the player themselves. Then asking the questions and presenting challenges that have the individual break through their self-imposed limits. Life coaching is seeing behind the physical manifestation of the individual. The coach is very curious and seeks to understand how this person thinks about themselves. The curiosity naturally leads to the coach asking deep powerful questions which can knock the client off of autopilot answers. When the autopilot mode is switched off, the client is then freed up to go inside of their own intricate cognitive tunnel system to find the answer that deeply resonates. Coaching is summed by Whitmore (2002) as the process that unlocks a person's potential which offers them possibilities for reaching maximum performance. Whitmore goes further asserting that coaching involves the person in the teaching so that they are an active participant in their learning. Coaching is a partnering of two people, one client and one coach, who together create an alliance which is designed to deepen the client's learning of themselves and supports them in forwarding their learning to action. The foundation of this alliance is built upon the mutual understanding of each other, commitment and communication (Kilburg 2001). It is this designed alliance between coach and client that is essential in facilitating behavioral change, perhaps more so than giving feedback (Goodstone and Diamante, 1998).

The International Coaches Federation, a non-profit global organization formed in 1995 describes coaching as a process whereby the coach partners with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential (International Coaches Federation, 1995). When coach and client meet, the client chooses the focus of conversation and the coach listens then contributes observations. This interaction creates clarity for the client, which helps them focus and naturally moves them into action. Coaches recognize and highlight to the client that the results presenting themselves in the client's life are a matter of the client's intentions, choices and actions. The process of coaching deepens the clients learning, improves their performance, and enhances their quality of personal and professional life (CoachInc., 2005, p.11).

Purpose of coaching

Coaching serves many purposes and comes in as many different specialties as there are clients. The universal purpose of coaching is to enhance individual lives, both personally and professionally. Coaching is especially useful for leaders in upper administration because of their need for less formalized training; instead, they prosper from objective, insight-based thoughtful feedback. The process of coaching provides this. First, it sees the client as having their own answers. Second, clients are their own best expert and third, the coaching process helps them hear their wise voice. The purpose of coaching is to help people learn more about themselves, their strategies, the perspectives from which they make choices, and to identify how those choices serve them or hinder them. Once client's self awareness is tapped and actualized, the goal is to

deepen the client's learning of who they are *being* as they move forward to their goals. This deep level of self awareness contributes to higher levels of self actualization. Pronounced individual self-actualization, typically produce positive net effects in how one leads. The result is greater probability for them to more effectively lead others.

The coaching process is more than a professional using coaching skills; it is a designed alliance, the relationship that exists between coach and client. The purpose is to provide trust and confidence in the relationship which has the client unusually comfortable in exploring who they are and how to live their life more fully and with purpose. The process assists them in finding clarity for their life, which creates focus and naturally evolving them into action. In essence, moving them from where they are to where they want to go.

History of coaching

Life coaching is not a direct derivative from psychological theory, but it can be said the field did indeed influence fibers of life coaching. Sigmund Freud's theory (1961) professes that the unconsciousness that lies within a person is a significant driving force in their conscious behavior. He believed that the super ego, the ego and the id were symbols and it is this part of his theory that has applicability to coaching. Life coaches and clients go deep into the conscious to discover the brilliance and blocks that unconsciously affect the client's decisions and choices.

While Freud's theory underpinnings were of neuroses and psychosis, they marked a significant starting point and attempt for understanding human behavior. Colleagues of Freud moved themselves from seeing people as broken to seeing them as being capable,

creative, and whole. Alfred Adler and Carl Jung highlighted their relationships with clients and involved the clients in the therapeutic approach (Pedrini & Pedrini, 1976). This idea of relating and involving the clients in the professional process is highlighted with Adler and Jung. It is also a stronghold in the coaching process.

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) emerged on the research platform in humanistic psychology and the human potential movement was born of this milieu. Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Rollo May, among other theorists, formed the concept that the development of human potential is largely untapped. This evolving theory believed that humans held the innate potential to experience an exceptional quality of life filled with happiness, creativity, and fulfillment (Salerno, 2005). This movement morphed to personal development in the 1980s coupled with and motivated by the global economic restructuring. The restructuring created changes which were unpredictable and unprecedented, reworking the scale of uneven development. Katz's (2004) ambitious study showed how we as a nation take for granted the political and economic structures and that during times of stress we realize our once had fortune. It is the realization that misfortune has fallen upon us that forces the reshaping to meet the demands presented. With the upheaval and restructure, humans found a positive net effect from the empowerment that comes from within. From that assumption, they believed, living a life by design far exceeded living life by default, only to be dependent upon external sources. In essence, humans innately hold phenomenal power around how they choose to show up in the world. This then cultivated individuals and brought about positive change at large.

Nedra Francis and William Kritsonis (2006) in a doctoral forum note that Maslow centered his research on the term “self actualizing people”. A term coined by Kurt Goldstein (1878-1965). Maslow took this concept and wrote about people who were being as they were becoming. Maslow researched, interviewed, and observed people who stated they were living the life they wanted to live. They reported living with vitality and constantly seeking to find more of themselves. It is this paradigm that seemingly set the point for the evolution of life coaching as a respected profession in the mid 1980s to early 1990s. Vikki Brock (2008) in a recently published dissertation states that in 1995, the world saw the first two international certifying organizations emerge, Personal and Professional Coaches Association (PPCA) formed by Laura Whitworth and International Coaches Federation (ICF) by Thomas Leonard. In 1997 the owner of ICF and president of PPCA announced the merger of the two into what is now known as The International Coach Federation. The organization is home to over 15,000 personal, professional and business coaches representing approximately 90 countries (ICF, 2009). In 2007, Price Waterhouse conducted an extensive global survey and the results showed that over 30,000 coaches were in active operation (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2007).

Research context

Coaching is a profession that aims to build interpersonal relationships, by accessing and increasing emotional intelligence. The Institute for Health and Human Potential (2009) defines emotional intelligence as having the ability or capacity to accurately perceive, assess, and manage and/or generate the emotions of one-self and of others. This ability to understand emotions promotes emotional and intellectual growth.

(Mayer, J.D., Caruso, D. & Salovey, P., 1999). Coaching also improves job performance and enhances organizational performance, improves teamwork and culture development, increases training effectiveness, human resource planning and capital development, and transition to a new leadership position (Williams, R. 2007).

Coaching produces results that support the human infrastructure. The global economy and corporate downsizing forces leaders to reorganize and to do more with less. Furthermore, humans living in the 21st century are longing for a quality of life that adheres to personal and professional values, while also doing more with less. Global turmoil has led many into financial challenges, and in some cases, may also be a contributing factor to the crises faced by land-grant universities. Since 2000, the news has been reporting that the federal and state governments have to continually meet expansive budget shortfalls. Instead of looking at new ways to compress, they are looking at what is currently compressed, and then continue to cut from there. Today, institutional survival and growth is dependent upon higher tuition rates and competitive grants because of the budget shortfalls and the decade of downfall in the economy. Mark Smith with the American Association of University Professors, director of government relations (2003) states that most state spending is focused on three areas – corrections, health care, and education. He goes on to say that "states are projecting major cuts in higher education programs" (p. 1). When this researcher looks at the funding history of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, it affirms that leaders within higher educational institutions will have to do more with less.

The University of Nebraska was founded in 1869. Today's UNL Extension is a division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Extension nation-wide is cooperative by nature, linking land-grant universities in each state, with the county governments, and the United States Department of Agriculture. This three-way partnership, shared by Nebraska counties, state government and federal programs and grants, provides the venue for research and new information originating from the land-grant campus and reaching out to the people of the State of Nebraska.

In 1978-1979 total funds brought into the Nebraska Extension system was $11.6 million. This amount was comprised of state funds at $4.6 million (40%), county at $3.0 million (26%), federal at $3.7 million (31%) and non-tax, also known as grants, $.3 million (3%). The financial picture of 2006-2007 shows significant contrast in the funding make up. Total funds were $51.2 million dollars with state at $22.7 million (44%), county at $8.2 million (16%), federal at $4.4 million (9%) and non-tax (grant) funds at $15.9 million (31%), (IANR, 2007).

This researcher is not advocating for the need for coaching only when budgets are declining, however, coaching becomes even more important when budgets are at an all time low and leadership positions are removed. Especially at these times, it is critical to grow every employee into a leader and coaching is one way to do that. Due to the vertical cuts that the budgets have forced over the past decade, organizations are flatter organizational structures. The organizational change has also created job insecurity. Because of these environmental forces, organizations have been left with no choice but to

increase the work of those who are left to run the organization, forcing them to progress and develop quickly (Jarvis, 2004).

This inevitable trend to do more with less, adds to the obvious need to streamline and utilize efficient leadership abilities of all employees. Managers that receive coaching are able to take their personal learning and insights and translate that growth into improved effectiveness. Managers who received coaching increased retention and produced effectiveness between the links of self-development, management development and organizational effectiveness (Wales, 2003). The following table developed by Manchester, (2002) will highlight the key reasons coaches are hired to help executives.

Table 1: Key Reasons Executive Coaches are Hired to Help Executives

	Intrapersonal Changes	Interpersonal Changes	Organizational Changes
Developmental Focus	Enhance use of emotional intelligence Increase skill level and knowledge required of complex and rapidly changing business Achieve work-life balance to enhance success and well-being.	Develop management and leadership skills among technical people Ensure success of leaders in the early stages of their new leadership position Develop capacity to model ideal feedback and relationship behaviors Support the goals and leadership challenges of women and minorities	Coordinate and ensure involvement in succession planning Maximize development of all high-potential employees Increase capacity to revise business strategies and involve more people in the change process instigated by globalization, technology, and corporate mergers.
Problem Resolution Focus	Prevent executive derailment Avoid misalignment-regarding culture, responsibilities, operating styles – for executives in new environments Reduce high stress levels or other emotional factors that may be interfering with performance	Retain talent and reduce turnover that is caused by a perceived lack of leadership Reduce conflict that interferes with collaboration among executive team members Close gap in leadership skills currently required and what leaders know how to do	Remove obstacles, namely, executive resistance, that interfere with the implementation of key strategic initiatives and goals Move beyond malaise and fears related to issues such as recessions or traumatic events Eliminate obstacles that inhibit successful transitions for executives who are assuming new roles.

Wise, P. S., & Voss, L. S. (2002). The case for executive coaching. Lore Research Institute. Durango, CO.

The budget shortfall has created competition, a down-size in the vertical management structure and has shrunk talent pools. The very success of land-grant universities depends upon the capacity to respond to these challenges. Part of that challenge can be met by providing coaching to the individuals within the organization, giving them the opportunity to develop themselves to face the upcoming challenges. The willingness and ability to innovate and produce quality leaders on every level is of paramount importance. Dr. Warren Bennis, a distinguished professor of the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, has been a long-time leader in the field of leadership research. Among his findings, he drew sharp contrasts between managers and leaders. These findings were summed up with a now familiar proverb: "Managers do things right, leaders do the right thing" (Antioch University, 2002, p. 1). Because of today's trends, it is critical to create leaders that engage in self empowerment and bring that same insight to their teaching, research and collaborations with their respective teams. This prevailing attitude will be of considerable importance in the future of higher education as well as to the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in the work of research, teaching and outreach. Entrepreneurism in academia is where leaders take tradition into consideration, but launch their research, paradigms and delivery of programs and themselves outside the box of tradition to a more progressive, forward thinking style and attitude. This paradigm shift will require change and change is hard, even when people are in agreement that change is needed. Leaders are often times asked to lead and manage change without clear expectations of how to do such or what the

benefits will be. Coaching skills facilitate change within individuals and explore systematic change by looking at all perspectives, building relationships, understanding and letting all voices be heard. Coaching for change can support academicians in assuming a willingness to take upon new ventures in their field of study and assist them in way to account for personal and professional outcomes and impacts.

Leadership theory and concepts have come from a number of sources. The common denominator that exists, no matter the theory, is that leadership is the process of influence. The most common thought process when considering leadership is the process of influence that one has over another. The complexities that have presented themselves - global economic restructuring, doing more with less, and living and working in a way that honors values - bring the need for another form of leadership, called self-leadership. Self leadership is having the innate ability to influence oneself and while it may be a person with an entrepreneurial spirit that is more apt to self lead, this process is innately available to everyone. The entrepreneurial spirit adopted by scholars will have them leaning towards influencing themselves first. Leadership action that garners commitment rather than compliance is made up of leaders that follow a process of leading self. They are leaders who are trustworthy because they do what they say they are going to do and are able to do so because they make decisions that align with their personal value system. This notion of self-leadership is considered pivotal to employees' enthusiasm, commitment and performance in organizations (Manz, 1986). Under the self-leadership paradigm, when people are aware of their top values, leaders are able to help them set goals and achieve them. Personal goals exert a powerful influence over how people

behave and how they experience their lives (Emmons, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 2001). The coaching process highlights the essence of self-leadership. Coaching has been identified as a key tool for development (Cairo & Dotlich, 1999; Crane, 2001; Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000; Kilburg 2000) and has been cited as a significant way to produce increased satisfaction, both personally and professionally, and help leaders identify new skills as well as leverage existing talents and abilities (Kampa-Kokesch, 2002).

Coaches report that their clients express the wish to live by design, in that they decide what and how they will live their life. What brings the client to coaching is that they feel they have lost this power to design and they instead live by default. They have let external circumstances dictate how they will live their life. They become driven by the things of the world, demands of the job, finances, etc. rather than by their internal compass. Life coaching is the profession that has the client focus on what their internal compass is pointing toward. As a result of this process, clients move toward clarity, focus and action.

While coaching is relatively new, there are several studies that show phenomenal return on investment of dollars from coaching. Olivero, Bane and Kopelman's (1997) mixed methods study showed managers increased productivity by 22% with training intervention. When adding a one-to-one coaching element with the training intervention, productivity pushed to 88%.

Philadelphia's Right Management Consultants commissioned a landmark study where they looked at the economics of coaching. They found a return-on-investment (ROI) of dollars spent on executive coaching of nearly 600%. The executives that

engaged in the experience of being coached reported increase in productivity, improvement in relationships with direct reports and colleagues, and greater job satisfaction (Bolsch, 2001).

A similar study conducted three years later showed nearly the same ROI. The research was done by Metrix Global with Fortune 500 firms. Coaches were hired for their senior level mangers and the results showed a 529% ROI (Wilson, 2004).

Personal context

I am a part of the professional development team for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension. One of my roles as a certified coach and an educator is to create curriculum and programming to help employees get clarity in regard to their personal and professional goals so that they can focus on their goals and act to achieve them. My secondary role is to co-lead these workshops to help individuals understand the concepts of coaching and guide them in moving from conceptual understanding to action. Along with many others in the professional development team, I believe that each individual has the capacity to lead, but that leadership must first come in the form of one leading self. My experience with teaching coaching concepts and providing coaching has been positive. The positive experience has come in many forms and the predominant theme seems to be people's understanding for themselves, why they do what they do. When people gain awareness and take responsibility for the choices they make in their life, they naturally increase their locus of control. This increase of internal control decreases the likelihood victimization or martyrdom.

I, too, have been coached and have a coach. I believe it has changed my life by helping me to become aware of my values, seeing places that are not in alignment with my values and giving voice to those values that are being honored as well as dishonored. The process has helped me to lead myself better so that I can better lead my life. Because coaching helped me clarify my values, I became intentional in defining my purpose in life. Having purpose in life is a catalyst that guides how we make choices in terms of allocating our resources of time, energy and money. My experience of being a coach and being coached has made me a more productive, assured, and organized team player.

I know of other academicians that have been coached and some seem to really be alive and energized by the process, while others report a so-so attitude. Through the last five years these differences reported to me by others in regard to the impact of coaching have fascinated me. What happens in the coaching process that makes it wildly successful for some and what happens in the coaching process that has others reporting flat affect? What I do believe aligns with Peter Senge's (1990) observation, that any organization's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members.

Corporations, private and public businesses and the institution of higher education are comprised of many who lead others, professors that guide students to their ultimate educational goal, graduation. Youth today are not about finding a good job and sticking with it for the rest of their lives. They are more about finding a job that has meaning. Humans in general are looking for meaning of their lives, what legacy they leave. They

believe in living a life that aligns with who they are when they are honoring their values. This makes the world of academia a prime target for the study of coaching.

Because coaching is a relatively new practice, little research has been done to understand its effectiveness. This is especially true with coaching in the field of academics. Does it have the power to produce an effect? The research that has been done has been with executive leaders, no studies have been conducted on the efficacy of coaching with academic leaders.

Purpose of study

Coaching has been shown to be a professional development tool that leads people to greater personal goal attainment and enhanced well-being (Fortgang, 1998). University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension is investing large amounts of resources on coaching. In order to measure the success of this commitment, it is necessary to discover if and how program participants are benefitting from that investment. Because the body of coaching research is relatively new and holds little empirical evidence supporting its strength, this study contributed to the aforementioned claim (Grant, 2003a; Green et al., 2006). Additionally this perspective was important to consider for those who manage the coaching function or who are coaches themselves. Furthermore, the field of coaching is relatively new and as of late much is being written about coaching, almost exclusively executive coaching. This research focus was on life coaching and academic leaders.

Hence, the purpose of this study was to understand the efficacy of coaching from the perceptions of academic leaders. Efficacy is defined as “the power to produce an effect” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The research sought to understand how this

strategic mechanism produces an effect upon an academic leader, if any, in both the personal and professional domains.

Specifically, the researcher wanted to identify the specific aspects of the academic leader's life that were changed as a result of being coached. Was there a pivotal moment of self awareness? How did they feel their relationships have changed as a result of being coached? Did they do things differently in their life, step up to the plate or play big as a result of being coached? Did they better define their purpose in life? What worked for them in coaching and what could have worked better? Each of these questions will be posed both in the personal and professional realms of the leaders' lives.

Research Questions

This study was an exploratory investigation designed to understand the efficacy of coaching from the perceptions of academic leaders. Qualitative questions served best in getting to the essence of efficacy. Research questions included:

- When did you begin coaching?
- How long were coached on a consistent basis?
- Were you coached weekly or bi-weekly?
- How did you choose your coach?
- Was your coach certified?
- How has coaching affected your personal and professional life?
- How would you describe the growth?
- How did coaching affect your relationship with yourself and with those closest to you?

- How has coaching affected your professional life?
- How is coaching helpful?
- What was important to you in picking a coach?
- How can coaching help you to become more self-aware?
- How can coaching help you to set personal and professional goals?
- How can coaching help you to become a better leader?
- How have you benefitted from your coaching experience?
- How have those you are in relationship with, be it personal or professional, benefitted as a result of your coaching process?

Qualitative research aims to understand in an in-depth matter, the complexities of human behavior (Griffiths, 1996). Because coaching is about human behaviors, it is a field of inquiry that lends itself well to this study. Qualitative research is a way in which researchers can dig deep within what is being researched so that understanding is gained at a level deeper than what is appearing on the surface. The underpinnings of hermeneutics were presented in this qualitative approach. The hermeneutics approach recognizes that the author naturally has various beliefs that may contribute to biases. That being said, the approach acts on the premise that researchers should suspend, as best as they can, their various beliefs in the natural world in order to study the essential structure of the world in which they are studying (Van Manen, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the terms were defined as follows:

Definitions

Term	Definition
Academician	A member of an academy for promoting science, art, or literature. (Merriam-Webster, 1748).
Associate Certified Coach	Associate Certified Coach (ACC) credential is for the practiced coach. It requires completion of a set amount of coach-specific training; a minimum of 100 coaching experience hours; and at least eight clients. This certification is issued by the International Coaches Federation (ICF), an international professional licensing organization.
Higher Educational Leader	An individual employed in a leadership role by an institution of higher education, a university. The individual must assume an official leadership role and is one who intentionally and willingly seeks to guide, inspire and positively influence others.
Leadership position	An individual who is assigned a role of guiding a group of individuals sharing a mission to co-create a shared purpose with the intent to reach a common goal.
Life coaching	A designed alliance between an individual and a coach where together they co-actively explore the individual's life to uncover potential and discover possibilities.
Efficacy	The power to produce an effect. (Merriam-Webster, 13th century).
Effect	A set of observable self-reported manifestations of a subjective experience that are seen as a cause and effect as a result of the coaching experience.
Self Leadership	The ability and process of intentionally influencing self, recognizing the ways in which we influence our behavior and understanding our impact of such self influence.

Limitations

The contextual limitations in the current research literature were considerable because the presence of life coaching in educational contexts is minimal. When refining the research literature search to life coaching of academic leaders, the body of published research was almost non-existent. Only one study by Campbell and Gardner (2003) came even vaguely close to the research proposed here. Campbell and Gardner investigated

the impact of life coaching on 12th grade students. The study didn't yield statistically significant findings, but did indicate that life coaching "may have potential for building resilience and wellbeing in young people" (Gardner & Campbell, 2003, p.10). However, Grant (2003b) conducted a sister study that investigated the impact that coaching had among post-graduate students. This study gave evidence that coaching, employing both a cognitive and behavioral approach, had significant impact and in fact, a greater impact than if used with only cognitive or only behavioral.

Scholarly knowledge is lacking when it comes to knowing how coaching impacts those in an educational setting. The coaching literature holds no significant published studies that speak to its impact on academic leaders in institutions or of higher educational organizations.

Formal educational settings teach those who will assume positions within many categories of employment. Therefore, higher educational settings would be remiss to not be at the forefront of what appears to a significant movement for creating positive change and advancement in human capital. Coaching professionals assert that learning is a process that facilitates the means to the end. Academic leaders may lean toward the belief that learning is an end in itself, the ultimate end all and that we are never done when it comes to learning. To marry these two belief systems, educational leaders and coaching, seemed to be a wise and obvious move.

There were certain limitations inherent in this particular research design. One was the relatively small sample size. That being said, qualitative research is by nature not as concerned with the size of the sample as quantitative research. This particular

study would be of less value if too much emphasis were to be placed on the number of research participants. Phenomenological research design employs instruments that help describe in great detail lived experiences, in this case, the experience of being life coached. This experience is then universalized. While all the phenomenon experienced by one or a few individuals will not be replicated 100% in others, some foundational themes will be the product of such a body of research.

A further limitation of this study was the lack of diversity in organizational location. Although the initial purposeful sample pool was 295, only five participants qualified. The 295 participants invited were from Kansas State University, Purdue University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and North Dakota State University. They were invited because of their participation in the *Clarity, Focus Action: Coaching Tools and Tactics for Leaders* workshop presented by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension. Only five qualified because of the criterion of being coached for two or more years. The purpose for this criterion is described in Chapter 3.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

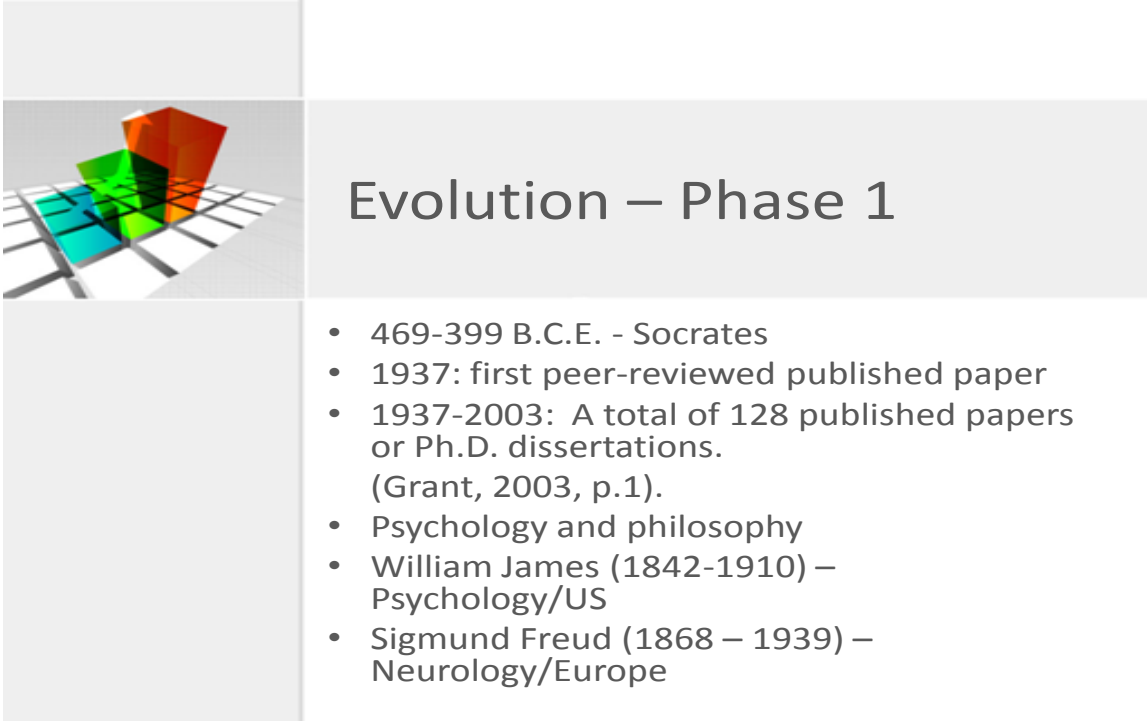
Theoretical Foundations

While it is true that the profession of coaching is relatively new, it can also be said that the underpinnings of coaching have been present for centuries. The coaching paradigm encapsulates the idea that coach and client work together in an effort to move the client from a life that is status quo to a life that is successful. The word, successful, is envisioned and defined by the client and it is ever evolving.

The behavioural science literature on executive (performance) and life coaching (in-depth) shows the year of 1937 as having its first peer-reviewed paper on coaching published. Between 1937 and November 2003 there were a total of 128 published papers. Between 1937 and 1994, 50 papers or PhD dissertations were cited in the PsychInfo and DAI databases. Between 1995 and 1999 there were 29 papers or PhD dissertations. Between 2000 and November 2003 there were 49; a total of 128. Between 1935 and November 2003 there were a total of 33 PhDs. Of these 128 citations, 73 were articles which discussed coaching, theories of coaching or application of techniques, and there were 55 empirical studies (Grant, 2003, p.1). This review of the coaching literature comes from varied sources. These sources included online databases in the fundamental areas of organizational management, positive psychology, sociology, adult education, management development, learning design, leadership and business. The databases used were Educational Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), ArticleFirst, PsychFIRST, Emerald and HighBeam Research. The researcher consulted with several colleagues and advisers seeking recommendations on journals and books that lent

themselves to the purposes of this study. Lastly, the researcher consulted dissertations and research papers, as well as, a number of private organizations involved in the field of coaching.

Phase I



The literature review reveals that some of the basic fibers which make up the coaching process are found in the theoretical basis of psychology and philosophy. These theoretical foundations go back to early Greek philosophers, namely, Socrates (469-399 B.C.E.) who sums up the need for self development when he said “The unexamined life is not worth living” (Nails, D. 2009, p. 1). When people are not in need of fulfilling the fundamental requirements for sustaining life, seeking food, shelter and clothing, then they are in need to search inside themselves to become .

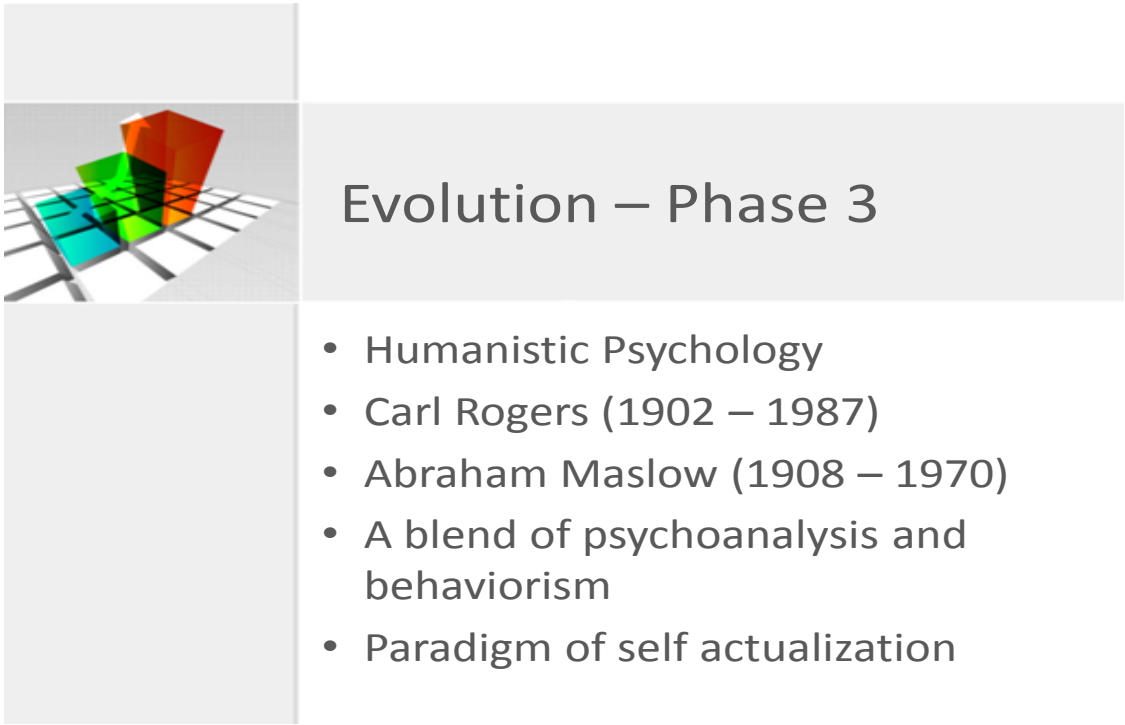
William James (1842-1910) is a key contributor to the psychology movement, he was innovative and an outside of the box thinker in the disciplines of psychology, philosophy and physiology. His 1200 page book, *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), has influenced and continues to influence the study of human phenomenon. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2009), after receiving his doctorate of medicine from Harvard, he went on to quench his intellectual thirst for his own emotional journey. William James taught the first American psychology class in 1875 and jokingly stated that the first lecture in psychology he ever heard was the first one he gave (Goodman, R. 2009).

While William James was making the field of psychological research a respected profession in the United States, Sigmund Freud (1868 – 1939), a neurologist was making a place for psychology in Europe. Freud was and is today a significant European contributor to the field of psychology and is a key figure for the evolution of psychological identity and recognition to the scientific community. Sigmund Freud, pushed the field of psychology to new heights, giving the profession a place in the world of science. Freud is known for his psychoanalysis theory that brought to light the id, ego and superego. Much of William's and Freud's work was on the study of the psyche, but with little evidence and science to measure the psyche, the field needed to push further in order to gain a solid foothold in the field of science, which was largely dominated by measurements and numbers.

Phase II

This push created a second phase in the growth of the field of psychology that we know as behaviorism, where observations could be made and counted. The second phase of psychology was brought to life by the behaviorism theorists, B.F. Skinner (1904 – 1990) and John Watson (1878 – 1958). A behaviorists is a psychological theorist who demands behavioral evidence. (Graham, G. 2007). The major delimitation found in behavioral theory was the obvious disconnect between behavioral observations (external) and cognitive processes (internal). There seemed a missing link as psychology is the study of the mind, not just outward behavioral measures.

Phase III

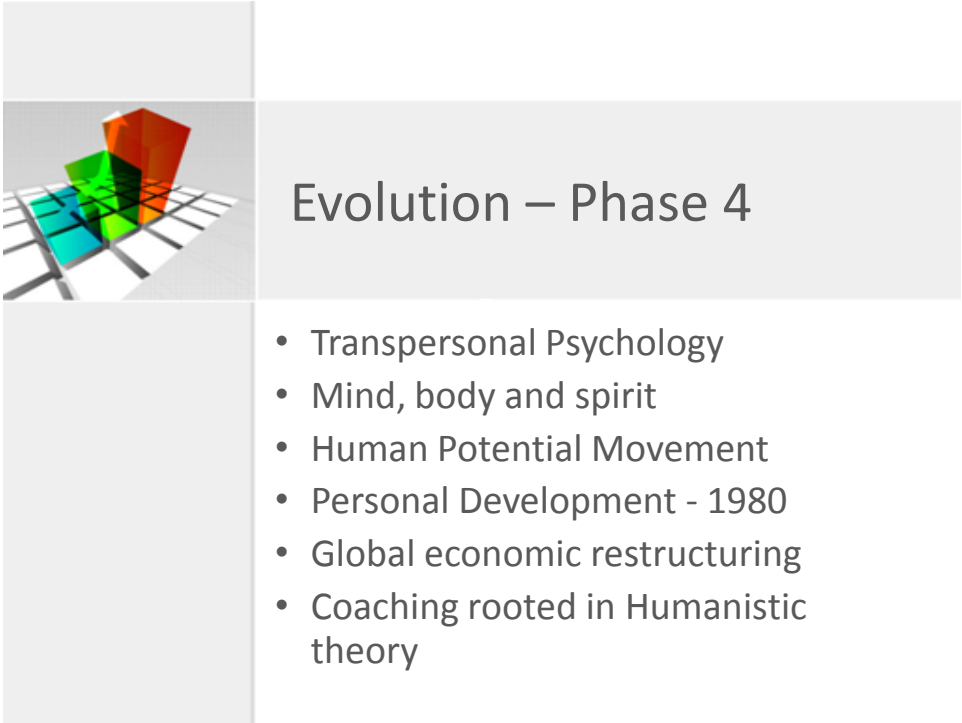


Because of this disconnect, a third phase of psychology came to the field with Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970) and Carl Rogers (1902 – 1987) in the 1950s. This third phase was a reaction to psychoanalysis and behaviorism and we now know it as Humanistic Psychology. This approach varied from psychoanalysis and behaviorism in many ways, perhaps the most distinct variation is in its seeing the patient as part of the process. Rather than having the patient studied from an objective point of view, seeing the therapist as the one with all of the answers, the humanistic view held the paradigm that each individual was unique and pushed for client's to self-actualize, find out who they were being in life and what they needed to be in order to live a life of fulfillment.

This theory blended both psychoanalysis and behaviorism, it saw the patient as having the ultimate control over his life and while it took environment into account, as did behaviorism, it gave more attention to the patients internal thoughts and desires in relationship to the external stimuli rather than the external stimuli dictating what or how the patient would think and react.

As the world and theorists learned from each of these three phases, the field of psychology continued to expand, build in credibility and validity. Abraham Maslow considered as one of the founding fathers of humanistic theory, morphed the fourth force, known as Transpersonal Psychology, which encompassed the whole person, mind, body and spirit. This force sought to discover not only the depth of a human being, but the possibilities and range which was yet un-mined in the human potential.

Phase IV



The emergence of theory in the field of psychology gave birth to human beings wanting more in terms of self-discovery, self-awareness and self actualization. As the human potential movement evolved, theorists such as Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Rollo May formed the concept that the development of human potential was largely untapped. "The movement believed that humans can experience an exceptional quality of life filled with happiness, creativity, and fulfillment" (Salerno, 2005 p. 9). This movement morphed to personal development in the 1980's coupled and motivated by the global economic restructuring. The restructuring created "changes which were, neither uniform or unidirectional, and reworked the scale of uneven development. Taken for granted political-economic realities and relationships were shattered and reworked" (Katz, 2004).

The theories of psychology are no doubt the underpinnings of the coaching profession. The theoretical foundation that most contributes to the field of coaching is humanistic theory. Humanism highlights the spirit of the individual and it sees the client as a complete capable human being. This theory seeks to understand the innate need for self-fulfillment while respecting the uniqueness of each individual (Rogers, 1951, 1961, 1980) and recognizes that the gateway to the relationship hinges on effective listening skills (Peterson, 1996).

Expanded definition of coaching

The definitions of coaching are many. While none of them drastically differ from one another, there are subtleties that have created problems. Roles and skills can be confused in organizations when the coaching definition is wide and varied. Because of

this abstract concept, the effectiveness of coaching as a developmental skill and change agent is diluted (Gibson, 1998). Evered (1989) first defined the word coach as a verb and linked its roots in English literature back to the 1500's. During this time the root word, coach, was commonly used as carriage. A carriage is designed to support and transport valuable goods to their desired destination. In the 1800s the term coach originated in the field of sports. This is the image that is typically conjured in the mind when hearing the word coach. Globally, life coaching was emerging in the 1970s and 1980s with the first life coach training taking place in the U.K. in 1981 by Sir John Whitmore (Brock, 2008).

A review of the literature clearly shows how the principles of humanistic theory present itself in the coaching world. Coaching literature reveals a theme that emphasizes individuality, self-awareness and self-actualization. Coaching has emerged from many different fields and therefore has many definitions, perhaps as many definitions as there are coaches. The definitions are often tailored toward the coaching niches which will be explored later in this chapter. For the sake of revealing the core of coaching, this researcher provides the following understanding based on her review of the literature. Coaching is client-centered, which can be an individually, team or organizationally based (Tobias, 1996; Withersppon & White, 1996; Goodstone & Diamante, 1998; Frisch, 2001; Williams & Davis, 2002; Peterson & Miller, 2005; Coach U, 2005 p. 5). The coaching premise is that the individual, or those who make up the team and/or organization hold their own best answers. They are the best experts for their lives and know what needs to happen to create fulfillment (Creane, 2003; Hoffman,

1999, p. 3; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007). With the coach understanding the aforementioned premise, it is his/or her job to meet the client where they are by discovering, clarifying and aligning what they want to achieve. The coach encourages self awareness, discovery and clarification for who the client is and what he or she wants to achieve, then helps the client discover his or her personal roadmap holding them responsible and accountable along the way (Hoffman, 1999, p. 3; Beale, 2001; Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007, p. 290; ICF Website, 2009). The way in which a coach assists a client in moving from the present to their desired future is best, in part, stated by Stephen Covey (1989) in his *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* book. In order to win a public victory of being able to lead people, one, in this case the coach, must first seek to understand, then to be understood. In other words, the coach possesses the skill to meet the client where they are at in life, emotionally, physically, cognitively and spiritually.

Distinctions of coaching modalities

Just as with the definitions of coaching, being varied and many, you can find the same is true with coaching modalities. For the purposes of this review, the word modality is a focus or a specialty area that the coach has chosen as his or her specialty, or niche. Because of their prioritization, they know more information in this field and have the most experience, perhaps personally and certainly professionally. The more focused and specific a coach can be in areas they work best, the better the client can choose the appropriate coach.

The International Coaches Federation (ICF) recognizes the need for coaches to distinguish themselves by their niches, area of interests or specialties. One of the coaching goals is just that, setting goals. In order to set goals you must be clear on what you want. The clearer you are the better your focus and the more efficient your action becomes. That being said, it only makes sense that the coaching professionals walk their talk by being focused in their area of expertise. There are many types of coaches. The Coaches Training Institute website (The Coaches, 2009) lists 24 niche communities (e.g.: ADHD coaching, coaching coaches, spiritual coaching, emotional intelligence coaching, death and dying coaching are among the 24 plus that have labeled their area of specialty. It could be said that all coaching is personal, because the core element is the relationship that is between coach and coachee. The differences in coaching that exists between the niches are most commonly the language, methods and technologies. One way to consider the differences is to look at the desired outcome, is it about the person reaching human potential or is it about the team working in harmony? It is about the "way the value and effectiveness of the coaching is measured or assessed" (Coach U, Inc. 2005 p. 97). In a review of the literature, this researcher found two major types of coaching, regardless of the niches, in-depth and performance (Koonce, 1994; Olivero, Bane & Kopelman, 1997; Snyder, 1995; Thach & Heinselman, 2000). The most common niche areas are life coaching, executive coaching, relationship coaching, also known as team coaching.

In-depth coaching

In-depth coaching is coaching the whole life of the person with the ultimate goal of the coachee achieving his or her unlimited human potential. The needs of the client

drive the coaching agenda. Life coaching is for the coachees to attain important personal and professional goals as set by them (Grant & Greene, 2001) and to increase their well-being as defined by them (Naughton, 2002). In-depth coaching can happen with individuals and with those individuals in team settings. The coach comes with the intention to help members take full, coordinated use of collective resources in accomplishing the desired outcome (Wageman, R. 1998). While individuals receive coaching, the team is actually seen as its own entity. The coach is coaching the collective individual, those parts within, i.e., critical self, ego self, super ego, et al. To coach individuals separate from the team as a whole, experience shows that the system or the team may resist the individual changes. The system has a homeostasis and when one changes, the system fights to keep the status quo. (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007 p. 282).

Performance coaching

Executive coaching is perhaps the most widely researched area of coaching and it is a mixture of personal coaching and business coaching. The idea behind executive coaching is for the executive, a person in a senior-level position, to be supported and encouraged as he or she executes his or her duties. The coach is coaching the executive to become more effective at his or her leadership, communication and delegation. The executive receives direct benefits from the coaching, so too, do his or her subordinates and the organization as a whole. The ultimate goal lies in the measurement of success as determined by indicators set by the executive. (Coach U, Inc. 2005).

There are as many niches and titles to coin the niche as there are coaches. Executive coaching is the one niche that has received an official definition from the International Coaches Federation. This need was recognized by those coaching high powered executives. They were receiving feedback for clarity. Executives were not about to invest money into something which clearly lacked in definition. Therefore, the International Coaches Federation Conference which convened in October 1999 in Orlando, Florida set out to determine the definition of "Executive Coach" (ICF, 1999). A group of 36 Senior Executive Coaches met with the purpose to fully understand and discover the uniqueness of executive coaching and defined this niche as follows:

"Executive coaching is a facilitative one-to-one, mutually designed relationship between a professional coach and a key contributor who has a powerful position in the organization. This relationship occurs in areas of business, government, not-for-profit, and educational organizations where there are multiple stakeholders and organizational sponsorship for the coach or coaching group. The coaching is contracted for the benefit of a client who is accountable for highly complex decisions with wide scope of impact on the organization and industry as a whole. The focus of the coaching is usually upon organizational performance or development, but may also have a personal component as well. The results produced from this relationship are observable and measureable, commensurate with the requirements the organization has for the performance of this person being coached." (ICF, 1999, p. 2)

Coaching is often times confused with three other professional roles of counseling, consulting and mentoring (Grant, 2001a; Zeus & Skiffington, 2002). While

these three professions share similarities with each other, they also maintain distinct differences.

Coaching versus counseling

Both coaching and counseling professionals want to help people. It is also true that the counseling theories are a spring board for the coaching phenomenon which sprang up in the 1980s. The similarities stop there. Several individuals have researched and written about the differences between coaching and counseling. In the review of literature authored by Kilburg (2000), Levinson (1996), Richard (1999), Saporito (1996), Sperry (1993, 1996) and Tobias (1996) a number of differences repeat. These differences are as follows:

Life Coaching	Counseling
Insurance companies to not cover sessions	Insurance companies provide coverage a pre-set number of sessions
Sessions occur in several contexts, i.e., phone, email, face-to-face	Sessions are face-to-face
Sessions last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours (Sperry, 1996)	Counseling sessions typically are billed at 45-50 minute intervals.
Relationship is more collegial (Levinson, 1996, Tobias, 1996).	Relationship is more professional in nature, clearly identifying therapist and client.
Certification is suggested, not mandatory	Licensure through the state is mandatory

When patients seeks counseling or therapy, they are typically looking at their past, trying to make sense of what has happened to them that has rendered them useless. It is the counselor's job to move them from the past to the present. Coaching is all about starting with where the client is presently and help them define and get to where they want to go in the future.

Counseling, or therapy, often looks to the past in order to discover, heal and understand. Coaching, on the other hand, looks to the future in order to make a good life even better. In coaching, the starting point is the client's desire for personal and professional success. Coaching focuses on forwarding all aspects of the client's life to extraordinary. Coaching is not about how you came to be who you are; it is about getting from where you are now to a future you want (North, 2003). Coaches use methods to understand if the client is ready for coaching or if they indeed would be best served by a mental health professional. These methods are varied and can include two free sample sessions, intake discovery form processing, and a free association session where the client is free to speak thoughts, feeling and situational details with a non-judgmental partner, etc. The coach can then make an educated decision as to what professional service best meet the client's need.

Coaching versus consulting

Consultants are the expert. They know the answers and they are contracted based on the premise that they will hear the client's situation and be able to dispense advice to improve effectiveness and increase success (North, L 2003). In coaching, the client is the expert and has his or her own answers. The coaching relationship gives the agenda setting rights to the client and sees them as creative, resourceful and whole (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House & Sandahl, 2007 p. 3). The coach acts on the premise that the clients have the answers within themselves or have access to the resources to meet their needs, the coach merely provides the introspective tools in helping the client search from within.

Coaching versus mentoring

A mentor often has many more years of experience than the person being supported. Mentoring is akin to role-modeling where the client sees attributes, qualities or abilities in the mentor that he/she wishes to learn or emulate. Coaching is a partnering of two equals, which focuses on the unique and intrinsic qualities already within the client that may not be recognized or appreciated. The coach helps the client affirm and embrace their own true self (North, 2003).

Clearly the way in which the coaches presents themselves, remains present and open to what the client is saying, as well as to what they are not saying. They also have a tool kit from which they pull throughout the sessions. There is no particular order as to what tool to use, what size or for how long. This requires pacing on the coaches part, meeting the client where they are at, noticing if the process needs to speed up or slow down, following the energy and dancing with what shows up (Withworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007), then calibrating appropriately. The coach also uses his or her knowledge and expertise accessing what tool should be used. The most fundamental skill the coach uses is that of listening.

Coaching Competencies

Regardless of coaching niches or whether coaches are working with an individual, an executive or a team, they must possess proficiencies in active listening, believing in and co-creating elements for change and be the catalyst for self awareness and actualization (ICF, 1999 p.2).

The International Coaches Federation credentialing has outlined 11 competencies that should "always be present and visible in any coaching interaction": (ICF, 1999 p.3).

- Meet ethical guidelines of the profession
- Ability to establish the coaching agreement
- Ability to establish an intimate and trusting relationship with the client
- Ability to be fully present, conscious and spontaneous
- Ability to express active listening
- Ability to ask powerful questions
- Ability to be a direct communicator
- Ability to create and raise the client's awareness
- Ability to design and create action plans and action behaviors
- Ability to develop plans and establish goals with the client
- Ability to manage the client's progress and hold him/her responsible for action.

Coaching skills

The literature is broad and expansive when writing about the knowledge and skills successful coaches embrace. Research continues to identify the core skills as well as the high performing skills. Coaching institutions along with many articles and books will highlight the tools needed to do coaching (Cunningham, 1991; Goldsmith, 2000; Kilburg, 2000). Killion & Harrison (2005) summarize what skills successful coaches need to posses are, in part, strong inter-personal skills and sensitive communication skills.

Inter-personal skills and communication skills are critical in relationships of any kind, parent-child, wife-husband, peer-to-peer, etc. In coaching, communication is the key in taking the client from where they are today to where they want to be in the future. When lay people think of communication, they often times focus on their ability to send a clear message. When coaches think of communication, they think of listening.

Listening

Listening is the gateway through which all coaching passes. It is the skill upon which all other coaching skills hinge. Listening is an active process and it is where all of the human senses come alive. In coaching, there is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is merely translating the auditory tones coming from a mouth, then hearing the exchange. It is merely a verbal auditory recognition. Listening, on the other hand, is more than merely recognizing auditory signals, but it is noticing the depth, the wisdom behind the auditory; it is noticing what isn't being said, paying attention to the body language, the modulation of verbal delivery – is it fast or slow? Are words hard-edged or soft-edged? Coach U, Inc. (2005 p. 135) lists the following behaviors for which one should listen for:

- Attending – being fully present, both physically and psychologically.
- Eye contact – noticing the visual connection, noticing when it breaks.
- Facial expressions – the act of mirroring is recommended in this behavioral skill. The coach should more times than not match the client's facial expression. This is a way in which the coach can show the client how he/she is trying to meet the client where they are at, putting themselves in the client's shoes, so to speak.

- Voice tone – Similar to the idea of facial expressions, the client will feel matched as if you are walking side by side with them when your tone mirrors or matches their tone.
- Voice volume – The coach's affect is best received when it matches what is being said.
- Space – Respecting the client's need to be close and yet respecting their unique space for personal boundaries. This is different for both culture and people in general. Coach notices what distance appears comfortable for client.

Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, (2007, pgs. 32-34) affirm the aforementioned skills and in their training state that there are two aspects of listening. First is the awareness of what one is receiving from the client. What is being noticed by the coach, what is the coach sensing while gathering from all that the client is saying and not saying. It is gathering all that we notice from our client's delivery. Non-verbal behavior contributes a great deal of information to the coach, perhaps more than words (Siegman & Feldstein, 1987).

A second aspect of listening is the impact that coaches listening skills have on the client. For example, a coach watches if the client is coming alive or withdrawn, notices all that is happening, calculates what is happening that creates the impact. As the coach notices impact they are constantly adjusting the dynamics of the coaching relationship. The coach is always listening to help clients align their choices with their values which lead them to their vision.

Mehrabian (1971) conducted a study to determine what cues people use to judge whether or not other people liked them. The study showed that another person's words contributed to only 7%, voice cues accounted for 38% and facial cues accounted for 55%. This study concluded that when facial expressions were incongruent with the actual words, the facial expressions were believed more than the words. Listening is also being aware of one's own self, which gives greater access to intuition and curiosity, then using this information if it serves the client's growth (Egan, 1994).

When a coach listens, with awareness and noticing impact, there are a number of available skills with which to check. It is the coach's job to listen and then to check what they believe is being said. The skills to check this accuracy and also show the client you are 100% present is reflecting and paraphrasing. Reflecting offers the coach the opportunity to make sure he or she has got what the client has shared as well as offers the client the opportunity to hear what talk goes on in his or her head. This is a process that helps the client filter through to the bottom line, which creates clarity. Reflecting allows both coach and client to learn from the shared experience (Wertenbroch & Nabeth, 2000, Dewey, 1933). Another listening assessment skill is paraphrasing. This is done when a coach uses what the client is saying to demonstrate that one understand the client's words. This in turn, lets the coach know he or she got it right and lets the client know he or she is being heard, moreover, understood.

An additional component of what a coach listens for is the truth. Listening for the truth and articulating it to the client is critical to the client's growth. Educational institutions, especially land grant universities, pride themselves in providing unbiased,

objective, research based education and information. The same is true for a coach (Coach U, Inc. 2005). The coach most often times serves as a safe person when to tell the truth and from whom to receive truth. Because of the cohesiveness present in the coaching relationship, the coach can and has the responsibility to communicate truth to the client in a supportive way that promotes growth toward self awareness. The truth is shared in an effort to influence people toward growth (Townsend, 2007 p. 115).

Powerful questions

If listening is the gateway to good coaching, then questioning serves as the hinge holding the gate. According to Coaches Training Institute (2007, p. 76), questions are a cornerstone of their coaching model. Coaches Training Institute (2005, p. 183) writes about how essential powerful questions are to good coaching. Asking a good question at the right time is what deepens the client's learning and drives them forward to action. Questions help to open the conversations by providing exploration which helps clarify issues (Ivey, 1983). Questions hold the key to awareness and change. The moment a question is asked is that moment that holds the greatest leverage for transformation (Goldberg, 1998).

The *how to ask a good* question begins with the coach is listening at 360 degrees. When listening to what is being said, noticing what is not being said and getting to the truth, the coach cannot help but form immense curiosity. It is curiosity then that drives the forming of the questions, exploratory or definitive. The definitive question is to get information, details and facts they are typically close ended questions. Definitive questions are used to gather quick bits of information so that facts can be heard which

allow coach and client to go into the depths of what really needs to be discussed. Definitive questions are typically short, close ended questions, typically illiciting a short answer of yes or no with the burden often residing with the client (Ivey, 1994). The coach doesn't want to spend a lot of time on these questions, but at times they do serve the client and coach when facts are needed.

The exploratory question is the tool the coach uses to get to deeper part of a human that innately holds knowledge, wisdom and power. Powerful questions are open-ended; they often times begin with what or how and the burden lies with the client (Ivey, 1994). Questions are fueled by the coach's intense curiosity. Powerful questions are useful in that they shut the autopilot response off. Viktor Frankl (1998) saved his own life by asking himself questions, such as, "Has all this suffering and dying round us, a meaning?" They are so deep and open they force the client to go into the deep intricate tunnel system of their minds to find the answer that they have not been able to uncover (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 2007).

Acknowledgement

Acknowledging is a coaching skill that happens throughout the coaching relationship (Davis & Williams, 2002). Acknowledgement is not akin to praise and compliments. The latter speaks to what has been done - the doing of a person whereas the former, acknowledgement speaks to the person's character – who they had to be while they were doing, speaking to the values they honored while they were in the midst of doing life (Pappas, 2008).

Acknowledgements are sincere, truthful and short – they point to the client's strengths and endorse the person rather than the deed (Davis & Williams, 2002). Often times clients don't see the positive intention and goodness of their efforts. When the coach can highlight those traits it has the client feeling seen at their core. It is as if their foundation has been strengthened (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, Sandahl, 1998).

Accountability

Accountability shares universal acceptance in coaching, management, counseling and other like professions. This skill has also been linked to promoting self-esteem (Smith & Smoll, 1990). Accountability is where the coach holds the client's action and learning as they set forth in their agenda or goals. Accountability in coaching is different from what society usually defines as accountability. Coaches Training Institute (1998) shares the lay person definition of accountability as being a professional nag. Usually an imbalance of power, for example, parent holding his/her child accountable for getting their homework done. However, accountability in coaching is where the coach is simply asking the client to give an account to that to which they have committed. The commitment is important because it was in service of what the client wanted to have happen. The coach asks the client questions, such as: What worked? What didn't work? What happened? What would you do differently next time?

Accountability in coaching offers a way for the client to process his or her subjective experience. This then helps the client gain greater self awareness that enables him or her to gain insights, which can lead to positive and accurate management of emotions and lessen the chances of mis-reading an event (Brotman, 1998). A mark of an

effective leader is the ability to be self aware, being able to take in feedback, look for the truth and grow according to the truth (Goodstone & Diamante, 1998).

In coaching, accountability is intended to provide guidance, support and challenge. The coach can see the client and speak to how he or she sees the client honoring his or her life, or values by the actions taken. The coach has the skills to provide constructive accounts for what he or she sees the client doing. Tom Gilbert (1978) claimed that information coming in the form of accountability or feedback has more potential for creating increased competence in the day-to-day management of performance.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

Research strategy and rationale

Qualitative Research

In 1970, qualitative research was recognized as a valid form of research methodology, but only in the fields of anthropology or sociology. With time, its use and credibility came to the fields of education studies, human science, psychology and many other humanistic fields. Because of the many quantitative versus qualitative debates from 1970's to the late 1980s and early 1990s, the qualitative approach addressed the primary concerns of credibility by constructing the research design to meet reliability and validity research requirements. Since this time, qualitative research has gained world- wide acceptance and has been growing as evidenced by the number of educational textbooks and journal articles published in the last two decades.

Qualitative methodology will be used in this human science research as a need to gather in-depth understanding of lived experiences. Qualitative research acts on the premise that each social context and human within that context is unique. They cannot be broken down into categories of significance. Individuals reading this research should be able to step inside the social context as they read of the experiences of those interviewed. The social meaning derived from the participants' detailed accounts will begin to build a scientific foundation for the coaching profession within the academic world of leadership studies. The overall qualitative methodology is ideal for this research project since "all qualitative research seeks to discover understanding or to achieve explanation from the data instead of from or in addition to prior knowledge or theory"

(Richards & Morse, 2007). To date, there have been no studies executed to understand the efficacy of life coaching on academic leaders. The foundation of qualitative research is to understand the meaning of lived experiences from human perspectives. It is through that perspective that we understand the essence of the experience, apply meaning to such and paradoxically learn a universal truth.

The data collected was complex and vague; numbers would not capture understanding and meaning, nor will they give applicability to the measure – they will only be numbers. Subjective life experiences cannot be captured on a Likert scale, but those same experiences can be captured through conversation, where discovery and exploration will naturally proceed. This research was about understanding and therefore the questions posed were as important as the answers received. Qualitative research provides the framework for questioning and supports the foundational concepts needed to conduct research that will get at the deeper meaning of experiences.

Quantitative research is concerned with forming a hypothesis where universal truths are provided by numbers (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). While the numbers may indicate a statistical significance they do not communicate the meaning, the experiences, the learning or the essence behind the numbers. When dealing with human beings, numbers become less meaningful because humans are made of their own unique DNA coding. While themes exist, the experiences will be as unique as their DNA structure. Quantitative research is conclusive; it is either statistically significant or not. Responses posed to questions in Quantitative research or closed ended, are either yes or no.

Qualitative research on the other hand is always significant because it is concerned about the meaning of the experience, understanding the essence of the human. Therefore, the questions are created to explore and discover. Qualitative questions are powerful in that they are open ended; they are short; they are efficient; they are not disguised as there is not a determination that has to be made, i.e., hypothesis or null hypothesis. Instead there is an understanding that is being wanted because there is deep curiosity around the meaning, the only attachment to the outcome is to give freedom for subjective experience to report and to understand the meaning from that subject's experience. Both methods are useful and should be selected to best meet the needs of the research. In general, quantitative is detail with direction and qualitative is whole with depth.

Qualitative research is the best method for this research project as it attempts to understand an area where little is known (Richards & Morse, 2007 pg. 29). The primary purpose of this research was to understand the efficacy of coaching from the perceptions of academic leaders. Qualitative research methodology allows for both discovery and exploration which was required in attempting to understand phenomenon.

In all qualitative research it is important to understand the research question as it will guide the research methodology. The research question that guided this study was exploring the experiences and the efficacy of life coaching for academic leaders. As the purpose above points to the selection of qualitative research, the question just captured points to the methodology. The methodology then suggested for this question is that of phenomenology, more specifically, psychological phenomenology.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology's underpinnings are philosophical and derived primarily from the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Several philosophical researchers further developed Husserl's views and used the approach extensively in the human science research arena. As with qualitative research so too with the originations, a common theme exists that looks to understand and explain experiences of an event through the eyes of those who were there.

This qualitative study comes from a constructivist paradigm whereby the nature of reality assumes a world with no absolute realities (Hatch, 2002). It is the perspective of the research participants who construct their realities via their experiences. Therefore, no one reality exists for the larger whole. Constructivists do acknowledge that elements of truth are often shared across social groups. They assert that *truth* is that which is agreed upon as being *truth*. Guba & Lincoln (1994) state that realities are apprehendable in the form of abstract mental constructions that are experientially based, local, and specific. This researcher targeted her focus to understand the "meaningful concrete relations implicit in the original description of experience in the context of a particular situation" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 14).

Most qualitative studies are rooted in the ideology of phenomenology, believing that lived experiences are to be understood through study without any idea or notion of the outcome (Hatch, 2002). This study focused on more than one research participant and looked to describe through participant's words of their experience. As a result, the study sought what common themes emerged, what universal experiences prevailed.

Creswell, 2007) explains the essence of phenomenology research is to deeply understand individual experiences of a particular phenomena and then to mine for the common themes. These themes then provide insights and application for universal meaning.

The data collection and analytic tools are naturalistic with the principles of phenomenology being used to guide the interpretations of perspectives shared by research participants. It is through this qualitative phenomenon that one can be begin to understand the nuances of life coaching and its' experience as reported by academic leaders, the benefits associated with the process and ways to employ such to help others. The data is a composite description garnered by the phenomenon as reported by all individuals. As a result, what the research participants experienced as well as, how they experienced it became known (Moustakas, 1994).

Through data collection, the phenomenological approach suspended judgment, bias and the notion of whether or not the experience was right or wrong. Instead, the phenomenological researcher came from a place of curiosity, simply trying to step into the experience of another attempted to understand it fully and deeply. Phenomenologist research believes that knowledge and understanding are deeply embedded in the everyday world. It was hard to put a number or statistic on the efficacy of life coaching, but it was compelling to hear from leaders what experience life coaching offered them and to learn how they experienced it. The truth and understanding was within their experiences and their knowledge of the experience that held the wisdom in the nearly non- existent body of research literature. The challenge for the phenomenologist was how to assist participants to capture their experiences in words to bring forth the rich

essence of the experience and how to extrapolate the experiences into a way that the outside world could step into the marvel of the experience without actually being there.

Psychological theory

Several different approaches exist under the umbrella of phenomenological research. For example, the hermeneutical approach which is described as research of a lived experience and how that experience is interpreted by the researcher. The researcher was aware of personal biases and previous experiences. These thoughts were allowed to be present during the interview. Another approach was that of the philosophical approach or existential phenomenology and others. This research took on the psychological approach to phenomenology.

Psychological phenomenology, sometimes referred to as transcendental phenomenology, (Moustaka, 1994) conveys less of an emphasis on interpretation and more on a description of the participants' experiences. Moustakas, states that transcendental by definition, is when one takes in an experience as if it were for the first time. The researcher who employs psychological phenomenological methods is setting aside interpretation and suspending judgment. Instead the researcher is very aware of interpretations and judgment but is focused on really standing in the experience from the participant's place.

To aid this practice, the primary founding father, Husserl (1913), coined a concept that we now know as bracketing. To bracket, the researcher is holding up a phenomenon in a fresh light, becoming very curious about the experience while suspending

presuppositions and avoiding interpretations (Ashworth, 1999). This process was employed in each and every interview of research participants who have experienced the phenomenon. While no process is perfect in suspending preconceived notions, this process honestly attempted to set aside researcher bias in order to fully understand the phenomenon from the participants' experiences.

Psychological Phenomenology

The research methodology rationale of the psychological phenomenology approach lies in direct correlation with this study's purpose and research questions. The study's purpose was to determine from the research participant's perspective the efficacy of life coaching upon academic leaders. The methodology of psychological phenomenology fits this purpose like a glove. Creswell (2007) reports that Moustakas's (1994) psychological phenomenology method is first focused on the participants' description of experiences and secondly on the researcher's interpretation of those experiences. This approach also aligned completely with the researcher's purpose.

This researcher has been through coaching and is a coach. Therefore, a natural orientation of interest was present. That was a driving force of interest in this research. This researcher was self aware of how coaching positively proved herself and wonders, "Is it the same for everybody and if so, how and if not why?" Psychological phenomenology guards against this natural bias by setting aside the inherent beliefs as much as possible and stepping into the fresh perspective of another person as he or she report their experience of the same phenomenon.

An important key to any good body of research, especially qualitative, is the

research question. It is the research question that drove this study and anchored the investigation so that it kept the process open to reflection, curiosity for the end result of findings that were descriptive in nature, indicative of any good psychological phenomenological research.

Research Design

The focus on this section was to show how this researcher selected participants, of course after committee approval, along with the data sources as well as the strategy as to how data was collected. Additionally, this section speaks to the process of analysis, the researcher used in order to interpret the views of the participants.

The study was retrospective and was designed to appreciate and understand the experience of life coaching from the perspectives of the academic leaders. It has not been clear whether the experience has been, in sum, positive or negative and that is what led this researcher's curiosity. This researcher wanted to know what the leaders found as effective and also wanted to know what did not work for them while being coached.

Participation selection

This researcher sought to explore the efficacy of life coaching on academic leaders. The first step was identifying a site and individuals for involvement in the study, one that allowed access and then established rapport of trust that resulted in the best possible and authenticated data (Creswell, 2007). Toward this end, the researcher is a faculty member of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and a part of the professional development team. This researcher has established respect and positive rapport with the administrators and faculty who were purposely selected for this research.

Therefore, this researcher requested permission from the Dean of Extension to gain access to the faculty and administrators who have participated in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension's *Clarity, Focus, Action: Tools and Tactics for Leader* workshop. This permission was granted, and personalized research invitations were sent to the 295 workshop participants. These potential research participants were all leaders employed by university systems, namely, Purdue University, Kansas State University, North Dakota State University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Each participant has assumed a leadership role within their institute and also serves in the role as either faculty or administrator or both.

A purposeful sampling strategy was employed by the researcher in finding academic leaders who have experienced the phenomena of being life coached. This was a criterion purposeful sample. The course of the inquiry strategy was dominantly inductive. This method forced the researcher to think, understand, and be curious which then drove for more data collection, leaving no rock unturned. This type of research strategy was most fitting for purposeful sampling in that the investigator wished to select good informants who have undergone at least two years of life coaching and who have expressed willingness to share their reflections of the experience. Furthermore, participants had indicated through post workshop surveys and through informal sharing, the experience of life coaching was for some, good and for some, bad. This researcher set the criterion of two years. The purpose was to separate out the people who have been coached through life versus through situations or crossroads in their life. Life coaching is the process by which coach and client work together towards self-actualization,

identifying where the client is and where they want to go. Situational coaching is where client and coach work together to overcome a situation or a crossroad in life. Life coaching is typically ongoing, at a minimum of two years through life, whereas situational coaching lasts anywhere from a month up to a year. As soon as the situation or crisis is over, then so is coaching.

When the candidates were approached and officially agreed to participate in the study, they were given explicit conditions of confidentiality and anonymity. This researcher identified five academic leaders for the study. All academic leaders met the two year criterion of being coached two or more years. Each academic leader was coached by a certified life coach. A certified life coach is a coach who has completed training through an accredited coaching program. An accredited coaching program is a program that is recognized and approved by the International Coach Federation. The International Coach Federation is the leading global organization that sets the professional standards by requiring a designated number of experience hours and who has been coached by a mentor coach. All five leaders that qualified for the research study were faculty and/or administration members of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Extension.

Protections

This study followed the guidelines as set forth for the protection of human subjects, adopted by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Nebraska. Approval was sought and granted with the approval number of: 20100110422 EX, Project ID: 10422. Each participant was informed of the study's purpose and received

information about what the involvement meant, as well as the time needed to participate in the study. The participants were offered the right to review the initial transcripts of the semi- structured interview and had the right to strike any part of the transcript that they wished to have deleted. They were also informed of their right to suggest changes in the transcript to better reflect their point of view. Participants were informed of their rights of confidentiality were welcomed to ask any questions at any time during the research. Each participant was informed of their right to refuse any question or to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative consequences.

Data collection

The most common type of qualitative inquiry is the unstructured, interactive interview as it offers the research participant the opportunity to tell her or his story in an open, un-judged, interactive forum (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 113). Because of the relative geographical proximity, this researcher conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews. Phenomenological study is the process of collecting information primarily through in-depth interviews (Creswell, 1998). Location and time was agreed upon with an emphasis toward accommodating the research participant. All interviews were audio recorded then transcribed word-for-word by the principal investigator. Each participant was given first rights to review transcriptions and to make any and all changes they deemed necessary.

Interview Procedures

This researcher had access to the participants and employed a one-on-one, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The initial interview lasted approximately

60 minutes. At least one additional formal conversation was conducted to discuss the transcripts and any questions or comments participants had when reading through the transcriptions. The use of adequate recording devices was used to pick up nuances and verbal articulation. The interviews were held in a quiet comfortable place and discretion was left solely to the participant's choice. This researcher asked each participant at the start of the interview if note-taking was acceptable, and each participated voiced objection to this method. The intent of the researcher was to only take notes that were in service of other questions as inspired by the current dialogue. There were a set of 11 questions that were open-ended and broad.

- How has coaching affected your personal and professional life?
- How would you describe the growth?
- How did coaching affect your relationship with yourself and with those closest to you?
- How has coaching affected your professional life?
- How is coaching helpful?
- What was important to you in picking a coach?
- How can coaching help you to become more self-aware?
- How can coaching help you to set personal and professional goals?
- How can coaching help you to become a better leader?
- How have you benefitted from your coaching experience?
- How have those you are in relationship with, be it personal or professional, benefitted as a result of your coaching process?

The replies to these broad open-ended questions served as a springboard for the researcher to ask clarifying questions or other such questions that encourage a deeper exploration. This interviewer was mindful of good listening skills and was reminded of the significance of creating silence after asking questions, which gave participants time to search for their true answer. The only transcription came from the audio tape and not from inscriptive notes taken by the interviewee, as these notes were incomplete and only served as a reminder to the interviewee to circle back around to with questions to get more clarification from the participant.

Bracketing

Moustakas (1994) subscribes to one of Husserl's concepts and coined the term *epoche* also known as bracketing, which means to set aside one's own biases, judgments and interpretations from those of the interviewees. For example, this researcher is a coach and has a bias that coaching does produce an effect. That self-awareness has the researcher insistently *clear* her mind, intentionally adopting a *beginner's mind* perspective, so that she can fully hear the speaker's experience. To be as free as possible of biases, this researcher intentionally employed high levels of self-management. Moustakas (1994) explained self-management as having awareness of personal biases, and literally setting those biases aside so the researcher is more inclined to see things as they appear from the perspective of the speaker, free of researcher prejudgments and preconceptions.

This researcher is not ignorant of her own biases when it comes to the efficacy of coaching. Bracketing is a skill that was implemented with diligence to insure the

integrity of the participants' experiences and meaning they attributed to such. In order to set aside biases to the best of her ability, this researcher noticed and then journaled her own experiences during the coaching process. Another method that helped the researcher withhold her own suppositions was listening from a place of curiosity. This is a skill that is taught to coaches and is the gateway through which all coaching passes. Because of the training, a high level of self management has been learned and again, this researcher was cognizant of the constant reminders needed to remain in utmost curiosity - to hear not only what is being said, but what is not being said. Then, questions were formed around what the researcher suspected and needed to verify, rather than just assumed to be true from the participant's perspective.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the principal investigator. Subjects were asked to read the verbatim transcripts and to provide feedback or strike any and all components they wish.

Data collection obtained through audio taped transcription provided a database that will be maintained by the investigator five years after the study concludes. The importance of the data base, augmented by the researcher's bracketed comments and memos (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the collected narrative data was only used after it has been read and verified by each participant, thus completing a strong case for the construct validity of the current study.

Data analysis

The phenomenological method emphasizes the use of inductive strategies that will lend themselves to a body of literature that will aid in theory development. Glasser and

Strauss (1967) introduced the idea that theory could be constructed from qualitative data, and since that time phenomenological methodology has matured and gained recognition across disciplines, including educational research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Creswell, 1998).

The purpose of phenomenological theory is to find a framework that explains a particular phenomenon or situation based on the research participants' expressed views. This analytic approach is useful when the researcher is interested in the context for the participants and when the researcher desires to capture the complexity of a phenomenon. Phenomenological theory offers guidelines for interviewing and analyzing the data. In the case at hand, the development of phenomenology entailed a thorough examination of the data to understand the efficacy of life coaching and leadership.

Validation strategies

The data available to the researcher for analysis consisted of audio taped interviews and their respective transcribed texts. The researcher read and reread the individual interview transcriptions multiple times as a part of the category-content analysis step. Numerous bracketed notes related to the individual narrative texts were read and reread and compared to begin the holistic-content analysis process. Such a procedure is consistent with Creswell's (1998) suggested starting point in his data analysis process. The actual text references that were found to be instrumental in defining the emerging patterns or themes were *bookmarked* for later recall and use. The process the researcher used to determine the patterns or themes that emerged from the

narrative stories taken as a whole is similar to the constant comparative method as documented by Merriam (1998).

Once the data collection was underway, the constant comparative method was used to improve the interview guidelines and develope emergent categories from the data known as *open coding* (Creswell,1998). The constant comparative method is a "*recursive and dynamic"* (p. 155) strategically weaving and carefully reading and rereading with the continual comparison of content data to the emerging patterns, themes, or other aspects of the holistic story that the researcher noticed. Especially helpful to such a holistic interpretation of the data was being able to explore the common story elements associated with the participant interviews. In other words, the multiple readings of the interviews as stories, individually, then among cohorts, then again from first to last as a group, with a critical eye, ultimately revealed a theme or pattern.

Coding interviews for categories allowed instances of the categories to be counted. The idea developed categories through examination of the interviews. Starting with as many categories as identified, the researcher then began to narrow the categories down through an inductive process to five categories. The researcher identified a central category and then looked for relationships to the other categories. The categories would have subcategories or properties (Creswell, 1998). The researcher also began looking for relationships among the categories. This process is known as axial coding (Creswell, 1998). In addition to looking for similarities of categories the researcher looked for disconfirming cases (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). To identify the categories the researcher looked for patterns that emerged from the data. Frequency of response was

one way patterns were identified (LaCompte & Schensul, 1999). With the emerging patterns, a story began to unfold from the data, (i.e., selective coding) which led to identifying theoretical properties (Creswell, 1998).

Exploration of researcher bias

Qualitative inquiry recognizes that the expertise that lies within the researcher can be both a limitation and a de-limitation. Moustaka's (1994) approach in phenomenological methods focuses more towards a description of the lived experiences and less on the interpretation of those lived experiences reported. This aids in helping to control researcher bias by *bracketing* (Moustaka, 1994) or otherwise known as setting aside the investigator's experiences so that the perception being shared is a fresh and authenticated view point from the perspective of the research participant. This researcher's bias lies within her professional credentials. She is a certified professional co-active coach and holds a license as a mental health practitioner with the State of Nebraska. Her experience of coaching was positive and instrumental in her development, both professionally and personally. She admittedly holds an assumption that coaching is equally effective for others. That bias was bracketed and was held with great accountability in suspending her beliefs. The bracketing and requests that she made to her advisors held her accountable and self-aware while interviewing participants as well as analyzing their data. Bias awareness was useful in that it helped the researcher to conform to phenomenological values. Eger (1993), suggested that the researcher should stay close to the phenomena by avoiding as much as possible all abstraction and

imposition of constructs, and by relating always the object of study to the experiences of the subject who does the studying.

Another potential problem was the researcher's obvious excitement and belief in the efficacy of coaching. It was important for this researcher to conduct the interview holding a space that was appreciative and conducive where the participant felt free to articulate his perspectives of the coaching experience.

A second bias the researcher held is that coaching, a professional tool, helps individuals to clearly understand their core values. When one becomes clear on core values, the individuals can better align what they do in life with who they want to be in life. This is the essence of self leadership, knowing self with a high level of self awareness, taking 100% responsibility and being responsible for your impact. This will be a bias that the researcher had to bracket and continually be cautious of as she probed with powerful questions, being careful to not disguise questions in an attempt to solicit an answer that aligned with her bias.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Results

Introduction

One cannot get a true sense of the meaning that comes from a phenomenon or experience unless those who actually experience it share their stories, insights, and reflections (Shumer, 2000). The probing research questions elicit responses from academicians leading to discovery and understanding of coaching efficacy. This research brings validity and credibility through rigorous reading, reflection, and re-reading transcripts, then coding in vivo in *Atlas TI* software. The coding consists of select words or phrases that highlight lived experiences from each academic leader's perspectives of coaching efficacy.

It was important to comprehend the meaning of the effects that life coaching had upon these academic leaders, to understand from their perspective how they experienced these effects in their lives, both personally and professionally. Hatch (2002) reports that research is axiomatic, in that individuals act in the world and experience the world through their perceptions and not on supposed objective truths.

Using a phenomenological method of analysis, the academic leaders' recollection of their lived coaching experience provided the means for discovering the efficacy of coaching. This chapter includes an interpretation of transcribed interviews that were read for accuracy by the participant, then read by the researcher for a general understanding, re-read by the researcher for meaning, reflected upon, and in vivo coded into *Atlas TI*, which enables the lived experiences to take textual shape, providing an understanding of essence and meaning of the overall lived experience.

Interview and Selection Process

Number of participants

Creswell (1998) reports that phenomenological research approaches for sampling size can be in the range of 1 to 325. There simply is no magic sampling number for qualitative research, although, smaller sample sizes are more manageable. Marshall (1996) asserts that an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study is one that adequately answers the research question. Small sample sizes can be unnerving to modern science as they go against traditional quantitative measures in which sample size is meant to represent the larger population or picture. Phenomenological researchers respect the validity that sample size offers, and also believe it is not the number itself that provides meaning. Instead, it is the quality of understanding that comes from the number, large or small. Typically, phenomenological research suggests the researcher interview five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being studied (Polkinghorne, 1989). Purposeful sampling is ideal in phenomenology as it permits the selection of participants whose qualities or experiences will garner the most meaningful data to describe the experience. It is for this reason that the researcher had a purposive sample of five subjects, three white males and two white females. All have served in official leadership positions within a higher educational institution and all have served in a faculty position.

Selection of participants

The target audience for the study was the 295 participants in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension's *Clarity, Focus and Action: Tools and Tactics for*

Leadership workshops that were offered to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Kansas State University, Purdue University and North Dakota State University. Personalized research invitations were sent via email to each workshop participant. The research criteria stated that they needed to have been life coached for at least two years. A 90% response rate to the personalized electronic invitation was received, with only five people fitting the two-or-more year coaching parameter. This researcher believes the sampling procedure did not exclude anyone and also provided enough data for a manageable study. Five participants yielded enough information to illuminate themes and increase the strength of inference. All individuals voluntarily participated and were assured that their identity would be protected by replacing their name with a number. The interview format, whether it was face-to-face or via telephone, was decided upon by the participant. Once their preference was stated, the time and place of interview was scheduled. Three of the subjects requested face-to-face interviews, while two requested telephone interviews.

Data collection

IRB approval was sought and granted IRB # 20100110422 EX. After participation agreements were made and logistics were defined, a consent form was sent to each participant (see Appendix A). Upon the receipt of each consent form the researcher called each interviewee to schedule an hour and location at their preference. The qualitative interviews were structured with a guiding set of questions used in an informal style. This semi-structured process provided an interactive and comfortable setting. The interviewer was careful to ask for clarification when interviewees expressed

generalities or abstractions, in order to gain a better understanding (Hatch, 2002). This style of interviewing led to a descriptive narratives of the phenomenon. Interviews con were not complete until saturation of data was achieved (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each interview lasted up to one hour and was audio taped. Verbatim transcripts were produced within 48 hours of the interview and emailed to the participants in a Microsoft Word document through a secure server. The participants checked the transcripts for accuracy and approved them, with the exception of one transcript in which one participant requested the exclusion of some text. This section was deleted from the original transcript then re-read by the interviewee, who had no additional edits and gave final approval of the revised transcript.

Data Analysis

Transcripts

As mentioned above, this researcher transcribed verbatim the interviews within 48 hours as suggested by Colaizzi's phenomenological method (1978). Quick transcription enabled the researcher to remember nuances, sighs and laughter during specific parts of the interview. This non-verbal aspect was represented in the transcription to give an overall flavor of the interviewee's experience. Following the methodological rigor as set forth by Meadow and Morse (2001), this researcher meticulously read and re-read the original transcripts. Each transcript was uploaded into *Atlas TI* qualitative scientific software coded in its own hermeneutic unit. This was the primary tool used to collect, connect, visualize and analyze the textual content.

Validation strategies

The significant sentences, statements and/or quotes that described each academic leader's lived experience were extracted. Close attention was paid to self managing personal experiences of the researcher by bracketing personal thoughts, responses and feelings. These textual pieces formed the basis of thematic coding and the context of each was examined to look for relationships among each hermeneutic unit, and then grouped into like units or themes. This process developed a textual description of the experiences and a structural description of how they were experienced which provides an overall essence of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Results

Three hundred and sixty significant statements were extracted from the five transcripts. Table 1 depicts examples of significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provided information as to how the participants experienced the phenomenon of life coaching with the associated formulated meanings.

Table 1:
Significant Statements/Sentences or Quotes

Significant Statement/Sentence or Quote	Formulated Meaning
Instead of us always having to have a negative conversation - me whining at them - it becomes where we have a constructive conversation.	Realizing that negative communication comes across as whining, people can shift to being positive, which then creates constructive communication.
By saying yes to everybody I am saying no to the people that I had said I would finish something for them. So I am really concentrating on keeping my commitments to other people.	Being more responsible for commitments has you honoring both yourself and others.
Understanding another's value system isn't	Understanding one's own values and

something you change to fit your own.	respecting the values of others clarifies responsibilities and helps life run more smoothly.
It did bring awareness and that is what I think - over and over again. Now I am making the changes.	Coaching helps create self awareness
I had to kind of climb out of the hole.	Coaching looks to the future encouraging people to move from the pit of the past.
I am focusing on the positive things in life, only saying yes to those things that are in alignment with my values and goals.	Once clear on values and priorities, your *yes* is *yes* and your *no* is *no*. You say yes out of commitment, rather than out of compliance.
To expect change within one week on a behavior that has happened over 50 years…	While coaching provides help in the here and now, it takes time to change patterns or relationship cycles that have operated over time.
I still have trouble owning things and I still get into this negative pattern but I do now have an awareness of it and I am trying to overcome that.	Awareness is the first part of changing destructive behaviors.
The biggest change is that I feel the freedom to express myself as myself.	Freedom to express ourselves opens the door to becoming more of who we really are at our core.
I feel more positive about myself.	Coaching operates from the premise that people are creative and resourceful. This premise becomes the premise from which individuals operate, and helps develop a positive sense of self.
I felt really alone and not supported at all, so it has taken almost ten years of negative, even non-positive feedback from administration. To kind of overcome that- and I can't change them- all I can do is change my view and my energy, so to speak, and that is what I am working on.	Defeat and/or hopelessness sets in when looking for others to change. Empowerment happens when one's locus of control is realized.
I keep striving for and I am in a better place, so I do have more positive feedback for myself.	When I honor myself and my values, I feel better about myself. My reward comes from self rather than depending on it from external sources.
I seem to have more of an inner reserve to keep trying.	Changing negative patterns, honoring values and oneself creates an internal well spring of energy.
My coach asked me how I wanted to live my life, and I said, "like a daisy". I'm living my life like a daisy as a result of that discussion. Now when I feel I have lost my	The structures and discussions that happen in coaching creates 'aha' moments that stay with people and have them continuing to shift how they show up in life.

way, I think of the daisy. The yellow center of the daisy is representative of my heart and soul. That needs to be my bigger focus when making decisions. So I am always coming back to the image of a daisy and that constantly has me realigning my decisions based on my values.	
Yeah, everybody knows how to listen, everybody knows how to ask a question, and be engaged in a conversation. But for what purpose?	Coaching is different from basic social skills because of its purpose and intentionality.
I had always thought I could figure stuff out myself. I mean heck, I am a smart guy, I have a Ph.D.- I can do these things.	Coaching speeds up the process of getting what you want or allows you to see things differently.
Coaching teaches excellent skills for anybody that deals with managing people.	Managing people has a better effect when employing coaching skills.
Accountability. That was very beneficial.	Being held accountable by somebody was a critical part of what made the coaching effective.
Self assurance and maybe self esteem improved.	Being heard and being real in the coaching relationship brought empowerment.
Coaching changes the type of conversations we have, helping people figure out in various situations what is really important and what is it that they want to have happen.	Relationship conversations change when using coaching skills. Being coached not only helps the coaching participant, but also those who are in relationship with the person being coached.
With the coaching skills that I have experienced, listening and powerful questions have helped me be a better teacher and parent. Instead of telling youth what is important for them, I have learned to help them in identifying what is important to them.	As a leader we are expected to grow others. Telling them what to do is enabling or doubting them. Coaching skills help people learn their own answers, come up with their own solutions and enables them to lead themselves.
I have changed as a father. My son said that his teacher thought he should drop down to a lower level math class. I typically would have said, "Maybe she is right." Instead, because of the empowerment that comes from powerful questions, I experienced that with my coach, I changed my approach with my son and asked, "What do you want to do?" He chose to stay at the same level and not drop down. He got an A in it this year! That conversation was huge, just huge.	Whether coaching professionally or coaching as a father, the skills are profound for helping people grow.

Coaching starts with the notion that people are creative and resourceful.	The coaching paradigm presents empowerment, looking for good things and positive relationships.
I think because of the coaching, I am much better at listening to what she is saying and tuning in, if you will, to what she is not saying.	Relationships with significant others improve because of listening the coach way versus the *other* way.
Coaching has a way of building self confidence and self esteem and that carries over to other things.	Increasing self esteem enhances other areas of one's life.
Coaching is so valuable for my professional roles, because there isn't anybody else you can do that with. You can't talk with the people that you supervise in those ways, you can't talk to the people that supervise you in those ways and there aren't many colleagues that you can talk to in that fashion either.	Leaders can feel alone. Coaching gives them the freedom to express their innermost self, discuss the problems at hand and feel assured that what they have shared is confidential.
I didn't feel comfortable talking with deans and vice chancellors about concerns I have with particular individuals within the department because I don't want them to think less of the department or the people that we are working with. So you are sort of stuck in this middle ground of not having an outlet.	The coaching relationship provides a safe place for talking about difficult situations and finding solutions.
Coaching offered me a different perspective of my goals, clarity around that allowed me to better serve people.	Coaching provided a comfortable place to talk about important issues, which brought clarity and helped me to be a better leader.
Has coaching made a difference for me professionally? Oh, absolutely! And personally? Probably even more so. Absolutely.	Coaching makes a difference. No question about it.
Coaching crosses over both areas of life almost seamlessly.	Coaching is powerful in supporting people in their personal and professional life.
Coaching can be more the notion of how do you swing the bat and hit the ball. There is also an element of coaching that correlates to trying to get somebody to give 110% and to find the very best in what they do and to take responsibility.	Coaching looks at the how and has the client figure it out, always believing in the capability of the client.
I must certainly be easier to live with now.	As a result of coaching, relationships change.
There is a clearer perspective of why I say yes to things. When I don't respect my	Self awareness and accountability help a person feel more in control of life, rather

boundaries of energy and time, saying yes to so many things, I can now acknowledge it and do something about it. I am less of a victim.	than being controlled *by* life.
Coaching spends more time in the present and future and less time in the past. So, you don't have time to be a victim. I think that helps and if you spend more time in the present and future, then you are working more on getting out of where you are as opposed to thinking about where you are at. So, by default, there is less time to think about being a victim.	Because the focus of coaching is looking at where you are today and where you want to go, one has less time to wallow in the past, even though the past is a part of the picture.
Coaching has opened up lines of communication for me.	Coaching creates an environment and a way to have better conversations.
Coaching also helped me to prioritize	Coaching creates management skills for people to be more effective in what is important.
Coaching has helped me make time for the personal side of life, because I better manage the professional side now. I have more personal time to invest and I think that helps recharge my energy and enhances creativity.	Balance creates synergy.
Before coaching, I wouldn't have ever applied for positions that I wanted, it would have been too much work, it would have been out of the realm of possibility, it would have been too scary, it would have been too whatever… and even now I think about it and it surprises me that I did it and it feels great!	Roadblocks to excellence are recognized and removed so one can continue on the path.
It is the self awareness, in terms of knowing what you are capable of. Part of coaching for me is… has been to realize that what I want to do I can do. I guess I keep coming back to the notion that coaching pulls you out of the past and pushes you into the future.	What people think of themselves can seriously hold them back in the past, but once awareness is brought about through the process of coaching, potential and possibilities are limitless.
Well, there were people issues in the past, there were relationship issues, there were work issues, there were… you know there were a bunch of issues. And so there were all kinds of physical, emotional, mental ties to the past. So all of that in my mind got unraveled and sorted out and not to say it	Letting the past dominate your thoughts and actions will keep you stuck.

is completely gone, but at least it is managed and it's put in its place and some of it is gone. To me, without letting go of the past, you can't move forward.	
I remember that about ten minutes or so was spent talking about what happened in the past and there is good reason for that.	The past is important, but only to the extent that it serves the present.
It was gratifying. Here are your frustrations, now let's move ahead to what you have control over and what do you really want to do.	The premise and roadmap of coaching put life in a more manageable space.
It wasn't like I was preaching to him, but I was helping him understand what he had.	Because of the experience of coaching, others are also able to reap the benefit. There is a ripple effect.
I guess I would frankly have to say that I had good intentions to do more coaching than I have done. It is not to say I haven't coached, so I have used the basics, but I thought early on, it is one of those things if you are going to do it, you need to practice, to be in that mode, to think it through. So, I guess I am acknowledging opportunities where I could have coached and didn't, or at least didn't do it as much or think it through as much as I could have, I feel like there has been problem solving, and there has been empowerment, but there could be more than there was.	Being coached has lasting effects in changing individuals. To pass that on, creating a ripple, takes effort and intentionality. It is not a natural act.
It seemed like those in Hollywood had coaches, but who else really had a coach? If I could say it that way. There was almost a glitz factor to it, that coaching wasn't integral to life empowerment, coaching was what you had if you could afford everything else. So it would help with the icing on top, but it wasn't integral to any core things. I mean, because you had a coach, you also had a therapist, you had a manicurist, you had a pedicurist and this was your group that worked on you. So, it sounds crazy, that is umm… the key piece of coaching - I guess, is the so what.	Not understanding what coaching is, who it is for and what benefits are reaped creates resistance and disinterest.
There were days when I got off the phone and I felt so energized that I just had to get up and leave the office. There were days I was so pissed off, there were a couple of	The coaching relationship is not always warm and fuzzy. It can have a considerable amount of push. Both coach and client need to have a relationship

times. There were some days that I was so mad at my coach. Oh, I was mad… Oh, I was mad. I was mad, I was frustrated and I felt like I had just, I felt like I had just, it was one of those days where I felt like I needed a pat on the back and what I was getting was. "You talked about honoring yourself, I don't hear your action honoring your values." I think you need to be open to that if it is truly going to do you good.	strong enough to support the push.
I have said yes with a better sense of knowing why I was saying yes. It wasn't a reaction because I felt wanted, needed. It was a yes because if I do this, and couple it with that, it equates to ultimate full promotion, it equates to impacts, it equates to professionally the things that we are all working toward.	Coaching creates clarity for the client by assisting in alignment between personal values and professional choices.
Ultimately I really am in control of what is going on.	Assuming control creates hope.
I feel like there is a level of respect that I feel like I wouldn't have had because I wouldn't have the time to develop the relationships. So those are really important benefits and it makes a difference for everything else.	Because of the awareness of what was really important to me, I made efforts toward strengthening relationships.
The paradigm is the notion of taking charge, thinking of the future as opposed to dwelling in the past.	Taking control over what you can contraol instead of fretting over the past brings a sense of freedom.
It was a revelation and it was very important. Those calls were really big deals.	Coaching makes change and the impact is significant.
I kept trying to figure out my private/personal life.	Being stuck is a reason for coaching.
Just having a safe place where I could really be in need and not feel like I had to be putting on my public face, but really being a person who was dealing with a lot of uncertainty so I could move forward.	The coaching relationship provides safety for the client to be her true self. Assisting client in overcoming obstacles to reach success and happiness.
My personal life and professional life have always been so close. My professional life helped build my personal life, giving me more strength there, and my personal life helped keep my professional life in focus.	Personal life and professional life are seamless in that one affects the other.
"Ask for what you need." That was very	Leaders often times believe they should

very helpful because many times I would reflect back on that, and I would process my thoughts and learn what I needed.	have all the answers. Coaching shifts this paradigm and helps leaders see asking for help as leveraging resources around them and encourages them to make requests.
My daughters. More than once they would say to me, "Man, that is amazing what you are doing, it is amazing."	Actions speak louder than words.
I took the Nike symbol "Just do it," and I put it on my computer, my window, my mirror at home, my car dash. Like don't let this fear or this uncertainty freeze you in life, just go ahead, just take one small step and that was really very key, just do the next thing, you don't have to look too far ahead. Just do the next thing.	Life's trials can be daunting, and metaphors can mirror how one needs to be in order to become.
It's good to have a neutral party, somebody who cares about me but is able to be objective. So listening to me and reflecting back to me helps me see what I am saying.	When we hear ourselves talk, we hear what we are saying.
Okay, in a way I think it would be a reflection, it is kind of like a mirror almost. Reflecting what I say, The other thing is to think of other options that I might not even have thought of or if I had been aware of other options, would have just passed them off as "No no, I can't do that." To take the chance to think about possibilities.	When hearing your own thoughts, you see the patterns that can limit your progress. Coaching illuminates the limitations placed by self to help clients move from what isn't possible to perspectives around what is possible.
My coach focused on me, more than the topic. That brought my focus more on me, my innate power, not the external thing (the topic). I have repeated that way of interacting in my personal relationships and I think it has really been useful in strengthening those relationships.	The coach is focused on the client and how the client responds, feels or sees the situation or topic. This has the client feeling seen and heard.
The impact has been that we have a whole lot more harmony in our office. And the impact has been… well in the past it would have been people coming in whining and bitchin' with me just nodding and acting as if I was listening. Now, I challenge the 'complainer' by asking what part do you play in that? What is your role? What can you do to fix your part in the situation?	Coaching helps leaders to challenge the status quo and to hold staff accountable to their part in conflict.
Before coaching I led in an authoritarian way telling people, "You just need to stop doing this." Now I am investing more time	An authoritarian style of leadership yields compliance, possibly. Leadership based on coaching skills yields understanding.

with staff when they are unhappy by reminding them of their responsibility in the choices they are making.	
My coach held me be accountable for my behavior, pointed out when I was honoring my values and when I wasn't. That accountability had me want to be a better leader and take a part in solving office conflict. Dodging it and playing safe wasn't resolving conflict so I thought to try something different, so I started holding people personally accountable for their behavior.	Change is hard, conflict is even harder. Honoring the change that needs to take place can be scary. Having accountability and a safe place are elements that support doing the right thing.
Having time to think, to really get my head clear and to get centered allowed me to think about how I wanted to examine myself, my beliefs, my feelings about things. This made me even stronger in those beliefs and feelings that I thought were true. Overall, it was a really positive growth experience.	Life can get too busy. Introspection and the opportunity to focus on who we are can get lost in the process of living. The coaching experience, providing structure and a positive relationship, can help individuals regain their soul, the hidden treasure within.
Coaching has taught me to listen carefully and because of that I am not being so reactive towards my children, wife and grandchildren. Instead, I am being proactive, really listening to what they are saying, not just to what I am wanting.	The benefits of really being listened to by a coach can generalize to other relationships. *Reactive* communication can change to become *proactive* communication.
Helping me get clear and helping me crafting my mission. That got me really and truly focused on what was important, what are my roles in life, what do I want to do, what do I want to be.	Clarity about what you want and how you want to be creates a clear path.
When I look back on my life, I want people to say "He cared about us and for us. He took the time to really be with us, he truly loved us and wanted the best for us."	Life is about living and about leaving a legacy.

The next phase of data analysis involved a process called horizonalization (Moustakas, 1994). This is where the researcher takes the formulated meanings derived from the significant statements and categorizes them into clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2007). These clusters resulted in five themes (see Table 2).

1. The coaching relationship
2. Self and value awareness
3. Boundaries
4. Perspective shifts
5. Enhanced relationships and communication

Each of these themes is described as follows:

Table 2 Theme Clusters with Associated Formulated Meanings

The Coaching Relationship
A powerful and trusting relationship
Freedom to express myself as myself
An objective point of view
A valuable and confidential relationship
Comfortable
An outlet
Challenging my best, even when I couldn't see the best
Accountability in honoring self
Gratifying
A safe place with no judgment
A neutral party
A place where I had time to think, clear my head and get centered.

Self and Value Awareness

Increased self esteem

Understanding other peoples' values

Coaching brought awareness and reinforces positive change

Recognition that I blame and get into a negative pattern, I am trying to overcome that

Feel more positive about self

More self awareness feeds inner reserve to keep striving

Self assurance and self esteem improved

Builds self confidence that carries over to other areas of life

Less victimization

Knowing self capabilities

Define self by desired future rather than a product of the past

Boundaries

Keeping my commitments

Feeling in control of life rather than being controlled by life

Creates management skills to prioritize

Better management of professional side which recharges energy

Say yes with a better sense of knowing why I am saying yes

Learning what is my responsibility helped me feel that life is more manageable

More energy, hope and creativity

Perspective Shifts

Circumstances don't just happen, I create them

Focus on the positive

Have the power to change my view

Live by design, not default

Metaphors create structures for reminders of how people change paradigms

Asking for what you need used to be seen as weak

"Aha" moments creates a new feeling, a fresh start

Changes the way I approach conflict

Enhanced Relationships and Communication

Engaging in conversation with a purpose

Positive coaching relationship created skills to use in managing people

Changes the type of conversations

Don't fix things now, instead dialogue and listen

Better at listening to words and noticing behavior

Responsive in critical relationships, rather than reacting

Open communication, focusing on person rather than topic

Repeated the coaching way in my personal and professional relationships

Instead of telling people what to do, invest in them to find what they want to do

Reactive communication has changed to proactive communication

Theme One: The Coaching Relationship

When people appear successful on the outside, they are less likely to ask for help. Instead, they expect themselves to "figure it out on their own" and at best, they rely on their close supports, albeit, informally. The coaching relationship offered an objective point of view that helped the participant see more clearly. One person in this study first

sought coaching in response to a traumatic, life-changing event. She preferred a coach over a counselor because she did not want to dwell in the past, she wanted to move forward with her life. She said in coaching she found positive support and challenge that moved her from being stuck to defining her new life. The individual continued in the coaching process after her grief became more manageable because of the positive impact coaching was having on her life.

The other four participants came to coaching because it sounded interesting to them or they were feeling a bit stuck in life. They weren't in a traumatic place and the resistance to seek coaching willingly came out as "My life is good, I have a wife, two kids and my health. I am a doctor, I have friends, I don't need a *cheerleader*." Another participant stated that coaching was too full of "glitz - it was what you had if you could afford everything else, not integral for core things." Another participant described his concept of life coaching as "unnecessary, especially males, we don't even need maps, we will get to where we need to go." And another said, "Man this is pretty much West Coast woo-woo."

The coaching relationship was critical factor for each participant in overcoming initial resistance to commitment and belief in what coaching could do for them. Resistance comes when we are unconsciously incompetent. In other words, we don't know what we don't know. That seems to be the case above, in which the individual does not know what coaching is all about and makes it out to be too glitzy or West Coast woo and certainly not something worthy of Ph.D. –level status. This was the prevailing attitude of all the participants with the exception of the individual in the midst of trauma.

A participant coined this theme by stating, "It is like the difference between wearing glasses or not wearing glasses." Participants consistently inferred that "personal life and professional life have always been closely connected." Another participant sharing that "Coaching crosses over both areas, *personal and professional*, almost seamlessly." People in leadership positions can feel isolated and wonder who to turn to, they need to hear themselves talk in order to process action, "It is good to have a neutral party, somebody who cares about me, but is able to be objective." So some listening to me and reflecting back, helped me hear what I was saying." Another described clarity coming from "reflection, like a mirror almost." Coaching creates clarity by illuminating the limitations participants placed on themselves.

I think I have been a role model as far as doing some things that are different, out of the box thinking in order to rise to a challenge and excelling to help a group with an issue. I think especially of a big group that I am working with, challenging them and encouraging them to think big picture and that came from coaching.

Participants felt that the coaching relationship was a venue of safety and freedom where they could express their truth. Participants described the coaching relationship and venue as a place where "I could be myself," and "I didn't have to put on a face." Another described the experience of being "real in coaching," just expressing herself gave her the "freedom to be more transparent" in her relationships outside of coaching. Because of the trust he had with his coach, one participant was able to share that his critical inner voice that was always making him "not smart enough." Being able to entrust this information with his coach helped him identify that critical voice and just the recognition

helped dis-empower the voice so he was more able to "trust himself, not the critical voice."

This freedom of self expression that was spurred through a healthy trusting coaching relationship "gave courage to do the next thing." It was described by another as it "giving them a new vision for life," and offering "independence, direction, awareness and freedom." It allowed participants to "trust" they had the best answer for their life and the issues they faced.

Professionally, leaders felt freedom emerge from the coaching experience, by "bringing personnel issues" to somebody objective. Participants in leadership roles didn't feel they could talk to deans and vice chancellors about concerns with particular individuals as it "Didn't feel safe." Often leaders felt "stuck" as the middle man. Being able to bring sensitive issues to a safe structured professional relationship "seemed the best fit to get everything out on the table."

Theme Two: Self and Value Awareness

Focusing on other people's needs, whether they might be personal or professional, took precedence over personal needs. The tendency was to be almost mocking when they spoke about what they wanted to be better at personally: "I mean, who really cares if I improve my golf swing" was a mirror of how they were not allowing themselves to pursue personal interests in life. Of course, the individuals met career demands and provided adequately for themselves and their families, but they didn't always find time to work toward personal goals or enhance their lives in meaningful ways. The business of life seemed to crowd out the insights they needed to develop their own values, beliefs and

natural inclinations. The time and reflection with a coach helped them gain a better understanding of their own attitudes, values and beliefs, which empowered them to be more aware of themselves.

For example, one participant described her level of self awareness before coaching as a six on a scale of one to ten, with one being unattached to self to ten being very attached, i.e., aware of attitudes, values and beliefs. After coaching she rated herself as a nine. Another participant spoke about the impact coaching had on her self-awareness and said this helped her continue to make changes in her life.

Awareness is the first part of changing destructive behavior, whether it is cyclical thought patterns or alcoholism, awareness is the first part of change. "One thing is that I still have trouble owning things and I still get into this negative *place*, but I do now have an awareness of it and I am trying to overcome that." Another participant agreed: "It is the self-awareness, in terms of knowing what you are capable of. Part of coaching for me has been to acknowledge what I want and can do. I guess I keep coming back to the notion that coaching pulls you out of the past and pushes you into the future."

As self-awareness became more pronounced for the people in the study, the more important it became to them as helping others become aware of their own set of values, beliefs and attitudes. The participants realized that the coaching process was one in which they found their own answers, rather than being told by the coach. One participant talked about how he began using this premise as a way of advising his students:

I used to tell kids, particularly at younger ages, what is important for them and I

have realized that instead of telling them I need to help them explore and identify what is important to them based on what they value and believe in. Then help them think through alternatives and consequences associated with various behaviors.

Another participant shared these perspectives with his own child:

Rather than saying, "Yeah sure, maybe your teacher is right, this math is just too hard." Instead, I ask the basic question, "What do you want to do?" My son said, "I am going to stay in this and go another year." Guess what? He did it and got an A this year! So allowing him to voice what he wanted versus accepting what the teacher wanted, allowed both he and I to become aware of his value around challenge. That is just huge, just huge!

Values are those elusive ideals that we all talk about, but seldom can people tell you their top five values. A sense of being clear on "what was mine versus what was theirs" emerged as a woman said that "understanding my values is important because it let me know who I want in my life."As one participant talked about his coaching experience, he said that, "having the introspection times, the opportunities to really get clear on my top five values and get centered, allowed me to want to examine myself, my beliefs, and my feelings about things. This process continued to make me stronger in my convictions and beliefs." Another participant added that, "I used my beliefs and values to engage with staff around office issues that created difficult situations, being in touch with my values helped strengthen my leadership so I was better able to confront conflict rather than my old pattern of avoiding." Another participant shared, "Because of being aware

of my value around compassion, I listen more intently at meetings and because of that, I'm a better leader."

Coaching "helped me get clear and helped me craft my mission statement. It got me truly focused on what was important to me and helped me get clear on my roles in life." All participants had a sense of standing taller, stronger and more esteemed when their actions aligned with their values. As evidenced by a participant stating, "There are days when I got off the phone and I felt so energized from being heard at my core which helped me to connect to my true self that I just had to get up and leave the office." Another participant stated, "I didn't question my action in confronting tough situations, I had a sense of confidence." And another felt "proud and stronger" when honoring his values by their actions. And when the challenge came from the coach to honor those values when they seemed to be getting stepped on, it was met with great emotion:

> *There were days that I was so pissed off! I wanted to come to this encouraging supportive empowering coaching session, only to hear challenge and pushing. As I look back I am glad I was pushed, because it really served me in playing my bigger game, but at the time, I was so mad because my coach kept pointing to the incongruence's of my action, by doing. to who I said I wanted to be, my mission, my values.*

One participant stated well what seemed to be the consensus of the group: "You need to be open to coaching if it is truly going to do you good because walking your talk, living in alignment with your values, takes courage, challenge, accountability that ultimately brings celebration, but it is not always easy getting to the end."

Theme Three: Boundaries with Accountability

Another participant spoke of a close family relationship in which he really worked on how he was going to *be* as he engaged in a critical conversation. The participant said that the conversation itself failed, but he felt a sense of pride in how he owned his feelings, shared them and remained calm while in the conflict and it felt good to know that his responsibility ended there. When he spoke of this circumstance, his non-verbal affect was discerning, as he stated the conversation "went south" and as he realized that through his story that he actually "felt free". The freedom came because he "clearly expressed what he wanted to have happen to make the relationship good." His non-verbal indicators exhibited a pleasant smile, he explained, "I guess I did win. Coaching works and it has to be the individual that you are trying to work with that has to make the choice and has to make the change and if they don't, then they don't and so go on and let it go." Knowing your boundaries is like building the necessary structures to balance critical conversations.

Another individual understood through the coaching process that by not knowing or setting her boundaries she said "yes to everybody, she was saying no to herself, her own needs." Yet another participant realized through coaching and boundary identification that he was constantly putting himself in the "martyr role." He said, "I got clear on my *yes* and knew that when I said *yes*, I was saying *no* to something else." It is as if the participants were on *autopilot* as they reacted to requests. They typically had an immediate response of yes. Because they had little regard or courage to honor their boundaries and they allowed others to take from them, which left them feeling hopeless.

This was described by one participant saying, “I felt obligated,” another said, “I felt guilty,” and another said, “If I didn’t do it, then who would?” *Yes* was the word of the day and at the end of the day it was the word that made it a bad day, full of “too much to do with life spinning out of control,” and “things spilling off the to-do list.”

Boundaries are like the internal fence. With no fencing, it is hard for people to separate what is theirs and what belongs to somebody else, creating a “sense of overwhelm.” Coaching helped participants to set internal boundaries by “separating past issues”, “a bunch of issues”, “all kinds of physical, emotional and mental ties to the past.” One client described his mind getting “unraveled and sorted out.” As a result, he is able to be “more present as he is not worried about what happened ten years ago.” The past is important, indeed, but only to the extent that it serves the present. As one participant noted, “very little of what was talked about, made a difference in my current situation.” Another said that “spending more time in the present was empowering” and another said he felt his time was “more efficient” by setting boundaries on his time in the present moment, rather than “getting lost in the past mistakes.” Another participant described boundaries as “gratifying,” knowing “what I have control over and what I don’t.”

Others saw that boundaries between the professional and/or personal side of life created an overall sense of balance. One participant shared that when he first started coaching, he got frustrated by the coach pointing at his apparent “lack of spending time on what I was passionate about, outside of work.” This same participant said after three years of being coached, he is “making time for the personal side because he better manages boundaries on the professional side.” Another stated that the “investment in his

personal life creates synergy and energy" and another believes that the balance was afforded to him because of setting boundaries, which has "enhanced creativity." This has improved his effectiveness in both personal and professional life.

Accountability in honoring boundaries in coaching is not about "I told you to do that, or you knew you should have done this and you didn't, so now, you are in trouble." Accountability in coaching is about having clients set boundaries to protect their energy so they can do things that align with their values and that will serve them in moving toward their goal. Participants stated that they learned just as much about themselves through mistakes or not reaching their goals as they did when they achieved their goals. They felt supported by this approach, as it was gave them freedom to do whatever they chose and still receive feedback that held them accountable and encouraged them. They described accountability in different ways: from "holding my feet to the fire because I have a part in this, too" to the belief that "accountability was very beneficial." Having a sense of ownership in the situation, whether it was personal or professional, moved them from merely compliance to being fully committed. "Instead of just nodding and tuning it out, I confronted the ideas and asked myself, 'What part do I play in this? What are my roles? What can I do to fix this? What beneficial choices can I make,' because I do have a choice in this situation."

Coaching helped participants deal with conflict through setting boundaries around who was responsible for what parts. When these, so to speak, fences were constructed, accountability was easier to address because clarity was created. Often times, participants experienced conflict with others as a result of mandatory change.

Participants shared that they didn't always know how to handle conflict, for themselves or for others who came to them. Through coaching, participants were challenged to deal with conflict by role identification. Knowing and owing their part, then their coach held them accountable as leaders to move towards the conflict rather than away from it. Coaches held participants accountable and participants stated they felt supported by the accountability and learned how to go out into their world and hold others accountable in a supportive way. Coaching accountability, in essence, created a ripple effect. This was demonstrated by one respondent who told about an ongoing conflict situation in his office. He stated that it had been going on for years and was never met with any resolve. He felt that he was able to deal with it productively and felt good about it as a result of being coached through how he could deal with it. He shared that, "a bit of my coach's accountability had me realize that this office situation can't go on. I was tired of the way things were, so was everybody else." He continued to say "in the past, the conflict was dealt with by dodging the conflict and playing it safe by ignoring the conflict, hoping it would go away on its own, wishing for peace and harmony" but when this playing it safe wasn't in service of the participant's mission statement and the coach held him accountable to his own leadership mission, the client went back into the office which was in conflict and said, "'This isn't working, so let's try something different,' and something different did happen."

The participant described the *something different* as "a whole lot more harmony, not whining and bitching." Coaching intends to lead people to desired resolutions by holding coaching participants accountable to doing what they say they want to do,

whether it be in their mission statements, their values or their acknowledgement knowing they need to take action. Coaching holds people accountable and encourages them to make choices based on being involved in creating the life they want, by setting boundaries and finding resolutions to what isn't working rather than passively wishing away the problem.

Theme Four: Perspective/Paradigm shift

The participants have perspectives on many facets in life, including work, relationships, hobbies and so forth. The participants' perspectives are made up of beliefs, expectations and assumptions and they make decisions based on those currently held beliefs, expectations and assumptions. One participant said, "Keep doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results. That is the definition of insanity." Yet, that is what was happening. Staying trapped into believing, "I don't like it, but it is just the way it is." The habitual pattern of *it is what it is, and I can't do anything about* it is what had participants in a trapped or stuck place. Participants said that coaching helped them to shift their habitual way of looking at things, into a way that illuminated possibilities. This shift was described in various ways: "compelling", "energizing", "powerful", "creative" and "able to take charge".

A coaching technique to use in shifting people's perspectives is through metaphors. The following examples show how the participants were able to draw on imagery and experience. This allowed them to see themselves in a way that they weren't able to see themselves before being coached. One explained:

I remember drawing a picture of how I felt: clouds and rain. At first the picture represented how my life felt gray, dull, empty, no hope of sun shining. But when I when my coach explored with me other perspectives for the drawing, I realized that the clouds and rain were needed as they would be the source of energy to help the new little plants of my life start to grow. And that, you know that somehow came through coaching, I don't think that would have ever realized that without having somebody to help me think about the possibilities, think about the depth, think about the opportunities.

Another participant said:

I took the Nike symbol, 'Just Do It'. I put it on my computer, my window, my mirror at home, my car dash. It meant to me that I could do anything I wanted to do, I just needed to 'Do It!' The action that I took helped me to overcome fear and uncertainty. Instead of staying froze in life, I just went ahead, took one small step and that was very key to just do the next thing.

This client's future was one foot in front of the other, and she moved. She shifted from looking to her future as one "being full of grief" to one that was "full of possibilities."

Another participant explained how her perspective shifted by using a metaphorical experience:

My coach asked me to name my favorite flower, I named the Daisy. It still strikes my mind as I remember talking about this daisy. My most favorite flower represented me and it was all alone, just swaying, no direction. I could see me,

> *the daisy, standing amongst my colleagues-alone. That vision shifted my perspective by seeing me choosing to be there – alone, I all of a sudden saw how I was creating that, doing it to myself, it wasn't being done to me. Once I saw that image, I knew that I was a victim of my own choosing.*

At the time of the interview, the participant said how she has changed her life and her relationships because of that "aha moment." She reported that she has a much better job, with a better boss. She reported that the relationship with her husband is a *little better*, but that she was a *lot better* in the relationship. She went on to explain that she has accepted who he is and, more importantly, has found more of herself and brings her full self to the relationship and to living the life that she wants. She stated she is less focused on wanting others to change and more focused on what she can change, starting with herself. This perspective shift serves her and empowers her.

Theme Five: Enhanced Relationships and Communication

All of the participants shared how positive it was to be listened to and as a result, this helped them hear themselves more clearly. One client said she realized that she was "engaging in conversations that turned negative, with whining." As she shared the story of a negative conversation with her coach, she realized that it was she who was whining. More specifically, she realized she was talking about what she didn't want versus what she did want. She stated, "No wonder people weren't listening to me, now I strive to focus on the positive things I want to do." This realization helped her take responsibility for her part in creating constructive conversations, which has enhanced her relationships

because of her intention to "communicate in a more positive way, still telling her truth, but not being so negative."

The coaching experience provided focused listening and powerful questions. These skills seemed to transfer to the participants' work and personal life. One participant said that "Everybody knows how to listen and ask questions, to be engaged in a conversation, but being in a conversation the 'coaching way' provides a purpose and structure. The conversations 'have depth and purpose.'" Another participant stated that the coaching skills are "excellent skills for anybody that deals with managing people." Another asserted that coaching "changes the type of conversations, helping each of them to figure out what is really important and what it is they want to have happen."

Being coached provides the experience for one to be truly listened to and often times we can only give what we have received or experienced. One participant described his relationship with his wife as "being closer than we have ever been." Another stated, "I must certainly be easier to live with now." The participants said that because of being coached and feeling the difference it made in them they wanted to be that person who helps other people *feel* better. As one said, "This coaching way has been really useful to me in my personal relationships." Another stated that he is a "more calm grandpa". Another shared that when he and his wife are getting irritated with each other, he recognizes it and begins to "listen more carefully to what I am hearing, reminding myself to be more proactive rather than reactive." He goes on to explain that he "sees his coach in his mind's eye, then tries to emulate her style of listening."

And, finally, another participant speaking about his wife stated, “I think because of the coaching, I am much better at listening to what she is saying and tuning in if you will to what she is not saying.” Participants felt relationships improved because “there was a level of respect”, they “made the time count” and were “intentional about developing deeper relationships”. One participant said that, “Those are really important relationships and when those are better it makes the difference in everything else.”

Chapter Five

Conclusions and Implications

Introduction

This chapter summarizes, discusses and highlights the significance of the synthesized data presented in Chapter 4. From that discussion, the researcher suggests implications for coaching in institutions of higher education. Next, the researcher illuminates the strengths and limitations of this research study and finally makes recommendations for future research.

Summary

This study investigated the efficacy of coaching on academic leaders. The goal, was to learn whether or not coaching produces an effect on the lives of academic leaders and if it does, how? The research began by following Moustakas' interpretation of Husserl's psychological phenomenological approach. The researcher was guided by a constructivist paradigm in which the nature of reality assumes a world with no absolute reality. In fact, multiple realities exist as humans experience phenomena from his or her unique perspective. Since each academic leader experienced life coaching from their individual point of view, they each experienced a different reality. However, each perspective shares threads of similarities. Those similarities are the themes that are presented in this research. In time, saturation of data of thematic findings will produce universal truths.

The sampling was purposeful in extending 295 personalized research invitations by email to academic leaders who had previously participated in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension's *Clarity, Focus, Action* workshops. This program was

offered to faculty and administrators at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Kansas State University, Purdue University, and North Dakota State University. The significant criterion for participation in the research was that participants needed to have been coached for two or more years by a certified coach. This criterion proved to be a decisive filter as the sample yielded five qualified participants. The two year criterion ensured that the coaching occurring was about one's whole life, not specific situations or discrete events that happen in life. This researcher wanted to investigate the affect of life coaching on a person's whole life, which is different from investigating coaching a person around a situation.

Five in-depth interviews were conducted with academic leaders, three face–to-face and two by telephone. Each of these leaders had been coached for two or more years. The research results provide rich textural descriptions of the effects that life coaching produced for both personal and professional life. Five themes constituting efficacy in life coaching emerged. They are as follows:

- The coaching relationship
- Self and value awareness
- Boundaries
- Perspective shifts
- Enhanced relationships and communication

These themes emerged through the in-depth interviews and transcription process. They became more pronounced, recognizable and uniform as the researcher formally

documented the participants' repeated phrases, concepts, and words through the *Atlas TI* in-vivo coding process.

Discussion

Coaching is not for everybody and with the profession in its infancy people often have the wrong idea about what coaching is, who benefits from coaching, and what the benefits are. These questions are answered in part by one participant's explanation of coaching:

> *Coaching was more the notion of how do you swing the bat and hit the ball. There is also an element of coaching that correlates to trying to get somebody to give 110% and to find the very best in what they do and to take responsibility.*

While some helping professions, such as psychotherapy or the medical physicians, may focus on helping people survive, life coaching is meant for those who want to thrive beyond the status quo.

The five themes that emerged from the data in Chapter 4 provide insight and clarity into understanding the effect that coaching had upon the lives of academic leaders, both personally and professionally. The following discussion of those five themes answers the *so what* of coaching.

The Coaching Relationship

One of the first themes to emerge in the study was the academicians' experience of coaching was the importance of the coaching relationship. Initially, academic leaders reported resistance to the notion of life coaching. Four out of five participants felt that asking for coaching was a sign of weakness. Besides resistance in asking for help, there

was also a lack of understanding of what coaching was, its purpose and how they would benefit. As pointed out in Chapters One and Two, the professional field of coaching, is relatively new and its purpose unknown to most people. So the lack of information of what coaching is and the tendency for coaching to be compared to counseling adds to the resistance.

In the lives of those presented in this study, only one woman had a traumatic event which influenced her interest in coaching. The other four were wondering why they would they try coaching with men saying "I am a smart guy, I have a Ph.D., I can do these things"; "Isn't coaching for those in Hollywood?"; and "We are guys, we don't need help." The other female participant in the study felt that "other people are worse off than I am, why should I need help?" The only participant that did not share any feelings of resistance was the participant who had recently experienced a traumatic family loss. These questions are clearly answered, and the participants' who initially asked them can now look back on their experiences with coaching and answer the questions for themselves. Coaching is not a *must* for anyone, yet the people in this study felt that because of coaching they were more fulfilled and productive in life, both personally and professionally.

It is paramount for leaders to understand what coaching is and then clearly decide on their own if they want coaching. The coaching process works best when there is understanding and willingness on the part of the client. Anderson and Steward (1983) believe that resistance is universal and it is normal for people to struggle when it comes

to asking for help, unless it is catastrophic. As previously mentioned, that theory proves to be true in this research.

Each participant spoke about the relationship with their coach as being the key factor that helped them overcome their resistance to coaching and to change in their lives. Freud's (1926) research on relational psychology supports the notion that the helper's authenticity, the trust factor and the helper's ability to empathize all facilitate and advance the relationship between helper and client. This research has demonstrated that after the relationship is established, these academicians looked forward to the coaching sessions saying, "Those calls were really big deals"; "Overall, it was a really positive growth experience"; "That conversation was huge, just huge!" and "It was gratifying."

The coaching relationship is critical in the coaching process. It is suggested, based on the findings of this research when the academicians chose to be coached an essential next step was for them to decide what characteristics they wanted in a coach. Do they want a female or a male? What criteria will they use in determining what coach to interview? What religious orientation do they prefer? The relationship is most deepened by the sense of trust and understanding the client feels coming from the coach. This theme being most predominate would indicate that without a trusting relationship between coach and leader, the other themes, results may diminish in affect or go away entirely.

The coaching relationship is essential to the development and fulfillment for the client. The greater the mutual respect, trust through transparency and honesty shared by both, the more successful the outcomes will be for the client. This relationship creates a

safe container for holding confidences and deep sharing which gives permission and calls forth the inner brilliance of the client.

Self and Value Awareness

Resistance decreased as trust increased between coach and participants. And the second theme, *awareness of both self and inherent values* quickly followed. Coaching begins with the premise that the client himself has the answers and that those answers are correct when they are in alignment with the client's values. The participants in this study talked about how that concept was a critical facilitator of sustainable change. Derlega, Winstead and Jones (1991) affirmed this insight, stating that self-awareness is related to positive intrapersonal and interpersonal outcomes.

This research indicates that clients became more aware of their values and this contributes to a sense of knowing oneself. The current study also demonstrates that the self awareness gained by the leaders then created movement toward the realization of their untapped potential and that this typically occurred for those in this study in the first year and half of the coaching process. Once they became aware, they made choices to align their action with their values, focused on what they wanted and began to create more of what they wanted. Through coaching, they gained insights into the core values that made up their *being*. They began to look to their own self for answers which increased their sense of control and trusting in their own resourcefulness.

Participants also seemed to *stand taller,* with more confidence and pride with increased degrees of self- realization as this gave them insights as to what inherent values needed to be honored by their actions and made decisions accordingly. Because of the

coaching process, aligning walk with talk, academicians in this study felt they paid more attention to the personal side of life which enabled them to gain energy and momentum for the professional side of life. Life is about balance and it is a continuing process of moving towards personal and away from professional or vice-versa to create sustainable balance. Participants said they were constantly struggling to meet the demands of life and no matter how many to do lists, or organizational structures they put into place, they still couldn't get enough done to find balance. To pay attention to the things that mattered most rather than to those things that mattered least. However, as their self-awareness increased so too did their ability to feel balanced.

Coaching assists people to get back in touch with the core of who they are, the foundation from which they are intended to make choices from. Take for example the ice berg. The beauty that is seen on the outside is only the tip, it is magnificent, but that in and of itself is only as magnificent as the structure of what lies below it. Without the massive foundation, the magnificent beauty would be unseen. Coaching helped these participants find their foundation so that they could rise above and *be* their magnificent selves as they moved through life.

Boundaries

The third theme that emerged was *boundaries*. This theme seems obvious, for when people become more aware of self and values, this *North Star*, if you will, guided them to their *yes's* and their *no's*. This theme was more pronounced in the professional arena as participants tended to gain self-worth by what they did and how much they did.

From this researcher's life experience in the human science field, she would tell you that most people in the western culture are scripted to identify who they are by what they do. Their mere existence is measured by what degree they hold, what job they hold, who they have as family, what do they look like next to *The Jones's*. This researcher doesn't argue that these elements are a part of who people are, but certainly not all of who they are nor is it the place from which they should most predominantly identify themselves.

Technically people are referred to as human beings, but they identify their being by what they are doing. This research explored and found that academic leaders felt they were at the mercy of the external demands, motivated by the need to obtain, please and act for what was outside of them rather than what was in service to the inside of them. They would tend to say yes to others more and then feel overwhelmed. One participant described *overwhelm* as "mountains", another described the amount she had said yes to as making her feel "helpless and trapped". When participants described their lives after being coached, one participant stated, "I still have things falling off the *to-do list,* but I know I said yes to it and I am responsible for it." Another participant explained that she hated a messy desk, but when she would spend time organizing it she would be "ridiculed from others" since coaching she realizes her value around order and now honors that value by giving herself permission to "clean her desk off, make file folders, organize her priorities." The research showed the coaching process helped participants to own their choices, which increased the likelihood for them to set boundaries. As participants identified their boundaries they became more aware of when to say yes and when to say no. This awareness increased their sense of locus of control.

This sense of internal control, self-responsibility, made them less resistant to feedback and accountability. Accountability in coaching is how the coach challenges a client to live in alignment and do what he says he is going to do. Challenges the client to honor the boundaries they set. One client was specifically very clear about how mad this made him during one of his sessions. Even when he spoke of it, this researcher could see his tension, and anger. This researcher believes this to be valuable to the field of coaching, that even though, through the coach's lens, people are seen as creative and resourceful, everybody does have breaking points. Those too are boundaries that can be seen and honored in and for the client. It can be a gift to the coach and client relationship that is so important by giving the client a sense of what it feels like to have his or her boundaries honored. Therefore, it is essential for the coach to meet the client where she is in a particular situation. This may also be the flag that says a referral to counseling is needed. It may also be the flag to reiterate to the client, that she is 100% responsible for what they get in life. So instead of just *taking it* (the challenge) they may need to say "stop" I don't need the challenge, I need a pat on the back. Coaching, because of the trusting relationship and the client being more self realized, serves as a wonderful boundary building experiential exercise. Supporting and challenging the client to find where they need to *put up the fence*, set boundaries, so that they can create a life that serves them so that they can better serve others, which is a theme that is presented later.

Whereas the second theme of self and value awareness was about who the academician was *being*, this third theme of boundaries with accountability was about what the academician was *doing* to honor their being. More action oriented and the

action seemed to create a synergy of production and balance. Aligning being with action created a positive snowball affect with client's getting more of what they wanted in life.

Perspective Shifts

The fourth theme of *perspective shifts* shows how people's way of looking at life circumstances can hinder or help them. As mentioned in Chapter Two, counseling operates from a paradigm of something is broken and needs fixing whereas coaching operates from the paradigm that people are creative and resourceful. The findings of this research demonstrate the need for growth even though nothing is broken and that is where the profession of coaching finds its usefulness. It is apparent that metaphors in coaching, particularly with this sample, worked well in helping participants turn bad into good or stuck into possibilities. For example, one client was asked to draw a picture, first thing that came to her mind. She drew clouds. Initially the clouds were talked about as the representation of doom and gloom. Through the coaching process, the participant said "all of a sudden I realized that the water produced by the clouds would be needed for the growth of new seeds, which represented by new life. That was aha for me, it is as if new breath entered my body." Another seeing herself as a daisy, all alone and wondering why, and being able to, through her coach's reflection of her words, realized the negative tones and energy that she brought to the table. "I heard how negative I was, no wonder people didn't want to listen to me. I always felt when I started to talk they would just shut off. Now I try to focus on the positive and that focus has me being different and I feel different in the meetings, I feel like people are listening to me more." Self betrayal

and blame go hand in hand. The clarity and objectivity that client's can see through the use of a metaphor is significant to the accuracy of their vision.

The coaching paradigm automatically holds clients responsible for what is created in their lives. Again, this paradigm is what separates coaching from counseling. Hypothetically coach says, "This is where you are today and let talk about what you want your future to look like." In contrast, counselor says, "This is what happened to you in the past and that is affecting your present, let's go back to the past and resolve the hurt." So clearly a difference between the two professions, both are unique in their *come from* and yet they hold the similarity of helping people.

The coaching *come from* had participants feel an increased sense of in their locus of control and, as a result, this alone created huge shifts for the clients. Participants reported feeling stuck and frustrated, life wasn't bad, they just thought it could be better. When they realized that their feeling stuck was a byproduct of their choosing and shifted their perspective through the use of metaphors or through the experience within the coaching process, they found new ways to be and do. It isn't that they consciously chose to stay stuck, it was just the paradigm from which they have operated from over the years had them operating from autopilot mode or from within a boxed pattern of thinking. One participant confirms that he is "no longer a victim and if I heard myself being a victim, I acknowledge it and take responsibility for it, instead of complaining about what *they* are doing to me." Another stated that, "They quit whining because I realize I play a part in what is going on." When participants experienced an increased locus of control they felt more empowered and responsible for their lives. This experience carried over to those

conflict situations in their lives. For example, one participant ignored personality issues in his office, stating "it had been going on for years and I kept thinking to myself nobody is going to want to work here." He went on to share that he typically acted like he was listening and when he got tired of it he would lead the "authoritarian way." When he was complaining about the situation to his coach, he realized that he "creating more of what he didn't want – complaining." This created a shift in his perspective that he was just as much a part of what kept the conflict going as those who were personally involved in the conflict.

This research study showed that participants had a filter system or a lens from which they viewed their situations and their world. The coaching process itself and metaphors seemed to reflect back to them how their filter system collected evidence to make it true. If the truth of what they were seeing served them, brought them energy, then great! However, if it was the filter or lens that kept them stuck, then the use of metaphors and the coaching process helped to create for them a different filter system or lens from which to see their world. These different filters or lenses offered another way of seeing things, which created different perspectives. These different perspectives then sort of knocked them off of autopilot and had them stand in perspectives where they could be at choice about what was possible. When participants were allowed to stand and explore different perspectives they began to roadblocks as possibilities, from this place they became engaged, alive, and empowered.

Enhanced Relationships and Communication

The fifth theme of *enhanced relationships and communication* supports theories of relational psychology as advanced by Freud in 1926. We learn to develop relationship and communication skills by the practice and role modeling of our own experience in relationships. Each participant emphasized the freedom in the coaching relationship to be themselves, say what they wanted to say and shared how good it felt. Because they were truly listened to, they heard themselves and wanted to share this experience in their interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. As a result, participants shared that "I must be easier to live with now"; "I am less reactive and more proactive"; and "Instead of telling people what to do, I ask them what they want to do."

Participants reported how they were different in relationship and in communication as a result of coaching. They felt supported by the coach's deep listening and felt cared for by the coach's questions. Participants often talked about how they would be in a conversation with a spouse, a student or a colleague and find themselves wanting to really be of help. So their experience of really being helped was that of their coaching experience. They leaned on this experience to re-create such in their own relationships. Participants said through the interview, "I see my coach when I am in conversations with others,"; "I can hear my coach asking me questions and I then ask them to my advisee's,"; "I know how it felt to be really listened to, so when my wife and I get into a conversation that starts getting emotions flying, I stop myself and begin listening." The relationship with their coach changed their relationships with others.

Because of the new way that participants showed up in their relationship, listening more intently and asking questions about what the other person wanted rather than asserting their own wants, relationships were described as better. One stating, “I think this is the closest my marriage has ever been.” Another sharing, “my relationships with my advisees are more productive, they believe in themselves and are making decisions because of my questions; that makes me feel really good.” In psychology, the school of thought known as behaviorism indicates that learning occurs through interactions with those around us. This theory supports the value of a good coaching relationship and the change it can affect in other relationships and communication.

The finding of this study suggests that because of the individuals experience in the coaching relationship, change occurred. The experience, described as positive by all participants, was then replicated their personal and professional relationships. Humanistic theory suggests that individual change occurring at any level can create a ripple effect and that supports the findings herein. The reciprocity between the process of being coached and the positive difference it made for both personal and professional aspects of a clients life was evident. The skills and behaviors they learned through the experience of coaching helped them with their spouses, their children, their advisees, their colleagues and the people they formally lead.

Coaching improved their experience of relationships and taught them how to effectively communicate. Communication improved by listening more intently, to hear frustration to learn to empathize and set own judgments aside. Coaching and the coaching relationship stated that listening is the gateway through which all coaching

passes. When truly listening participants became more curious and were able to suspend judgment. Participants remembered during both personal and professional conversations of times when they felt themselves getting triggered. It was this sense of awareness that had them think of conversations with their coach. That memory brought the feeling of integrity and humanity. They talked about how they felt and they wanted to offer this to others and that came through communication, really listening, asking questions and looking behind the words to understand the values that were behind the words. This way of being, of leading others built better relationships, whether it be marriage, advisor/advisee relationship, collegial relationships, boss/employee relationships – it didn't matter, it was useful in all arenas. And when used in one arena, it typically cascaded into other arenas, offering more of what was wanted, productivity, balance and the feeling of belonging.

Participants in this study described the effects of coaching as "Long lasting", "Life changing", "Revolutionary", "Very important", and "A really big deal"! The participants in this study have all experienced major life-changing events, in their words, "positive". All five participants have made major life changes since the start of coaching. Three have created or been offered employment described as "my dream". One has created a niche within his current position that makes him "fortunate and very happy, it will take me to retirement." And the other, who has lost her life partner, had the backyard landscaped, enjoyed the beauty as she remembered beautiful moments in her past life, then chose to sell the house, move to a new town to begin her new life, saying with a smile, "No regrets."

Limitations

As with all research, limitations exist with this study. The interviews on the efficacy of coaching with academic leaders were after the fact, meaning the research took place after they had been coached. Therein lays the limitation. Interviewing the participants prior and during their coaching experience or shortly after may provide more in depth and details with richer context.

A second limitation was the small sample size (five academicians). Generalizations need to be made with caution. Because of the small sample size, additional research should be conducted to verify the themes that presented themselves in this study.

A third limitation is the close involvement of the researcher to the field of coaching. This researcher has bracketed her bias, and because she is human, no doubt her biases have influenced the findings of the study. I believe another study conducted by a non-coach researcher would lend validity and credibility to these findings.

The fourth limitation is that this study did not include anybody that was unhappy with the coaching process. Perhaps the criterion of being coached for two years, only opens the door for those who were happy with the process. It may prove interesting to decrease the two year criterion to one or one-and-a-half years of coaching. This difference in time may illuminate different findings in regard to whether or not coaching produces effects on the personal and professional lives of academic scholars.

Strengths

The strength of the study, relative to the size of the study, was the diversity of coaches. The work of three different coaches was represented, one from Canada, one from Colorado and one from Nebraska. A second strength of the study was the male to female participant ratio, five total participants, with three males and two females. Themes emerged as if there were no variables, no outliers. Consistent findings presented themselves, regardless of coach or participants.

Recommendations for Future Study

Including the suggestions outlined in the limitations section above, other recommendations that would lend a deeper understanding of coaching efficacy with academic leaders are as follows:

1. A mixed methods study offering pre and post assessments would be useful in identifying behavior changes specific to the themes identified in this study. This researcher would recommend measuring efficacy of the five themes that presented themselves from a pre and post methodology. This would lend not only credibility to this study, but also to the scientific coaching community. The science of coaching, relatively new, has generated little research so far and what does exist is qualitative and typically focused on executive coaching. Creswell and Clark (2007) state that mixed methods procedures offer strength by offsetting the weaknesses of separately applied quantitative and qualitative methods.
2. It is also recommended that a 360-degree qualitative and/or mixed study be conducted. Each participant spoke of how they believed their relationships with

3. family and colleagues greatly improved. They were also very willing to take the responsibility for why the relationship improved or did not improve. The 360-degree study would be fascinating and tell us whether or not these participants did indeed change their behavior in those relationships, or was it just their perspective of what they believed changed. This researcher suggests involving significant others, children, co-workers and employers. Gaining their perspectives through pre and post assessments, as well as, in-depth interviews would add significantly to the credibility and understanding of the efficacy of coaching.
4. Future research on coaching efficacy among scholars can provide further insight into understanding its usefulness and application. This research would increase the number of research publications, thus growing the research literature to advance the field and usefulness of coaching.

Conclusion

This researcher has worked in the academic world for 11 years and has been certified as a coach since 2006. Prior to coaching and education, this researcher was a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner and to this day maintains her license. It has always been the opinion of this researcher that therapy looks to heal the past and coaching looks to grow the future. So both professions are critical to the growth of humans, but the focus on the growth is what separates the two.

I was very excited when introduced to the coaching process. I saw its applicability for those who are stuck in the status quo and who wanted to grow toward a desired future of excellence. As I observed other academic leaders, I wondered, “Can

people grow on their own?" and "How does someone know if she is living life to its full potential?" Noticing that many people in leadership positions tend to talk mostly about who they were in terms of what they did professionally, I wanted to know who they were apart from what they did: "How do you define yourself apart from your cognitive self?"

This study answered these questions for me and it can be concluded that life coaching holds significant potential for growing leaders personally and that growth naturally generalizes into their professional worlds. As a matter of fact, from where these leaders were before to where they are now has dramatically shifted.

Three of the research participants said, "I now have the dream job," meaning they each have gotten clear on what they wanted, pursued it by asking, investigating and creating and when asked they said, "I have the dream job that I have always wanted."

Another research participant stated that he has always thought he wanted to have a certain status and it angered him that he had to go through so many steps in order to get what he wanted. He said that because of coaching, he realized that the job he thought he wanted didn't line up with his values and it made him sit back to think twice and decided it wasn't what he wanted. He reported great satisfaction for where he was at, working excitedly on a project that would probably take him to retirement. And the last participant has geographically moved, facing her biggest fear of leaving behind what she has always known. She will say today, "Everyday is a new day!"

This researcher believes fully that coaching can help you get clear regarding who you are, help you identify your top values and then give you insights and encouragement

to find where in your life you are not aligning your *doing* with your *being*. This awareness then creates a shift in what people will say yes to and what they will say no to.

I started this research wondering, if it was just me and my experience of coaching that really moves people from feeling stuck to seeing possibilities. I ended this research hearing and witnessing how people indeed moved from a place of feeling stuck to seeing possibilities *and* seizing opportunities. Coaching was a venue that allowed them to show their true selves, which offered them a great resource of internal strength that assisted them as they created their path. In this researcher's opinion, coaching creates a process whereby insights, empowerment, and action infuse the person being coached and has them get more of what they want. In the end, all we have to do is ask ourselves questions such as, "Who do I want to be?"; "When I am 95 years old, looking back on my life, will I be proud of how I *showed up*?"; "What will my children say about me?"; What will my grand children say about me?"; "What will my colleagues say about me?" If you are aware of your innate values and design your life in a way that honors those values, you will feel confident with the words said in remembrance of you. Coaching can no doubt help you with this endeavor.

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Appendix

A. IRB Approval letter

B. Research recruitment request to Dean of Extension

C. Recruitment invitation

D. Informed consent

E. Participant thank you letter

IRB approval letter

January 21, 2010

Deanna Peterson
Southeast Research and Extension Center
600 Frontier Dr #6 North Platte, NE 69101

John DeFrain
Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies
254 MABL UNL 68588-0236

IRB Number: 20100110422 EX
Project ID: 10422
Project Title: Coaching Efficacy with Academic Leaders: A Phenomenological Investigation

Dear Deanna:

This letter is to officially notify you of the approval of your project by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects. It is the Board's opinion that you have provided adequate safeguards for the rights and welfare of the participants in this study based on the information provided. Your proposal is in compliance with this institution's Federal Wide Assurance 00002258 and the DHHS Regulations for the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46) and has been classified as exempt.

You are authorized to implement this study as of the Date of Final Approval: 01/21/2010. This approval is Valid Until: 05/02/2011.

1. The approved informed consent form has been uploaded to NUgrant (Adult Consent Form-Approved.pdf file). Please use this form to distribute to participants. If you need to make changes to the informed consent form, please submit the revised form to the IRB for review and approval prior to using it.

We wish to remind you that the principal investigator is responsible for reporting to this Board any of the following events within 48 hours of the event:
• Any serious event (including on-site and off-site adverse events, injuries, side effects, deaths, or other problems) which in the opinion of the local investigator was unanticipated, involved risk to subjects or others, and was possibly related to the research procedures;
• Any serious accidental or unintentional change to the IRB-approved protocol that involves risk or has the potential to recur;
• Any publication in the literature, safety monitoring report, interim result or other finding that indicates an unexpected change to the risk/benefit ratio of the research;
• Any breach in confidentiality or compromise in data privacy related to the subject or others; or
• Any complaint of a subject that indicates an unanticipated risk or that cannot be resolved by the research staff.

This project should be conducted in full accordance with all applicable sections of the IRB

Guidelines and you should notify the IRB immediately of any proposed changes that may affect the exempt status of your research project. You should report any unanticipated problems involving risks to the participants or others to the Board.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office at 472-6965.

Sincerely,

Becky R. Freeman, CIP
for the IRB

Research recruitment request to Dean of Extension

May 25, 2010

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Extension
Dean Dickey
211 Ag Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583

RE: Research request for dissertation

Dear Dean Dickey,

As you know, I am pursuing my Ph.D. in Human Science through the College of Education and Human Science. I have spoken with you about my upcoming dissertation and now provide to you this written request.

The "*Dissertation"* is titled: Coaching Efficacy with Academic Leader: A Phenomenological Investigation. I have received approval from my doctoral committee to proceed with my research. In doing so, I make this request of you.

To give you some background, this research would evaluate the effects of life coaching with qualifying participants who have attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension *Clarity, Focus and Action* workshops. This is a qualitative investigation designed to understand the efficacy of life coaching with academic leaders. The actual research would be executed through phenomenological method whereby in-depth interviews would take place to obtain an extensive and reflective description of their experience, while also attempting to obtain information about the effect of coaching upon personal and professional life satisfaction.

I am in hopes that these requests will obtain your approval. I believe a win-win exists for both me and the University. For me, this experience will benefit me by creating an endearing challenge, desired experience, and a way in which my academic career can be applied to reality. For the University, the benefits are many. I know you believe in or at least endorse the idea that coaching provides overall benefit, both in terms of personal and professional life satisfaction. You have supported the education of coaches within the institute, as well as the training of approximately 295 academicians in the use of coaching skills. The potential research participants in this research will give insights into whether or not coaching produces an effect, and if so, will then answer the *so what* of coaching.

I, of course, welcome any questions or comments that you may have in regards to this request.
I look forward to hearing your approval or the alternative, in which case I respectfully request a sharing of what brings you to such a decision. As always, your time is precious and I appreciate the willingness and consideration you will bring into this matter.

Sincerely,

Deanna L. Peterson

Cc: Dr. John DeFrain
Dr. Kathleen Lodl

Research Invitation

From: Deanna L Peterson <dlpeters@unlnotes.unl.edu>
To: gbergman1@unl.edu
Date: 07/19/2010 11:42 AM
Subject: Research invitation

July 19, 2010

Dear (Potential research participant),

I am conducting a study on the efficacy of coaching with educational leaders as a part of my Ph.D. in Human Science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Information about this research project will increase the understanding of whether or not life coaching produces an effect on educational leadership.

You are receiving this e-letter because you

1. Have been a participant in one of our *Clarity, Focus, Action: Coaching Skills for Leaders* workshops.

2. I have been given permission by the Dean of Extension to invite you to participate in my research project.

3. As a result of your introduction and/or experience with the coaching workshop, you may have chosen to continue working with a personal life coach. To participate in this research, you need to have been coached by a life coach for at least two years.

If you agree to be a part of this study, I will interview you in person or on the telephone about your experience with the coaching process. The information from your interview would be kept confidential and anonymous. You will also have the opportunity to review the transcript of our conversation. All information will be treated with sensitivity and discretion, and results will be presented in summary form. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw at any time. Unfortunately, you will not receive financial compensation for participating in this study. Fortunately, your information will further develop the science of life coaching.

Please reply to this email by July 26, 2010 if you match the criteria and are willing to participate.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Deanna L. Vansickel-Peterson

Deanna L. Vansickel-Peterson, LMHP, CPCC

Deanna L. Peterson, LMHP, CPCC
Extension Educator

Douglas/Sarpy Extension-Central Office
8015 W. Center Road
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Difficulties...rather than ease can extract your best

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

COACHING EFFICACY WITH ACADEMIC LEADERS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

Dear (name),

I am conducting a study of the life coaching process as part of my Ph.D. in the College of Education and Human Science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Information about this research project will increase our understanding of how individuals can be assisted to develop the self-knowledge, change skills, and learning skills necessary to create a basis for ongoing personal development, and make a more meaningful and productive contribution to our institute.

If you agree to be part of this study, I would interview you in person or on the telephone. Your involvement will require about one and a half hours of your time. The purpose of the interview is to understand your experience of the coaching process. You will have a chance to review the transcript of our conversation. All information will be treated with sensitivity and discretion, and results will be presented in summary form. No one research participant will receive financial compensation for participating in the study.

I am not aware of any risks involved in participation in this project. In fact, I hope it will be an interesting and useful experience for you. You will be identified by number and not by name. All responses will be confidential, and your name will not be used in any report regarding this research. You are free to decline to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the investigator at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Your rights as a research participant have been explained to you. If you have any questions, please contact the researchers listed below. If you have any other questions that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact that University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (UNL IRB), telephone (402)472-6965.

Please let me know if you agree to be part of this research study. I can be contacted by email at dpeterson2@unl.edu or by telephone at 402.444.1799

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

YOU ARE VOLUNTARILY MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE CERTIFIED THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY HAVING READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION PRESENTED.

_____	_____	_____
Name	Signature	Date
PRIMARY INVESTIGATOR	Deanna L. Peterson, LMHP, CPCC	Office:
(402)444-1799		