

THE EXPERIENCE OF CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION BY LIFE COACHES
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

July 2012

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2012

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ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION PROJECT: The Experience of Critical Self-Reflection by Life

Coaches: A Phenomenological Study

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DEGREE: Doctor of Education

COLLEGE: Teachers College

DATE: July 2012

PAGES: 114

The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches. Life coaching is expanding within many disciplines including education, health care, business, social work, and wellness. Life coaching involves a coach working with an individual or groups aimed at effecting change for professional and personal development. This study addresses the gap in understanding the experience of critical self-reflection in the coaches' practice.

This was a qualitative study grounded in the phenomenology method. Data was collected from certified life coaches who were purposively sampled from referrals by certified life coaches within the United States. Data was collected from the participants through critical incident questionnaires (CIQs), journal summaries, and a semi-structured final interview. The Epoche phenomenological analysis was utilized to analyze the generated narratives (i.e., data).

The results of the analysis emerged five themes (a) structure and discipline, (b) increased self-awareness, (c) passionate purpose, (d) professional development, and (e) enhanced relationships with self and others. The findings revealed critical self-reflection provided an introspective self-analysis for the coaches to enhance and expand their coaching skills including presence, powerful questions, listening, strategic interventions, and self-management. The coaches identified increased energy for themselves between coaching sessions after completing the CIQ, which provided a mechanism to slow down, focus, and prepare for each coaching session. The focused attention on the coaches' behaviors, thoughts, and actions led to increased awareness of how to redirect and course correct before and during a coaching session. This redirection and focus created a deeper connection with their client. The coaches recommended critical self-reflection be taught in coach training schools and become a regular practice within the coach's professional development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It takes a team to write a dissertation, and my team did not begin with the first written word in this project. It began long before I even knew I would spend four years immersed in a doctoral program. The players have changed over the course of time, yet the contributions have lingered.

I thank my husband, Rick, for his patience, humor, and his respect for my passionate spirit of indulging in learning opportunities. Without his willingness, this accomplishment would not be fulfilled. To our sons, Chris and Andrew, who were in college while Mom was, I appreciate your feigned interest in my ramblings. Most importantly, I thank you for being delightful and inspiring teachers of life for me.

My dissertation chair, Dr. Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, a/k/a Dr. Shelly, recognized something in me early in the program and never stopped believing in my capabilities. I am grateful for her spirit of learning, laughter, availability, and keeping me focused with her phone calls and emails. I could not have accomplished the completion of this program, let alone the dissertation, without her guidance, advice, and recommendations to pursue a topic of meaning and purpose. I thank the members of my committee: Dr. Thalia Mulvihill for her eloquent expressions, powerful questions, and teaching me the value of how to present and defend one's position; Dr. Kristie Speirs Neumeister who introduced me to the study of creative thinking, which I continued applying to finish this

dissertation, and to Dr. Roy Weaver who came on board offering supportive thoughts and a reminder that surprises occur at any moment.

Five incredible life coaches said “yes” so that I could conduct my study. To them, I am honored to have experienced their stories and to represent them in some capacity. They humbled me, inspired me, and their experiences held me to the fire to complete. I appreciate and honor their commitments to themselves, to the field of coaching, and to me.

My awesome peer reviewers, Dr. Lyn Jones, Dr. Amanda Funk, and Dr. Robyn Chaddock provided me feedback, encouragement, direction, and challenge. I am incredibly blessed to have had them on my team to boost my confidence and develop my insight.

My colleagues at Ivy Tech Community College were the best cheerleaders with encouragement, laughter, compassion, and empathy. I am indebted to the administration for supporting my vision, and to my program chair, Eric Comstock, who gave me the latitude, freedom, and independence to pursue my goals.

My friends provided stress relief through their phone calls, text messages, Skype calls, prayers, and Facebook postings offering welcomed interactions of encouragement. My meltdowns were brief due to their timely interventions. A special thanks to my friend, Jerilynne Knight, who revisited APA just for me.

The best for last is my magnificent relationship with God and the power of faith, spiritual guidance, and divine appointments. Only through my spiritual beliefs and daily connection could I have mastered these four years of learning and living. Amen.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the students in the Human Services program at Ivy Tech Community College-Central Region. They inspired me to the finish line, and I am privileged to be a part of their journey and transformation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Life coaching is a rapidly growing field of knowledge and practice aimed at helping people to achieve personal and professional development by focusing on their goals and aspirations. The business of life coaching is booming across the United States, and challenges are arising as to the definition, professionalism, and application in business, education, training, and other venues. An internet search reveals coaching for multiple purposes such as wellness, business, executives, life balance, motivation, nutrition, and many other personal or professional areas. As with any discipline, it is important to conduct research to explore the ways in which coaching works, so that the profession can be informed and practices enhanced. The discipline of life coaching is in its infancy compared to professions involving psychology, social work, sociology, and business. Empirical and descriptive research is needed to help practitioners understand, theorize, and contribute to the development of life coaching as a profession.

Working as a life coach, I have relied heavily on my background as a licensed mental health practitioner to help me conceptualize and create my coaching process. I have pondered the following questions:

- How do life coaches without a formal degree, certification, or licensure maintain credibility and professionalism within the field of coaching?
- What coaching theories do other life coaches use to guide their practice?

These questions fueled my desire to research how a coach develops as a professional, particularly with the use of critical self-reflection.

In the review of literature, it is difficult to find a universally accepted definition of life coaching. A question from the literature asks whether life coaching is the same as executive coaching. Is business coaching the same as executive coaching? Some would say yes, others no. Williams and Menendez (2007) write, “A client may seek creative or business coaching, leadership development, or a more balanced life, but all coaching is life coaching” (p. xi). With executive coaching, the emphasis sounds like it would be on the executive, yet many aspects of the success of the coaching practice includes helping executives explore personal issues that impact their leadership style. With so many interchangeable terms, it is easy to speculate that defining coaching has been as ambiguous as defining adult education and the adult learner.

The International Coach Federation (ICF) defines coaching and a professional coaching relationship as:

- Coaching: Coaching is partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.
- A professional coaching relationship: A professional coaching relationship exists when coaching includes a business agreement or contract that defines the responsibilities of each party (ICF, 2011, n.p.).

A definition of coaching is a collaborative partnership between coach and clients where the clients ultimately discover their own truths to enhance their experience and to lead a full and satisfying life (Kristal, 2009). Coaching is a method of conversation that

empowers the client through probing questions and attentive listening. Coaching facilitates the client learning what is needed without the coach telling or advising (Williams & Menendez, 2007).

What seems to be consistently revealed through the literature is a common denominator, which is the goal of achieving changes in the client with respect to his/her personal objectives and the questions raised by individuals or organizations that engage coaches (Kristal, 2009). That being said, the role of life coaching is to help clients facilitate change through a learning process. Utilizing techniques such as reflective listening and open communication with dialogue and inquiry, coaching influences change (Meyer, 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Life coaching is rapidly growing as a profession, yet it remains unlicensed and anyone can claim to be a coach, can charge for services, and set up a practice. There is a belief coaching will reach a critical mass in society – “people will have heard of coaching, know when they need a coach, know how to find a coach, and know the difference between partnering with a life coach and seeking the services of a therapist or counselor” (Williams & Menendez, 2007, p. xii). Coaching is short-term, addresses goals and accomplishments, and can be done in person or with technology appealing to a broad range of professions. Yet, there is not a universal acceptance of what defines an effective coach. Though the literature addresses the skills needed to be a life coach, the practice of engaging in introspective practices to develop as a life coach has not been thoroughly addressed (Drake, Brennan, & Gortz, 2008).

This study addresses the gap in understanding the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches. There have been studies about the value of critical self-reflection with other disciplines and the impact of change within the coachee's life (Kristal, 2009). Yet, there has not been as much emphasis placed on critical self-reflection for the coaches, which is a deeper and more meaningful process in deriving meaning from prior experiences.

A recent informal interview with an expert in the field of life coaching supports the need for a study on critical self-reflection. The interview was held with the former president of the Indiana chapter of the ICF. The former president identified the value of helping life coaches utilize introspective work in order to become more proficient in the understanding of the life coaching relationship (F. Carter, personal communication, 1/5/2012).

As someone who has mentored over 400 life coaches, the former president of ICF affirmed the focus of a study on critical self-reflection, as understood from adult learning theory, could have significant contributions to the practice of life coaching. One contribution could be defining how to help coaches learn the process of critical self-reflection. Her comments support the gap in the research that going a step further into critical self-reflection as opposed to self-reflection is a needed area of study.

Researcher Statement

In my quest to identify a topic I was passionate about, committed to, and could contribute to the specified discipline, I revisited my professional foundation as a licensed clinical social worker. Conducting psychotherapy for several years provided an incredible opportunity to be involved in transformational experiences, but I quickly

discovered to be effective, I needed to do my own work – my own introspective work. Delving into the psyche and psychosocial aspects of individuals' lives week after week led me to consult with professionals for theoretical suppositions and exploration of counseling techniques and methods. My own reflection process allowed me to recognize what was effective and how I contributed to the success or failure of a psychotherapy experience. When I transitioned to life coaching, I discovered that my clinical skills were highly intertwined in the competencies of life coaching. I still needed to assess, explore, and reflect. I continued to connect with my professional network and hired my own coach. I also became certified in another modality of coaching so I could continue my formal and informal learning.

In interacting with other coaches, I learned that not everyone shares my zeal to explore introspectively. Often, once a coach had a system in place for their clientele, their system was used consistently for each client. Over the past ten years, I have engaged with a variety of coaching practices and systems. Some of my colleagues defined heady, business-oriented schema as coaching. During the past year I met with life coaches and searched the literature for research on the efficacy of life coaching.

Reflection is frequently referred to in the psychology and social work literature, yet I was surprised that the coach's willingness and ability to critically self-reflect was not as prevalent. How could one be so complacent in not doing one's own work when working as a change agent? Reviewing the research on the use of reflection and critical reflection identified critical self-reflection was not as defined or separated from the reflection practices found in psychology. Would critical self-reflection take the coaching

relationship to a new level if the coach utilized critical self-reflection and not just systemic methods of coaching?

As I identified myself as an adult educator and began my doctoral studies, I was introduced to several adult learning theories and practices. The connection between life coaching and adult education was cemented for me when I learned the concepts of andragogy and self-directed learning (Knowles, 1980) as well as transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009). The life coaching client could be defined as an adult learner with vision and goals to enhance learning for professional and personal development. The compatibility of life coaching with adult education influenced my topic selection for this study.

Another discovery influencing this study was critical self-reflection using the specific practice of a Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) as designed and developed by Brookfield (1995; 2006; 2011). This critical self-reflection activity was primarily confined to the classroom. I spent four years in this doctoral program and participated in the use of the CIQ's within most of my major courses. Could this reflective practice instrument be of value to the profession of life coaching as a method for data collection? I could not locate one reference to this instrument being used in life coaching as a tool for reflection or critical self-reflection to help identify the professionalism and effective practice of a life coach.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches. Support for this study emerges from Kristal's (2009) study on reflection and critical reflection in the process of change through life coaching. He further

recommended studying the difference between critical reflection and critical self-reflection in the coaching relationship and how critical self-reflection contributes to the fields of adult learning and coaching.

Research Questions

When using phenomenological research, the focus of the study is a specific phenomenon. “Exponents of this approach are interested in the qualitatively different ways in which a phenomenon is experienced” (Pietersen, 2002, para 15). The research questions for this method then explore the experience of that phenomenon. In this study, the primary research question is:

What is the lived experience of life coaches using critical self-reflection to improve their practice?

From this question of discovery, I propose exploring the following secondary research questions:

1. How do introspective/reflective experiences provide meaning to the life coaching relationship?
2. What is the value of critical self-reflection activities within the life coach’s development as a life coach?

Role of the Researcher

A key distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is the role of the researcher who is considered the instrument for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Trusty, 2011). The researcher is directly involved with the research participants facilitating the data collection methods such as fieldwork which involves visiting the site of the study, interviewing face-to-face or via

phone, or conducting focus groups through webinars and face-to-face interaction. It is essential that I define reflexivity in this study to remove bias, judgments, and preconceived ideas. “Reflexivity in research can thus be seen as being critically self-aware of one’s impact on the research rather than reflecting more generally on the research and evolving meanings” (Finlay, 2011, p. 84). My experience as a life coach, mental health practitioner, and adult educator certainly leads to assumptions and beliefs as to the significance of the study and to the outcomes. I value critical self-reflection as a component of skill and training needed to be competent and effective in one’s practice. This statement is a perspective of reciprocity found within qualitative research based on my life experience and professional development.

As the primary researcher in this study, practicing self-management was critical to the trustworthiness of the study. My role included being neutral and being in a process of discovery. It began with my bracketing assumptions, presuppositions, and projections (Coates, 2010; Moustakas, 1994). However, it was presumptuous to ascribe to the methods of bracketing without understanding the difficulty and layered aspects of bracketing one’s past experiences with the phenomenon. Being able to reflect and be reflexive are practices the qualitative researcher strives to accomplish to prevent “becoming too self-absorbed and caught up in self-indulgent introspection such that the focus of the research shifts away from the phenomenon on to the researcher” (Finlay, 2011, p. 79).

I came to appreciate the practice of bracketing and reflexivity within this study as I focused on staying present and suspending past knowledge of the phenomenon. As described in Chapter Three, I employed specific strategies such as a reflective journal and

peer debriefing and allowed for wonderment and discovery to guide my role as the researcher.

Significance of the Study

Since life coaching is in its infancy as a recognized and credible profession, there is a growing awareness of the importance of empirical research to define the professionalism of life coaching (Grant, 2009; Williams & Menendez, 2007). As will be noted in the literature review in Chapter Two, in the past three years, there have emerged published dissertations conducting research on some aspect of life coaching. This study contributes to the credibility of life coaching as a profession and to the development of the practice of professional life coaches. Those invested in empirical research encourage the ongoing development of practices to support life coaching as a profession. By conducting a study specifically aimed at a particular practice of critical self-reflection, this study provided life coaches an opportunity to experience a practice often reserved for academic settings and to discover how this experience may contribute to their profession.

As the practice of coaching continues to seek recognition as a profession, and in particular, as a helping profession, coaches must continuously seek to engage in self-analysis and professional development to satisfy the core foundations of ethical practice that are expected of us by our clients and our peers from other helping professions (Drake et al., 2008, p. 29).

Williams and Menendez (2007) are strong proponents of empirical research to support the success of the coaching profession.

As people enter into our profession, many think that a one-day workshop or reading a book makes them a professional coach...It's possible to learn coaching

methodology in a quick manner and be effective, but that doesn't make someone a professional coach" (p. xxiv-xxv).

As life coaches participate in training and developing new skills, the profession benefits. This study provided life coaches the opportunity to practice a specific introspection activity and discover the meaning of critical self-reflection for themselves as well as for the body of knowledge contributing to the life coaching profession.

Limitations

As stated in *The Role of the Researcher*, a potential limitation could have been if my experience as a licensed mental health professional and life coach revealed bias or assumptions about critical self-reflection and its value the life coaching profession. By practicing the step of bracketing within data analysis, in which my presuppositions and bias were neutralized, this potential limitation was addressed.

Another limitation to this study related to the identification of participants through snowball sampling, given that this was a small qualitative study – four to six participants. The size of the sample provided a process of discovery to formulate a deeper application of critical self-reflection in the life coaching experience. Rather than the findings being applied as a broad and generalized outcome for the world's interpretation, the findings were examined and described as they apply to the life coaching profession, especially for life coaches' personal and professional development. This awareness of the limited application of the findings did not diminish the value of this study as the role of critical self-reflection continues to be identified as a method for developing training, applying knowledge, and assessing effectiveness of education and programs.

Definitions and Terms (Operationally Defined)

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are used.

Term	Definition
Adult Education	<p>“Activities intentionally designed for the purpose of bringing about learning among those whose age, social roles, or self-perception define them as adults”</p> <p>(Merriam and Brockett, 2007, p. 7).</p>
Certified Life Coach	<p>An individual who has completed a minimum of 100 hours of client coaching experience and is certified in a specialized course of training in the discipline of coaching (ICF, 2011).</p>
Life coaching	<p>The “partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential”</p> <p>(ICF, 2011, n.p.).</p>
Life coaching relationship	<p>“A professional coaching relationship exists when coaching includes a business agreement or contract that defines the responsibilities of each party”</p> <p>(ICF, 2011, n.p.).</p>

Term	Definition
Critical Incident Questionnaire	A reflective-practice instrument comprised of five questions, each of which asks life coaches to write down details of the coaching session experienced (Brookfield, 2006).
Critical self-reflection	An adult learning term and is defined as “questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience” (Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009, p. 7).
Participants	Certified or licensed life coaches engaged in the process of critical self-reflection.

Summary

The interview-based, phenomenological study of critical self-reflection as experienced by life coaches provided the opportunity to expand the existing research on life coaching and its value to life coaches, clients, credentialing organizations, and researchers. Life coaching is hitting a critical mass internationally and the definition, competency, and practice of life coaching called for empirical research to lend credibility to this expanding profession. Critical self-reflection, a primarily academic based learning method, has transferable properties to life coaching profession by encouraging the continued development of application of learning. This study was guided by the literature related to critical self-reflection, life coaching practices, and adult learning theories. Chapter Two outlines a review of this literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

During this study I investigated the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches and the meaning of this lived experience. Initial thoughts about this study emerged from Kristal's (2009) study on reflection and critical reflection in the process of change through life coaching. Upon further consideration, I examined the difference between critical reflection and critical self-reflection in the coaching relationship from the perspective of the coach. I also explored how critical self-reflection contributes to the fields of adult learning and coaching. The literature review focused on the impact of studies in life coaching using critical reflection, reflection activities, and other disciplines practicing critical self-reflection. The literature review also provided the theoretical framework of transformative learning theory and self-directed learning theory.

Life Coaching and Adult Education

Life coaching is a rapidly growing field of practice and knowledge helping people develop both personally and professionally. The life coach guides clients toward meeting their goals and aspirations. The emphasis is on "producing action and uncovering learning that can lead to more fulfillment, more balance, and a more effective process for living" (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998, p. xi). Identified as emerging from executive coaching, life coaching is in its infancy compared to professions involving psychology, social work, sociology, and business. Life coaching can be delivered by

anyone who desires to create a life coaching practice. The life coach does not have to have a degree or a certification. A recent coaching study identified “Untrained individuals who call themselves coaches were viewed as the main future obstacle for coaching over the next 12 months” (ICF Global Study, 2012, n.p.).

Adult education is a broad term including formal college education; job related training, community education, or self-improvement. Adult education emerged from the training and development field expanding outside of organizational development to community and higher education venues. Coach training programs are adult education programs as they are targeted towards adult learners, facilitated by adult educators, and promote professional and personal development. Similar to a life coach, an adult educator facilitates meaningful adult learning honoring the experiences of the adult learner. A primary purpose of adult education is to recognize adult learners as resourceful in understanding their experiences and reflecting upon them for problem-solving (Brookfield, 1995).

Life coaching and adult education share properties related to adult learning. Both were influenced by psychology and philosophy (Williams & Menendez, 2007). Both focus on adult learners with the goal of transforming and enriching lives. Both recognize adult learners are self-directed and possess the characteristics of knowing what they want to achieve, as well as learn, through active participation. Adult learning is referred to as a process uniting cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for the purpose of acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one’s knowledge, skills, values, and worldviews (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Life coaching is referred to as a process to enhance and change lives enabling learning and development

to occur. The emphasis of life coaching is on the present and future focused on goals and behavior.

Higher education recognizes life coaching as an emerging discipline offering master's degrees and classes in life, business, and executive coaching. More than 30 American universities have introduced coaching programs, including Harvard, Yale, Duke, New York University, Georgetown, the University of California at Berkeley, Penn State, the University of Texas at Dallas and George Washington (Morgan, 2012). Some colleges even offer coaching to freshman students to help with the transition from high school to college (Hoover, 2011).

A common reference in the literature was there has been little empirical research into the effectiveness of coaching as a profession. Grant (2003) identified that out of 98 citations related to coaching, only 17 were empirical evaluations of the effectiveness of coaching. Most of the citations I found in my review were focused on evaluating executive coaching or business coaching within work or organizational settings. As previously stated, the coaching industry is growing tremendously, and there are emerging studies from graduate students' research in the past three years focusing on life coaching. Brock (2008) studied grounded theory and the roots and emergence of coaching. Carter (2009) studied Appreciative Inquiry and transformative learning and the impact on life coaching practice. Kress (2008) studied executive coaching and the perception of self-awareness and leadership behavior changes, and Vansickel-Peterson (2010) studied the effectiveness of coaching with academic leaders. There remains a broad chasm between the coaching profession and the supportive research to identify coaching as an invaluable tool for personal and professional development.

A review of the literature identified several studies conducted with the executive coaching profession. Executive coaching is defined as working with someone one-on-one at an executive level within an organization. It is a challenge to compare or correlate the findings of these studies with the findings of studies on life coaching. The executive coaching studies are predominantly focused on organizational benefits such as increasing sales and managing teams, rather than on the coaches or clientele.

Other studies on life coaching focused on the coaching process and what coaching approach works best. These studies supported the value of coaching. As indicated in an executive coaching research, “the whole coaching journey is undertaken for the benefit of the clients, so it is certainly worthwhile to understand their perspectives as deeply as possible” (DeHaan, Bertie, Day & Sills, 2010, p. 608). As offered by another researcher on the value of life coaching (Pavlina, 2008):

Life coaching can work nicely. The skills and ideas you gain from your life coach may endure well beyond the paid coaching period, so you aren't just paying for your time on the phone or for short-term benefits. Ideally you're paying for a permanent shift to a higher level of performance (p. 1).

Since life coaching is considered of value, this study added value in understanding the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches.

As summarized in other research, there have been emerging studies on the efficacy of cognitive-behavioral solution-focused life coaching on raising goal striving, hope, and well-being in coaching clients as well as finding that coaching was effective in helping clients reduce workplace stress. “These studies are indicative of the breadth of coaching research that is beginning, and reflect just how many open questions there are”

(Linley, 2006, p. 4). Spence and Grant (2007) propose the empirical study of life coaching is significant for the sustainability of the life coaching profession. There are a number of challenges to be met in developing coaching knowledge such as defining coaching, expanding the theoretical approaches to coaching, and developing the empirical evidence research collection on coaching.

Wales (2002) conducted a phenomenological study with a group of managers by providing coaching over a period of year and offered coaching every two weeks. The results of this study conclude that coaching was effective in increasing the managers' self-development and organizational effectiveness. Grant's (2003) study on life coaching concluded "life coaching should be solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral, rather than an introspective, overly-philosophical endeavor" (p. 262). However, this result is based upon participants "over engagement in self-reflection," which could be detrimental to goal attainment (p. 262).

Grant (2009) identified the following statistics related to the research conducted over the past decade in the area of executive, work place, and life coaching:

- 425 articles, dissertations, and empirical studies were published between 2000 and May 2009;
- 156 outcome studies were published since 1980; and
- 104 case studies, 36 within-subject studies, and 16 between-subject studies.

He concludes, "The knowledge base underpinning coaching appears to be growing at a substantial rate. To further move towards a solid evidence-based approach to coaching, more between-subject studies, and particularly randomized outcome studies, are needed" (Grant, 2009, p. 1).

Coaching Core Competencies

The ICF developed a list of core competencies for the coaching profession and to assist in credentialing individuals through its organization. These competencies apply to any type of coaching practice whether wellness, life, business, or executive coaching.

They are not ranked in any particular order, and they guide the individual seeking coach training to identify professional training programs, which will meet these competencies.

The core competencies include:

- Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards,
- Establishing the coaching agreement,
- Establishing trust and intimacy with the client,
- Coaching presence,
- Active listening,
- Powerful questioning,
- Direct communication,
- Creating awareness,
- Designing actions,
- Planning and goal getting, and
- Managing progress and accountability.

(ICF Core Competencies, 2012, n.p.)

What is of interest is that the practice of critical self-reflection, self-evaluation, or reflection on the coach's part is not listed. In the descriptors of each core competency, no mention is made of the coach participating in self-evaluation or introspective work

for self. These competencies are targeted towards the client, albeit credentialing depends upon whether the coach adheres to these principles in practice. This study bridged the gap in the life coaching profession to identify the possibility of incorporating critical self-reflection in the coaching core competencies.

Reflection is Reflection, Isn't It?

Critical self-reflection is the phenomenon in the dissertation topic, and the literature review on reflection was quite interesting. It appears the word “reflection” is used interchangeably with “self-reflection” and “critical self-reflection.” Kristal (2009) completed a dissertation study researching critical reflection in coaching. His findings support the application of critical reflection to improve self-awareness, provide a flexible coaching process, and identify the significance of authenticity in the critical reflection activities (Kristal, 2009). To further explore this phenomenon and identify the significance in the application of critical self-reflection, I applied adult learning theory as the theoretical foundation for this study.

Critical self-reflection was introduced to me in the Adult, Higher, and Community Education doctoral program within the first two courses I completed. Though a veteran of the world of mental health, social work, and psychology as a mental health professional, I had not encountered critical self-reflection as a practice as I now understand it to be. I turned to Dr. Jack Mezirow and Dr. Stephen Brookfield as the educators of my developmental learning in this practice.

Mezirow (2009) identified critical self-reflection as one of the elements in transformative learning among adult learners. Critical self-reflection refers to “questioning the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior

experience” (p. 7). The use of critical self-reflection is in response to one’s conflicting thoughts, feelings, and actions. Mezirow described content, process, and premise as the three forms of reflection in the transformation of meaning perspectives: “content (reflecting on what we perceive, think, feel, and act), process (reflecting on how we perform the functions of perceiving), and premise (an awareness of why we perceive)” (p. 7).

Brookfield (2006) defined critical reflection “as the process by which we research the assumptions informing our practice by viewing these through four complementary lenses—the lenses of students’ eyes, colleague’s perceptions, literature, and our own autobiography” (p. 26). He elaborated as adult educators and in the arena of adult learning, critical reflection is a practice to measure success as an educator and how learning is experienced. Through critical reflection, Brookfield (2006) maintains adult educators can reenergize. He wrote, “One of the problems many of us face as the years pass by is that our teaching can become stale” (p. 27). This premise aligns with this study to address complacency in life coaching practices. Life coaches, like adult educators, may experience mindful coaching as Brookfield (2006) believes with “awareness that things are rarely what they seem” (p. 28).

In reviewing the practice of using the Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ), Brookfield (1995) identified a benefit as helping students become reflective learners. Students began to notice and study the patterns they exhibited and how they reacted to different situations. Of interest is Brookfield’s account of his using the CIQ as part of his teaching journal to examine his reactions to his students’ comments. I find it

advantageous to offer life coaches a qualitative instrument that has been used worldwide within organizations and education (Keefer, 2009).

Brookfield (1995) offers six reasons critical reflection is important to teaching. I think these reasons fit the core competencies of life coaching as delineated above and support the use of the CIQ as a critical self-reflection activity in other areas of adult education including life coaching. A compilation of these six reasons are critical self-reflection helps us:

- Make informed actions with a better chance of achieving desired outcomes;
- Develop a rationale for practice, and the underlying principles behind our practice;
- Keep perspective about limits to our abilities in the classroom;
- Ground ourselves emotionally;
- Enlivens our classrooms; and
- Increase democratic trust enabling students to feel safe in their own opinions and beliefs. (Glowacki-Dudka & Barrett, 2007).

Another connection life coaching has to adult education and critical self-reflection is to consider the study by Glowacki-Dudka and Barrett (2007) with online students and the use of CIQ for critical reflection. They found the use of the CIQs for the critical self-reflection activity was of value to the students in connecting the students to the instructor and the course. Life coaches interact with their clients via face-to-face sessions, telephone, and online coaching courses. The use of critical self-reflection expanding beyond the face-to-face interaction opens up the applicability to other domains, including a life coaching session.

Other disciplines use critical self-reflection and critical reflection. In a blog for social workers (McColl, 2011), the emphasis on critical reflection to sustain social workers in the workforce, particularly in child protection services, is noted as essential:

Critical reflection leads to increased awareness of the tension between personal and professional integrity and ethics, and the tasks one is meant to undertake in the course of one's work. Self-reflection, self-location and critical reflection are unquestionably necessary skills for child protection as the need to remain conscious is integral to anti-oppressive and emancipatory work with others... In order to have a critically reflective work force, we must have organizations and practice systems which pragmatically encourage and support critical reflection. This critical reflection cannot be an intellectual exercise but must also lead to improved practice and better outcomes for vulnerable children and their families. Perhaps when critical reflection becomes a systemically supported practice, social workers and other skilled child protection professionals will make their way back into this incredibly challenging and complex area of practice (McColl, 2011, p. 1).

As a social worker and life coach, I appreciate the emphasis on the practice of critical self-reflection rather than an intellectual concept. Life coaches practicing critical self-reflection through various activities have the opportunity to evaluate and assess self and professional integrity and development. Using critical self-reflection as an evaluation process may include assessing for competency. The nursing field has supported the use of critical self-reflection activities citing "systematic, deliberate, and focused self-reflection is an under-valued tool for enhancing individual accountability for continued competence" (Lenburg, 2000, p. 2). Critical self-reflection can be used as a

professional development tool for improving quality practice. Thompson and Thompson (2008) described the value in having a supervisor, mentor, or coach to process reflective practices in social work.

Schön (1984) was credited with bringing reflective practice to professionals as an evaluative process related to professional development. He outlined two approaches called reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. These two types of reflective practices ideally integrate to help an individual draw from past experience and a professional knowledge base to reflect on a situation currently occurring as well as reflect after the situation to make sense of it and construct meaning. Thompson and Thompson (2008) added another dimension to this practice called reflection-for-action, which is planning ahead and reflecting on what may happen allowing for preparation and anticipation of a situation. These practices are identified as relevant to thinking/analysis and self-awareness.

Andragogy and Self-Directed Learning Theory

Critical to the understanding of adult learning theories is the work of Malcolm Knowles, whose significant contribution to the field of adult learning was his theory and principles known as andragogy (Frey & Alman, 2003; Knowles, 1980; Merriam et al., 2007), which provided a framework for understanding and teaching adult learners. Though researchers still debate whether Knowles' assumptions are actually theory rather than characteristics, the application of his findings have shaped ongoing theoretical perspectives for decades (Merriam et al., 2007).

Knowles' assumptions (Frey & Alman, 2003; Knowles, 1980; Merriam et al., 2007; Minton, 2011) are as follows.

- Adult learners come into the classroom with a wealth of work experience and abilities with the ability to transform the information they receive into meaningful cognitive and reality-based application.
- Adult learners are often driven by their need to know.
- Adult learners have a focus on what they aspire to be and consequently are internally motivated to direct their learning toward those goals.
- Adult learners desire an instructor who is student-centered and who places them in an active rather than passive learner role.

Cox (2006) claims, "I would argue that andragogy has reached its zenith with the advent of coaching as a learning approach" (p. 195). She posits andragogy not only provides the core principles of adult learning; it represents the philosophy of coaching.

Building upon andragogy, and the assumption that adult learners are self-directed learners, self-directed learning theory is applicable in formal and informal education programs, the classroom, online, and wherever education and instruction can take place (Merriam et al., 2007). Guglielmino, Long, and Heimstra (2004) present several perspectives from researchers and educators on the theory and practice of adult learning. In addition to Knowles' assumptions, "self-direction can be seen as both an instructional method (self-directed learning) and a personality characteristic (learner self-direction)" (Guglielmino et al., p. 7).

Transformative Learning Theory

A theoretical foundation for this study was through the lens of transformative learning theory, an adult learning theory first introduced to adult education by Jack Mezirow in 1978 (Castelli, 2011; Mezirow & Associates, 1990; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009). One of the key elements within transformative learning theory is to question assumptions and beliefs created through prior experiences. Transformative learning theory employs critical self-reflection to find “meaning and significance in the learning experience” (Castelli, 2011, p. 15). As discovered in other research related to life coaching,

When reflecting on coaching as a whole, there is an unmistakable mirror image of Mezirow’s stages in transformation in the framework and processes described earlier within the coaching literature. Clients typically come to personal coaching with a need to improve on aspects of their lives or work. They then proceed to assess their current realities and assess their underlying beliefs. Next they brainstorm the possibilities for change, after which they plan and implement a course of action. During this stage they episodically acquire the skills and knowledge needed to reach their goals and begin ‘test driving’ their new roles or strategies. Confidence and competence is gradually built and ultimately, the transformation becomes a natural state of being. Thus it is clear that the coaching process has strong links with Mezirow’s stages in transformation. (Griffiths, 2005, p. 60).

Though adult learning theory has promoted critical self-reflection within the academic venue, the transferability of this practice to other disciplines is again

emphasized. In this study, I focused on the lived experience of the life coaches utilizing the practice of critical self-reflection. Like an educator effecting change through learning, a life coach effects change through coaching (Kristal, 2009). Change is a key element found within the tenets of transformational learning theory, and the fit with life coaching supports an ongoing reflective practice. Transformative learning theory provides for the individual to transform from one set of behaviors, beliefs, and assumptions to another once the individual has the self-awareness to identify the unknowingly carried assumptions (Fisher-Yoshida, 2009). This self-awareness is one outcome of critical self-reflection, and the impact of awareness on one's behaviors and actions influencing self and others may result in significant change. "There are different amounts of transformation that can occur, and the level of self-awareness of the person being coached is critical in determining the level of readiness to transform" (Fisher-Yoshida, 2009, p. 151).

Castelli (2011) views the value of critical self-reflection practices within higher education and compares the practice to one of being a coach or mentor. Advocating for reflection practices within graduate courses for business students, Castelli (2011) found by creating a safe environment to promote critical reflection expanded the students' learning resulting in a transformative learning experience.

Summary

This study was an interview-based phenomenology study, which focused on the lived experience of the participants as they experience the phenomenon being studied. This literature review revealed the need for ongoing empirical research in the life coaching profession to add to the body of knowledge of an emerging discipline and

profession. The research was promising as I discovered recent dissertations approaching various issues within the life coaching profession and its connection to adult learning and education. I recommend continued exploration of methods to enhance the practice.

Critical self-reflection as an adult learning concept has transferability to other disciplines, including life coaching. Through the lens of adult learning theories, life coaching and its processes share adult learning frameworks. Chapter Three continues the exploration of research outlining the specific application of phenomenology research methods to investigate critical self-reflection as experienced by life coaches.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

When I entered the Adult, Higher and Community Education doctoral program, I knew my background in the behavioral and social sciences would influence my decision to conduct a qualitative research study. I was not aware of the multiple methods and designs. When I was introduced to the qualitative phenomenological method, I was intrigued because of its aim to describe the experience of the participants without preconceptions or suppositions on the part of the researcher (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). This study was a qualitative phenomenological study exploring the topic of critical self-reflection in life coaching. As I reviewed the literature on life coaching, the practice of reflection in the life coaching relationship had been studied from the perspective of the life coach and coachee; however, the practice of critical self-reflection had not been as prevalent from the perspective of the life coach (Kristal, 2009).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research can be completed using a variety of methods. These include: phenomenology, naturalistic inquiry, field study, ethnography, and inductive research, among others (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The primary assumption in qualitative research is that “reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds” (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 97). Qualitative research explores and values the

experiences and how the research participants construct meaning. Merriam and Simpson (2000) state:

The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives, to delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and to describe how people interpret what they experience (p. 98).

Denzin and Lincoln (2004) offer this description of the complex nature of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 4).

Description is the significant word and action in phenomenological research (Creswell, 2007; Groenewald, 2004). The objective of the qualitative researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon and remain true to the facts while representing the lived experiences of the participants (Finlay, 2009).

A key distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is the role of the researcher who is considered the instrument for data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Trusty, 2011). The researcher is directly

involved with the research participants through multiple data collection methods, such as field-work that involves making observations or visiting the site of the study, conducting interviews face-to-face or over the phone, or facilitating focus groups through webinars and face-to-face interaction. In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection, rather than an experiment or a survey. Due to the interactions and personal involvement in qualitative studies, the researcher must possess the skills to be aware of bias and preconceptions which may impact or influence the outcomes of the study (Groenewald, 2004; Hoepfl, 1997; Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The qualitative researcher determines the method to be used, and then decides upon the materials and skills needed. As qualitative research is an inductive and fluid process, the choice as to which of these are employed is not always made in advance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The methods undertaken and skill sets of the researcher in a qualitative study need to be of high quality, just as the quantitative researcher selects a high quality statistical method to ensure validity and reliability of the study.

While qualitative research is not as regulated through external processes as quantitative studies, each qualitative design has its methodology and processes for data collection, synthesis, and analysis. The researcher delineates and describes these distinct methods to ensure quality within the study. As with quantitative research, qualitative research utilizes a systematic, consciously selected design, data collection, interpretation, and communication (Mays & Pope, 2000; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Mays and Pope (2000) state:

Quality in qualitative research can be assessed with the same broad concepts of validity and relevance used for quantitative research, but these need to be

operationalized differently to take into account the distinctive goals of qualitative research (p. 50).

Sample selection in qualitative research uses purposeful sampling, unlike the quantitative paradigm, in which study samples are selected through probability sampling utilizing representatives from a larger population (Hoepfl, 1997). The size of the sample depends upon the type of qualitative study and is selected through a variety of purposeful sampling such as snowball sampling, typical case sampling, and maximum variation sampling (Groenewald, 2004; Hoepfl, 1997; Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Phenomenology Research

In choosing the phenomenology method for this study, I studied Edmond Husserl (1859-1938), who is credited with being the primary founder of phenomenology (Creswell, 2007; Finlay, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Husserl's approach to human science research was based on subjective openness with a rich steeping in philosophy. His basic assumptions described phenomenology as the study of the lived, conscious experiences of several persons resulting in the development of descriptions of the essences of those lived experiences (Husserl, 1962). Husserl developed the phenomenology research method of using Epoche, which continues to influence phenomenology research currently (Creswell, 2007; Hamill & Sinclair, 2010). Epoche means to "refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Epoche allows the researcher to view the lived experience of the participants through a fresh perspective.

Phenomenology method is used in several disciplines working directly with people including psychologists, nurses, educators, and social workers. Moustakas (1994)

explains the essence of phenomenology research is to deeply understand individual experiences of a particular phenomenon. The researcher then delves and discovers the common themes from the lived experiences of the participants. In studying the lived experiences of the participants, phenomenology research recognizes that people see different realities in different situations, in the company of different people and at different times. The significance of this recognition helps define the meaning structure from the participants' responses.

Understanding lived experience requires the participants to interpret the action or experience for the researcher, and then the researcher must interpret the explanation provided by the person. When focusing on the lived experience of the participants, the phenomenological method is recommended (Cohen, Kahn, & Steeves, 2000; Groenewald, 2004; Hays & Woods, 2011; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Moustakas, 1994). "This method is most useful when the task at hand is to understand an experience as it is understood by those who are having it" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 3). When a fresh perspective is considered on a topic already studied, research supports that a phenomenological study is an important method to answer questions of meaning and the implication to the practice of the discipline (Cohen et al., 2000; Hays & Woods, 2011).

As I explored the various qualitative methods to research lived experiences, I eliminated ethnography because it focused on cultural experiences. I did not want to put myself into the study as a participant, so I did not choose autoethnography. I dismissed grounded theory since I was not pursuing an emergence of a theory. I knew my research would not be a case study, as I reviewed studies using this method and did not find substantial rationale for a case study approach with the phenomenon of critical self-

reflection and the lived experiences of the participants. Research supports using a phenomenological study in life coaching because of its close connection to counseling where “assessing detailed information about client experiences is a natural part of professional practice” (Hays & Woods, 2011, p. 291).

Phenomenology research requires the researcher to bracket past experiences and knowledge to understand a phenomenon at a deeper level (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing is putting aside one’s beliefs, pre-suppositions, and experiences to be more open to the phenomenon. “By bracketing, we can temporarily suspend what we think we already know and actively listen to patients and their individual reality” (Hamill & Sinclair, 2010, p. 16). I am a licensed clinical social worker who has worked as a psychotherapist, counselor, and life coach. One of the components of counseling training was the ability to “bracket” my presuppositions to be present with my client and understand the client’s worldview (Coates, 2011). I acknowledge I have had significant practice and training in identifying preconceptions and putting them aside. In this phenomenology study, I exercised the same diligence I have used in my clinical practice to further develop the skill of bracketing. The steps I utilized are described in the data analysis section. To assist with bracketing, none of the participants in the study were former or current coaching clients of mine. Another self-management tool I used was completing my coach certification training during the weeks of the study and data analysis. This serendipitous timing provided the accountability for me to remain in a space of inquiry while focused on the study. Throughout the 12 weeks of training, I had access to resources to support my clarity and commitment to expanding the questions for my

interviews and listening from a place of discovery. This was a valuable resource for me as I moved into data collection and analysis.

Phenomenology research is used to answer questions of meaning, and the research question is typically a broad question (Moustakas, 1994). The research question in this phenomenology study was, “What is the lived experience of life coaches using critical self-reflection to improve their practice?” From this question of discovery, I explored the following secondary research questions.

1. How do introspective/reflective experiences provide meaning to the life coaching relationship?
2. What is the value of critical self-reflection activities within the life coach’s development as a life coach?

Participant Selection

As Moustakas (1994) references, phenomenology studies several individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. According to Creswell (2007), there is no set number of participants to conduct a qualitative study. Phenomenological researchers recommend a sample of 1-325 individuals be interviewed who have studied the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1989). Purposeful sampling was utilized in this study with specific criteria to increase quality assurance. Snowball sampling (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003) is defined as receiving referrals from a few research participants.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) through Ball State University approved the exempt study, 308255-1 Exempt. (Appendix A) I began recruiting participants as soon as I received the IRB letter. The target population was certified life coaches within the Midwest region of the United States. The initial snowball sampling was implemented

through a certified life coach who elected to be in the study, and who offered to distribute my inquiry for participants to her coaching database and to coach organizations. When the Midwest ICF chapters, including Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois, were contacted for email membership lists, I discovered membership emails would not be shared. I was directed to utilize social media to contact members. As a result, the certified life coach and I posted to our respective LinkedIn accounts to the National Association of Speakers group page, the International Federation of Coaches group page, and the Chicago Coach Federation group page. The certified life coach posted on Facebook to coach organization pages, and she contacted the presidents of each Midwest ICF chapter. Two participants in the study stated they had sent emails to colleagues for referrals. The snowball continued when I contacted my network of life coaches and consultants who made referrals. (Appendix B) While impossible to note a specific number of contacts as I am unaware of how many life coaches communicated the opportunity to be in the study, 78 emails were distributed directly to certified life coaches for recruiting and to respond to initial inquiries.

I received numerous inquiries regarding the study. Eleven life coaches requested the informed consent to review, and they were interviewed by me either via phone or email using the preliminary open-ended interview questions (Appendix D). Two of the eleven did not meet the criteria for the study, and four declined to participate. Five certified life coaches actually participated in the study.

The criteria for the participants were:

1. Certified Life Coaches who had completed a minimum of 100 coaching hours.

2. Committed to sharing their lived experience in an authentic and trustworthy manner.
3. Engaged in an active coaching practice with a minimum of five clients per week.
4. Willing to commit to a preliminary interview to discuss the concept of critical self-reflection, eight weeks of critical self-reflection activities, and a semi-structured interview concluding the data collection.

Participants were invited to a telephone interview with me to explore their interest and commitment to the study. Confidentiality and ethical issues were addressed. Participants signed an informed consent once they agreed to the activities and structure of the study. Participants were made aware of their right to voluntarily leave the study. Prior to the launch of the study, I held a teleconference call with the participants to review the details of the study, define critical self-reflection as used in the study, and answer any questions. To maintain confidentiality, participants did not identify themselves during the teleconference call. The data collection began on March 5, 2012 with five certified life coaches who signed the Informed Consent (Appendix C), and it concluded on May 5, 2012.

Data Collection

As described in resources outlining the methods to conduct a phenomenology study, data collection may range from observations of people, places, and interactions, such as interviews, immersion in naturalistic settings, focus groups, and media analysis, i.e., art, poetry, or conversations (Creswell, 2007; Tewksbury, 2009). In-depth interviewing is considered a primary mode of data collection (Cohen et al, 2000;

Groenewald, 2004; Hays & Woods, 2011; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 2006). In this, the following procedures represented data collection:

1. Over eight weeks, beginning March 5, 2012, the participants completed a Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ) after each coaching session. This was the basis to their critical self-reflection about their own practice.
(Appendix E)
2. Every two weeks, participants responded to eleven learning journal questions summarizing their learning from the CIQ responses. (Appendix F)
3. Participants submitted the learning journal summary electronically to me on Sunday night by 5 p.m. every two weeks of the study: March 18, April 1, April 15, and April 29. The learning journal summary was a summation of the participant's reflective activity as written in their collection of weekly CIQ's.
4. At the end of the eight weeks, participants were interviewed for descriptions of their experiences with critical self-reflection.

The semi-structured interview format was recommended to allow for the expansion of thought and experience during the data collection interview (Groenewald, 2004; Nadler, 1977; Smith & Osborn, 2007). Semi-structured interviews provided the researcher and the participant an opportunity to engage in a dialogue encouraging the participants to tell their own story. Semi-structured interviews promoted rapport, allowed for flexibility in the direction of the interview, and supported the development of richer data (Smith & Osborn, 2007). As recommended by qualitative researchers, preparing a

list of open-ended questions for the semi-structured interview established rapport and created an open and safe environment for the participants (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Seidman, 2006).

The participants individually scheduled interviews for the week of April 29, 2012, and selected the location. The following semi-structured interview questions were sent to the participants via email prior to their scheduled interview. (Appendix G)

1. How would you describe your experience with critical self-reflection?
2. What learning occurred from your understanding of the critical self-reflection activities?
3. What was important to you during this experience?
4. How have you benefitted from the experience of critical self-reflection in your life coaching practice?
5. What value does critical self-reflection add to your development as a life coach?

Each interview was conducted in an interactive manner allowing for expression and clarification of thoughts and ideas. This interviewing style led to a descriptive narrative of the phenomenon. The interviews provided a means for the participants to wrap-up their processing as they had been submitting journal summaries every two weeks. Rather than the interview being the sole description of the phenomenon, the interview was an expansion and summary of thoughts and experiences from the journal summaries. Four of the interviews were face-to-face at a location selected by the life coach. The fifth interview was conducted via Skype for the face-to-face interview and then moved to a telephone interview due to an internet disconnection interrupting the

face-to-face interview process. All of the interviews were digitally recorded with two digital recording devices. The interviews lasted 40-90 minutes, depending on the life coach.

Confidentiality of Data

Confidentiality of data was maintained by using pseudonyms in place of the participants' real names. All documents including journals, field notes, interview transcriptions, and email correspondence were stored in a locked filing cabinet located within my office. Electronic data was stored on a backup drive that is password protected. I personally conducted the interviews and transcribed them verbatim. My faculty advisor and I had access to the raw data. De-identification involved destroying references to personal information of the participants. Any findings reported in published manuscripts, documents, or future presentations refer to the participants' pseudonyms.

Validity and Reliability

The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis to get an understanding of the reality of those studied. The interpretation by the researcher of the data requires a high level of responsibility and credibility. Validity within a qualitative study refers to trustworthiness and authenticity within a process of research (Creswell, 2007). Internal validity is considered strength within qualitative research, and there are multiple validation techniques to support qualitative research (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Padgett, 1998). I selected peer review and debriefing, and rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Padgett, 1998).

Peer/colleague review and debriefing was used to examine my data and receive feedback on the plausibility of my initial findings (Merriam & Simpson, 2000; Padgett, 1998). Three doctoral qualitative researchers and educators served as my peer reviewers. My dissertation chair debriefed the research process providing reactions and feedback. Those serving in this capacity had access to my field notes and portions of the data analysis. Telephone conversations and email served as the primary communication to debrief and dialogue about the data analysis process. Confidentiality was emphasized, and constructive criticism welcomed.

The pursuit of rigor in qualitative studies is often met through thick description. Rich, thick description “allows readers to make decisions regarding transferability” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). As the author and researcher, I detailed the participants and phenomenon under study. Providing adequate information and detailed description about the research process, researcher perspectives, and in the context of the participants, allows a future reader of the study to determine if the detailed descriptions have shared characteristics and if the results are applicable to other settings (Dreier & Wright, 2011; Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

Reliability was enhanced through the process of reflexivity in which the researcher is aware of one’s own experiences in the research study including values, bias, judgments, and past experiences (Padgett, 1998). Mays and Pope (2000) define reflexivity as “sensitivity to the ways in which the researcher and the research process have shaped the collected data” (p. 51). Through this practice, I increased my self-awareness of the pitfalls of researcher bias, and described my willingness to work with whatever emerges from my researcher role. At the outset, I conveyed my personal and

intellectual biases. Through the use of field notes, reflection journaling, and debriefing sessions, I communicated meaning, experience, and sought feedback as to whether the data was understood and transferable (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Data Analysis

In phenomenology research, data analysis begins with data collection (Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) make a point that there is not one method to conduct analysis and interpretation in qualitative research stating, “There is no single interpretive truth” (p. 35). The goal of data analysis in phenomenology research is to accurately capture and communicate the meaning of the lived experience for the participants (Cohen et al., 2000). The data analysis was influenced by transcendental phenomenology or psychological phenomenology, as originated through Husserlian philosophical insights (Husserl, 1969). Psychological phenomenology focused on the participants’ description of their experiences and less on the researcher’s interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Moustakas (1998) developed a process for phenomenology research based on Husserl’s use of Epoche, the bracketing of one’s ideas and judgments to focus on a fresh perspective. The transcendental-phenomenological reduction data analysis process systemically guides the researcher to the meaning and existence of the experience. Transcendental means “to move beyond the everyday to the pure ego in which everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time” (Moustakas, 1998, p. 34).

I adopted and adapted the steps for data analysis from Moustakas (1994) and as modified by Creswell (2007). As the data analysis unfolded, I adhered to the stages recommended while being open to the emergence of analysis that would benefit the description of the lived experiences of the participants. In this particular method of

analysis, a composite textural description and a composite structural description emerged to identify and describe the overall essence of the phenomenon. The following data analysis steps comprised the process I followed in this study.

1. Verbatim transcription of the interviews.
2. Read through the text, make margin notes, and form initial codes. Read text several times to obtain an overall feeling for the participants' experiences and representation of their voices.
3. Describe the essence of the phenomenon referring back to the narrative.
4. Identify and develop significant statements; group them into meaning units, themes.
5. Develop the textural description – What happened?
6. Develop the structural description – How was the phenomenon experienced?
7. Develop the shared essence of the individual participants. (Creswell, 2007, p. 156-157).

Below I review Steps 1-4 as they apply to the method and practice to emerge the findings, which are detailed in Chapter Four.

Epoche - Bracketing

One of the main distinctions in phenomenology research analysis is the role of the researcher's experience. Though not a participant in the research study, such as an auto-ethnography research design, my experience does connect me as co-researcher. As such, it was significant that I possess the self-awareness to participate in a Husserlian phenomenology study and put into action specific steps for bracketing. Hamill and Sinclair (2010) addressed the qualities of the bracketing researcher citing suggestions to

accomplish bracketing in a Husserlian phenomenological study. The qualities included being self-aware and self-critical; curious and quizzical; insightful; and possess a willingness to be wrong. I was able to check understandings with my dissertation chair and peers. Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson and Poole (2004) recommend maintaining a reflective journal from the beginning of the study. This journal assisted me in developing bracketing skills by practicing:

- Self-awareness–bracketing was considered throughout the entire research process;
- Elevating my consciousness–I recorded my understanding and definition of critical self-reflection, and my interpretation of the issues;
- Visualizing–prior to interviews with the participants, I visualized neutrality within me so I arrived present to the participants’ language, experience, and knowledge; and
- Active listening–I engaged in the art of active listening allowing for curiosity and appreciation of the lived experience by the participants.

The first act of bracketing as recommended by Moustakas (1998) and Creswell (2007) was to describe my personal experiences with the phenomenon. I reflected upon my introduction to critical self-reflection in my doctoral classes. Having had a recent course in which I was required to complete a CIQ every week, I remembered how I felt when I answered the questions and what reactions I experienced. I reflected upon Brookfield’s writings about the CIQ and how it impacted his professionalism and passion for education. I cleared my mind over and over with each remembrance until I reached a level of openness and clarity. I continued until I trusted I could experience the data and

be present, attentive, and focused on the participants' presentations and not cloud it with my own perceptions and experiences.

I practiced bracketing at each stage of the data analysis process to maintain clarity and openness to the data. I kept my reflective journal on my digital recorder so I could dictate in the moment any interfering thoughts or emotions that may enter the data analysis process. I focused on the intention of curiosity, discovery, and wonderment as I reviewed each transcript and journal summary. I debriefed my thoughts with my dissertation chair and one of my peer reviewers. Any time I thought I was not clear to proceed with a portion of the data analysis, I removed myself from the process and rescheduled another time to analyze. I found this to be effective in looking at the data with a fresh perspective.

Verbatim Transcription of the Interviews

I interviewed the participants, digitally recorded all of the interviews, and I personally transcribed, verbatim, the recordings. This proved to be an advantage to my early immersion in the data. Prior to each transcription, I practiced self-management in bracketing any preconceived ideas, assumptions, or bias and moved into a space of discovery, wonderment, and curiosity. Following transcription of the interviews, I then listened to each recording and compared the audio and transcript for accuracy. After transcribing, I listened to the audio recordings along with the written transcripts to verify my transcription accuracy.

Read Text, Make Margin Notes, and Form Initial Codes

As outlined in phenomenological data analysis method, the audio recordings and written transcripts were reviewed multiple times. Each time, I was intentional about

bracketing and focused on discovery. To assist me with this key step, I identified curiosity questions that went beyond “what happened” to “what if this had happened” or “what is right in front of me that I am not seeing?” These questions and others assisted me remain open and explore the phenomenon from a lived world perspective.

The transcriptions and journal summaries were initially read for the overall experience of the life coaches (Moustakas, 1994). During the subsequent readings, I began open coding making notes in the margins to identify key words or phrases related to the research questions. This step provided a means to collect, connect, and begin to wonder and visualize the textual content. I began with the journal summaries and noted key words in the margins. When I reviewed the transcripts of the interviews, I completed a separate process of open coding. When I had finally reviewed all the data individually, a comparative analysis was completed between each participant’s journal summary submissions and their transcript. All the data was then entered into one document and began to blend. I then was able to compare among the whole as a group to continue discovering key words among the whole.

Describe the Essence of the Phenomenon Referring Back to the Narrative

I applied the research questions to the data to focus on critical self-reflection and began to read for the experience of the phenomenon. As the essence of critical self-reflection emerged, I began a list of phrases, concepts, ideas, and meaning to explore.

Identify and Develop Significant Statements; Group into Meaning Units

Moustakas (1994) referred to this step as horizontalization, giving equal value to each statement. I reviewed all journal summaries and transcripts of the interviews line by line selecting the statements that addressed the phenomenon of critical self-reflection. I

identified 220 statements from the five transcripts and seven journal summaries to answer the research questions. Meaningful formulations were made for each extracted statement. I submitted portions of the 220 statements to three peer reviewers and the committee chair to get feedback on the trustworthiness of this portion of the analysis. The reviewers did not identify any researcher bias and agreed the essence of each statement was created in the formation meaning statement. Examples of how the significant statement and formulated meaning statements were derived are below. (Appendix H) They provided information as to the textural and structural descriptions of how the participants experienced the phenomenon, critical self-reflection. Although the statements were taken from verbatim transcripts, they have been edited slightly to improve their readability.

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
I liked that I had this kind of structure way of reflecting on my work, and because there was a lot going on for me internally more than externally, it gave me a place to practice some of that with myself.	CSR provided a structured format to complete focused reflection.
I am observing myself more and more in the midst of my conversations and noticing how much I am calling my clients and students forth.	CSR helped the coach became more aware of congruency in calling forth self and clients, which created more awareness in the coach and the clients.

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
I would say it was an absolute benefit to my practice. Benefit to increasing my skills and to be more aware of them and increased my professionalism.	The practice of CSR can increase and expand the coach's professional development.
It also really helped me to see that wherever I was within my own life had a bigger impact than I was acknowledging with my clients.	CSR increased awareness of personal life experiences impacting the coaching practice.
It was interesting for me just to have this documentation of what was going on for me over this 8 weeks period of time because I think that, if we took another 8 weeks period of time, obviously, they wouldn't look exactly the same or anything like that but I think there are some things that are very consistent that were reflected here. Number one, I love my work. I love coaching and I love training and facilitation.	Having recorded reflections provided the coach support for the passion and purpose of life coaching.

I compared and contrasted each statement from the transcripts separating them into clusters of meaning, commonly referred to as categories (Moustakas, 1994).

Repetitive, overlapping, or unrelated statements were discarded. From the clusters of meaning, five themes emerged:

1. Structure and discipline.
2. Increased self-awareness.

3. Passionate purpose.
4. Professional development.
5. Enhanced relationships with self and others.

The themes and clusters were then reviewed by the peer reviewers and the committee chair to support validity and trustworthiness of the data. The intent was to increase the likelihood of developing the best structure and naming of the themes.

Time Line

The Ball State University IRB approved the exempt study. (Appendix A) I began recruiting participants as soon as the IRB letter was received. The informational interviews were conducted once participants began contacting me, and the emergence of the identified participants occurred. The study was structured using the following timeline:

Timeframe	Activity	Due Date
Week 1 – February 19	Questionnaires emailed	-
Week 2 – February 26	Preliminary interviews	-
Week 3 – March 5	CIQ's begin	-
Week 4 – March 11	CIQ's	-
Week 5 – March 18	CIQ's	Journal Summary due March 18
Week 6 – March 25	CIQ's	-
Week 7 – April 1	CIQ's	Journal Summary due April 1
Week 8 – April 8	CIQ's	-

Timeframe	Activity	Due Date
Week 9 - April 15	CIQ's	Journal Summary due April 15
Week 10 – April 22	CIQ's	-
Week 11 – April 29	Final interviews	Journal Summary due April 29

Transcription and analysis were completed during May 2012 with preliminary findings discussed with my faculty advisor and peer reviewers.

Summary

The phenomenology method for exploring the experience of critical self-reflection by life coaches supported an effective approach to understanding experience and constructing meaning for the advancement of the discipline of life coaching. I chose this data analysis process because of the emphasis on bracketing my opinions, experiences, and beliefs to focus on the participants and their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenologists differ on whether a researcher can bracket sufficiently in qualitative research since the role of the researcher is so intricately woven in the data analysis (Finlay, 2011). Those supporting psychological phenomenology recommend the researcher be clear about the approach taken with bracketing (Creswell, 2007).

Conducting rich interviews and maintaining the CIQ and journal summaries for data collection supported the qualitative approach to studying a phenomenon and described the lived experiences of the participants. This study provided an opportunity for the exploration and discovery of meaning through transcendental or psychological phenomenology data analysis.

Chapter Four outlines the results of the data analysis and provides a vivid description of the participants' lived experience with critical self-reflection. The description captures the relationship, conditions, situation, and essence of the experience.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Once upon a time there were five life coaches who embarked on an eight weeks journey with the phenomenon, critical self-reflection, thinking they were stepping into the familiar territory of reflection. Their journey was filled with surprises, puzzlement, emotion, and ultimately the discovery of new perspectives. From their individual experiences, a composite structure of meaning is describing their lived experience with critical self-reflection. This is their story.

Description of Coaches Participating

In applying the psychological phenomenology research design, the emphasis was on the participant's experience. Each of the life coaches in this study presented uniqueness and characteristics that blended into one as the phenomenon emerged. It is valuable to introduce each participant, their background, and their textural representations to gain insight into their experience with critical self-reflection. Pseudonyms were used to protect confidentiality.

Kim holds a Master's Degree in Social Work with licensure as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has 12 years' experience as a life coach and over 20 years' experience as a psychotherapist. She is a member of the International Coach Federation and holds its Professional Certified Coach certification. Kim has worked seven days a week to meet the demands of both practices. She intended to slow down and create a

different way of working through the critical self-reflection process. As she participated in the study, she also established her private practice. When I interviewed her, Kim had left her counseling position of 16 years to begin slowing down, and she was looking forward to her first day in her new office. She said, “Isn’t it interesting that the last eight weeks I had this experience that helped me to do that.”

Carmen holds a Master’s Degree in Social Work and is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker. She has nine years’ experience as a life coach, is a member of the International Coach Federation, and holds the Professional Certified Coach certification. Carmen described enthusiasm for research, and her mind encapsulates theory, practice, and opportunities for learning to broaden the research opportunities in life coaching. She said, “You know, I’m a research freak. I love to read. I love to discover what those next levels are.” She also loves to laugh and finds coaching to be a fun experience, especially when mentoring new coaches.

Jill has a background in nursing and holds a Bachelor’s in Nursing Science degree. She is certified as a life coach and established a full-time coaching practice one year ago. Her coach training focused on body-centered coaching, and she described a desire to impact people by helping them connect to their mind and body. Being authentic is a strong value for her, which she identified as being in integrity. During the study, she had designed her first professional workshop, and she stated, “This was big. It was really big, and I realized having to go and reflect upon it was really big, too.”

Karen spent 20 years in higher education as a full-time professor when she decided to pursue a career as a life coach. She began her coaching practice three years ago. She is a member of the International Coach Federation, and she holds the Associate

Certified Coach certification. Her doctoral degree is in music performance, and she found many similarities in coaching clients to working with music students. She stated, “I would love to go back and teach now that I have coaching skills because I was coaching; but I was doing it blindly, and I didn’t know what I was doing.” She enjoys using metaphors to help clients identify with their personal insights.

Mary holds a Master’s in Social Work, and she is a Professional Certified Coach through the International Coach Federation. She has worked as a life coach since 1999. Mary provides mentoring and training for new coaches as well as finding a new awareness of working with seasoned coaches. Mary described being on a sabbatical prior to the study and the critical self-reflection was described as being like a butterfly. She noted, “Maybe the past few months I feel like I’m like the butterfly emerging from the cocoon and certainly the past eight weeks have been, I think, the bigger part of the butterfly is out of the cocoon than in.” Mary values introspective work as she creates the next developmental part of her coaching practice.

Participant Selection Process

Qualitative research does not designate a certain number of participants for a qualitative study. Phenomenological researchers recommend a sample of 1-325 individuals be interviewed who have studied the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1989). Purposive sampling is frequently used in phenomenology as it “permits the selection of participants whose qualities or experiences will garner the most meaningful data to describe the experience (VanSickel-Peterson, 2010, p. 63). I had a snowball sample of five life coaches, all Caucasian female; age range 40-56. All were certified as life coaches from coach training programs within the United States, all had

completed over 100 life coaching hours, and all had an active practice averaging five clients per week.

Data Collection

An Informed Consent form (Appendix C) was sent to each participant. Upon the receipt of each consent form, the participants were invited to participate in a teleconference call, which was scheduled at two different times to accommodate schedules. During the call, I reviewed the procedures for the study, defined critical self-reflection as used in this study, and answered questions. The data collection launched March 5, 2012 and completed May 5, 2012.

The participants were asked to complete a CIQ (Appendix E) after each coaching session as one of two critical self-reflection activities for the study. The CIQ was modeled from the original CIQ developed by Brookfield (1995) and used predominantly in academic settings. The CIQ was comprised of five questions as outlined below:

1. At what moment in this session did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in this session did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone in the session (group member, client, you, colleague) took in this session did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What action or experience in this coaching session did you find most puzzling or confusing?

5. What about this coaching session surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you).

I did not collect the CIQ's as they provided support to the coaches' second activity involved with critical self-reflection.

The second critical self-reflection activity involved the coach submitting a journal summary every two weeks during the study. The journal summary included 11 questions (Appendix F) and the responses were based on the initial responses to the CIQ questions. A total of seven journal summaries were received, and they were included in the data analysis.

At the end of the eight weeks, I conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant. Four of the interviews were face-to-face at a location selected by the life coach. The fifth interview was started on Skype and completed on the telephone. Each interview was digitally recorded with two digital recording devices. The interviews lasted 40-90 minutes, depending upon the life coach.

Results

Textural and Structural Descriptions

Upon applying the psychological phenomenology data analysis steps, clusters of meanings led to the emergence of five themes.

1. Structure and discipline.
2. Increased self-awareness.
3. Passionate purpose.

4. Professional development.
5. Enhanced personal relationships.

The themes and clusters were then reviewed by the peer reviewers and the committee chair to support validity and trustworthiness of the data. The intent was to increase the likelihood of developing the best structure and naming of the themes. Each theme is described and supporting quotes from the data are presented in the following paragraphs. This step serves as the textural description of the phenomenon and leads to the structural description to describe the overall essence of the experiences with critical self-reflection.

Theme 1: Structure and discipline.

In this study, the life coaches were given a highly structured format to explore the phenomenon of critical self-reflection in a life coaching practice. The rigor of this study was the intensity of completing a CIQ after each session. Some coaches saw five to ten clients a week or saw clients and did trainings/classes with coaching clients. To ask them to interrupt the flow of the day and to stop and start after each session was deliberate, albeit there was a conscious recognition of the commitment level this practice would elicit if the coach continued in the study. All five coaches completed with differing experiences and common meanings.

The emphasis on a daily structure requiring the discipline of completing a CIQ after each session was an activity in which none had participated, and all were intrigued enough to sign up for the study. One of the participants admitted she was a little nervous about signing up because she was “not a detailed” person. All of the participants found the structure to be effective in creating a discipline process of critical self-reflection.

I liked that I had this kind of structure way of reflecting on my work, and because there was a lot going on for me internally more than externally. It gave me a place to practice some of that with myself. (Study Participant)

Two of the participants had a regular practice of reflecting and meditating prior to the study, however, neither had used the activities in this study. Compatibility with the structure and discipline of critical self-reflection complemented their existing practices.

I think the real difference was the structure, just more tightly structured, more organized, and at the same time, not totally unlike just my own reflective work. (Study Participant)

Supporting this theme, one coach described the structure and discipline as follows:

I used my morning time as a time to meditate and to practice motivational and inspirational reading, which I feel really allows me the opportunity for critical self-reflection. I do that every single day. But I did not designate a period of time before or after my coaching to do that and that's what this, started to say force, which is not a good word, this encouraged me to do. (Study Participant)

All of the coaches identified the discipline of doing the critical self-reflection activities resulted in “slowing down”, “focused more”, and “identified reflection.” One coach remarked critical self-reflection helped her “reflect on what is reflection.” The discipline of critical self-reflection became a habit and integral part of the coaching practice. One coach commented, “I think if anything I might have fought it in week three to four, but then towards the end this is just a regular practice now. It really became much more of a habit.” Another coach identified, “I’m not as much a cross things off a

list; organization isn't me so it was, here you have to. So, is there ways that I already was doing it? Yes. Were they as concise? No. For me, when you do, it's even that more beneficial for myself."

But it was the discipline of doing that all the time and really focusing the attention on self-reflection and knowing, and even coming into the session knowing at the end I was going to walk out and direct my attention further. (Study Participant)

All of the coaches liked the CIQs and the formatted questions; however, their use of the CIQ became an intriguing part of the experience. The coaches described their reactions to the questions as "basic," "promotes honesty," and "perfect." It was interesting to hear from the coaches how each began to modify the critical self-reflection activities through the CIQs as the study continued. For example, one coach began using the CIQ even more by completing one prior to a session to clear any thoughts, and then after the session to help transition to her next client. By week four of the study, two of the coaches experienced the CIQs as "repetitive", especially when clients were presenting with similar issues. One coach began to summarize the CIQ's for two to three clients in one day. "I found that sometimes some of the questions didn't quite fit for me and I either, you know, didn't respond too much or I just made it work for me basically."

Another coach stopped using the CIQs after week four.

I think it started to feel a little bit, like it started to feel, like I feel like I'm going over and over the same thing over and over again. It started to feel a little repetitive to me and like it was, I was getting a lot from doing the reflecting less so about going in and answering every single question. (Study Participant)

The phenomenon of critical self-reflection was flexible and transitional as evidenced by the experience of the coaches. By modifying the activity, the phenomenon was still experienced as relevant to the coach, and the coaches felt committed to the study. The individual application of the phenomenon was a significant contribution to the description of their lived experiences.

All of the coaches valued the journal summary activity as part of experiencing critical self-reflection. Once the structure and routine of critical self-reflection became familiar, the journal summaries reflected deeper thoughts and emotions. One coach commented, “I really liked that part. I liked that much more than doing the CIQs. I think the CIQ process was important to get to the journal summaries for the time that I was really using it.”

Cause a lot of times when I've done it in the past, it's been up here. (Points to head.) And, I think when I go, you know okay, why did that work, and yeah that happened, but not the writing down of it, the preserving of it, and then you come back in time and go, huh, look at that, that's interesting. A month ago you were thinking that and here you are again or you've really changed. It's just that record of it that's interesting. (Study Participant)

The journal summary provided a mechanism to compile the CIQ responses and was not seen as an isolated experience. “I was more present with my clients because of this journal.” The coaches’ journal summaries were rich with content. Even the ones that did not have long narratives brought forth insight and richness. One coach commented, “It’s just helpful because when you go back and read something, you get some perspectives about things that maybe you don’t get while you’re in it.” This

identified the experience of a phenomenon is based on the quality of the lived experience in the coach's world.

I took some time to re-read all of the summaries I have submitted for this project, and it was quite something to notice what has transpired for me, probably more internally than externally, during these past two months. (Study Participant)

Theme 2: Increased self-awareness.

The value of self-awareness in the life coaching practice provides the coach a mirror to reflect upon several aspects of being a life coach. With self-awareness, coaches make strategic interventions with self and clients, establishing business practices, client selection, and choices impacting the overall experience of life coaching. The coaches increased self-awareness through critical self-reflection as they all recognized transformational experiences related to their individual behaviors as the coach as well as how they were affected by clients.

It's a catalyst for certainly increased self-awareness and for increased, what's the word I'm looking for, knowing at a different level and coming at it. It's like putting stuff under a magnifying glass and really looking at what's there.

(Study Participant)

All the coaches noticed a shift in their energy with various client interactions. Awareness of the shift led to insights on the impact of energy in the coaching relationship and with self.

When I exude a higher level of energy, I believe it becomes more synergistic in the coaching process; therefore, I need to find a way to increase my energy for all my clients. (Study Participant)

All of the coaches identified engagement and disengagement experiences and how being aware of when they were most engaged or disengaged created more energy for the day or gave them opportunity to course correct for the next client. One coach stated, “Well, similar to hypnotherapy, I felt like when I started in a tired state, and I was aware that I was tired, it energized me completing the CIQ.”

The coaches seemed surprised at the emotional awareness they gained through critical self-reflection, which allowed them to clear their minds, move their bodies, and refocus attention. Two of the coaches identified boredom and being aware of how the coaching session was not energizing for them or the client. One coach identified, “sometimes I can actually feel bored and that’s a great clue for me to just get them in their bodies, get them out of their heads, get them going.” Two of the coaches were going through significant changes in their practices and personal lives. Critical self-reflection was a means to help them explore their feelings related to the experiences in the moment. A coach commented she had a very emotional week, and “this is so painful, I’m having a hard time. And then I got through it and got to another place and when I go back and read, I think, yeah, it was a tough week, but you know what it’s not the end of the world.” Shifting perspectives and perceptions as a result of the emotional awareness was important to the coaches.

I discovered that if I was having a difficult day or a stressed out day, I wasn't utilizing my principles as much and I realized that as I was doing the CIQs. And when I began to think about that, I realized that I was getting off track based on what I had to offer my client. And so by being self-reflective, it allowed me to clearly practice more of my coaching principles. (Study Participant)

Added another coach:

I am proud of my willingness to be with my feelings and the trust and knowing I have that there is always so much clarity, growth, and learning that follows a period of intense emotions. (Study Participant)

Curiosity and creativity were heightened as coaches increased awareness of how they were interacting in the coaching sessions. Maintaining a sense of curiosity led to being present, connected, and engaged with the clients.

The whole business about the curiosity and a great reminder on a new level to me, not that I don't already know it, just taking it deeper and just how important that curiosity is and staying in that place of curiosity. (Study Participant)

Creativity in co-creating a client session or thinking more clearly about an intervention or a powerful question to ask a client was identified. One coach described, "I think as the time went on I would say I did bring more creativity, more in a faster amount of time, yeah, absolutely, because of the self-reflection."

All of the coaches described a "deeper sense of connection" during the practice of critical self-reflection, which helped them stay "fully present."

So, when I think about the value, this whole process, I would say that it felt like not only did it make feel, have more integrity, but it was better for my health and my mental health, that it connected me deeper to myself and to my clients, and connection is a very important value. (Study Participant)

All of the coaches practiced life coaching through telephone and face-to-face sessions. They noted an awareness of how they were experiencing their energy, presence, connection, and practicing their coaching principles.

Lot of times I will kind of leave and I'll just race into the next thing or get ready for another client that are back to back, which they usually are. I think I could see myself allowing more time to like really let what happen settle in, notice myself so that I could even create more presence for the next client and for myself.

(Study Participant)

Critical self-reflection increased awareness in recognizing the importance of self-care as a life coach. All of the coaches identified not taking care of themselves at certain times in the study. “Need more water, rest, and exercise” and “I didn’t practice self-care this week” or “I overscheduled myself” were noted. One coach noted, “I needed more centering time myself as well as more sleep and less busyness.” Considering how much time is spent in tending to the client coaching sessions, the marketing and running of a business, the awareness of self-care and the impact on the practice helped the coaches make different choices in the day or for the upcoming week.

Theme 3: Passionate purpose.

Life coaching is a career path where passion is often described as essential to the success of a coach. Because there are a myriad of coaching practice styles, populations to serve, niches to create, and an endless possibility of how to practice as a life coach, honing in on the purpose for the coaching practice and whether the career is meaningful are two areas of evaluation. I was privileged to experience the life coaches’ passion both during the interview and while analyzing the data. Passion was identified and emerged as each narrative was reviewed. Critical self-reflection helped the coaches uncover a deeper level of passion and purpose for themselves, their clients, and their practice.

That I absolutely love what I'm doing, and it does come pretty naturally to me. And I think I said that in my journal pieces that it just brought it to life even more. So I learned that more and more about me that it's not necessarily easy but it comes so naturally. (Study Participant)

The coaches described “loving coaching;” “committed to impacting one person at a time;” “I have found my niche;” and “I am passionate about what I do and invite any and all to come play.” One coach commented, “It really solidified my passion and my recognition that this really is a natural for me, it truly is my calling so that was even more valuable to me to recognize that this is it, I really have found my niche.” Another stated, “I love coaching as it gives me an opportunity to remind people of their greatness.” And one noted, “Because it inspires me to look even deeper as a coach, to see what else I can create as a coach and create a bigger impact with my clients and with my work with them.”

Maybe it's not so much new as it is validation, affirmation of what I've known. But I think it was just very reinforced in this process and that has to do with knowing that I am living on purpose in terms of the work that I'm doing. And that it's not only work that I love but it's work that I'm really, really good at so there's that fit between what you're passionate about. (Study Participant)

Life coaching for all of the coaches was a service. Their willingness to participate in the study was inspired by service. They described purpose in making a contribution to the field of life coaching through their participation.

Part of what drew me to it also is that it was service, not only to you and your doctoral studies, but to eventually the larger profession of coaching, which I think

it's going to be really important for us. I see in the next few years there be more and more studies involving coaching in various aspects and providing critical information for us as we grow this profession and as we become better coaches, better able to serve and better known, and to have this body of research for people to draw upon. I think it's an important piece for the good of the profession, and so I saw it as a win/win/win. (Study Participant)

Theme 4: Professional development.

This theme encompassed the value of critical self-reflection to the development of the life coach. Professional development described coaching principles, skills, and resources the coaches used in their practices. Four of the coaches are members of ICF, which outlines specific competencies for coaches; and all the coaches follow the coaching principles of the coach training organization from which each was certified. One coach stated, “I would say it was an absolute benefit to my practice. Benefit to increasing my skills, and to be more aware of them and increased my professionalism.” Another statement was, “It really helped me to stop and hone in and really re-evaluate who I am as a coach and what more I wanted to provide.” One coach identified, “And fascinating was the fact that I was constantly learning something, becoming aware of something, being reminded of something, either discovering something or uncovering something.”

The aha moments I had over the last eight weeks with clients as a result of being so in tune to have to answer those questions brought it to a deeper level of coaching, an absolute deeper level of coaching. (Study Participant)

Critical self-reflection illuminated times of specific behaviors the coaches chose, which increased awareness of their skills in the coaching sessions. One coach said, “I felt like I was not making a difference in a client’s process which had me question my skills.” Another said, “I would not have shared a personal story because it seemed to put the client in ‘comparison mode.’” Other comments included the phrases, “not fully present,” “disengaged,” and “I was pretty critical of self after a session.”

I think the biggest habits I noticed were the big “I” statements, which in my coaching school, you do not use an “I” statement in any coaching. It’s all about the client’s agenda and so it’s about them so it’s the “you” statements. So I realized that. (Study Participant)

Additional comments indicating critical self-reflection helped the coaches identify skills and competency were “It was just very serving to have that tool and to write about it because I was definitely doing a lot of beating myself up and this is creating more stress.” A coach said, “I was really able to focus more on which skills am I using.” Another coach noted, “What I learned from the last session is that I did not move my body nor did I have my client move his body. I got stuck and did not get present with what was happening for me.” Finding humor in critical self-reflection and embracing the discovery of themselves in practice was of value.

Oh, the fun part was the humor in it. The fact that I’m a mentor coach and I’m helping new coaches identify what they’re doing well and what skills they’re not doing well and then recognizing that I did all the skills they weren’t doing well in my own last coaching sessions. (Study Participant)

The coaches described self-management and “getting themselves out of the way” as significant to allowing the coaching process to unfold with the client. One coach said, “If anything, it helped me to be more objective and neutral.” Another coach commented, “Just that I think it’s beneficial to get curious about what is happening over here (points to self) as a coach and a lot of times that has so much to do with what’s happening over with the client.”

So when I used critical self-reflection and felt some angst for my client or maybe some frustration that they weren’t getting them where I wanted them to be, self-reflection allowed me to lean on my principles that I ascribe to and advocate, which then reminded me that my clients in this office were exactly where they needed to be at all times. And that then allowed me to relax, which I’m sure had some sort of energy component with my client. (Study Participant)

Increasing listening skills and going deeper with the clients were noted by the coaches. Phrases such as “helped me focus more,” “present and engaged,” and “ease and comfort in which I show up,” were noted.

The other skills, the acknowledging, the validating, the empowering questions, the paraphrasing, being able to really forward the motion, stretch them to a new comfort zone because you could hear much more of what they weren’t really saying and what they were really wanting, and just listening at that deeper level, it was fun. (Study Participant)

Critical self-reflection was attributed to developing the coaches’ professional presence and curiosity of further exploration of their skills and of their profession as a life coach. The coaches noted the impact of practicing critical self-reflection as “valuable,”

“very serving,” and an “integral part of my practice. Other descriptors included “vulnerability,” “accountability,” “clarity,” “integrity,” and “being honest.”

I love to discover what those next levels are so really in looking at the skills that I have had to work on as a result of the reflection, as a result of evaluating myself and reading more about them and what that next level is. Not just doing them as I was taught but now what's the next level of that has been discovered. For the validating for instance, or the acknowledging, okay I'm doing this at this level. What more has been researched? What's the next piece and skill in the coaching world that you can add to it. (Study Participant)

The coaches said the critical self-reflection activities made them more aware of the power in the coaching relationship, and the responsibility in professional development to be aware of the power. They commented the professionalism in “hanging out my shingle;” “being further along on my journey;” “can you really show people that you're human;” and “being aware of my power and the responsibility that goes with it.” One coach stated, “You forget how powerful you are and how important it is to be aware of that power.”

Another area of professional development all the coaches addressed was the practice of critical self-reflection in the profession and the need for critical self-reflection within coach training. Three of the five coaches mentor new coaches. Though some aspect of coach training provides evaluation and reflection, outside of a personal coach or a personal mentor during the training or secured while in practice, the coaches did not know of a structured critical self-reflection practice that they completed. One coach said, “Needs to be a standard practice for every coaching school now.” Another coach stated,

“We get done with the coaching school, and we think I gotta make a profit, and I gotta make a name out there, I gotta get it all done, and we forget to stop and continue on our skill development, continue on our personal development.”

Necessary if we want to improve, if we truly want our profession to be recognized as a good, solid profession. If we don't continue to evaluate on a regular basis, we're not going to make it that professional piece. It is absolutely necessary so we don't get drawn into not doing our core functions, not holding up to our ethics and our integrity and what a coach should be doing and needs to be doing.

(Study Participant)

Some of the coaches made specific recommendations regarding implementing critical self-reflection in their practices. The focus was on “asking myself powerful questions;” “taking time weekly to reflect;” and “I’m definitely taking the CIQs forward.” Other comments included a broader application to the coaching field and training. Some phrases included “a coaching group for coaches,” or a “mastermind group.” Ideas for training included an “older more experienced coach” practicing critical self-reflection as part of “peer mentoring process.” One coach noted, “I think it’s structured enough for seasoned coaches or coaches that have been in practice for a little bit of time.”

Theme 5: Enhanced relationships with self and others.

This theme focused on the benefit of critical self-reflection in transcending from the professional relationships with clients to the coaches’ personal relationships with family, friends, and with themselves. In essence, the coaches found themselves more reflective about their individual lives attributed to the practice of critical self-reflection.

Phrases included “celebrate my own stuff;” “much more just being who you are;” and “never passing on an opportunity to get to know something more about myself.” Being transparent, accepting, and honest were identified. One coach referred to accepting her clients so why not accept herself as she reflected on her self-criticism.

References to family occurred as one coach described reading her reflections to her husband and another stated the critical self-reflection made her think of how she was relating to her husband. One coach commented, “It transferred from just critiquing my coaching to critiquing my way of being to people outside in my life.”

The more I evaluated my professional skills in me as a life coach; it began to permeate into who I am as a person. So it began to not only be critiquing my face-to-face or my one-on-one coaching, but also my one-on-ones with my kids, my one-on-ones with my husband, how I was operating in a group outside of coaching and just in general, in my volunteer activities. I just began to critically look at how I showed up everywhere. (Study Participant)

Critical self-reflection helped the coaches reflect on the values and behaviors utilized within the coaching sessions with clients and then with others. One coach would ask herself, “Would you do that with a client? If you wouldn’t do that with a client, why would you do that with your daughter? Why would you do that with this?” Another coach commented, “If I get some insight, I apply it to my personal life. I apply it to my relationship with my husband. I apply it to my other types of work.” Another noted, “I can see how there is a connection between some of my choices and decisions I am making in my own life and how that translates into my work.”

The awareness of how a coach was experiencing their personal life and the impact on the coaching practice was attributed to the practice of critical self-reflection. One coach stated, “It offered me an opportunity to really look at what I might be conveying as well as how I was perceiving the world. It also helped me to see that wherever I was within my own life had a bigger impact than I was acknowledging with my clients.”

I think that critical self-reflection is an integral part of each person connecting to their own personal wisdom, their inner voice, their inner knowing, that there’s something that surfaces that you just can’t get to if you’re just thinking about something, perhaps you could if you were talking about it, but there’s something about this process in being quiet and taking this time to reflect that I think helps each one of us access that inner wisdom that I think is just so important.

(Study Participant)

Composite Textural Description

The composite textural description has been synthesized as represented by the discussion above. To summarize the textural description, the coaches experienced critical self-reflection as a valuable and meaningful practice generating insight and fresh perspectives. Critical self-reflection evoked emotional expression and the practice of honesty, creativity, curiosity, and kept the coaches in integrity, a value all shared. Contribution to the field of coaching through critical self-reflection was passionately and purposefully experienced.

Composite Structural Description

As I synthesized the data and emerged a composite structural description, critical self-reflection was experienced as a structured and disciplined practice with the flexibility

to fit the coaches' practices and preferences. This structured flexibility increased self-awareness of deeper meaning in being engaged with clients and others. Coaching principles and skills were enhanced to the level that the most experienced coaches in the study were experiencing new perspectives and perceptions, which were directly attributed to the critical self-reflection activity. The coaches grew in their awareness of when they were ineffective because critical self-reflection slowed them down long enough to truly catch up with their coaching skills and course correct in sessions as a result. Critical self-reflection fueled the already established passion within the coaches to a level of excitement, earnest, and purpose creating an experience of transformation that carried over from their professional lives to their personal lives. In essence, critical self-reflection is a practice recommended and needed for coaches of all levels.

The coaches experienced critical self-reflection in relationship to their life coaching practices, clients and colleagues, and personal relationships. Within the context of the life coaching practice, critical self-reflection offered an evaluative process to illuminate areas of professional development. Specifically the coaches experienced improvement in their coaching skills, particularly listening, interpreting, asking powerful questions, staying present and focused, and moving clients forward as their agendas indicated.

The coaches' experience of critical self-reflection within personal relationships brought forth awareness of interactions, whether positive or negative, moving them to alter how they communicated. Even the personal relationship with self had mind-altering stages as critical self-reflection created new perspectives and experiences for personal growth and understanding. Critical self-reflection was experienced as a tool to recognize

the value of self-care, which impacted the coaches' interactions with clients, self, and personal relationships.

Summary

Five life coaches participated in the lived experience of the phenomenon, critical self-reflection, over a period of eight weeks. The critical self-reflection activities included completing a CIQ after each coaching session and then submitting a journal summary of their experience every two weeks. A semi-structured interview was conducted as the final data collection, which I transcribed. The psychological phenomenology data analysis method was applied to the data. As described by Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007), the data was put through the rigor of Epoche, open coding, memoing, horizontalization, formulation of meaning statements, clustering of statements to emerge the invariant formulation of themes, and descriptions for textural and structural formation of the essence of the phenomenon.

Throughout the data analysis, peer reviewers and the dissertation committee chair participated in dialogue, checking portions of the analysis for bias or incongruence. Five themes emerged from the study of critical self-reflection: (a) structure and discipline; (b) increased self-awareness; (c) passionate purpose; (d) professional development; and (e) enhanced relationships with self and others. Chapter Five concludes the study noting the findings, applicability to further research, and my conclusion conducting a phenomenology study.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Summary of Study

A phenomenology research study commenced to answer the question, “What is the lived experience of life coaches using critical self-reflection to improve their practice?” Using purposive sampling, five certified life coaches participated in a structured eight weeks process using an adult education instrument, CIQ, as a critical self-reflection activity. Coaches were asked to complete a CIQ after each coaching session and to submit a journal summary describing their experience every two weeks until the study completed. Coaches participated in a semi-structured interview to describe their lived experience with critical self-reflection. Transcendental or psychological phenomenology data analysis was applied to the data collected. The results of the analysis emerged five themes (a) structure and discipline, (b) increased self-awareness, (c) passionate purpose, (d) professional development, and (e) enhanced relationships with self and others.

Discussion

Critical self-reflection as practiced in this study included the use of a CIQ with five questions for the life coach to respond to after engaging in their respective coaching practices. The life coaching practice included individual sessions, mentoring life coach mentees new to the profession, or facilitating coach training classes some of the coaches

taught. Brookfield (1995) introduced the concept of the CIQ as a critical self-reflection activity within his career as a college professor. He found the CIQ helpful with his students to identify areas of engagement and disengagement in the classroom as well as emotional responses around surprise, confusion, and puzzlement. How would an adult education activity developed for critical self-reflection transfer from an academic setting to another discipline such as life coaching?

The CIQ identified a deeper awareness of what occurred during the life coaching relationship as experienced by the coach. Through the deliberate practice of critical self-reflection activities, the coaches uncovered a depth of meaning for themselves and their practices that was a rich and fulfilling discovery. The findings reveal how important it is to practice introspection and authentic examination of self for the profession of life coaching.

The other aspect of using the CIQ typically used in academics was exploring the connection between life coaching and adult education. Is a life coach an educator? The data from the coaches supported the parallel due to the similar characteristics used to describe a life coach and an adult educator. A life coach guides their clients to self-discovery believing the client already has the capability to discover their direction for change. Exploration of a client's goals helps to accomplish the purpose of coaching. Life coaching occurs in many settings including academia as the research identifies coaching in business, wellness, education, and nutrition. Adult educators guide their students to self-discovery in learning new information, applying the learning, and determining a course of action whether completion of a degree or a program. Formal learning settings, such as higher education, have incorporated life coaching into

curriculum for students to obtain a degree in business and life coaching. Higher education has recognized the value of coaching for faculty (Van-Sickel, 2010) and students (Hoover, 2011). Informal learning settings, such as community programs, offer classes with life coaches to introduce the possibility of coaching for personal and professional development. Life coaches, like adult educators, disseminate information, participate in self-discovery, promote self-directed learning, and participate in the creation of transformational learning. It seems prudent to make the connection between life coaching and adult education as a partnership (Brookfield, 1995).

The themes identified through data analysis answer the research questions as to how critical self-reflection provides meaning to life coaches and their practices. Two secondary research questions were explored.

1. How do introspective/reflective experiences provide meaning to the life coaching relationship?
2. What is the value of critical self-reflection activities within the life coach's development as a life coach?

The coaches identified several ways critical self-reflection constructed meaning to the life coaching relationship. Critical self-reflection provided the opportunity for the coaches to reflect deeper and with more understanding of the value of connection and presence within the coaching relationship. Increased self-awareness helped the life coaches connect more deeply by staying focused and present with their clients. This deeper sense of connection led to increased energy for the coach and the client as the coach could sense when an intervention or change of direction was needed. As a result,

coaches felt more alive and responsive to the needs of their clients enjoying more fun and passion for their work.

Finding meaning in the life coaching relationship was evident in the power experienced within the coaching session. The coaches recognized how powerful they could be and were conscious of the responsibility to not abuse their power. The power referred to the strong sense of their presence within the coaching session and how that presence could be effective or ineffective in how the coach showed up for the client. Rather than the power being perceived as a control factor, it was influential power in how the coaching session was managed once the coach identified the level of responsibility through critical self-reflection. ICF identifies power as one of the core competencies, and this finding aligns with the importance of not abusing power within the life coaching relationship.

The coaches found meaning through critical self-reflection by identifying the skill sets and competencies of coaching. Listening more and practicing self-management, which refers to focusing on the client's agenda and not the coach's, were two identified areas of meaning. When more aware of their listening or not listening, the coaches reflected on how their connection was impacted through listening skills. Feeling bored, disengaged, and disconnected were emotions and conditions experienced. Paying attention to the client interaction during these experiences validated the significance of taking time to critically reflect on behavior and thoughts in the life coaching session.

The coaches were occasionally surprised at the level of emotional intensity they experienced when they reflected after the sessions. By doing so, they could transition before seeing their next client by managing emotions and shifting energy. This means

the coach could practice self-talk or meditate prior to seeing their next client to diffuse any emotions they did not want to take into the next coaching session. How is this meaningful? It provides a clear and present view of the next client rather than being clouded by the previous coaching session. Critical self-reflection contributed to the coaches being mentally alert, energetically present, curious, and in the space of discovery, which led to a positive experience for the coach and client. This is a significant benefit of critical self-reflection as each client deserves the full presence and attention of the life coach who has been hired to guide them to their goals and aims.

Schön (1984) identified in his research on reflexive practice the significance of constructing meaning after reflecting on past experience and a present situation. The life coaches found significance and meaning in increasing their ability to be present with a client, which adheres to coaching principles in the coaching relationship (Williams & Mendez, 2007). By doing so, the life coaches were benefitting from their purposeful reflective practice (Cox, 2006; Schön, 1984).

Critical self-reflection can be accomplished in a number of ways. Some critical self-reflection activities utilize journal writing exclusively or debriefing with colleagues, coaches, or mentors. The coaches found the structured discipline of the CIQ helpful in going deeper than a reflective perspective of a session. Though the five questions comprising the CIQ are simplistic in form, the encouragement to slow down, focus, reflect, and think meaningfully led to further insights about the coaches' behaviors and thoughts captured in the moment for reflection. All of the coaches described the CIQ as a good starting point to practice critical self-reflection. Having specific questions to

answer and completing the journal summary questions led to an intensive period of critical self-reflection.

Even with the structure of the study, each coach adapted the critical self-reflection activity to fit personality, learning style, and application preference. Once the structure became familiar, the coaches moved into adaptation. One coach found the structure so meaningful, she started using the CIQ before and after the sessions. Another moved from the individual CIQ to a summation of two or three sessions as she reflected upon the commonalities of the clients and their respective sessions. One coach moved from using the CIQ to the journal summary as the primary method of critical self-reflection once she identified the CIQ as helpful to get her started, but preferred the journal summaries. Two of the coaches intended to continue the practice as designed in this study. Three identified the desire to do a weekly critical self-reflection practice whether using the CIQ or the journal summary questions. Clearly the introduction of CIQ as a critical self-reflection activity, combined with the journal summary, became an integral part of the life coaches' practices. This finding is supported through self-directed learning theory honoring the adult learner's experiences and abilities to problem-solve, innovate, and adapt to learning environments (Knowles, 1980; Merriam et al., 2007).

How did the client benefit? The coaches did not assess their life coaching skills from the clients' perspectives. Their clients were unaware the coaches were participating in a critical self-reflection study. The coaches' perspective is that whatever was happening with them was directly correlated to what happened in their life coaching practice. Mezirow (1998) emphasized meaning from critical self-reflection encompasses feelings, values, ideals, moral decisions, and intentions and is communicated

authentically. If the coaches felt energetically depleted or bored, they experienced the client as having lower energy or also being bored. When the coaches were energized and feeling fully present, they experienced their clients as engaged and present. Though a limited finding from this study's parameters, the coaches identified it was helpful to recognize what was going on within them was having a bigger impact on their clients than they knew as a result of doing the critical self-reflection activity.

Self-awareness in helping professions is certainly viewed as a necessary attribute in developing skills and competency within a discipline (Mezirow, 1998). Becoming aware is the first choice to decision-making. The coaches found themselves course correcting within sessions as their awareness grew from the critical self-reflection activity. Responding more quickly, invoking creative interventions, asking more powerful questions, and getting clients to physically, emotionally, and mentally move were identified as decisions made in the life coaching sessions as a result of completing the CIQ on a regular basis. Becoming more aware of listening skills, staying present and focused, getting self out of the way, and validating the client's and coach's accomplishments were attributed to the critical self-reflection activity.

Another significant meaning identified with critical self-reflection was professional development. All the coaches valued learning and exploration of new ideas and new ways of working with their clients. Critical self-reflection helped the coaches identify their level of coaching skills and tuned them in to where they needed attention such as improved listening, removing "I" statements, being still, or displaying curiosity. Though the coaches had experience in assessing themselves with mentors as part of their coach training, none of them had a systemic method for self-evaluation until this study.

The coaches who had daily practices of meditation, thoughtful times of reflecting, or sharing ideas and concerns with other coaches still found the critical self-reflection activity as beneficial to going deeper and expanding their thinking. While continuing these other practices, the coaches were in agreement with Drake, Brennan and Gortz (2008) that additional training is needed in the life coaching profession for ongoing professional development. All the coaches identified the need to teach critical self-reflection as a meaningful method in self-evaluation and critique. As identified in Chapter Two, none of the coaching core competencies with ICF specifically addressed evaluation and critiquing of the coach with a critical self-reflection practice.

One seemingly surprising finding was the coaches acknowledging their lack of self-care during different times of the study. Critical self-reflection was experienced as a tool to recognize the value of self-care, which impacted the coaches' interactions with clients, self, and personal relationships. Over scheduling, not getting enough rest, feeling dehydrated, and feeling fatigued became more obvious to them as they slowed down to reflect on themselves. Though aware of their busy schedules, critical self-reflection was a tool to help the coaches authentically communicate with themselves and identify when they had not paid attention to their own physical and emotional well-being. As one coach described it, "I'm sure this had a synergistic effect on the client." Two of the coaches were going through significant changes within their life coaching practices while participating in the study. Critical self-reflection helped them validate the decisions they had made as they reflected on their next steps and direction. Self-care was an essential part of these transitions, and the increased awareness helped the coaches intervene on themselves.

Perhaps one of the most gratifying findings from this study is the level of passion identified by the coaches for their purpose in coaching. I write gratifying because finding one's passion for the work chosen sustains the momentum for meaningful work and practice. The clients benefit because they are working with someone dedicated to the profession with purpose and intention. All of the coaches expressed pure enjoyment in their work. They attributed critical self-reflection activity as a direct correlation to their renewed awareness of why they chose coaching as a career. The coaches who were mentoring new coaches or training seasoned coaches displayed enthusiasm in working with their mentees. Knowing they were making a contribution to people's career choice and to the progression of life coaching as a profession fueled their passion and purpose.

Though the emphasis of this study was on critical self-reflection in the life coaching practice, an interesting finding emerged as the coaches' critical self-reflection transcended from their practice to their personal lives. Becoming increasingly aware of how they experienced themselves in other relationships and in other settings was attributed to the practice of critical self-reflection. As their awareness increased of their own behaviors and thoughts increased, their attention was drawn to their relationships with family members, colleagues, community members, and self. As one coach stated, "How was I showing up elsewhere?" It is as if a personal inventory took shape the longer the study continued, and the coaches were more mindful of their interactions with others outside of the coaching relationship. This finding supports the professional development of the coach offering them opportunity to deepen established relationships and the formation of new relationships from a more evaluative perspective.

Drake et al. (2008) emphasizes the need for ongoing introspective professional development to support life coaching as a profession, and the results of this study support the contribution of critical self-reflection. One of the coaches described sharing with other coaches her experience with this study and how they commented they had not considered evaluating themselves on a regular basis. The coach stated, “Never thought about really stopping and evaluating on a regular basis what I am doing? This is another reinforcement that we’re not teaching it; we’re not incorporating it in our practice.” I think the significance of the study was demonstrated in discovering how critical self-reflection is a needed self-analysis competency for the life coaching profession. Additionally, the study connected life coaching and adult education as outlined in the research by Cox (2008) and Griffiths (2005). Both identified the significance of adult learning theories applying to the competencies, skills, and philosophy within the life coaching profession literature. Transformative learning theory and self-directed learning theory permeated this study as the coaches defined transformational moments and adult learning.

Limitations

Limitations with this study include:

1. The findings are not generalizable to the population as a whole. The reader needs to determine whether these findings are applicable for a specified purpose.
2. The sample was limited to five women in the age range from 40-56. Though diverse in style, personality, and coaching practices, other types of diversity such as race, socio-economic status, gender, marital status, and

education were not diversified. Another study to verify the themes may be of value in assessing this study's trustworthiness.

3. My background in life coaching, counseling, and education could be construed as a limitation since I have a close relationship with the phenomenon. Though I was intentional in practicing Epoche throughout the stages of the study, perhaps a non-coach researcher would present a study of validity.

Recommended Further Study

Further study in life coaching could be focused on conducting a more specific application of the CIQ. Perhaps a quantitative, longitudinal study to learn whether there exists a correlation between the frequency of CIQ usage with this study's results. Does the CIQ have as much significance with new life coaches versus more experienced coaches and how would those categories be defined? Another area of study could be how critical self-reflection is actually taught in coach training schools to prepare life coaches for self-evaluation and their own introspective work.

Could it be that critical self-reflection could be a practice for any occupation or any relationship? This question would support broad applicable studies to any helping profession and those who work with people from a perspective of change. With such a multi-faceted and global application of critical self-reflection, numerous studies could be recommended for several disciplines.

I envision the application of critical self-reflection for other professions, specifically for those who consult, mentor, or supervise. Human resource managers could study how managers evaluate themselves and whether critical self-reflection

impacts how they assess their staff. Workshops, training manuals, teleconferences, and webinars offer opportunities for ongoing application of the significance of critical self-reflection for personal and professional growth. Training and development, human resource management, and counseling are three areas to explore in expanding the practice of critical self-reflection activities. Revisiting Brookfield's (1995) experience with the CIQs could result in the development of a downloadable application so individuals could practice critical self-reflection after meeting with a client, employee, or customer.

Researchers in human sciences may develop other qualitative research designs to investigate critical self-reflection activities. Graduate students who are considering entering the fields of psychology, sociology, life coaching, adult education, or organizational development may want to expand upon this study to widen the applicability of critical self-reflection with specified populations.

Conclusion

When I decided to view life coaching as an adult education program, the idea of studying critical self-reflection was intriguing. The conclusion of this study has had a transformational impact on me. Perhaps the biggest impact was uncovering the depth the life coaches discovered within themselves as a result of deliberate critical self-reflection activities. Giving meaning to themselves and their practice as a result of this study demonstrated the significance of introspective and honest accountability of the life coaches' skills, career choice, and sustainability within their practices. The level of commitment each coach demonstrated to reach these findings and to support the study is not easily described, primarily experienced, which reflects transformation at its best.

With a background in life coaching and education, I have had the opportunity to practice self-management for the purpose of data analysis, and to connect with my own awareness of how critical self-reflection expands my thinking and practices as a life coach and as an educator. The life coaches who participated in this study humbled me with their level of commitment and dedication to the study, the profession of life coaching, and to me. As I reviewed their journal summaries every two weeks and glimpsed into their worlds, I was struck by the depth of their expressions. Though bracketing my reactions and excitement, when it came time to analyze, I was swept into the reflective practices and became immersed in what would be discovered. The essence of critical self-reflection is richly represented in the life coaches' data indicating application of this practice belongs in the life coaching profession.

Perhaps the best way to conclude a study on critical self-reflection is to offer a reflective experience that occurred while interviewing one of the coaches. The interview was taking place outdoors while seated at a table with the cacophony of birds above us on a ledge overhanging our table. About 15 minutes into the interview, we were abruptly and shockingly interrupted when a baby bird, whose appearance indicated a stillborn baby bird, landed with a splat on our table. The life coach and I simultaneously inhaled with an exclamation of "Oh my!" on the exhale as we stared at this lifeless creature. Torn between laughing and being respectful, we moved into disposal of the bird. I realized that above us was probably a nest, and the bird was unceremoniously kicked out, not viable to the flock. We resumed the interview and, as we were wrapping up; the life coach and I moved into reflecting on how anything that happens can be used as a metaphor for learning. I asked her what she thought the baby bird represented since it

occurred during our interview of describing her experiences with critical self-reflection and how does it tie into the eight weeks she just finished. She replied, “I noticed some things that I had given birth to in my coaching practice that were not viable and so I pushed them out of the nest.” Perhaps as life coaching moves from infancy to maturity with more research expanding professional development, the opportunity to push things out of the nest will result in more opportunities to fly with intention, purpose, and of course, passion. Think what could be uncovered if critical self-reflection activity lines the nest of possibility.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) EXEMPTION



Institutional Review Board

DATE: February 7, 2012

TO: Deanna Shaw

FROM: Ball State University IRB

RE: IRB protocol # 308255-1

TITLE: The Experience of Critical Self-Reflection by Life Coaches: A Phenomenological Study

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: February 7, 2012

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on February 7, 2012 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Editorial notes:

1. Approved- Exempt Status (Category 2) with Informed Consent

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact please contact John Mulcahy at (765) 285-5106 or jmulcahy@bsu.edu if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

APPENDIX B

EMAIL TO INTRODUCE THE STUDY TO POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Author: Lynn Shaw, MSW, LCSW, LCAC, CIC®

Hello, my name is Lynn Shaw, and I am a doctoral student at Ball State University, Muncie, IN, recruiting participants for my dissertation study involving certified life coaches. Please read the following for information describing the study. For those interested in being considered for the study, an informational telephone interview will be scheduled.

Introduction

You are invited to volunteer to participate in a research study that is the basis of my dissertation. This study is governed by the Institutional Review Board of Ball State University. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign a consent form which states that you have read the overview of the study, that any questions you have about this study have been answered, and that you agree to participate. You will be given a copy of the form to keep for your records.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the essence of critical self-reflection by life coaches. Your expected duration of participation is eight weeks. Data received from this study will be shared with the participants, faculty at Ball State University, and submitted to a professional journal for publication. You qualify as a possible participant in the study: 1) because you are a certified life coach; 2) because you have a minimum of 100 documented life coaching hours; and 3) because you have a current life coaching practice.

Study Procedures

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to provide information about your experience with critical self-reflection activities.

1. All participants will be asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire that will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.
2. The questionnaire will be used as a discussion for a preliminary interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.

3. Over 8 weeks, you will be asked to complete a critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) after each coaching session. This will be the basis to your critical self-reflection about your own practice. (See attached questions.)
4. Every 2 weeks, you will be asked to respond to approximately eleven (11) learning journal questions that will summarize your learning from the CIQ responses. (See attached questions).
5. You will submit the learning journal summary electronically to the primary researcher on Sunday night by 5 p.m. every two weeks of the study (March 18, April 1, April 15, and April 29).
6. At the end of the eight weeks, you will participate in a semi-structured interview, which will last 60-90 minutes, to describe your experience with critical self-reflection.

Study Risks

Your participation in this study involves no physical or psychological risks.

Study Benefits

The benefit of this study is to participate in empirical research to support the professionalism and credibility of life coaching.

Costs to the Participants

There are no costs for participating in this research study.

If you are interested in being considered for participation, please email me at dlshaw@ivytech.edu to schedule your informational interview. Thank you for your consideration.

APPENDIX C**INFORMED CONSENT****CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY****BALL STATE UNIVERSITY**

Title: The Experience of Critical Self-Reflection by Life Coaches

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Name: Lynn Shaw, MSW, LCSW, LCAC

Email: dlshaw@ivytech.edu; dlshaw@bsu.edu

Telephone: 317-691-9948 (primary); 317-921-4743

Department: Educational Studies, Teachers College, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306.

Dissertation Chair: Michelle Glowacki-Dudka, Ph.D., mdudka@bsu.edu

INTRODUCTION:

You are invited to volunteer to participate in a research study that is the basis of my dissertation. This consent form provides you with the information you will need to consider whether or not to participate. This study is governed by the Institutional Review Board of Ball State University. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this consent form which states that you have read the overview of the study, that any questions you have about this study have been answered, and that you agree to participate. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

STUDY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study is to explore the essence of critical self-reflection by life coaches. Your expected duration of participation is eight weeks. Data received from this study will be shared with the participants, faculty at Ball State University, and submitted to a professional journal for publication. You qualify as a possible participant in the study: 1) because you are a certified life coach; 2) because you have a minimum of 100 documented life coaching hours; and 3) because you have a current life coaching practice.

STUDY PROCEDURES: If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to provide information about your experience with critical self-reflection activities.

1. All participants will be asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire that will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.
2. The questionnaire will be used as a discussion for a preliminary interview lasting approximately 30 minutes.
3. Over 8 weeks, you will be asked to complete a critical incident questionnaire (CIQ) after each coaching session. This will be the basis to your critical self-reflection about your own practice. (See attached questions.)
4. Every 2 weeks, you will be asked to respond to approximately eleven (11) learning journal questions that will summarize your learning from the CIQ responses. (See attached questions).
5. You will submit the learning journal summary electronically to the primary researcher on Sunday night by 5 p.m. every two weeks of the study (March 18, April 1, April 15, and April 29).
6. At the end of the eight weeks, you will participate in a semi-structured interview, which will last 60-90 minutes, to describe your experience with critical self-reflection.

STUDY RISKS:

Your participation in this study involves no physical or psychological risks.

STUDY BENEFITS:

The benefit of this study is to participate in empirical research to support the professionalism and credibility of life coaching.

COSTS TO THE PARTICIPANT:

There are no costs for participating in this research study.

COMPENSATION:

There is no monetary compensation for participants in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

If you consent to participate in this study, your questionnaires, journal summaries and transcription of your interview will be kept confidential. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet located in the primary researcher's residence for future reference for publications and presentations. Data will be kept for a period of three years and may be referenced in future research studies involving critical self-reflection and life coaching.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN, AND WITHDRAWAL FROM, THE STUDY:

The decision to participate in this research study is entirely up to you. Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Signing this form does not waive any of your legal rights.

CONTACTS:

If you have any questions about the study, please ask, and the primary investigator will do her best to answer them. If you have additional questions in the future, please contact the primary researcher using the contact information listed on the first page of this consent form. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at University of Indianapolis (317-788- 3368) or the Office of Research Integrity at Ball State University (765-289-1241).

STATEMENT OF CONSENT:

I have reviewed the study outlined above and have listened to the primary researcher's orientation regarding differentiated instructional techniques. I have had questions about the study answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Signing this form does not waive any of my legal rights.

By signing below, I am indicating that this form has been explained to me, that I understand it, and any questions have been answered. I am indicating that I understand the ways the data will be collected and utilized. I understand that my privacy will be protected. By signing this form, I am agreeing to participate in this research study.

I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THE ABOVE EXPLANATION OF THIS STUDY, THAT ALL MY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN SATISFACTORILY ANSWERED, AND I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of Study Participant

Printed Name of Study Participant

Date

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE EXPLAINED FULLY TO THE ABOVE PARTICIPANT THE NATURE AND PURPOSE PROCEDURES AND THE POSSIBLE RISK AND POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE STUDY.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D

PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

1. What training program did you receive your life coaching certification?
2. What are your life coaching credentials?
3. How many hours of documented life coaching do you have?
4. Have you participated in life coaching as the coachee?
5. How would you define reflection within the context of life coaching?
6. Are you familiar with the process of critical self-reflection?
7. How do you distinguish reflection from critical self-reflection?
8. Are you familiar with the practice of critical self-reflection involving Critical Incident Questionnaires?

APPENDIX E
CRITICAL INCIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The Life Coaching Critical Incident Questionnaire

(Brookfield, 1995)

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about your life coaching session. Your responses will form the responses to your biweekly journal summaries.

1. At what moment in this session did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in this session did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone in the session (group member, client, you, colleague) took in this session did you find most affirming or helpful?
4. What action or experience in this coaching session did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about this coaching session surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you).

APPENDIX F
LEARNING JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Please submit only the SUMMARY, not the weekly CIQ's

1. What have I learned this week about myself as a life coach?
2. What have I learned this week about my emotional responses to life coaching?
3. What were the highest emotional moments in my life coaching activities this week?
4. What were the lowest emotional moments in my life coaching activities this week?
5. What life coaching tasks did I respond to most easily this week?
6. What life coaching tasks gave me the greatest difficulty this week?
7. What was the most significant thing that happened to me as a life coach this week?
8. What life coaching activity or emotional response most took me by surprise this week?
9. Of everything I did this week in my life coaching, what would I do differently if I had to do it again?
10. What do I feel most dissatisfied with regarding my life coaching activities this week?
11. What do I feel most proud about regarding my life coaching activities this week?

Don't worry if your answers to these questions overlap or if you feel one question has already been answered in your response to an earlier question. Do try to write something, however brief, in response to each question. Even noting that nothing surprised you or that there were no high or low emotional moments in your learning tells you something about yourself as a life coach and how you practice (Brookfield, 1995, p. 98).

APPENDIX G

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your experience with critical self-reflection?
2. What learning occurred from your understanding of critical self-reflection activities?
3. What was important to you during this experience?
4. How have you benefitted from the experience of critical self-reflection in your life coaching practice?
5. What value does critical self-reflection add to your development as a life coach?

APPENDIX H

FORMULATED MEANING STATEMENTS

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
I liked that I had this kind of structure way of reflecting on my work, and because there was a lot going on for me internally more than externally, it gave me a place to practice some of that with myself.	CSR provided a structure format to complete focused reflection.
I found that sometimes some of the questions didn't quite fit for me and I either, you know, didn't respond too much or I just made it work for me basically.	The CIQs were adaptable to the coach's preference and practice.
What I found was that as I got more into it maybe by um, that 3 rd two weeks of the study, I was doing more of the summary and not so much answering every single Critical Incident question so I definitely shifted the more I was doing it.	CSR journal summaries were more significant to the coach than the CIQs once the structure and routine of the CIQs became familiar.
I would say it was an absolute benefit to my practice. .Benefit to increasing my skills, um, and to be more aware of them and increased my professionalism.	The practice of CSR can increase and enhance the coach's professional development.
Yeah, it increased my skills. .I was really able to focus more on which skills I am using.	CSR increased professional development.
Making sure that I had at the end of every session, stopped, gave myself time to think what did I do, what did I need to give more attention to, what were the skills I was taught, which skills am I using, what .habits did I get into that I needed to reframe	CSR heightened awareness as to the art of reflection and the feedback to the coach expanded their skill development.

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
<p>I took some notes. I'm not a detailed person, I'm a bullet point person so I would write down if there were any habits, I would write down what I was finding. I would write down some of those answers to the questions in bullet points wherever so that I could go back and reflect on it in my journal.</p>	<p>CSR can be completed in multi-faceted methods depending upon the coach's preference, style, and needs. .</p>
<p>But I think in doing the summaries, I think it just felt, um, it just felt easier to work with the summary questions and still have them be very meaningful after having used the CIQ's for the first four weeks,</p>	<p>Journal summaries became the primary CSR activity and produced meaningful results.</p>
<p>Oh my gosh, I actually have to evaluate me and be honest. Which that's the hard part for anybody but that's also part of my coaching philosophy is to be truthful and to just embrace what and who you are so that was the ticket to the next level and to the next dimension of I gotta really do this for me, too, which it was a great experience, and it's going to continue.</p>	<p>CSR impacted the coach's awareness of authenticity, honesty, and self-evaluation as a constant practice.</p>
<p>It was interesting for me just to have this documentation of what was going on for me over this 8 weeks period of time because I think that, if we took another 8 weeks period of time, obviously, they wouldn't look exactly the same or anything like that but I think there are some things that are very consistent that were reflected here. .Number one, I love my work. I love coaching and I love training and facilitation. .</p>	<p>Having recorded reflections provided the coach support for the passion and purpose of life coaching.</p>
<p>Even though I appreciate my "slower" times, it sometimes frightens me that no one will call again." Get freaked out and have to change the story in my head.</p>	<p>CSR identified emotional reactions when the coach is less busy during periods of time in the practice.</p>
<p>I have learned even more that I love what I do for a living and it is truly a passion as well as a calling.</p>	<p>Coaching is a passion.</p>

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
<p>You have to be disciplined in them and it absolutely has to be incorporated. .It made me realize that the schools need to not only teach the skills of coaching but the skills of our own critical self-reflection because we're missing that component, and it's necessary to keep us on point.</p>	<p>CSR is valued as an integral part of coaching methodology.</p>
<p>I am just done doing this by myself on my own in this way. .Like I am just done with it. .And it's amazing how even in the past couple of weeks since I finished this what's happening in terms of moving into this new, I guess, stage or place of much more collaboration.</p>	<p>CSR revealed to the coach an awareness of what the coach no longer wants to tolerate as well as opening new opportunities for professional development. .</p>
<p>I think that one thing was it felt good to me that I was also doing something that was serving this profession and contributing to this work that you're producing. .There was that feeling of I guess just contributing my time and energy and to somebody else or something else. .</p>	<p>CSR provided an opportunity for service and contribution to self, this researcher, and the profession of life coaching.</p>
<p>Some clients wear me out more than others depending upon the way and the energy they put off.</p>	<p>CSR revealed the impact of energy in the coaching relationship and how it can negatively impact the coach.</p>
<p>Really seeing my growth and confidence in some of the facilitation that I'm doing. .I can really see how I've come in such a long way in all of that. .</p>	<p>CSR revealed an increase in personal growth and confidence in the area of facilitation.</p>
<p>Pay closer attention to my schedule. .Make sure I have a better balance of the number of clients, locations, and types of clients.</p>	<p>CSR enhances the need for self-care.</p>
<p>It was created even more presence of just slowing down, what happened, what needs to happen next .instead of waiting until the next time they were here to wonder what happened, what needs to happen next.</p>	<p>CSR contributed to changing the pace of the coach and reflecting on the practice of coaching with each client.</p>

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
<p>I think that CSR is an integral part of each person connecting to their own inner wisdom, their inner voice, their inner knowing, that there's something that surfaces that you just can't get to if you're just thinking about something, perhaps you could if you were talking about it but there's something about this process in being quiet and taking this time to reflect that I think helps each one of us access that inner wisdom that I think is just so important.</p>	<p>CSR is an integral part of accessing inner wisdom utilizing quiet reflection time and written reflections.</p>
<p>I learned that life coaching and my clients' energy permeates my being in not so healthy ways.</p>	<p>CSR identified the impact on the coach when the client's energy is not synergistic.</p>
<p>Deeper listening, intuition popping, empowering questions were the "bomb", decreased my story and allowed more from clients.</p>	<p>CSR identified multiple expressions of how the coach was present and connected in the coaching sessions.</p>
<p>Very much engaged and in the flow; connected to my own power as a coach, a facilitator, and an instructor, as well as very connected to my clients and/or participants.</p>	<p>CSR identified engagement, connection, and power.</p>
<p>The vulnerability, when you can hear someone at the deepest level, and you don't have a judgment around it and they know that you're bringing out the best in them and you're saying what they're not saying and there's no absolute judgment and they can just relax right there, that's powerful.</p>	<p>CSR impacted the level of communication between the coach and client in a positive manner building trust and vulnerability in the relationship.</p>
<p>And I do believe that was a direct result of me being so aware in this session that I had to evaluate and answer to someone else in a sense, to you, it's not just answering to me but it's also providing it in written format to somebody else (laughing) or crap.</p>	<p>Awareness of accountability to self, client and the researcher contributed to the completion of the CSR activity.</p>
<p>I have a gift in training professionals to become coaches. .It is clearly my "sweet spot" where my passion and purpose are illuminated.</p>	<p>CSR identified the coach's gift in training and facilitating professionals to become coaches. .The coach became aware of the passion behind the gift.</p>
<p>I can see how there is a connection between some of my choices and decisions I am making in my own life and how that translates into my work.</p>	<p>CSR provided insight into how the coach's personal life impacts the coaching practice.</p>

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
I am observing myself more and more in the midst of my conversations and noticing how much I am calling my clients and students forth.	CSR helped the coach become more aware of congruency in calling forth self and clients, which created more awareness in the coach and the clients.
Again, creating more presence for myself and being a little bit more honest with my own feelings. I guess allowing myself to open up and express and feel what was really happening more in depth and kind of dropped more into that.	CSR developed professional presence and the practice of honesty with self-expression.
Awareness, presence, creating, curiosity, playfulness, and loving what is.	Benefits of CSR were multi-faceted helping the coach develop professional presence, connection, and fun within the coaching practice.
Seeing what was, giving me time to step back and see what was created, what was being created during that time for myself, for the client, for the interaction and what else can be created.	Creativity emerged as the practice of CSR continued.
Just in general giving myself to me because a lot of the, you're, that process feels like something that probably should be happening all the time with clients so I can see where it was generating kind of more energy into the sessions or for the next time.	CSR generated more energy for the coach to give to the client.
It also really helped me to see that wherever I was within my own life had a bigger impact than I was acknowledging with my clients.	CSR increased awareness of one's life experiences impacting the coaching sessions.
I believe that the primary learning was that I am absolutely critical and being that vehicle for others so the way I am critical in understanding and appreciating myself and what I give in a session. You forget that. You forget how powerful you are and how important it is to be aware of that power.	CSR increased awareness of the coach's presence within a coaching relationship and the assumed responsibility of the power of that presence.
I was a bit surprised and shaken by the intensity of my emotions last week. And equally surprised this week by my sense of calm and anticipation of what's next.	CSR offered insight into emotions.

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
It's really just allowing myself enough down time to totally be in a state of inquiry.	CSR provided a method to be in discovery.
I would say it was in analyzing the questions by the second week that I realized the stillness I was providing myself was allowing me to go deeper into a meditative state if you will that made me feel more connected to my clients, my power, and the work that I do.	CSR contributes to a deeper connection with self and clients identifying with power, presence and purpose.
I think my highest moment in my coaching this week had to do with the insights I received about myself which will ultimately and is ultimately affecting my work as a coach. I felt gratitude for this work and this study.	CSR increased awareness of the coach's self-observations and insights related to personal life and how that can impact her client sessions. The coach values the CSR activities as awareness is increased leading to further insights.
The hypocrisy I felt about being in a fearful state regarding my own life and advocating that my clients move out of that state...we either operate out of love or fear and I wanted to move beyond that in my own life as I leave a corporate job and do full time therapy and coaching in my own practice.	CSR provided insights into emotions and choices. .
I feel dissatisfied this week that I did not practice more self-care and meditate.	CSR identified an area of self-care for the coach to focus.
I think the real difference was the structure, just more tightly structured, more organized, and at the same time, not totally unlike just my own reflective work.	CSR provided a structure that was compatible to the coach's previous understanding of reflection.
Again, the length of it, the daily practice of it, I think that set some good habits for me for my future.	The CIQ provided the structure for a habit to form with CSR. .
Well it was important to me first and foremost to honor the commitment and play full out. And do you know what I told you I would do and do it to the best of my ability. Really spend the time and do the reflections after each call and sit down and do the every two weeks and not just rip it off but go through everything, put thought into and do it well. That was really important to me because integrity is like my number one value. .	Participating in the study heightened the coach's sense of commitment and to be in integrity with self and others.

Statement	Formulated Meaning Statement Describing Critical Self-Reflection (CSR)
<p>Well, it definitely heightens my curiosity now. Because I go well what was surprising? I need to look for something surprising about that call. Or what was puzzling about that call? I need to pay more attention to the puzzling stuff so that means I have to get more curious so I need to have my eyes wide open and be looking for stuff.</p>	<p>The CIQs became a natural part of the coach's conversation with self increasing awareness during the coaching sessions.</p>
<p>I could see something like this being actually part of a coach training program, absolutely.</p>	<p>CSR can be learned from best practices with multiple applications including a coach training program.</p>
<p>I'm certainly being more mindful about curiosity, that's for sure. (chuckles) I'm being more mindful about self-management. Yes, and in so doing, I think it's increased my presence just the minute you start being more mindful in general it's presence.</p>	<p>CSR enhanced mindfulness in being curious, present, and practicing self-management.</p>
<p>I am also becoming increasingly aware of different emotions that come up inside me from time to time during sessions, which are triggered by something the client says that brings up one of my issues and then I notice my .need to self-manage.</p>	<p>CSR increased awareness of times to self-manage due to the coach's emotional responses to client situations.</p>
<p>The most significant thing that happened was bringing more play/creativity and more mindfulness into my sessions and watching the positive impact that this has on my clients, which gets me excited about even more new possibilities.</p>	<p>CSR helped the coach identify increased .play, creativity, mindfulness, and possibilities within the coaching sessions.</p>
<p>I did not call forth as courageously and get my clients to commit to specific action plans as much as I would have liked.</p>	<p>CSR revealed the coach not being as effective in coaching practices.</p>
<p>I am the most engaged when I am genuinely curious, fully present in the moment and willing to take risks by trying new and creative approaches.</p>	<p>CSR identified engagement through being curious and present opening up risk taking and creativity.</p>