

**EXECUTIVE COACHING AND SELF-EFFICACY: A STUDY OF GOAL-SETTING  
AND LEADERSHIP CAPACITY**

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CAROL-ANNE MINSKI

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This dissertation has been  
accepted for the faculty of  
Fielding Graduate University by:

  
Katrina S. Rogers, PhD  
Chair

Committee Members:

Constance Corley, PhD, Faculty Reader  
Mary E. McCall, PhD, Faculty Reader  
Elizabeth Scott, MA, Student Reader  
Mary Wayne Bush, EdD, External Examiner

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# **Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of Goal-Setting and Leadership Capacity**

by

Carol-Anne Minski

## **Abstract**

Executive coaching has been proposed as an intervention that helps executives improve their performance, and achieve the goals of the organization. Goals direct attention and goal-setting is a proven practical managerial tool. People higher in self-efficacy are more committed to goals, find and use better task strategies to attain the goals, and also respond more positively to negative feedback than people with low self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990; Seijts & Latham, 2001). Limited research is available in relation to executive coaching and the role of self-efficacy in goal-setting. This dissertation research examined the strategies used by executive coaches to enhance leaders' self-efficacy. In regard to the process that executive coaches use to increase self-efficacy, very little is known about the variables that influence its effectiveness.

This innovative research presents an understanding of a new framework for helping leaders achieve their goals. This was a qualitative descriptive study that utilized a semi-structured interview method with 20 executive coaches. This study contributes to the coaching literature by illuminating theory-based strategies that build self-efficacy. The five theory-based strategies for enhancing self-efficacy uncovered by this research strengthen the case for an evidence-based approach to coaching.

These strategies--adaptive leadership, appreciative inquiry, social cognitive theory, adult learning theory, and change theory--provide a coaching model that coaches may utilize in order to enhance leaders' self-efficacy for positive goal accomplishment. It is suggested that this model be added to coach training and certificate programs.

KEY WORDS: Executive coach, goal-setting, self-efficacy, social cognitive theory, adaptive leadership, appreciative inquiry, adult learning theory, change theory, coach training, coaching model

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Purpose.....	1
Relevance .....	2
Reflexivity.....	3
Research Question.....	5
Definition of Terms .....	6
Limitations.....	7
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	9
Foundational Studies in Social Cognitive Theory.....	9
Goal-Setting and Self-Efficacy .....	13
Executive Coaching Practice.....	18
Goal-Setting Models and Coaching Skills .....	21
Coaching and Feedback.....	23
Coaching Relationships.....	26
Summary .....	28
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	30
Research Design .....	30
Sample.....	33
Data Collection Procedures .....	35
Interview Questions.....	36
Data Management.....	37
Data Analysis .....	38
Validity.....	42
Reliability .....	42
Summary .....	43
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....	45
The Coaches' Voices.....	46
Barriers to Goal-Setting.....	47
General Coaching Strategies .....	51
Themes for Self-Efficacy Enhancing Strategies .....	55
Coaching Process .....	63
Key Steps in the Goal-Setting Process .....	64
Summary .....	66

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS .....	68
Themes and Relevant Literature .....	69
Adaptive Leadership.....	70
Appreciative Inquiry.....	71
Adult Learning Theory.....	72
Intentional Change Theory.....	74
Immunity to Change Theory .....	76
Significance of this Dissertation Research.....	77
Limitations and Recommendations .....	79
Implications for Coaching Practice .....	80
Implications for Organizations.....	81
Implications for Research.....	82
Summary .....	83
REFERENCE LIST .....	86



## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Letters .....	95
Appendix B: Participant Selection Criteria Survey.....	96
Appendix C: Interview Protocol .....	97
Appendix D: Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement .....	100
Appendix E: Informed Consent Letter.....	101
Appendix F: Procedure for Recruiting Coaches .....	103
Appendix G: Exclusion Letter .....	104
Appendix H: IRB Application .....	105
Appendix I: List of Assessments used by Executive Coaches in this Study.....	116
Appendix J: ICF Core Competencies .....	117
Appendix K: Atlas.ti Network Views.....	118
Appendix L: Coaching Practice Topics 2000-Present.....	119

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1: Sample Demographics.....	34
Table 2: Barriers to Goal-Setting.....	49
Table 3: Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Goal-Setting.....	53
Table 4: Self-Efficacy Enhancing Strategies for Positive Goal Accomplishment.....	59
Table 5: Theory-Based Self-Efficacy Themes.....	61

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1: Conceptual Model .....	5
Figure 2: Model of Theory-Based Strategies .....	78

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Executive leaders who face the challenges of profound change may need coaching now more than ever. Organizations must carefully select qualified and competent executive coaches in order to facilitate achievement of goals during times of change. Executive coaches seek to develop a keen understanding of leadership concepts and practices, as well as an appreciation for the special challenges that leaders face. Unfortunately, the coaching of leaders is often poorly understood. A major strength of coaching is that it respects the style and the authority of the executive and provides both positive and negative feedback on the impact of the executive's behavior. High-quality coaches do not simply provide feedback; they take great joy in seeing people develop.

Executive coaches help leaders move more easily from feelings of anxiety to a creative strategic sense of goal-setting. Coaching encourages the executive to develop new approaches and goals, re-evaluate their impact, and try a revised approach for improved effectiveness (Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, & Fernandes, 2008). Goals focus attention, and goal-setting is a proven practical managerial tool (Latham, 2004). With executive coaching, it is generally accepted that goal-setting is a necessary condition for successful coaching (Grant & Jackson, 2004).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this dissertation research was to describe and document executive coaches' strategies for building self-efficacy to achieve positive goal accomplishment. By studying executive coaches' strategies for building self-efficacy, the researcher's goal was to contribute to the practice of executive coaching, coach training, and the coaching literature. The

researcher was seeking new insights to assist the understanding of coaching practices in relation to self-efficacy and goal-setting. Are there consistent self-efficacy enhancing patterns that coaches utilize in goal-setting sessions with executive clients? Although goal-setting models exist, descriptions of the various ways that coaches make use of goal-setting in their conversations with clients are not readily available.

### **Relevance**

The foundation for this research is that executive coaching can positively affect self-efficacy so that leaders can accomplish their goals to enhance organizational change. Self-efficacy is the belief that one has the personal capabilities and resources to meet the demands of a specific task and situation. Self-efficacy has been linked to performance through its effects on goal accomplishments. Research on social cognitive theory and goal-setting theory provides evidence that self-efficacy is a key causal variable in performance (Locke, Frederick, Lee, & Bobko, 1984). Individuals with high self-efficacy try more, accomplish more, and persist longer than those with low perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1991; Locke & Latham, 2002).

According to the International Coach Federation (ICF) guidelines, competency in planning and goal-setting is defined as

Ability to develop and maintain an effective coaching plan with the client, partnering with the client to develop goals that are (SMART) specific, measurable, attractive, and realistic, and have target dates. This includes staying aware of the client's plan, learning style, pace, commitment to the goal, and identifying successes that are important to the client. (ICF, 2009, p. 9)

A search for “goal-setting with executives” or “goal-setting and executive coaching” or “self-efficacy and executive coaching” on the ICF research portal

(<http://www.coachfederation.org/search>) yielded “0 articles found.” A search for “executive

coaching” yielded 45 articles, with only 3 mentioning goal-setting. This gap ignited the researcher’s desire to focus on how coaches utilize goal-setting sessions with executive clients.

Limited research is available in the areas of executive coaching and the role of self-efficacy in goal-setting. In regard to the processes that executive coaches use to increase self-efficacy, very little is known about the variables that influence its effectiveness. Executive coaching is linked to increases in self-efficacy (Baron & Morin, 2010). Self-efficacy is linked to performance through its effect on goals. Leaders with higher self-efficacy will set higher goals and find better strategies to attain their goals (Locke & Latham, 1990).

### **Reflexivity**

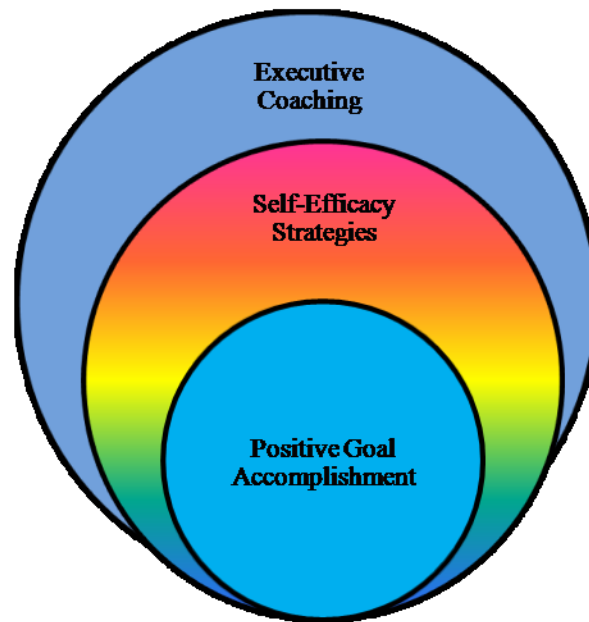
As a practitioner, I have always been passionate about motivation and goal-setting. I am a results-oriented, and an achievement-oriented person. If I ask myself whether it is nature or nurture, I am sure it is my nature to set and achieve goals. I believe that this is my gift, and this is the way I can help others. As a pragmatic problem solver, I am concerned with solutions to problems. I want to find the best ways to help my clients solve their problems. In my background of 25 years as a coach and organizational development consultant within Fortune 500 companies, non-profit organizations, and academic environments, my passion has always been to ensure that my coaching and consulting practices lead to successful client outcomes.

In my coaching practice, I have often wondered why clients have difficulty sticking to their goals. I believe that the key lies in understanding the influence of self-efficacy. Should coaches place more emphasis on how to set and monitor goals, or how to enhance clients’ self-efficacy? I believe the goal-setting session within the coaching relationship is the place to

explore the answer. The self-efficacy variable may provide a deeper understanding of how to overcome obstacles to goal-setting.

As a scholar, I have studied motivation theory to better understand the relationship between goal-setting and performance. The theories that resonate with me are those that view behavior as inherent in the living organism rather than externally driven. Locke (1991), Latham (2004), Bandura (1991), Ryan and Deci (2000), Gagne and Deci (2005) have captured my attention. My scholarly journey is shaped by social cognitive theory. Through my lens of social cognitive theory, one point keeps surfacing: Self-efficacy is a key causal variable in performance (Locke, Frederick, Lee, & Bobko, 1984). As a coach utilizing goal-setting methods and strategies, I understand that I must challenge my theoretical lenses or coaching practice bias, to remain receptive to the answers that the research uncovers. Bracketing is a mental exercise in which the researcher identifies then sets aside taken-for-granted assumptions (Creswell, 2006). One practice that I used before interviews was to clear my mind through a short meditation, so that I could be completely present with the interviewee, and remain open to possibilities. Use of the pilot study helped me confirm the wording of the questions through the participant's point of view. Journaling my thoughts and feelings during the research process aided in keeping me mindful of potential bias. Constant comparison of data, and checking themes with independent researchers kept me focused on the participants' viewpoints. I remained open to uncovering new insights that may add to the coach literature and enlighten the coaching practice.

**Research Question:** What are the strategies that executive coaches use to build self-efficacy in relation to positive goal accomplishment in their clients?



*Figure 1.* Conceptual model.

This conceptual model portrays the inter-relationships of executive coaching on self-efficacy and goal-setting in order to produce positive accomplishments for the leader. The model is based on social cognitive theory. Based on the view that self-efficacy is one of the most important factors impacting human performance (Bandura, 1982), Grant (2006) suggested that increased self-efficacy should be a natural consequence of effective coaching. “Coaching is a

goal-oriented solution-focused process in which the coach works with the client to help identify and construct possible solutions, delineate a range of goals and options, then facilitate the development and enactment of action plans to achieve their goals” (Grant, 2006, p. 156). The interventions taken by the executive coach will potentially increase the self-efficacy of the leader which in turn increases goal accomplishment.

### **Definition of Terms**

***Coaching:*** The coach works with clients to achieve increased and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning. The coach’s sole aim is to work with the coachee to achieve full potential as defined by the coachee (Rogers, 2011).

***Executive Coaching:*** Executive coaching focuses on helping executives improve their performance in their current jobs. Executive coaching can be understood as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial or supervisory authority and responsibility in an organization, and a coach who uses a range of techniques in order to help the client achieve a mutually defined set of goals with the aim of improving his or her professional performance and well-being and the effectiveness of the organization (Grant, Curtayne, & Burton, 2009).

***Coach:*** refers to the one who provides one-on-one coaching.

***Coachee:*** refers to the one who gets the professional service.

***Client:*** generally refers to the executive and other stakeholders, including more senior executives and/or HR representatives.



**Mentor:** typically refers to a senior, more experienced employee who helps a younger, less experienced employee become proficient in his or her role in the organization.

**Goal:** an object or aim of an action. Goals have both an internal and external aspect. Internally they are ideas (desired ends); externally they refer to the object or condition sought (e.g. a job, a sale, a certain performance level). The idea guides action to obtain the object (Locke, 1996).

**Self-Efficacy:** A simple definition is that self-efficacy is a person's judgment of personal capability. Bandura (1997) describes perceived self-efficacy as it refers to belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments.

**Self-Esteem:** is concerned with judgment of self-worth. There is no fixed relationship between belief about one's capacities (self-efficacy) and whether one likes or dislikes oneself (Mone, Baker, & Jeffries, 1995).

**Strategy:** In this research, strategy is defined as a "pattern that is used by the coach" as opposed to the strategic planning that is carried out in an organization. This cognitive approach in strategy formation regards the coach's strategy formation as a mental process of perceived patterns, and assumes intuiting and interpretation has taken place, and is based on Mintzberg's school of thought around strategy formation (Mintzberg, 1999).

### **Limitations**

This study was limited to external professional coaches who work with executive-level leaders. It is assumed that external coaches will have a less biased approach to the coaching practice in comparison to a coach working inside the organization. There is a distinction between

the *manager as a coach* and executive coaching. In the manager as a coach, the manager plays a coaching role as well as a supervisory role. Coaching was primarily viewed as a technique that a manager could use to correct deficiencies in employees' task performance. More recently, coaching is viewed as a means of facilitating learning, and moving executives from excellent performance to peak performance (Ellenger & Bostrom, 1999).

Otazo, Hall and Hollenbeck (1999) and Wasylyshyn (2003) described the main advantages and disadvantages of each type of coach. For example, whereas an internal coach knows the coachee's work environment better, an external coach generally approaches the coaching situation with more objectivity. This dissertation research study excluded internal coaches, defined as those who are permanently employed within the organization. The ICF recognizes internal coaches, but certifies them as a separate category. Internal coaches might be more influenced by their organizational culture. This study was focused on the ICF's common culture of external executive coaches.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review follows a line of investigation in the current literature that assesses self-efficacy as it relates to coaching leaders to increase performance. This chapter begins with social cognitive theory as a foundational foothold to improve self-efficacy and goal-setting outcomes. Relevant literature on leadership self-efficacy and goal-setting are reviewed. Next, current research that explores executive coaching practice and important elements such as relationship and feedback are incorporated. Finally, the chapter lays the groundwork for how this study adds to the understanding of the literature.

### **Foundational Studies in Social Cognitive Theory**

Bandura's (1986) classic work moved beyond the early structure of social learning theory to the articulation of how our cognitions emerge from environmental feedback and influence behavior. According to Bandura's theory of reciprocal determination, people can influence the environment by acting in certain ways, and the changed environment will in turn influence subsequent behavior. Bandura described how human agency (our ability to direct action toward results) involves complex thought processes that mediate the observed stimulus-response behaviors formerly explained by classical and operant conditioning. Bandura's unifying theory of behavior change (social cognitive theory) led to its surpassing behaviorism as the prevailing paradigm.

Social cognitive theory emphasizes conscious planning and intentional execution of action that influences future events. Human agency is characterized by intentionality and forethought or anticipation of consequences. People are pro-active, not just on-looking machines

influenced by external events. Bandura (1986) believed that intrinsic reinforcement (from self-evaluation) is more influential than extrinsic reinforcement. When a person's behavior exceeds the performance standard, he or she rates the behavior positively. However if a person's behavior falls short, the corresponding rating is negative. Unfortunately if one's performance standards are too high they can be a source of a person's distress. Like internal performance standards, perceived self-efficacy plays a major role in self-regulated behavior (Bandura, 1986). Perceived self-efficacy arises from a variety of sources as follows:

- Personal accomplishments (mastery experience).
- Observation of others similar to oneself succeeding (vicarious experience).
- Verbal or social persuasion (including coaching).
- Physiological state (including relaxation, bio-feedback, each of which affects physical capability; Bandura, 1986).

Persons with high self-efficacy try more, accomplish more, and persist longer than those with low perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy refers to belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), people's beliefs in their efficacy have diverse effects. Such beliefs in their efficacy influence

- the course of action people choose to pursue;
- how much effort they put into given endeavors;
- how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles and failures;
- resilience to adversity;
- how much stress and depression they experience in coping with taxing environments;
- the level of accomplishments they realize.

After reviewing nearly twenty years of research on perceived self-efficacy across many age groups in both laboratory and real-life settings, Bandura (2001) concluded that self-efficacy beliefs predict (a) the behavioral functions between individuals, (b) the changes in individuals at different levels of efficacy over time, and (c) variation within the same individual. It is here that the self-efficacy research stream begins to intersect with the research on goal-setting. Social cognitive theory and the research that underlies it are primarily focused on self-efficacy, its measurement, its causes, and its consequences. The concept of self-efficacy is important to goal-setting theory in two ways. First, when goals are self-set, people with high self-efficacy set higher goals than do people with lower self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 2002). Second, people higher in self-efficacy are more committed to goals, find and use better task strategies to attain the goals, and also respond more positively to negative feedback than people with low self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990; Seijts & Latham, 2001).

Applying social cognitive theory and self-efficacy constructs to the leadership process has practical implications. However, the role of self-efficacy in leadership development is complex. Some researchers developed measures that essentially ask respondents to define for themselves what leadership is, while other researchers elicit efficacy judgment for specific leader behaviors (Prussia, Anderson, & Manz, 1998). A significant challenge for leadership self-efficacy researchers is defining the specific behavior domain of the self-efficacy variable. Recall that Bandura's definition of self-efficacy was a task-specific capability. Kane, Zaccaro, Tremble, and Masuda (2002) defined leader self-efficacy conceptually similar to Wood and Bandura's (1989) definition of self-efficacy, in that leader self-efficacy is "one's perceived self capability to perform cognitive and behavioral functions necessary to effectively perform a specific *leadership* task" (Kane et al., 2002, p.67).

A method of providing more cohesiveness to the existing leadership self-efficacy literature would be to create a more comprehensive self-efficacy classification for leadership tasks. One notable attempt at forming such a classification was undertaken by Paglis and Green (2002) by conceptually defining leadership self-efficacy as “A person’s judgment that he or she can successfully exert leadership by setting a direction for the work group, building relationships with followers in order to gain commitment to change goals, and working with them to overcome obstacles to change” (Paglis & Green, p. 217).

Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, and Jackson (2008) improved on the Paglis and Green (2002) research by building a more comprehensive taxonomy applicable to a leader’s full range of activities. Anderson et al. (2008) conducted a three-phase study that provided a detailed content examination looking at perception of leadership effectiveness and areas for leadership development. In Phase 1, 44 senior executives were interviewed. A qualitative research methodology was used to provide a rich source of data that, when analyzed in light of the research literature on leadership effectiveness, yielded a comprehensive set of 88 attributes. These attributes were then used as input to create leadership effectiveness measures. In the next phase, 251 men and women representing a diversity of businesses rated their own leadership attributes, and 2,070 raters judged the effectiveness of their leadership, based on the 88 attributes, and 360 feedback. A principal components analysis utilizing managers’ ratings of the 88 attributes from Phase 1 yielded 18 self-efficacy domains: *change, drive, solve, build, act, involve, self-control, relate, oversee, show conviction, challenge, guide, communicate, mentor, motivate, serve, convince, know*. These domains represent a cognitive-based belief structure showing how managers conceptualize their own ability to execute leadership responsibilities.

In Phase 3, multi-source ratings of effectiveness for the 18 self-efficacy domains clustered into nine leadership competency areas: *Relational, Impartial, Technical, Creative, Directive, Tenacious, Empowering, Influential, and Strategic*. The results of this research revealed that managers' self-evaluations of perceived competence (self-efficacy) were significantly related to raters' descriptions of (the managers') effectiveness in a variety of areas, providing support that one's beliefs about leadership ability are related to one's leadership effectiveness. In summary, the relationships between self-efficacy and the nine leader competency areas were significant, and were consistent with broader evidence of the relevance of self-efficacy beliefs to performance. The results of this research study indicate a very clear and easily definable set of 18 self-efficacy domains and nine leadership competency categories. The Anderson et al. (2008) ground-breaking research developed a rigorous test to measure leadership self-efficacy. However, what is not known is whether variables such as length of time within a managerial role, and position requirements, may act as moderators of self-efficacy. The question still remains as to how individual self-efficacy domains can be improved by interventions such as coaching and training, and if so, whether the outcome is an increase in leadership effectiveness.

### **Goal-Setting and Self-Efficacy**

In reviewing the literature, Austin and Vancouver (1996) as well as Mitchell and Daniels (2003) conclude that the one overriding common theme among almost all approaches to motivation is goals. Two main motivation theories tend to dominate the organizational development literature, namely goal-setting theory and social cognitive theory. Goal-setting theory is fully consistent with social-cognitive theory in that both acknowledge the importance of conscious goals and self-efficacy. Bandura (1986) hypothesized that when people engage in

an activity and are informed of their performance, some set goals for themselves spontaneously. Goals have the effect of directing attention and action, mobilizing energy expenditure or effort, prolonging effort over time, and motivating the individual to develop relevant strategies for goal attainment (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981).

Executive coaching involves practical, goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and behavioral change (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999; Peterson, (1996). In leadership coaching it is generally accepted that goal-setting is a necessary condition for successful coaching (Grant & Jackson, 2004). Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, and Fernandes (2008) researched coaching as a method of leadership development to prepare executives for changes in their leadership roles. The study involved an online survey of 42 coaches and 114 executives at a large multinational corporation. After 12 coaching sessions spread over a 6-month period, the two groups of respondents were asked to what degree coaching had a positive impact on five goals for personal change. The executives in this study reported positive increases in effective people management (98%), relationship with managers (79%), goal-setting and prioritization (88%), dialogue and communication (68%). Coaches reported that executives now make clearer requests of direct reports, set better expectations, and set limits with colleagues more effectively. Although executives and coaches experienced more effective overall communication, only about 50% of executives reported improvements in how their managers communicated and provided balanced feedback to them. This disparity suggests the need for further exploration of the potential differential effects of coaching on executives and their managers.

Stajkovic and Luthens (1998) highlighted the power of self-efficacy in a meta- analysis applied to two decades of research. Their results demonstrated that self-efficacy explains a 28% increase in performance. This compares to 10.39 % for goal-setting, 13.6% for feedback



interventions, and 17% for organizational behavior modification. Self-efficacy is linked to behavioral outcomes such as engagement, persistence, strategy use, reduced anxiety, and task performance (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Paglis & Green, 2002). Results from empirical studies show that executive coaching has been significantly associated with higher self-efficacy and goal-setting (Baron & Morin, 2010; Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006; Moen & Allgood, 2009).

Using a repeated measures design, Evers et al. (2006) tested the use of executive coaching in the development of self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies with respect to three central areas of functioning: setting one's own goals, acting in a balanced way, and mindful living and working. The scores of the 30 managers who received coaching from their immediate superiors during a 4-month period (an average of 3.67 sessions) were compared to those of 30 managers who did not receive coaching. The experimental group had significantly higher scores than the control group in self-efficacy related to setting one's own goals. Empirical results of this quasi-experiment suggested that executive coaching is effective in raising outcome expectations with respect to self-efficacy beliefs in the context of setting one's own goals. The questionnaire utilized in this study measured outcome expectations. According to Bandura (1997) both outcome expectations and self-efficacy beliefs are reliable predictors of behavior and are domain specific (for example as noted above when setting one's own goals). Future examinations of larger groups of managers would be recommended to allow generalization of these results.

In a yearlong executive coaching experiment, executives and managers in a branch of a Fortune 500 company volunteered to participate in an online survey. Moen and Allgood (2009) tested the executive coaching effect on self-efficacy within four leadership domains:

- General capability as a leader (e.g., How certain are you that you can manage a reorganization?)
- Capability as related to motivating employees (e.g., How certain are you that you can challenge your employees through constructive feedback?)
- Capability as related to building relationships (e.g., How certain are you that you can establish cooperation with challenging customers?)
- Capability to execute management by objectives (e.g., How certain are you that you can be clear in directions to employees?)

Moen and Allgood (2009) used a 32-item scale developed to measure the above four domains. The research examined leadership capability by using a 7-point scale ranging from *completely untrue* (1) to *completely true* (7). Analyses were based on 127 executives (CEO) and middle managers. Results demonstrated a significant positive effect on self-efficacy in the experimental group, but not in the control. This research supported the position that executive coaching increases self-efficacy. Unfortunately, no measurements of actual performance were conducted in the Moen and Allgood (2009) study. However, this study represents an important step in leadership self-efficacy measures. As noted in the section of this paper on foundational studies, leadership efficacy measures have been found to be an effective means to understand and develop effective leadership (Anderson, Krajewski, Goffin, & Jackson, 2008).

The next study expanded the self-efficacy research with a strong methodology in specific task measurement. Baron and Morin (2010) conducted a post-test analysis of a leadership development program using three training methods: classroom seminars, action learning groups, and executive coaching. Executive coaching consisted of up to 14 sessions of 1.5 hours each. Data were collected in a large international manufacturing company from 73 first and second-

level managers over an 8-month period. Three questionnaires were utilized to measure the different training methods. The third questionnaire focused on measuring post training self-efficacy. An eight-item 11-point Likert-type scale specifically developed for this study. As recommended by Bandura (2001), 0 indicated Not at all confident and 10 indicated Completely confident. All items were examined by two subject matter experts. The wording of items (e.g., “Today, as a manager, I feel confident in my ability to help my employees learn lessons from the difficulties and setbacks they may encounter”; Baron and Morin, 2010, p. 26) was developed in line with the content of the training program related to supervisory coaching behaviors.

Results indicated that, after controlling for pre-training self-efficacy and other training methods, the number of coaching sessions had a positive and significant relationship with post-training self-efficacy. The higher the number of coaching sessions, the greater the increase in the managers’ self-efficacy beliefs. Although no control group was used, the longitudinal design and the fact that researchers were able to control for the other training techniques offset this weakness in part. The results of the regression analysis showed that action learning did not have a significant correlation with post-training self-efficacy, and the classroom seminar variable was almost zero suggesting a unique effect of coaching on self-efficacy. One improvement on this study would have been to include a baseline measurement of performance for use later in an on-going longitudinal study. However, results of this study do suggest that executive coaching can have a genuine impact on leaders’ self-efficacy.

### **Executive Coaching Practice**

Executive coaching has been described as a short-term interactive process between a coach and a manager to improve leadership effectiveness by enhancing self-awareness and the practice of new behaviors. Kilburg (1996) referred to executive coaching as consultation focused on managers and senior leaders in organizations. Although executive coaching has been proposed as an intervention to help executives improve their performance, and ultimately the performance of the overall organization, whether or not it does what it proposes remains unknown due to the lack of empirical evidence for what happens, why it happens, and what makes it effective (Kilburg, 1996).

A review by Kampa and White (2002) summarized the five known empirical studies produced in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These studies provided some evidence that executive coaching may positively impact individual productivity at the most senior levels. However, Joo (2005) reviewed six quantitative studies (1995-2005) and noted that many of the studies resulted in limitations due to small sample size or weak statistical methods. In 2005 executive coaching was described as a relatively new practice in coaching that emphasizes self-awareness and learning by the one-on-one relationship between the coach and the executive. Learning, development, behavioral change, performance, leadership, career success, and organizational commitment are the issues related with executive coaching (Joo, 2005, p. 465).

Kombarakaran, Baker, Yang, and Fernandes (2008) conducted an online survey of 42 coaches and 114 executives at a large multinational corporation. Coaching was selected as the method of leadership development to prepare executives for changes in their leadership roles, and for an increased scope of responsibility. The results indicated that executive coaching was positively associated with effective people management, relationships with managers, goal setting and prioritization, engagement and productivity, dialogue and communication.

The majority of the research on executive coaching in the workplace is published within the past 10 years. However, empirical research of the efficacy of executive coaching is outnumbered by practitioner research articles. Studies on executive reactions to coaching, learning, and behavior change are beginning to emerge (Wasylyshyn, 2003). Despite executive coaching's growth as a leadership development practice, the scarcity of empirical research is often noted as a caution. Please see Appendix L for the most recent coaching research topics. From the professional perspective as a practice, executive coaches have come a long way in the past decade.

Contrary to other helping professions such as counseling and psychotherapy, executive coaching is commissioned and paid for by a wide range of individual contractors within corporations, sometimes at board level (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2008). The Ridler Report (Mann, 2011) looked at emerging trends in the use of senior-level executive coaching from the point of view of corporate users. Data from users of executive coaching found that coaching is more commonly used by senior executives who are well established in their organizations. This was in addition to executives who were transitioning into new organizations. External coaches were used for executives to provide a greater possibility of new perspectives. Internal coaches were utilized for the population going through transition, moving into a new leadership role, or gaining new skills. Based on the latest 2012 global study, the International Coach Federation (ICF) estimates that there are as many as 47,500 professional coaches worldwide (ICF, 2012a).

The International Coach Federation (ICF) is recognized as the major accrediting body of coach training. The ICF developed a set of professional coaching core competencies. These core competencies were developed to aid in certifying coaches and determining that they coach to a

certain standard. Coaches are tested against these core competencies by having trained certifiers listen to a coach-client conversation.

The ICF core competencies are as follows:

1. Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards
2. Establishing the coaching agreement
3. Establishing trust and intimacy with the client
4. Coaching presence
5. Active listening
6. Powerful questioning
7. Direct communication
8. Creating awareness
9. Designing actions
10. Planning and goal-setting
11. Managing progress and accountability

Grant and Cavanagh (2007) point out that goal-focused coaching is increasingly being used but the coaches' skills are rarely measured. Grant and Cavanaugh (2007) studied 84 external (pay for services) professional coaches and 129 internal managers who were learning coaching skills. The coaches were asked to rate themselves on the goal-focused coaching skills questionnaire (GCSQ). Example items included

- My coaching is always effective in helping coachees reach their goals.
- The goals we set when coaching are always stretching but attainable.
- The goals we set during coaching are very important to my coachees.
- I am very good at helping my coachees develop clear, simple, achievable action plans.
- I always ask coachees to report on progress toward goals.

Results showed that the goal-focused skills questionnaire (GCSQ) distinguished between professional and non-professional coaches. There were significant differences between mean scores for external professional coaches and internal managers as coaches. This study also measured the coaches' self-reported emotional intelligence. This was the first study to investigate coaches' emotional intelligence related to goal-focused coaching skills, and provide preliminary evidence that goal-focused coaching skills and emotional intelligence of the coach may be related.

Grant and Cavanaugh (2007) concluded that a self-report measure such as the goal-focused coaching skills questionnaire (GCSQ) may prove to be a useful tool in the assessment and measurement of coaching skills in the workplace, and in measuring the impact of coaching skills-training programs. Coaching is an emerging cross-disciplinary profession. The future will bring heightened scrutiny of coaches' competencies and credentials. Professional coaching associations have an important role to play in cultivating high-quality training for new coaches. Credentialing organizations and coach training associations may want to consider including explicit training in goal-setting processes as part of the core coaching competencies, and as an essential part of any accredited coach training program. From the perspective of the client, "Rigorous coach training is highly valued in external coaches as it gives buyers an indication that the coach's profession is more than a retirement hobby" (Mann, 2011, p. 7).

### **Goal-Setting Models and Coaching Skills**

Goal-setting models are frameworks that support coaches' skills. The following models are presented as examples, without any judgment or evidence of one being better than the other.

Carol Wilson (2007) published a "starter kit" for coaches. In her book, Wilson (2007) discusses

several goal-setting models – GROW, SMART, EXACT. She notes that model-based coaching may be more frequently utilized by coaches that are new to *solution-focused* coaching. Solution-focused coaching is a simple series of processes in which an individual sets a goal, develops a plan of action, begins action, monitors his or her performance (through observation and self-reflection), evaluates his or her performance (thus gaining insight) and, based on this evaluation, changes his or her actions to further enhance performance, and thus reach his or her goal (Grant & Cavanagh, 2007).

The GROW model constructed by Graham Alexander in the mid 1980s and developed (with others) by Sir John Whitmore is the original coaching model: *Goal, Reality, Options, Will* (Wilson, 2007). Various definitions for the GROW model have emerged over the years. *Goal*: questions move the focus of attention forward past barriers and self-limiting beliefs. *Reality*: explores the client's current situation. *Options*: explores alternative strategies. *Will*: covers the actions that coachees will implement (and the commitment).

SMART goals (*Specific, Measurable, Achievable/agreed, Realistic/relevant, Time bound*) were originally set for managers to set targets for their teams. Smart goals are used in corporate goal-setting where targets are set by managers, such as profit or number of sales. The EXACT (*EXciting, Accessible, Challenging, and Time-framed*) model was developed by Wilson (2007) as an improvement on the SMART model. Wilson (2007) noted for performance coaching, the EXACT model utilizes the inclusion of exciting and challenging goals (Wilson, 2007): Wilson (2007) suggested that the time frame of 12 weeks is ideal: 6 weeks to break an old habit and 6 weeks to ingrain a new one. Wilson advises, “you can get excellent results as a coach once you have basic skills from the three models, however, good coaching is 80 percent coach and 20 percent the coaching model” (Wilson, 2007, p. 33). As coaches mature, and a more holistic view



of coaching emerges, coaching models are based on the criterion: “Will this enrich and improve the effectiveness of my potential responses to the client’s needs?” (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2011, p. 304). There has been little agreement about which executive coaching approach should be followed. “Discussion with a sample of eclectic coaches suggests that they have immense calm, hardly ever use tools, and if they do, they are seamlessly integrated into the conversation” (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2011, p. 300). Simply delivering against the initial presented goal is not necessarily an indicator of quality. The goal may be the wrong one for the client or the organization (or both). Achieving goal clarity may be the end point, not the beginning of the coaching assignment.

### **Coaching and Feedback**

Hall, Otazo, and Hollenbeck (1999) emphasized the importance of providing feedback to executives and noted how infrequently executives receive critical feedback about their personal and professional development. Leaders that are more committed to goals find better task strategies to attain the goals, and respond more positively to negative feedback than leaders with low self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990; Seijts & Latham, 2001). Feedback, when viewed as social reinforcement is likely to lead to subsequent goals (Bandura & Cervone, 1983). To the extent that the coach encourages and helps the recipients of feedback to set specific goals, coaching should enhance the impact of the feedback on behavior change. Several studies reviewed below have found positive impact of 360-degree feedback and executive coaching combined.

Research conducted by Thach (2002) evaluated the impact of a program combining 360-degree feedback and executive coaching on leadership improvement among 281 senior executives. Development needs were identified by a multisource evaluation (peers, employees, immediate superior). Six months later, another multisource evaluation with the same respondents was conducted. The statistical results showed that leadership skills improved by 55-60% on average during the professional development program. In addition, the analysis indicated a positive correlation between the number of coaching sessions and self-efficacy, as reported by managers themselves. One improvement to this study would be to look at the difference between executives with just 360-degree feedback and those with 360-degree feedback and coaching. This may have established a baseline to allow comparison of more significant results. Another concern in the Thatch (2002) research study is the feedback survey was not clearly validated. The survey was developed with input from the CEO to include customized questions as well as questions pulled from a database of competency questions (not identified in the research article).

Research by Smither, London, Flautt, and Kucine (2003) examined the added value of an executive coaching program in the context of multisource evaluations. The participants in the study were 1,361 second- and third-level managers in a large corporation. The methodology used was a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test format and included a control group. Multisource evaluations of the participants were conducted at the beginning of the program and one year later. Results showed that the managers working with a coach set clearer and more specific goals, were more likely to ask for ideas for self-improvement from their supervisor, and had better evaluations from their supervisor and their direct contacts, than did the managers in the control group who did not receive coaching. Unfortunately, the multisource feedback instrument

was not clearly identified and was administered in the year before this research took place, so the results were based only on the post-test rather than a change-score analysis.

Luthens and Peterson (2003) studied leaders from various organizations with a well-developed feedback assessment. The outcomes were defined as leaders achieving their own coaching objectives and five standard “control” items, rated by at least themselves, their manager, and their coach (multisource ratings). Measurements took place at three points in time (pre-coaching, post-coaching, and follow-up). The Managerial Feedback Profile (MFP) scale, developed for this study was theoretically based on classic dimensions of managerial performance and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997; Stajkovic & Luthens, 1998; Wood & Bandura, 1989). From this theoretical background, researchers captured three factors of self-regulatory behavior: behavioral competence, interpersonal competence, and personal responsibility. The Luthens and Peterson (2003) study represents the first time empirical analysis was conducted on combining coaching systemically based on social cognitive self-awareness and behavior feedback with a coaching program.

A problem associated with the 360-degree assessment is that it provides an overwhelming amount of information. However, pairing the coach with the 360-degree administration provides the guidance for the leader to deal with conflicting information. More studies are needed to provide consistent results with the 360-degree assessment instruments. Another problem is validity of the 360-degree assessment tool itself. In the three studies mentioned above, only Luthens and Peterson (2003) utilized a validated assessment instrument. Despite issues with the 360-degree assessment instruments, what these studies have in common is the successful utilization of the coach to work with leaders in the goal-setting process *after* the feedback.

### **Coaching Relationships**

Feldman and Lankau (2005) identified three key elements of executive coaching relationships as follows: (a) It consists of one-on-one counseling about work-related issues; (b) it involves the use of 360-degree feedback on executives' strengths and weaknesses as its starting point; and (c) its purpose is to improve managers' effectiveness in their current positions. Kampa and White (2002) note that establishing a relationship of trust constitutes the first step in the executive coaching process. It is during this initial phase of the coaching session that the coachee determines the professional and relational credibility of the coach, which in turn, influences the probability of the coach's suggestions having an influence on the coachee. In line with this thinking, deHaan, Culpin, and Curd (2008) suggested that general factors common to all good coaching (such as the quality of the relationship or "working alliance" between coach and client, the support system of the client, the personality of the coach, client expectations) predict helpfulness of coaching. Research studies have suggested that a good working relationship constitutes an essential condition for the success of executive coaching (Grant & Cavanaugh, 2007; deHaan et al., 2008). Although it is fundamental to the process, establishing a relationship should not constitute an end unto itself but rather be regarded as the basis for the process regarding the quality of the coaching (de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2008).

From the client's perspective, relationship has been noted as a key element in making the coaching engagement effective. A phenomenological study by Mary Wayne Bush (2004) reinforced the importance of having a strong bond between the coach and the client. In this research with 12 executives in a corporate environment, rapport and relationship surfaced as a key theme for effectiveness in their most recent coaching experience (Bush, 2004). In another study with executives, Wasylyshyn (2003) explored factors influencing 87 executives' reactions

to working with a coach and indications of successful coaching engagements. The top two personal characteristics of an effective executive coach were the ability to form a strong “connection” with the executive (86%) and professionalism (82%; Wasylyshyn, 2003).

Baron and Morin (2009) examined the determinants of the coach-coachee relationship. Thirty-one coach-coachee dyads were analyzed. The coach–coachee relationship was measured using the 12-item, 7-point Likert scale: Working Alliance Inventory (Corbière, Bisson, Lauzon, & Ricard, 2006). This inventory measured three components: (a) goals (we are working toward goals that we have agreed on), (b) tasks (my coach and I agreed on the steps to follow), and (c) bonding (my coach and I developed mutual trust). The coachee’s self-efficacy with respect to facilitating learning and goals showed a significant correlation with the working alliance. The more pragmatic coaching skills (related to structuring the process and attaining goals) had a larger impact on working alliance than did relational or communication skills. The more a manager is motivated to apply newly developed skills in his/her work the better the working alliance with the coach during the coaching process.

Results of the Baron and Morin (2009) research indicated that the coach–coachee relationship plays an interceding role in the number of coaching sessions. Coachees continued attending coaching sessions when the coach-coachee relationship (working alliance) was strong. What is missing from this study is the impact of the organizational culture. The engineering culture in this organization may explain why more pragmatic coaching skills had a larger impact on working alliance than did relational or communication skills. Also, the working alliance with a (recently trained) internal coach within the same organization may be different from the working alliance with a more experienced external coach. However, this research does represent

an endeavor to build a bridge between two scientific literatures: the plentiful literature dealing with the therapeutic process and the emergent literature on executive coaching interventions.

However, it is worth mentioning that with regard to a therapeutic relationship, therapy goes much deeper into the personal issues being addressed and into the fundamental causes of resistance to change, such as behavior patterns and dysfunctional personality traits (Kilburg, 1996). Working at a therapeutic level requires clinical expertise and seems inappropriate within the framework of the executive coaching process. If a coach finds emotional background is hampering an executive's performance, he or she should refer the executive to a competent therapist (Hodgetts, 2002).

### **Summary**

Relevant findings in this literature review included outcome studies that have demonstrated how executive coaching affects positive leadership change. Coaching research includes outcome factors such as goal attainment, performance, resilience, workplace engagement, satisfaction, organizational climate, and behavior change (Evers, Brouwers, & Tomic, 2006). Feedback alone is not the cause of behavior change; it is the goals that people set in response to the feedback (Locke & Latham, 1990), and it is the coach that guides that process.

There is agreement in the literature that more research needs to be done on the subject of executive coaching (Feldman & Lankau, 2005; Grant, 2006). Joo (2005) provided an integrative review of the practice and research of coaching. Joo reviewed a total of 78 articles and found that only 11 were research articles, including 6 quantitative studies and 5 qualitative studies. Joo (2005) concluded that even though there are a number of studies portraying successful instances of executive coaching, little empirical research has been conducted on the practice. Feldman and

Lankau (2005) note, “These studies establish the possibility and plausibility of the potential positive benefits of executive coaching, however, there is very little theoretical research that examines how or why executive coaching should work” (Feldman & Lankau, 2005, p. 834).

The challenge is to look beyond the immediate outcomes research and learn how and when different interventions work. Currently, what is missing from the literature is a description of what actually happens in the executive coaching conversation to enhance the self-efficacy of the leader. What coaches specifically do or say in the coaching session to increase self-efficacy is not known. Malone (2001) suggests that executive coaching allows enhancement of self-efficacy. Smither et al. (2003) agree that efforts to enhance the coachee’s self-efficacy beliefs are critical for implementation of behavioral changes, and suggest studying the strategies effective coaches use to increase their client’s self-efficacy.

Do coaches apply Bandura’s guidelines (mastery, modeling, and verbal persuasion) from social cognitive theory? What are additional strategies coaches employ that contribute to increased self-efficacy? What procedures or interventions do executive coaches use to increase self-efficacy? What actually happens in the executive coaching engagement to increase self-efficacy has been a mystery. The next chapter outlines the methodology for this dissertation research designed to uncover that mystery.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The focus of this chapter is on the research design, sample selection, data collection, data management, and the analysis process. The rationale for using a qualitative descriptive study is also discussed. The chapter describes the processes utilized in conducting the thematic analysis.

### **Research Design**

This dissertation research was a qualitative descriptive study utilizing one-on-one interviews with executive coaches. Qualitative descriptive studies offer a comprehensive summary of an event in everyday terms and seek an accurate accounting of events (Maxwell, 1992). This research study was designed to ascertain *how* executive coaches utilize interventions to enhance the self-efficacy of the leader. A qualitative study is the method of choice when rich descriptions of phenomena are desired (Sandelowski, 2000). Because my purpose is to describe executive coaches' goal-setting strategies with their clients, a qualitative study is an appropriate approach. "Qualitative research depends on the presentation of solid descriptive data, so that the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience under study" (Janesick, 1994, p. 215). Qualitative researchers are concerned about issues of richness, texture, and feeling of raw data because their inductive approach emphasizes developing insights and generalization out of the data collected.

Kilburg (2004) advises the use of more qualitative approaches in coaching studies and notes that there is a lack of detailed studies that describe what practitioners actually do with their clients. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. "Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85). Ryan and Bernard (2003) identify the tasks of thematic analysis



as (a) discovering themes and subthemes, (b) winnowing themes to a manageable few, (c) building hierarchies or code books, and (d) linking them into theoretical models. Thematic analysis organizes and describes the data set in rich detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

A purposive sample was utilized to select executive coaches that utilize goal-setting in their one-on-one meetings with executive clients. “A good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed, and is willing to participate in the study” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 228). Executive coaching involves practical, goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and behavioral change (Hall, Otazo, & Hollenbeck, 1999). “Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (Patton, 2003, p. 230).

The coaching community considered for participation in this study was the International Coach Federation (ICF) community of North America (including the United States and Canada). As an ICF member, the researcher had access to executive coaches through meetings, conferences, newsletters, and professional contacts from over 25 years in the coaching and related work. Snowball sampling was utilized by asking coaches who may know other coaches interested in participation to pass on the invitation (recruiting letter). Although I knew two of the four coaches from Fielding Graduate University, I maintained a neutral position in my role as interviewer. I was careful not to discuss the study before the interview or make any comments during the process. Both coaches maintained a professional stance throughout the interview.

The ICF is recognized as the major accrediting body of coach training and is also major credentialing body for coaches. The eligible participant was defined as an executive coach who obtained either ACC, PCC, or MCC certification (ICF, 2012b), or has had primary training at an

ICC accredited coaching school, or is involved in the ICF community through local chapter affiliation.

The initial criteria for inclusion in the study included

1. The executive coach considers himself/herself an external business coach and receives compensation for coaching services.
2. The coach resides primarily in North America (US or Canada) and coaches primarily in English.
3. The coach works with leaders/executives in a one-on-one coaching relationship either in person or by telephone (group coaching or training does not usually provide in-depth meeting with client needed to capture the rich detail needed for this analysis).
4. Criteria for being a member of the ICF coaching community entails at least one of the following:
  - received an ICF certification (MCC, PCC, ACC)
  - attended an ICF conference in the past 2 years
  - is a member of the ICF or ICF-affiliated local chapter
  - received coach training from an ICF-accredited coaching school

Exclusion criteria:

The coach should not be considered an internal coach that works within the organization to coach members of the same organization. In general, external executive coaches have extensive training. Also, the relationship with an internal coach may be difficult to assess when the coachee is in the same company. The coach is not a “personal” or “life” coach. The level/title

of the coachee is above a first-line supervisor. Participants that did not meet the selection criteria were sent a thank you letter (Appendix G).

### **Sample**

Twenty-four executive coaches volunteered and 4 internal coaches were eliminated. The sample comprised 11 females and 9 males. All of the coaches held coaching certifications, and 7 had achieved doctoral-level education. The number of years of executive coaching experience ranged from 2 years to 35 years (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Sample Demographics*

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Credentials</u>	<u>Coaching School</u>
1	Male	17	CO	PCC/PhD	Fielding Graduate University
2	Male	7	FL	PCC/EdD	Indiana Wesley University
3	Female	9	BC	PCC	Royal Roads University
4	Female	15	PA	PCC/MS	Coach U/Corporate Coach U
5	Female	2	KY	ACC	Georgetown University
6	Male	2	DC	ACC	Georgetown University
7	Female	4	CO	ACC	Georgetown University
8	Male	13	PA	PCC/PhD	Fielding Graduate University
9	Male	7	VA	PCC	Georgetown University
10	Female	18	OH	CC/PhD	Case Western Reserve
11	Female	27	VA	PCC	Georgetown University
12	Female	13	PA	PCC	Coach U/University Penn
13	Female	3	MD	ACC	Georgetown University
14	Female	35	PA	PCC/PhD	Center For Right Relationships
15	Female	10	PA	PCC	Fielding Graduate University
16	Female	12	FL	CPC	College of Executive Coaching
17	Male	15	PA	MCC/PhD	Coaches Training Institute
18	Female	5	VA	ACC	Georgetown University
19	Female	10	NJ	PCC/MA	St. Joseph's/Georgetown
20	Male	10	BC	PCC/PhD	Fielding Graduate University

Coaches in this study describe their coaching practices as executive coaching, leadership coaching, strengths-based coaching, and developmental coaching. The titles of the executives coached include everything from CEO, COO, VP, Senior VP, Executive Group VP, VP Business Development, Chief Mission Officer, Chief Content Officer, Superintendent of Schools, Scientist, President, business owner, government officials, HR directors, and director-level executives. On average, the coaches met with their clients for approximately 8 months, at a rate of twice per month. Most of the executive coaches used a mix of telephone and in-person meetings with their clients. Four of the participants used in-person coaching 100% of the time.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher used a semi-structured interview method. The semi-structured interview is defined as an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena (Kvale, 2002). Telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher and the time of the interview ranged from 25 minutes to 44 minutes. The researcher began her career in marketing research and has experience in conducting interviews, deep listening, and probing open-ended questions for rich meaning. The order of questions may have varied according to the flow of conversation. The advantage of open questions is that they provide richness of detail, and unanticipated findings may be discovered. Executive coaches are familiar with conducting coaching sessions on the telephone, so they appreciated the convenience and good time management of the telephone interviewing.

Data collection took place from January through February 2014. In December 2013 a recruitment note was e-mailed to potential participants and coaching professional organizations (Appendix A). This time period included prescreening potential participants for eligibility

criteria. Twenty executive coaches participated in this research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend sample selection to the point of redundancy. “In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations, if no new information is forthcoming from new interviews, redundancy is the primary criterion” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202). Redundancy was reached at 19 interviews.

### **Interview Questions**

The average time of the dissertation interview was approximately 34 minutes. The interview protocol was tested in a pilot study with four participants. The average duration of the interview was about the same. However, after the interview was completed for the pilot study, and the recording turned off, the participants remained on the line for feedback on the interview questions. Based on pilot study participant feedback regarding their understanding of the questions, some wording changes were made to improve clarity on the screening survey (Appendix B), interview protocol (Appendix C), and the introductory paragraph of the recruitment letter (Appendix A).

The main focus of the interview was to ask participants to describe the specific coaching that takes place during goal-setting with executive clients. The survey began with an introduction stating the purpose of the research and confirmation of permission to record the interview. The first set of goal-setting questions focus the respondent in the ballpark of goal-setting and obstacles to goal-setting. Then the topic of self-efficacy was introduced to see what first top-of-mind interpretations the coaches might have. The definition of self-efficacy was then read to the respondent before asking the core self-efficacy questions: How has self-efficacy played a part in your goal-setting sessions with your clients? When you are in a professional coaching conversation, what are some of the ways you enhance the self-efficacy level of the leader?

## **Data Management**

Data management includes the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval (Huberman & Miles, 1994). These operations ensure high quality, assessable data, documentation, and retention of data after the study is complete. The recorded interview files were stored on *Drop Box* (a secured internet file share) and retrieved by a paid transcriptionist (confidentiality agreement is located in Appendix D). The transcriptionist was the only one to have access to these records, and the files were deleted from the *Drop Box* upon completion of the study. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by assigning each participant a number. All participants were asked to sign the informed consent form before being interviewed (Appendix E). Signed informed consent forms, transcripts, written notes, and journals were stored in a locked drawer in the researcher's home office.

The computer was also utilized as an electronic file cabinet and as an efficient means of storing and locating recorded interviews, coding logs, electronic files, and communications to participants. Atlas.ti ([www.atlasti.com](http://www.atlasti.com)) was the software chosen for this research. Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) provided a rich representation system with text retrieval system that is visually immediate. The computer software provided project management, storage, and ease of retrieving data. This software enabled the researcher to organize text, graphic, audio data files, along with coding, memos and findings. The researcher purchased and installed the Atlas.ti software during a 6-month period prior to beginning data collection in order to attend training and practice with the pilot study. The pilot study confirmed that the data management process worked well (including audio recording equipment, transfer of the files, and accurate professional transcription service). The researcher obtained approval from

the Fielding Graduate University's IRB before beginning all research activities, including the pilot test of the interview protocol (Appendix H).

### **Data Analysis**

The researcher utilized an inductive approach, where the themes identified are strongly linked to the data because assumptions are data-driven. "Inductive data analysis bears remarkable similarities to content analysis, a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). The analysis of data begins shortly after the data collection commences and continues during the data collection and beyond (Richards & Richards, 1994). The researcher began coding after the first four interviews were conducted, and continued coding in sets of four at a time. (This was a comfortable pace that allowed for contemplation and reflection.) Once the first cycle of coding was conducted, all the transcripts were reviewed a second time for consistency of coding and to make sure the coding definitions were consistent from first to last transcripts.

In the first level of analysis, the researcher listened to the audio recordings while checking the transcripts for accuracy, and recording notes with initial comments on the transcripts. Next the transcripts were hand-coded. "A code is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing a portion of language based or visual data" (Richards, 2009, p. 94). Coding is a method that enables one to organize and group similarly coded data into categories or families. Classification reasoning plus tacit and intuitive senses determine which data look alike and feel alike (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 347). Next, the researcher uploaded the audio recordings, transcripts, and an initial list of codes in the ATLAS.ti file.



Here, the researcher re-read each transcript on the computer screen, confirming and highlighting the quotations that connected the first codes, while adding more in-vivo codes when appropriate. In-vivo codes are concepts using the actual words of the research participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). ATLAS.ti software keeps track of the number of times a code is utilized (groundedness) and the number of links to other codes (density). After coding the entire survey from beginning to end, the researcher looked back at specific research questions to again review the quotations across all surveys, and develop definitions for the codes. According to Saldana (2013) all of the above processes comprised first-cycle coding.

Next, the researcher requested an independent review. A sample of initial coding and actual transcripts (containing highlighted quotes, written notes, and codes) were reviewed by peers in a thematic analysis seminar which consisted of several coaches. In a dissertation committee meeting, the committee reviewed the code listing and actual transcripts (containing highlighted quotes, written notes, and codes). With a research journal and copious analytical memos, the researcher was able to answer questions about the definitions, further refine definitions, and prepare for second-cycle coding.

The second-cycle coding process involved reorganizing codes into families, developing broad categories, and merging some codes. At this point the researcher looked at codes such as "difficult goals" or "strategies to overcome obstacles" and re-read quotations in the original transcript. This cycle developed a code list of 97 codes and five families: barriers (BAR), strategies (STRAT), key processes (KEY), self-efficacy role in goal setting (SE), and ways to enhance self-efficacy (WAYS). At the end of second-cycle coding, a review was conducted with Mary McCall. Mary McCall is a faculty member for Fielding Graduate University, School of Human and Organizational Development, with expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods.

This review of the codes and discussion allowed for clarification of emerging ideas. One important decision out of this review was to clarify the *strategy family* and the *ways to enhance self-efficacy family*. For example, the strategies family contains the answers to the question: What strategies do you use when helping clients overcome obstacles to goal-setting? It contains general strategies mentioned in the beginning sections of the questionnaire. Therefore the definition for this family is *a general coaching strategy that coaches say they use with their clients*. The ways to enhance self-efficacy family is defined as *the specific strategies that coaches say they use when talking about self-efficacy*.

The third level of this data analysis, thematic analysis goes beyond simply counting phrases or words in a text and moves on to identifying implicit and explicit ideas within the data (Creswell, 2006). Thematic analysis involves the searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis supported the handling of text. In addition to identifying the themes during the coding process, the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software can build additional layers of analysis utilizing nodes. A node is any linked object (code, quote, and memo) that may be portrayed in a network view. This graphic view of the data allowed the researcher to explore the data visually and investigate linked objects. The researcher also looked at the groundedness of the codes defined in ATLAS.ti as the number of associated quotations. However, “The keyness of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, but rather on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). This analytic process involved a progression from description to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 2003).

At this point, the researcher also moved away from the computer to view the data in a different way. All of the data (printed listings of code family lists, quotations, research journals, coding memos) were placed on a large table. The researcher stood over the table to get a *view from the balcony* and draw a diagram on an 11” by 14” artist pad. The themes that were underlying these data were viewed as theory-based strategies that coaches use to help enhance self-efficacy. This was a most memorable experience for the researcher as the clear picture of five theory-based strategies stood out. I also had a “reality-check” discussion with my committee chair, Katrina Rogers to confirm my ideas about the themes. Katrina Rogers, currently Fielding Graduate University President, was one of the founding faculty for the evidence-based coaching program at Fielding, and has a background in organizational development.

The fourth level of analysis employed a word count. The researcher employed a tool in the ATLAS.ti software program known as the “Object Crawler.” It finds all occurrences of the entered search term and highlights a match at its original location. Words queried included perspective, theory, feedback, change, and success. The displayed results listed the exact match. The results included 13 matches for perspective, 16 matches for theory, 38 matches for feedback, 43 matches for change, and 55 matches for success. A click on the word match provided a link to the transcript to find the exact quotation, and the opportunity to re-read the quote in context. The significance of these word matches was that these words highlighted the theory-based themes that are displayed in the results.

Two additional steps in analysis that added other researchers’ eyes also increased credibility and confirmability of the research. First, I showed an initial version of the themes to two other coach-researchers to check for “face validity.” One coach-researcher said, “I can see myself in these results” and the other coach-researcher suggested a theme naming change and

adding a full listing of the codes that led to the themes. Instead of using “gaining perspective” as a theory-based descriptor, using “adaptive leadership” was chosen to be consistent with the other theme names. Second, I conducted a member check-in by providing participants with their quotations to confirm accuracy and credibility.

### **Validity**

Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures (Creswell, 2006). Good qualitative research builds validity through keeping a log of processes, diaries of ways of working with the data records (Richards, 2009). The following techniques were employed to ensure integrity, validity, and accuracy of the findings:

- Checking transcripts to make sure they do not contain obvious mistakes made during transcription.
- Pilot study test of the interview protocol.
- Revised interview questions were checked with dissertation committee.
- Member checking where participants reviewed themes to ensure they are recognized by the coaching community, and to validate the quotations used in the written report.
- Checking assumptions by continuous cross-checks with a research journal, and bracketing.

### **Reliability**

Reliable results are consistent across different researchers and different projects (Gibbs, 2007). Specific checks for the reliability of the results for this study included

- Keeping coding logs, and analysis memos.
- Consistency testing: Confirming the definition of codes, or meaning of the codes during the process of coding, constantly comparing data with the codes, and checking with dissertation committee during data analysis.
- Internal reliability (the degree to which information is consistent) was checked by independent reviews of first-cycle coding by peers taking part in a thematic analysis class.
- External reliability (the degree to which independent researcher will generate similar themes with the same data) was checked by two external executive coaches.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this research was to study the patterns that executive coaches use to build self-efficacy to develop positive goal accomplishment for their clients. A sample of 20 executive coaches that were members of the ICF community was interviewed by telephone. Data from the interview were transcribed and the transcriptions were coded, first by hand and then uploaded to ATLAS.ti computer-aided software. Computer-aided software was the tool for data management and thematic analysis was the process for the data analysis. “The qualitative researcher builds patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up, by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information” (Creswell, 2006, p. 175). The researcher established validity and reliability of the data through keeping logs of processes, and continuous check-ins with the dissertation committee. Themes were reviewed by peer researchers and executive coaches.

Themes were also reviewed by the researcher's dissertation committee. This review led to the theory-based themes that will be described in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this doctoral study was to answer the research question: What are the strategies that executive coaches use to build self-efficacy in relation to positive goal accomplishment for their clients? Self-efficacy beliefs influence how well people motivate themselves, and persevere in the face of difficulties, through reaching the goals they set for themselves. The researcher entered this study with the intention of testing self-efficacy theory and in the process uncovered four additional approaches to understanding self-efficacy as it relates to goal setting.

The findings of this research are presented in this chapter. First, the coaches describe their views on the importance of self-efficacy. The barriers to goal-setting are then outlined, and the strategies that coaches use to overcome barriers are presented. Self-efficacy beliefs help determine how much effort people will expend, how long they will persevere when confronting obstacles or barriers, and how resilient they will prove in the face of adverse situations; the higher the sense of efficacy, the greater the effort, persistence, and resilience (Bandura, 2012). Tables 2 – 5 present the core findings of this study. Each builds upon the next to result in the final result of the study – the five theory-based strategies. In Tables 4 and 5, the strategies that coaches use for enhancing self-efficacy are described. These specific strategies answer the research question stated above. The last section outlines the coaching processes as described by the participants.

### **The Coaches' Voices**

The coach participants were asked, How has self-efficacy played a part in your goal-setting sessions with your clients? Coaches described how self-efficacy played a part in their goal-setting sessions with clients as important to goal achievement as follows:

Coaches view self-efficacy as important to goal achievement:

Ultimately the whole process, not only goal-setting, but goal achieving is about self-efficacy. It is the process of self-efficacy in building capacity to do that. Yeah it's almost like self-efficacy is the definition of goal-setting and achievement, not only the setting but the achievement of those goals. (Coach 1)

Well I think it's really critical. I think sometimes clients set goals because it's something that they want, but they don't necessarily believe that they can do it. (Coach 4)

Coaches see high self-efficacy as beneficial to achieving significant goals in the workplace:

There are those who are a little bit more pessimistic, and some of the work that I do has to do with that. And then there are others who are more optimistic, and have a real learning mindset. (Coach 6)

I definitely think if a client comes with a high efficacy, then they are—how can I say that?—they're more—just the growth that they are able to attain and the goals they are able to achieve seems to be more significant in the workplace. (Coach 5)

Coaches note that leaders need a safe place to admit their level of efficacy. As the coach is building a relationship, understanding the client's self-efficacy was important:

A lot of self-efficacy for me and in my mind is for leaders to be able to have a safe enough place to be vulnerable enough that they can go back out there and look like a lion again, but meanwhile back in the room where I'm working with them or on the phone, they're all but in tears. (Coach 8)

I think it's really important that in coaching we meet the client where they are. And so part of the process of getting to know our clients and building a relationship with them is, kind of understanding, where they are in terms of their own self-efficacy in general. (Coach 10)

Coaches describe self-efficacy as confidence:



We are looking at “How can I be more confident that I can reach this goal?” And a coach is there to build that confidence, to build that ability to set in motion actions and measures and support that will increase the probability of success. (Coach 1)

I want to start from a place of strengths and that builds, I think some confidence in them early on, where I continue to go back to that of measures of success, past success. And it’s hard to measure, but I believe that is part of their self-efficacy and how they’re viewing their work and themselves. (Coach 7)

If I find that they’re just not feeling as confident in their ability or something, then we’ll talk about it. So I’ll try to double click on it then and where it’s relevant. (Coach10)

Well, it [self-efficacy] definitely is a key ingredient in the sense that some people do not have enough confidence to imagine or commit or articulate a goal that might be appropriate for them in their professional journey or in their development. (Coach 15)

And I think of self-efficacy as almost like self-authorship. It’s having the wherewithal and the self-belief and the courage to feel that I have what it takes to do something or accomplish something or get somewhere or move off of where I am. That’s what I think of as self-efficacy. It’s like, “Yeah, I can do it. (Coach 13)

Coaches mention those high in self-efficacy and those that are open to feedback:

One thing I can think about with being high on the scale with self-efficacy is that people are open. They are open to the feedback and they are open to trying something new. (Coach18)

Well I think self-efficacy is the bottom line. The other connection of course is that they are getting feedback from managers having input into what they want their subordinate to work on. They need to be, and we talk about this, they need to be checking in regularly with that manager, about how they are doing. So when that's involved, they need to be doing that kind of demonstration on the job with their issues. And they need to be checking in with their manager about how they are doing. (Coach 19)

### **Barriers to Goal-Setting**

The coaches were asked about goals that can be more difficult, and barriers to goal-setting. A barrier is defined (Merriam-Webster, 2004) as a limit or boundary, something that separates. Barriers to goal-setting included behavior change, emotional intelligence, personality style, lack of goal clarity, lack of belief in self, and lack of confidence.

Several coaches described barriers as underlying thoughts or behaviors that need to be changed:

Now he's set up barriers so his peers see him as a competitor. When really the behavior that he is working on changing is not seeing them as competitors, but seeing them as in the same family. (Coach 2)

What was quite clear working with him that there are two issues around his focusing. One is his behaviors have set a trend. That is not working well for him. And we had to... He has to make some decisions around how he wants to change his behaviors. (Coach 20)

I'm going to work at drivers underneath that become barriers to goals. (Coach 8)

Barriers that coaches described most often were barriers to either goal accomplishment or behavior change (Table 2). To be included in this table, the barrier was mentioned five or more times.

Table 2

*Barriers to Goal-Setting*

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Sample verbatim from transcript</b>
Behavior Change	A specific mention of a behavior problem or issue that brings the coach into the company to work with the client.	<p>She honestly was often not even aware that she was doing certain things, so the first behavior we needed to change was that we needed her to slow down. (Coach 4)</p> <p>He has to make some decisions around how he wants to change his behaviors. (Coach 20)</p>
Emotional Intelligence	Managing emotions, emotional self-regulation, negative emotions get in the way.	<p>He lacks emotional intelligence and self-awareness and social awareness about how he comes across and how that affects others. (Coach 9)</p> <p>Needs to overcome emotional barriers, that has to happen so that the change process can be undergone. (Coach 2)</p>
Personality Style	Personality aspect, challenges with leadership style, one predominant style.	<p>I think the more difficult ones are when they are about who they are as a person. (Coach 4)</p> <p>This was about being able to open more to others and dissolve that wall. (Coach 12)</p>
Lack of Goal Clarity	Client is not able to define the goal (i.e., being a better listener) -- the coach helps the client define the goal.	<p>The difficult thing and the challenge perhaps is taking something that seems nebulous and abstract because it deals more with people as opposed to information or data. And then trying to articulate it in a goal statement that can be actionable. (Coach 10)</p>

		<p>If they are not specific enough, if they are too fuzzy. (Coach 1)</p> <p>Lack of information or ill-defined goals is one. (Coach 17)</p>
Lack of Belief in Self, Confidence	Lack of courage, not confident, trying to look competent while not feeling confident.	<p>She was practicing enabling behavior and letting her staff get away with stuff because she wanted to be liked so much and didn't feel she was doing a good job and that then turned into lack of confidence. (Coach13)</p> <p>I would say for probably 80% of my clients it is in the courage area and it has to do with confidence. Particularly with my female clients, although it's certainly not restrictive to that. I have had a lot of male executives that externally exude confidence and inside they're scared, little boys. (Coach 14)</p> <p>They've spent most of their lives being very guarded, building a large structure and a persona around them, a persona of competence. (Coach 15)</p>

### **General Coaching Strategies**

The coaches were asked, What strategies do you use when helping clients overcome obstacles to goal-setting? Strategies are defined as “patterns” that are used by the coaches. This question is based in the goal-setting context. Here the coaches are focused on what (coaching pattern) is used with clients. The strategies executive coaches say they use with their clients to overcome obstacles to goal setting include asking probing questions, brainstorming, challenging assumptions, assigning homework, deep listening, and somatic techniques.

The overarching strategy used by all of the coaches is asking probing questions:

So I can see that reflected in their reactions to the goals that they’re setting for themselves and I usually press on that and just frankly ask them, How attainable does this seem to you? And that can be a rich conversation right there, so I like to have that discussion with them. (Coach 6)

Sometimes I’ll say “what are you saying yes to and what are you saying no to?” (Coach 7)

I’ll stop ‘em and say,” Did you hear what you just said? Let’s go back and just sit with it for a second. What’s showing up for you, whether it’s good, bad, indifferent? I’m hearing it, but are you hearing it?” (Coach 7)

Coaches talk about using solid coaching skills and listening:

And it kind of goes back to just solid coaching. It’s asking powerful questions, it’s trying to hear the nuances of what they’re saying and really deep listening to surface things that they don’t even realize they’re talking about. (Coach 14)

Some coaches address the body shape and use somatic techniques:

It’s helping them to address that body shape in this new place of energy, and helping them to see the difference between one body shape, which is an old story, and a new body shape, a new story, where they want to be. (Coach 5)

I always make sure that we build in the body and emotion because the body never lies. (Coach 19)

The research participants' top six strategies for overcoming barriers to goal-setting are described in Table 3. To be included on this list, the strategy was mentioned five or more times. The strategy definitions are based on coaching practice definitions as well as those definitions found on the ICF core competency list. The ICF developed a set of professional coaching core competencies to aid in certifying coaches and set coaching standards. Please see Appendix J for a complete listing of competency definitions.

Table 3

*Strategies for Overcoming Barriers to Goal-Setting*

Strategy	Definition	Sample verbatim from transcript
Asking Questions	Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit of the coaching relationship. Clear direct questions that lead to new insights and move the client forward (ICF core competency).	And I help them really drill down into getting past the surface stuff. “Honestly, what would the rewards be to you? And what would the consequences be if this doesn’t happen?” And that’s always a really fascinating conversation for the person. (Coach 20)
Assigning Homework	Described as designing actions, working with the client to design “fieldwork” outside of the coaching session (ICF core competency).	So we will brainstorm some options and give them some homework to go try some of the ideas and see the results. (Coach 1)  We might set in-between coaching sessions, I call it homework, for them to actually practice a particular behavior. To actually step into a particular behavior. (Coach 19)
Somatic Techniques: Addressing the body, energy of the body, using relaxation techniques	From the Greek word <i>soma</i> , this translates as “the living body in its wholeness” (Strean & Strozzi-Heckler, 2009, p. 92)	I almost always build in some somatic work with them. I almost always find, no matter what the goal is. That the physical body work, how they show up in their body, will affect their satisfaction. (Coach 19)
Brainstorming, thinking about obstacles, looking at options, trying out ideas	Looking at all possible options, used in the GROW model (Wilson, 2007).	Trying to think of ways to take those behavioral goals, and figure out ways that we can tie them to things that can be changed. (Coach 4)

Listening	Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying to understand the meaning in the context. Listening without an agenda to distinguish between the words, tone of voice, and body language (ICF core competency).	I especially listen for images or metaphors that they're using when they talk about trying to accomplish something. If they say something vivid or a little surprising to me, often it's in passing and it's not necessarily their focus.(Coach 14)
Challenging Assumptions	Challenging some of the coachee's understandings, and meaning in regard to particular events, situations, tasks or contexts. The challenge is issued with sensitivity and empathy with an intention to understand the situation from the client's perspective (Stein & Stelter, 2011).	Part of supporting them as I understand it, is challenging them and challenging assumptions. (Coach 14)  Getting back to assumptions and that there's some self-limiting belief that is interfering with them holding their efficacy; I poke at that as much as possible. (Coach 6)



### Themes for Self-Efficacy Enhancing Strategies

The next section of findings moves from the general coaching strategies used for overcoming obstacles to the specific strategies used to enhance self-efficacy. The analytic process involves a progression from description to interpretation, in order to attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns, and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 2003). Here is where the data begin to shed light on the specific self-efficacy enhancing strategies (ways) that the coaches use. The researcher methodically examined the codes, comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p 102). Two tools in ATLAS.ti helped with this process. One was the coding log and another was the network view that allows one to explore the data visually. The focal point for this analysis was to discover how the ways in which coaches enhance self-efficacy are different from the general strategies that have been described in the previous section. There is a progression from strategies coaches use *in general* to *specific strategies* that are utilized when the coach is attentive to enhancing the client's self-efficacy. These specific self-efficacy strategies include gaining perspective, reviewing past success, positive feedback, reframing, social experiments, and change models. Table 4 lists the self-efficacy enhancing strategies the coaches say they use for positive goal accomplishment.

*Gaining perspective and reframing* are similar ways to enhance self-efficacy in that both help the client see their situation in a different way. Gaining perspective was mentioned by most of the coaches, and a few coaches specified the theory-based strategy of stepping onto the balcony (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

The coach participants described gaining perspective in a variety of ways:

We check out assumptions, what other perspectives might there be on this? (Coach 3)

Ronald Heifetz's work with adaptive leadership and Heifetz's idea of getting up on the balcony to be able to see the floor from a vantage point and getting perspective. Kegan and Lahey would be another. Again, you can see that the paradigm is getting perspective on the stuff that might have a hold of you. (Coach 8)

Even though they know that because they're talking about it and they did it, they don't necessarily frame it in their story that way. But you the coach have an opportunity to frame it that way. So that helps to—so often in the life story, there are many opportunities to reframe how successful they have been at doing a number of things that they haven't really considered that they've done because they haven't framed it properly. (Coach 15)

*Reviewing past success and acknowledging skills* are similar ways of encouragement and are ways the coach provides positive feedback to the client. Acknowledging skills is focused on the present skill or competency to build self-efficacy. Reviewing past success reflects on past times as a way of building self-efficacy.

The coaches helped clients look at history to point out what worked in the past and point out success:

Just by asking the question of what's worked for you, and what have you already tried, or tell me about a time when you were successful doing this, enables them to reflect on those times of self-efficacy, and things that have worked. (Coach 1)

That one is getting them to tap into the fact that they have done this before and it's not new. That's a good one. (Coach 6)

Give them potential evidence of how they have been successful in the past. Or if they haven't been, help them find transferable situations in which they have had success. (Coach 4)

*Acknowledging skills and competencies* also involves the coach asking questions, pointing out success, and giving positive feedback.

Coaches described how they encourage the client by acknowledging what is working:

And the terms they're using to describe it, are sort of neutral, but what I am hearing is, "Oh, my goodness! That's amazing! Shouldn't you have some more energy around this event? It went well and I'm happy for you. (Coach 7)

I help them see where it's working for them. And reinforce that. (Coach 19)

I ask them to bring up, in their own mind, the skills, abilities and competencies that they already have, but just may not be thinking about at the moment. (Coach 1)

*Appreciative inquiry* is noted as a way of bringing up the client's strength areas and self-efficacy:

I'm just struck at how often people don't know their own strengths. They seem to be really well and keenly aware of their weaknesses and shortcomings. So I like to do a lot of appreciative inquiry and point it out in the moment if possible, when somebody is demonstrating strength so that they become more self-efficacious. To build their belief that they can do it. Well, the tried and true strategy again from the playbook of appreciative inquiry is to ask them to cite times when they have done something similar to it in the past with success. (Coach 6)

*Social experiments* are mentioned as a way to enhance self-efficacy. Social experiments are similar to homework, and also different from homework in that a social experiment moves beyond reading articles, keeping notes, or journaling. It involves trying a new behavior, modeling a co-worker, or changing a behavior to observe the reactions.

Coaches described social experiment as being ongoing:

We get back together the next time and see if the social experiment worked, and repeat this until we can come to a solution. (Coach 1)

"Would you be open to doing an exercise for the next 2 weeks?" And then I would share what the exercise I think might work and I'll say to them, "Do you think this might work for you?" (Coach 9)

### *Change theory and change models*

Coach participants in this research were articulate in using the theory-based frameworks for interpreting change such as those by Black and Gregersen, Van de Ven and Poole, Boyatzis, and Kegan. The two major change models described most often by the coaches include intentional change theory and the immunity to change model:

So intentional change theory is a theory from Richard Boyatzis and he's here at the Weatherhead School at Case Western Reserve University. And you may know of him because he's written a number of books. And the model itself would be the Intentional change model that I mentioned. (Coach 19)

I would say that if I were to boil down some of the bigger obstacles that it's owing to a story that the leader is telling himself. So I really like to use the Immunity to Change coaching model when it seems like the assumptions are really holding the person back. So I have found that that has been a very, very useful coaching protocol. (Coach 6)

The next two tables chronicle the development of the theory-based strategies for enhancing self-efficacy. Table 4 summarizes the specific self-efficacy strategies that coaches use for positive goal accomplishment. To be included on this list, the strategy was mentioned five or more times. This table displays each self-efficacy enhancing strategy with its meaning, and sample verbatim from the transcript. While the meanings are not exactly worded as ICF core competencies, they do fall within the ICF general category of *creating awareness* (see ICF core competency table in Appendix J). Table 5 lists the five main self-efficacy enhancing themes described in this research. The theory-based sources for the strategy are displayed and the coaches' statements that link these themes to self-efficacy are included.

Table 4

*Self-Efficacy Enhancing Strategies for Positive Goal Accomplishment*

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Sample verbatim from transcript</b>
Helping them Gain Perspective	Help them picture how they can get perspective on their own role.	We check out their assumptions, what other perspectives might there be on this? (Coach 3)
Reviewing Past Success	Look at past history to point out successes.	Number one is asking them what has made them successful in the past, what has worked for them in the past. (Coach 1)
Acknowledge skills and competencies /Positive Feedback	Help the client see where he or she is succeeding, see what is working and reinforce with positive feedback.	And I just said, “Do you realize what you just did?” And they kind of gave me a blank stare. I said, “You’re doing the very thing you’re trying to get better at and you did it quite well.” (Coach 6)
Reframing	Helping them constructively reframe their role, the situation, look at new ways to view the situation.	Now be aware more about the situation you’re in of people you’re involved in, look at the number of things you had to get done that day and what were you feeling, “Why were you feeling that way?” And then once we did that, I said to him, “Now start thinking about how you’re showing up. How are you communicating?” (Coach 15)
Social Experiments	Try a new behavior or practice exercise and report back to the coach.	Then on to the social experiments and try things, then they become consciously competent. Now they can actually do it but not have to think about it. (Coach 1)
Change Models	Intentional change theory, Immunity to change	Yeah, I would say that if I were to boil down some of the bigger obstacles that it’s owing to a story that the leader is telling himself. So

		<p>I really like to use the immunity to change coaching model when it seems like the assumptions are really holding the person back. So I have found that that has been a very, very useful coaching protocol. (Coach 6)</p> <p>So the coaching that I do follows a theory and a model called intentional change and it's known as intentional change theory or we abbreviate with the acronym ICT. (Coach 10)</p>
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Table 5

*Theory-Based Self-Efficacy Themes*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theory-Based</b>	<b>Link to Self-Efficacy*</b>
Gaining Perspective (includes reframing)	Heifetz and Linsky's (2002) work with adaptive leadership.  Kegan and Lahey's (2009) work with competing commitments and assumptions.	Part of my role is to help reconnect them with this bigger picture, "Pull them up to the balcony," I call it so we can look down together and see what's been happening and have them feel great about all the good progress but also then have energy to keep moving ahead on the path of change that they're seeking.(Coach 19)  Kegan and Lahey would be another. Again, you can see that the paradigm is getting perspective on the stuff that might have a hold of you. (Coach 14)
Acknowledging Skills and competencies (includes positive feedback)	Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005)	My observation has been that with baby steps, they change. They start to take an action—even if they don't believe it, with the help and the support of the coach and the challenge of the coach, they take a step and get a little positive feedback, something goes right or what have you, and then there's a little more, a little more. And then their self-efficacy or their self-perception indicates changes like, "Maybe I can. Maybe this is possible." (Coach 12)
Review Past Success	Social Cognitive Theory ( Bandura, 1986)	Just by asking the question of what's worked for you, and what have you already tried, or tell me about a time when you were successful doing this, enables them to reflect on those times of self-efficacy and things that have worked. (Coach 1)
Social Experiments	Adult learning (Kolb, 1984 ; Knowles, Holton,	And again having her go out and try those things. And she found out that if she just went and did those things that

	& Swanson, 1998; Mezirow, 2000)	<p>she didn't think she could do, or had a fear of, it worked really well. As a matter of fact every time she went out and tried something like that, every single time, I can't remember a time when it didn't work, it worked every single time.(Coach 20)</p> <p>Adults learn when they want to or when they need to or when you think about it, if behavior change is going to be successful and what we call sustainable or enduring, if it's going to stick. It does when the individual really wants it to happen. (Coach 19)</p>
Change Models	<p>Intentional Change Theory (Boyatzis, 2006)</p> <p>Immunity to Change (Kegan &amp; Lahey, 2009)</p>	<p>I would say, "Well, why do you want to do it now? Why is it important for you to change this behavior or develop this skill now? Why is it important?" (Coach 9)</p> <p>Intentional change theory starts with helping people to identify their ideal self, and that includes their deepest aspirations for the work and the life that they wish to have. (Coach 10)</p> <p>The next step really is to also consider who can help them because really for behavior change to be sustainable, you really can't go it alone. So I encourage them to think about who can be on their support team, who might be already modeling that behavior or embodying whatever the goal is focused around. (Coach 19)</p>

\*these quotation links were evident in the ATLAS.ti network views (Appendix K)



### Coaching Process

All of the coaches in this research mentioned utilizing some type of 360-degree feedback assessment. A 360-degree feedback will include direct feedback from an employee's subordinates, peers, and supervisor(s), as well as a self-evaluation. It can also include, in some cases, feedback from external sources, such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders. Four of the coaches use their own semi-structured interview, or survey. The coach participants in this study utilize a variety of assessment tools, and those mentioned most often include EQI 2.0 (an emotional intelligence assessment), DiSC Profile (a personality assessment), and MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a measure of preferences). Other mentions of assessments include personality profiles, strength assessments, and leadership profiles. (For a complete listing of assessments used please see Appendix I). The coaches in this study also used self-designed worksheets including a development planning worksheet, a worksheet based on the wheel of life, a questionnaire with reflections on leadership style, and a coaching goals progress/outcome worksheet.

When asked about goal-setting models, the coaches note their clients are aware of the *how-to* part of goal setting, and admit that some variation of the SMART model is utilized in their practice ( SMART goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound). Coaches emphasized that the most important part of setting the goal-setting process is clarification of the goal, rather than using a model.

Coaches noted the importance of clarification and wording of the goal:

So it's actually getting clarity of looking at the goal, "Is it something that I can do?" meaning I the client. If it is, then we kind of move on to the next goal. If it isn't, then they have to change the language of the goal. I really want people to use the right words, so it's something that they can connect to with something they can do. (Coach 4)

I spend time coaching on what's holding them back and how have they framed their goals up till now. Are those words working? Do they need to use different rhetoric, different language? How do they want to declare what their goals are? (Coach 7)

Coaches clarify the action steps:

So we try to find out what the action items are. And then what is it going to take to put those action items into place? Are they going to do it? (Coach 20)

Next, what I will work on, with a client, are the steps that will help them move from where they are to where they want to be. (Coach 14)

Once we're in a pretty good place with some pretty specific goals, then have them take each one and outline some actions. So what are some action steps that they can take that will bring them closer to that goal becoming real? (Coach 10)

Coaches were asked, What are the key steps that you think are important when you are specifically in a goal-setting session with your client? Following are the key steps in goal-setting. To be included on this list, the strategy was mentioned five or more times.

### **Key Steps in the Goal-Setting Process**

- Clarify the meaning and wording of the goal
- Confirm accountability and ownership
- Set action steps and milestones
- Look at future state
- Written record of commitment
- Check on the environment /organizational goals

When asked about measuring outcomes, all of the coaches say they check progress toward the goal in every session (as opposed to waiting at the end of the contract). Some coaches use a customized survey or a form at the end of the contract. A few coaches that use a 360-

degree assessment will re-administer the 360 as a post-measurement. Some coaches have the client use a self-scaling, where the client rates him/herself on a 1 to 10 scale. Following are some of the verbatim answers to the question on measuring outcomes.

One coach mentioned using debriefing sessions:

I include in the coaching engagement at least two debriefs with the supervisor and during those debrief calls, we revisit the business objectives and take stock on the progress toward them. (Coach 6)

Another coach uses a presentation at the end of the contract:

I work with the client to put together ...generally it's like a four-slide PowerPoint deck, we put together a mini-presentation that we then have a meeting with me, the client, and the client's boss. (Coach 17)

One coach experimented with asking about return on investment (ROI) and ended up using a 1-10 scale:

I've even gotten so bold to actually give people three or four questions of, What do you think the ROI has been for yourself in this coaching engagement? And people will tell you, 100% or 110% or, this has been an amazing experience. So I really go with something simple like scale of 1-10 and the verbatim comments that they give me. I usually give people a scale of 1-10 on the goal. Once they have clearly outlined their goal, I ask, "Where are you with it?" People generally give themselves like a 2 or a 3 or whatever. And then I go back and ask 'em just on a scale of 1-10, "Remember back when we started, you gave yourself a 3. Where would you say you are now?" And then they give themselves a 7 or an 8 or a 9 or, you know what, a 10! And they say, "I'm done with this. I'm ready to move on into something else." (Coach 18)

Another coach uses an accountability partner for feedback on goal accomplishment:

So once they have established what their coaching goals are, I encourage them to share those goals with two-three trusted people in their immediate system environment and then to get constant real-time feedback from those people. And the other way we do it is that they can identify—it might be the same people, but with the people that they have identified in the 360, then we identify two or three people that I can go to at the end of 6 months or of 9 months or even after the coaching engagement's over and go back to them and say, "What differences have you seen in the following areas, if any?" And certainly always with the manager. (Coach 12)

## Summary

This chapter described the research findings from the present research study in detail. The executive coaches clearly articulated the importance of self-efficacy in their practices. The coach participants in this study described barriers to goal-setting, and the strategies for overcoming those barriers. The barriers to goal-setting as described by the coaches in this research include

### Barriers to goal-setting

- Behavior change
- Emotional intelligence
- Personality style
- Lack of goal clarity
- Lack of belief in self/confidence

Strategies that coaches use to overcome barriers are as follows:

### Strategies to overcome barriers

- Asking questions
- Listening
- Somatic techniques
- Brainstorming
- Assigning homework
- Challenging assumptions

When looking specifically at the coaching sessions involving goal-setting, the coaches clearly identified key steps of the goal-setting process:

### Key steps in the goal-setting process

- Clarify the meaning and wording of the goal
- Confirm accountability and ownership
- Set action steps and milestones
- Look at future state
- Written record of commitment
- Check on the environment /organizational goals

The five coaching strategies that coaches say they utilize to enhance self-efficacy in order to develop positive goal accomplishment are (a) helping the client gain perspective, (b) acknowledging skills and competencies, (c) reviewing past success, (d) social experiments, and (e) change models. The thematic analyses for these theory-based strategies of building self-efficacy were presented in Table 5. Following is the listing of this key finding and answer to the research question:

#### Strategies that build self -efficacy

- Gaining perspective (Adaptive Leadership)
- Acknowledging skills and competencies (Appreciative Inquiry)
- Reviewing past success (Social Cognitive Theory)
- Social experiments (Adult Learning)
- Change models (Immunity to Change, Intentional Change)

The next chapter provides conclusions and significance of these results. Practical implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This doctoral study examined the strategies used by executive coaches to build self-efficacy in their clients. This chapter provides a brief summary of relevant literature, an overview of the methodology, and a summary of the significant research findings. It also offers recommendations for practical use of these findings and suggestions for future research.

A description of what actually happens in the executive coaching engagement to increase self-efficacy was unknown prior to this research. This groundbreaking research has taken the first step to fill that gap in the research literature. The purpose of this research was to investigate coaching strategies, and reveal the roles those strategies played in positive goal accomplishment. This was a qualitative descriptive study that utilized a semi-structured interview method with 20 executive coaches. Thematic analysis was the method used for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. “Theme identification is one of the most fundamental tasks in qualitative research” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 85). As a result of this research, five theory-based themes that enhance self-efficacy have been illuminated.

This study confirms what has been noted by Kilberg (2000) that the most frequently used skill by the coach is asking questions, followed by listening. In the coach practice literature Wilson (2007) notes that a coach asks a question to enable the coachee to acquire information and that questions are the precision tools in the coach’s toolbox. By choosing the right type of question the coach can shape the process by challenging, supporting, and encouraging the coachee without getting in the way. This research confirms the use of social cognitive theory, adaptive leadership, appreciative inquiry, adult learning, and change models as strategies by the coaches. The next section highlights the relevant themes that have been uncovered in this research and connects those themes to the relevant literature.

### **Themes and Relevant Literature**

A literature review of social cognitive theory (in Chapter 2) provided evidence that higher self-efficacy translates to firm goal commitment and higher goal achievement. The coaching applications for social cognitive theory include reviewing past success (mastery experiences), observation of others similar to oneself succeeding (vicarious experience), verbal persuasion (positive feedback), and physiological state (relaxation, bio-feedback). The specific strategy of reviewing past success (mastery) was discussed by the executive coaches in this research and is displayed in the final themes listing. Social persuasion is a term that underlines appreciative inquiry, positive feedback, and social cognitive theory.

Some executive coaches in this study mentioned using somatic techniques or helping the client with stress or relaxation, however this was not connected by the coaches to self-efficacy. Somatic coaching looks at mood, emotions, and the sensations that are happening in the body. The coaches that use this strategy mention it as an overall coaching framework of addressing body shape and energy, but do not make the connection to self-efficacy. However, it is important to note that Bandura (1982) lists physiological states as a way to enhance self-efficacy. Individuals rely on their judgment of their stress and anxiety levels as indicators of probable success (Malone, 2001). For example, stress and anxiety for the task at hand may result in a vulnerability and loss of confidence. Modeling others was not mentioned in this research, although it did come up in the pilot study. Modeling may be implicit in the use of social experiments, although not articulated by the coaches. One coach did recommend having the client find a mentor.

### **Adaptive Leadership**

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) focused on adaptive leadership. Both teach at John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In their book *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*, Heifetz and Linsky (2002) describe some problems as being technical and easily resolvable, while other problems are more complicated “adaptive challenges” that require experiments, new discovery, adjustments, and information from other sources. Challenges associated with leading include staying centered by going through the mental activity of stepping back from the action and asking what is really going on. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) use the metaphor of a dance floor where the leader gets up on the balcony to see what is really happening by separating from the situation. In order to become effective in leading, leaders learn the critical skill of getting on the balcony.

Many of the executive coaches in this dissertation research mentioned helping their clients *gain perspective*. Two of the coaches used the metaphor of *getting on the balcony and specifically* attributed the origin of the research to Heifetz and Linsky (2002). Coaches in this study noted that their clients gain perspective through uncovering assumptions, changing frame of reference, and reflective thinking. The strategy of gaining perspective helps the client develop capacity for critical reflection on what is happening while remaining objective. Getting on the balcony allows the leader the freedom to look objectively at his or her role. In the research on this strategy of gaining perspective, terms like adaptive leadership and adaptive change are used interchangeably. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) describe adaptive leadership in terms of gaining perspective with a view from the balcony. Kegan and Lahey (2009) describe adaptive change in terms of thinking about the competing commitments and the assumptions that underlie these



commitments. The strategy of gaining perspective intersects with adult learning, transformative learning, and appreciative inquiry.

### **Appreciative Inquiry**

In the mid '80s David Cooperrider and his associates at Case Western Reserve University challenged the focus on what is wrong or broken and introduced the term appreciative inquiry. Appreciative inquiry (AI) suggests we look for what works by looking at energizing moments of success (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005). The practice of AI moves through four stages. The discovery stage is about reflecting and celebrating strengths and success. The dream stage is about articulating potential. The design stage is about directing attention and action. The destiny stage is about recognizing the state of being in which individuals embrace the reality of their dream in the present. A key underlying assumption of this approach is that the questions we ask influence the answers we find. Strong positive responses allow people to work toward goals that are inspiring and energizing.

In this research, all of the executive coaches mentioned using the art of questioning to point out clients' success, acknowledge skills and competencies, and to provide sources of positive feedback. Several coaches emphasized the importance of celebrating strengths and success. The coaching applications for appreciative inquiry involve guiding the client in discovering and remembering best self, and finding clarity and hope in the desired future (Binkert & Clancy, 2011). Appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2005) intersects with all of the above mentioned theories through its underlying questions that provide an acknowledgement of skills, review of past successes, positive feedback, reframing, and reflective thinking.

### **Adult Learning Theory**

Adult learning theory encompasses a variety of associated theories such as transformative learning, reflective practice, learning styles, leaning goals, and experiential learning (Farr, Hermann, & Ringenbach, 1993). Research on adult learning suggests that deeper levels of learning (e.g., transformative learning; Mezirow, 1991) occur when there are sufficient opportunities for reflection and experimentation. The coaches in this research guided learning through social experiments, and recognizing the client as the self-directed learner.

Kolb and Kolb (2005) asserted that adults learn by doing, so experiential learning involves a direct encounter with what is happening in the present and adapting to the situation as it unfolds. Four elements are involved: a concrete experience, reflective observation, understanding the principles that affect the action, and active experimentation. The Kolb experiential learning model can often guide the coaching process (Leary-Joyce & Wildflower, 2011). A coaching strategy that falls into the category of experiential learning would be the social experiments used by the coaches in this current research. Mezirow's approach to transformative learning involves acting on ideas and being fundamentally changed by them. In transformative learning theory, existing belief systems and frames of reference need to be challenged before deep-level changes will occur (Mezirow, 1991).

Knowledge is created from interpretation and reinterpretation in light of new experiences. "Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 7). Frame of reference is a "meaning perspective," the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16). A frame of reference is composed of a habit of mind (set of assumptions) and the resulting point of view. Learning occurs in one of four ways: by

elaborating existing frames of reference, by learning a new frame of reference, by transforming points of view, or by transforming habits of mind. Executive coaches in this dissertation research discussed their uses of adult learning in several ways. The coaches constantly challenged their clients' frame of reference by looking at the roles they play in supervising, by checking negative self-talk, and asking the leader how they might reframe negative self-talk in a helpful way.

Knowles et al.'s (1998) adult learning theory can be stated with six assumptions related to the motivation of adult learning:

1. *The need to know.* Adults need to know the reason for learning something. Learning must be relevant and goal-oriented.
2. *The learner's self-concept.* Adults have formed a self-concept, prefer to be self-directed, and in control of their learning. Adults need to be seen by others as being capable of self-direction.
3. *The role of the learner's experience.* Prior experience of the learner provides a rich resource for learning.
4. *Readiness to learn.* Adults are most interested in learning with immediate relevance to their work/life.
5. *Orientation to learning.* Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-centered.
6. *Motivation.* Adults respond better to internal versus external motivation.

Coaches mention that using adult learning principles reinforces the importance of the client's agenda. Even in situations where the coaching contract has been suggested by the sponsor, the coach can support the client by showing that this is an opportunity to learn (Leary-Joyce & Wildflower, 2011). Locke and Latham (2002) noted that on tasks that are complex for

people, learning goals can be superior to performance goals. A learning orientation is characterized by a desire to increase one's task competence, whereas a performance orientation reflects a desire to do well and to be positively evaluated by others (Farr, Hermann, & Ringenbach, 1993). Learning goals may be effective in the acquisition of knowledge and subsequent performance because they require seeking feedback to determine which task strategies are effective and under which conditions (Dweck, 1986). Research by Scriffignano highlights the importance of considering learning goals in executive coaching (Scriffignano, 2009). The executive coaches in this study noted that they utilize adult learning theory, and adults learn when they want to, or in some cases, when they need to think about changing behavior. One coach noted “If it is going to stick, it does when the individual really wants it to happen.” Coaches in this research worked with clients to set learning goals, milestones, and action steps.

### **Intentional Change Theory**

Findings from this research place *self-efficacy at the threshold of change*. The relationship of change and self-efficacy are supported by the research on change models. Two change models described by the executive coaches in this study are intentional change and immunity to change. Intentional change theory (ICT) describes the essential components and processes that encourage sustained, desired change to occur in a person's behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and/or perceptions (Boyatzis, 2006). The “change” may be in a person's actions, habits, or competencies. It is “desired” in that the person wishes it so or would like it to occur. It is “sustainable” in that it lasts a relatively long time (Boyatzis, 2006). The change process involves a sequence of discontinuities, called discoveries, which function as an interactive cycle in producing the sustainable change at the individual level. These are (a) the ideal self and a

personal vision; (b) the real self and its comparison to the ideal, an assessment of one's strengths and weaknesses, in a sense a personal balance sheet; (c) a learning agenda and plan; (d) experimentation and practice with the new behavior, thoughts, feelings, or perceptions; and (e) trusting, or resonant relationships that enable a person to experience and process each discovery in the process. The ideal self is composed of three major components: an image of a desired future, hope (self-efficacy and optimism), and a comprehensive sense of one's core identity (past strengths, traits, and other enduring dispositions).

In the Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006) model of the ideal self, optimism and self-efficacy are seen as the main determinants and generators of hope, and therefore, key determinants of the ideal self. Efficacy and optimism research provided insights on the nature and the difficulty of goals selected and the mechanisms through which the ideal self becomes a motivational force within the self, guiding the individual on goals selection (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006). In the current dissertation research, many coaches talked about future state, future vision, and learning plans that lead to the future state. Boyatzis (2006) describes five steps for producing change, and most of the coaches included at least four of the steps in their descriptions of ways to help their clients. The coaches that described using the ICT model spoke about helping the client identify his or her *ideal self*. Intentional change theory (Boyatzis, 2006) offers a change process involving a series of discoveries that function to produce change at the individual level.

### **Immunity to Change Theory**

Kegan and Lahey (1994) lay the groundwork for understanding change-resistance by helping the client uncover “competing commitments” and adult meaning making. Kegan and Lahey (2009, p. 211) note that “feeling it in the gut” is a vital source for the motivation for change, yet without self-efficacy, or if we are not sure we “can do” it, we do not act on it. Executive coaches in this dissertation research talked about helping their clients gain perspective, or gaining self-awareness through revealing competing commitments.

Kegan and Lahey (1994) present a practical method, called the immunity map, intended to help leaders overcome an immunity to change. Even as they hold a sincere commitment to change, many people are unwittingly applying productive energy toward a hidden competing commitment. The resulting dynamic equilibrium stalls the effort in what looks like resistance, but is in fact a kind of personal immunity to change. It’s a psychological dynamic called a “competing commitment,” and until managers understand how it works and the ways to overcome it, they can’t do a thing about change-resistant employees (Kegan & Lahey, 2001, November, p. 85). Kegan and Lahey (2009) further distinguish between our increased understanding of the need for change and the lack of understanding as to what prevents it. The immunity to change model involves three adult meaning systems: the socialized mind, the self-authoring mind, and the self-transforming mind. The coaching process involves a map consisting of a four-column worksheet.

We make sense of the world and operate in different ways, depending on the lenses of each perspective. Each of the three levels of mental complexity incorporates a different subject-object relationship. As one moves to the self-transforming mind an even more complex way of

thinking allows one to look *at* rather than *through* one's own framework (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). In their book, *Immunity to Change: How to Overcome it and Unlock Potential in Yourself and Your Organization*, the authors note that even though we want to accomplish the goal, if we are not sure what we can do, we will not act on it. Self-efficacy, including having a notion of what we can do to accomplish our desired change is a factor (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). For one client described in the book, the process of completing the immunity to change model gave her the confidence to set and work toward achieving her goals. In addition to working from the gut, linking head to heart, and taking action within a social context are contributing factors described by the authors as ingredients needed for adaptive change. Several executive coaches in this current study use the language of *head and heart*, or hearing clients speak from their *mind and heart*.

### **Significance of this Dissertation Research**

This study directly contributes to the coaching research literature by confirming that coaches use social cognitive theory and introducing four new theory-based strategies that build self-efficacy. The coaches in this research *described five complementary strategies that played a role in developing positive goal accomplishment for their clients*: adaptive leadership, adult learning, social cognitive theory, appreciative inquiry, and change models.

This study *confirmed the importance of ICF core coaching skills* and centers the positioning of those skills within the goal-setting framework. Lack of confidence and lack of clear goals are barriers to goal commitment, along with emotional, behavioral, and cognitive barriers. The executive coaches in this study use a skillful blend of core strategies to overcome

barriers to goal achievement (asking powerful questions, deep listening, assigning homework, brainstorming and challenging assumptions).

The results of this research *highlighted theory-based strategies* that coaches use to enhance self-efficacy and positive goal achievement. The executive coach participants in this study described five main theory-based strategies: gaining perspective (adaptive leadership), reviewing past success (social cognitive), acknowledging skills and accomplishments (appreciative inquiry), social experiments (adult learning), and change models (intentional change and immunity to change). These results are displayed in Figure 2:

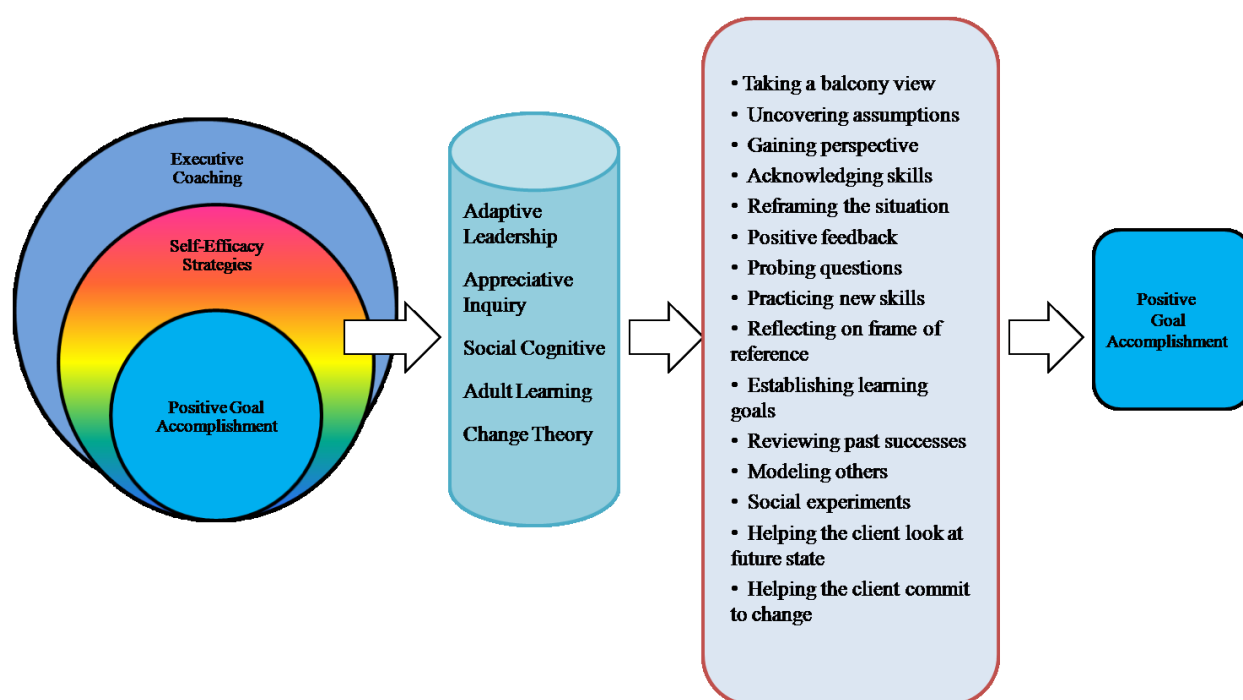


Figure 2. Model of theory-based strategies.

Executive coaches that utilize *adaptive leadership* strategies will build their clients' self-efficacy by helping their clients gain perspective through challenging assumptions, and



reframing. Executive coaches that utilize *appreciative inquiry* and *social cognitive theory* provide executive clients with the opportunity to build self-efficacy. Reviewing past successes helps clients start from a place of success. Acknowledging skills and positive feedback helps the client confirm competencies, and gain confidence. Appreciative inquiry offers the opportunity to celebrate strengths, successes, and build self-efficacy for positive goal accomplishment. Executive coaches that utilize *adult learning* build self-efficacy by providing their clients with ongoing opportunity for practice and reflection. Coaches that understand change theory can help their clients work toward achieving their goals through looking at future states and committing to change.

Results from this dissertation study highlight the strategies that coaches use to build self-efficacy. This current research strengthens the case for an evidence-based approach to coaching and provides a significant link to the self-efficacy literature. Research that supports this evidence based approach to coaching include Bennett and Bush (2014), Grant (2006), and Wildflower and Brennan (2011). This research provides further evidence that coaching strengthens self-efficacy and adds to the research on this topic. Results from previous empirical studies show that executive coaching has been significantly associated with higher self-efficacy and goal-setting including Baron and Morin (2010), Evers et al. (2006), and Moen and Allgood (2009).

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

Open-ended interview questions may have some disadvantages as different respondents may give various degrees of detail in answers. One challenge with survey data is capturing the differences in what coaches *say they do* in a session vs. what actually takes place. Although purposeful, the sample was one of convenience and may not represent the total population of executive coaches. Qualitative researchers typically study a small number of individuals or

situations (Maxwell, 2002). The small sample within the ICF community in this study makes it more easily reproducible. However, generalizability is not possible for entire executive coaching population from this sample of coaches.

Another limitation with the present study was the lack of measurement for goal accomplishment. Coaches in this study described check-in points during goal setting, and qualitative reporting at the end of the client engagement. A follow-up study is recommended to track the progress of the client's goal accomplishment. Coach-client pairs would be invited to participate in a longitudinal study that provided end measurements. A 360-degree feedback assessment would be a potential measurement pre-test and post-test. This research brings the question of whether or not the client views the strategies that the coaches say they use as meaningful or effective. Future quantitative research might explore the client perspective to ask what strategies they find effective, what strategies they have found not effective, and why.

A next step to this research might be to incorporate a quantitative study with a larger sample of coaches to learn how many executive coaches are utilizing strategy-based theory. This study protocol could be repeated for different coaching practices other than executive coaches, such as life coaches, or career coaches. Another option would be to conduct this study with non-certified coaches that are not affiliated with ICF to see if they have distinctively different patterns.

### **Implications for Coaching Practice**

Executive coaches that focus on strengthening self-efficacy will facilitate goal achievement for their clients. Self-confidence impacts leadership performance through the mediating mechanism of leadership self-efficacy. Chemers' (2000) theory of leadership

contends that leader self-confidence partially determined leader self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn impact leader behavior intentions. McCormick (2001) noted that because self-confidence is similar to Bandura's (1986) self-efficacy construct, this similarity can be used as a starting point for building a different leadership approach that can account for the frequently reported association between a leader's self-confidence and various criteria of leader effectiveness.

Schon (1987) noted that while many professionals seem to stop learning as soon as they leave graduate school, those who become lifelong learners become reflective practitioners. The ability to reflect on one's thinking while acting distinguishes the truly outstanding professionals (Schon, 1987). Coaches that continuously adapt new strategies and learn what works best for their clients will build their own credibility, and contribute to the coaching profession. Coach training schools that provide strategies and tools consistently aligned with theory will provide the best practices in executive coaching. Grant (2006) used the term "evidence-based" to differentiate professional coaching explicitly grounded in theoretical knowledge from the "pop psychology" personal development genre. Adding evidence-based strategies in the ICF accreditation process would strengthen coaching not only in executive coaching practices, it will strengthen professional development for all coaches.

### **Implications for Organizations**

Organizations benefit through coaches' expertise in utilization of change theories that help clients overcome inertia, and accelerate the client's ability to move forward. Organizational change fails without individual behavior change (Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). Coaches that utilize change theory strategies will enhance the leader's ability to influence change in the organization. Leaders need coaching guidance from people who have been there, and who know how to manage and design the journey. In organizational change, the boundaries blur between

coach and players. Leaders must give and receive help. In addition, leaders must learn to be discerning about the quality of help they receive.

However, it is the responsibility of each individual to achieve the personal-mastery needed to take on the challenge of change. Change will not happen all at once and experimentation is important. We are all different personalities with individual learning styles. Yet, we all flourish by encouragement and empowerment. The organization (leadership) has to commit to its people in order to encourage an environment for learning. When looking at organizational change, it is important to provide the coaching that leaders need. True learning takes place though paying attention to feedback and reflection on one's thinking. When coaching is provided to leaders as they acquire the skills of reflective thinking, these leaders can model that behavior for their employees. This in turn begins a new learning cycle for organizations.

### **Implications for Research**

There is no one magic formula, and new theories are always being developed. The results of this study illuminate five theory-based strategies that are linked to self-efficacy enhancement and goal setting. However, the models that coaches use to distinguish coaching interventions may not be very distinctive for our clients. Hopefully, there are many more discoveries to be made in this area of self-efficacy enhancement. As practitioners, we must be aware of what works best for our clients. Additional research with the client perspective is necessary to complete the total picture. This means more research is needed into what conceptual model best describes coaching from the client perspective. Some researchers have begun to explore the client perspective (Bush, 2004; de Haan, Bertie, Day, & Sills, 2010; de Haan, Culpin, & Curd, 2008). More research is needed to move beyond the tip of the iceberg.

## Summary

This dissertation research has highlighted both the skills, and the strategies that professional coaches employ. The results of this dissertation research present a range of evidence-based strategies that coaches utilize to facilitate clients' self-efficacy and goal achievement. This study confirmed the importance of the ICF core coaching skills, and suggests the requirement of adding theory-based coaching strategies to coaching certification training.

This ground-breaking research presents an understanding of a new model of theory-based strategies (Figure 2) for helping clients accomplish their goals. By asking executive coaches to reflect on their practices and strategies, this research has uncovered a new model that advances the understanding of the value of evidence-based coaching. Coaches now can have a firmer understanding of how the combination of these evidence-based strategies can influence self-efficacy to accelerate positive goal accomplishment.

Coaching professionalism demands continuous learning, skills development, and the incorporation of theory-based strategy. The fundamental nature of coaching is the compassionate guidance through a skilled and evidence-based practice. One coach in this current research describes this essence of coaching as the “invisible stuff” that coaches bring to the table. This dissertation research shines the light on what used to be invisible. Coaching is a profession that is evidence based, and has earned the respect that has been sorely missed for the past two decades. This dissertation research gives coaches the evidence we needed to uncover the rich benefits that coaching delivers to our clients. Executive coaches have the opportunity to affect organization change through helping individuals change. Coaching can positively affect self-

efficacy so that leaders can accomplish their goals to enhance organizational change. Individual behavior change precedes change in organizational performance.

Organizations are seeking concrete measurements of performance and return on investment (ROI). This means that more research is needed to confirm results at the conclusion of the coaching practice. Coaches can continue to fill this gap by keeping track of client achievements, and conducting follow-up surveys with organizations. Researchers can continue to build the evidence that coaching works, and reinforce the link between individual performance and organizational change. By highlighting individual achievements that accelerate organizational change, executive coaches will open the door to opportunities to help individuals fulfill their human potential, and help organizations achieve their goals.

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## Appendix A Recruitment Letters

**Title of Research Project:** Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.

As a doctoral student in Human and Organizational Development studies at Fielding Graduate University, I am recruiting executive coaches to participate in my current research project. The purpose of my research is to explore executive coach's goal-setting strategies/interventions with leaders. I am particularly interested in studying how the coach helps the leader overcome obstacles to goal-setting. The clarity of goal-setting begins the process of change. Limited research is available in relation to executive coaching and the role of self-efficacy in goal-setting. By studying executive coach's facilitation of goal-setting with their clients, I hope to contribute to the practice of executive coaching, coach training, and the coaching literature.

Please contact me at [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu) if you would be interested in participating in this study or if you need additional information. I would like to make an appointment to conduct a telephone interview that will last approximately 25-35 minutes. I'll be glad to share results of the study with you upon completion.

Also, if you know other coaches who may be interested in participating, please pass this invitation on.

Thank you,  
Carol-Anne Minski  
209 Susquehanna Drive  
Jim Thorpe, PA 18229  
570-325-4172, [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu)

*Short paragraph for newsletter:*

As a doctoral student in Human and Organizational Development studies at Fielding Graduate University, I am looking for executive coaches to participate in my current research project. My research concerns identifying various patterns and strategies that coaches utilize during goal setting conversations with their clients. I would like to make an appointment to conduct a telephone interview that will last approximately 25-35 minutes. If you are interested in possibly participating or would like to find out more, please contact me at 570-325-4172 or [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu).

Also, if you know of other coaches who may be interested in participating, please pass this invitation on.

## Appendix B

### Participant Selection Criteria Survey

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear (coach):

As a doctoral student in Human and Organizational Development studies at Fielding Graduate University, I am looking for coaches to participate in my dissertation research project, "Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity." Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate. Your participation in this research will help to advance our knowledge of what happens in executive coaching sessions to ensure successful goal setting outcomes. By filling out this form, you are agreeing for me to contact you further about the details of participation. By filling out this form now I can ensure that your background and experience meet the participant selection criteria. I am also willing to talk with you in person or by telephone to discuss your participation or your interest in the study. The answers to this survey, like any of the data collected, will be kept confidential and only used for the purposes of this research.

Thank you,

Carol-Anne Minski, Researcher, [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu)

1. Do you define your executive coaching practice as external (coach receives compensation for services provided as an outside contractor)? Or are you an internal coach? (Work within the organization coaching members of the same organization as part of a job.)  
*If both, note % of time spent in each category.*

- External \_\_\_\_\_
- Internal \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you have any of the following affiliations with the ICF coaching community?

- received an ICF certification (MCC,PCC, ACC)\_\_\_\_\_ *which ones?* \_\_\_\_\_
- attended an ICF conference in the past 2 years \_\_\_\_\_
- member of the ICF /or ICF affiliated local chapter \_\_\_\_\_ *which ones?* \_\_\_\_\_
- training from an ICF accredited coaching school? \_\_\_\_\_ *what school?* \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Primary residence: \_\_\_\_\_

(State or province, country, zip or postal code)

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ (Day) \_\_\_\_\_ (Evening)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Predominant language used in coaching: English; \_\_\_\_\_ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this survey to me at [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu).

## Appendix C

### Interview Protocol

Title of Research Project: Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.

#### **Introduction:**

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. I hope this is still a good time for us to talk. I've allotted 45-55 minutes, does that work for you? As you know, we are recording this conversation for research purposes and I want to confirm with you that this is being done with your knowledge and your consent. (Wait for affirmation). Thank you, I will start the recording now.

As you know, I am studying the interaction of executive coaches with leaders/executive clients during goal setting. In general, what I'm trying to do is to describe the coaching process that takes place in the session. This research is not evaluating or judging, it is a qualitative descriptive study. So this research may contribute to the coaching literature and coach training.

#### **First, some general questions:**

1. How do you describe your coaching practice? (Leadership coaching, Executive, Business coaching, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_
  2. What are positions of some executives that you worked with in the past year? (For example, CEO, CFO, Director)
- 

#### **Goal Setting**

3. Tell me about a coaching session when you worked with you client to set a goal: How do you approach that goal-setting session with your client?

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(Probe, for example in the first session.)*

At the outset, describe what you say:

- 
4. What are the key steps you feel are important when you are in a goal-setting session with your clients? Why?
- 
5. How do you know/find out when a client has reached the goal? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you use goal setting models? (If asked, provide examples: SMART, GROW)--Which do you use? -----Why do you use that one?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What specific goals do you encounter to be more difficult for leaders to accomplish?  
*Probe , if need: Think of a time when you worked with a leader to overcome some obstacle in a goal setting session.*\_\_\_\_\_
8. What strategies do you use when helping clients overcome obstacles to goal setting? (*If need, use answer from above as example for clarifications*)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. How do you interpret or define the term self-efficacy? (ask first and record before reading the definition.)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Self-Efficacy (Read definition)

*Self-efficacy refers to belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments. Self-efficacy is a judgment about a **task specific** capability, and research shows that those **with high self efficacy set high goals**.*

10. How has Self-Efficacy played a part in your goal setting sessions with your clients?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. When you are in a professional coaching conversation, what are some of the ways you enhance the self-efficacy level of the leader?

12. Probe: Are there any conversations around specific strategies or areas?  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you use any pre or post measures of your sessions? What do you measure? How do you use results? \_\_\_\_\_  
Probe for each instrument used, why do you use that?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 14a. How much time do you spend specifically on goal setting in one session? \_\_\_\_\_

- 14b. How many sessions might you devote to goal setting? Why? (Probe) \_\_\_\_\_

- 14c. How many total sessions do you spend per month with one executive client? \_\_\_\_\_

14d. Over how many months? \_\_\_\_\_

Just a few closing questions....

15. What coaching credentials or degrees do you have? \_\_\_\_\_ (also confirm any certifications, from what school)

16. Are your typical coaching sessions in person, on the phone/Skype/ or e-mail?(why do you use that method)(how did you decide?) \_\_\_\_\_

17. Is there anything else you would want to add, or anything that I did not bring up that you think is related to self efficacy and goal setting?

\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you so much for your thoughts and willingness to participate in this research. I will be sending you transcripts of any portion of this conversation I intend to directly quote in the write-up of the study for you to review and edit as needed. This will probably not be before this coming (Summer 2014). When I do that, I'll ask to have your comments back within two weeks. Is that acceptable?

Thank you so much. I really appreciate your willingness to participate in this study.

Do you have any questions for me?

Ending Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Survey Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix D**  
**Transcriptionist Confidentiality Agreement**

Title of Research Project: Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.

Carol-Anne Minski  
Doctoral Student  
Human and Organizational Development  
Fielding Graduate University

I have agreed to assist Carol-Anne Minski in her research on goal setting and leadership capacity as a transcriptionist. I understand that all participants in this study have been assured that their conversations will be kept confidential except as individually and specifically noted by study participants. I agree to maintain that confidentiality.

I further agree that Carol-Anne Minski will maintain access and full rights to the data, findings, and conclusions.

---

Transcriptionist Signature

---

Date

## Appendix E

### Informed Consent Letter

**Title of Research Project:** Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by me, Carol-Anne Minski, doctoral student in the School of Human and Organization Development at Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, CA. This study is supervised by Katrina Rogers, PhD. This research involves identifying various goal setting strategies used by executive coaches with their clients. You are being asked to participate in this study because you indicated interest to be a volunteer research participant. The total participation time will be approximately 25-35 minutes. You will participate in a telephone interview that will be audio recorded. I will contact you to schedule a mutually convenient appointment for the interview. I will call you at the scheduled time.

The Institutional Review Board of Fielding Graduate University retains the right to access the signed informed consent forms and study documents. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. The informed consent forms, audio tapes, and other materials will be kept separately in locked file cabinets. Drafts and other working documents will be kept on personal computers. A few carefully chosen people, besides me, will listen to the tape recordings or review transcripts— a professional transcriptionist, and possibly my faculty supervisor. In all cases the source of the data will be known only to me.

As a participant in this research, you will remain anonymous. That means that I will not reveal in any way your participation in this research. Any quotes I use from your interview will only be used with your specific permission and will not be attributed to you by name. All research materials will be kept in a secure file cabinet and destroyed ten years after the completion of the study. The results of this research will be published as a part of my Ph.D. dissertation and possibly in subsequent journals, professional or academic work, books, websites, workshops, or presentations.

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study. You may develop greater personal awareness of your process of coaching as a result of your participation in this research. You may withdraw from this study at any time, either during or after the interview, without negative consequences. Should you withdraw, your data will be eliminated from the study and will be destroyed. You may request a copy of the summary of the final results by indicating your interest on the attached form. Please indicate where to send the results and following the completion of the dissertation study the summary will be mailed to you.

If you have any If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, contact the Fielding Graduate University IRB by email at [irb@fielding.edu](mailto:irb@fielding.edu) or by telephone at 805-898-4033. If you have any questions about any aspect of this study or your involvement, please contact me at 570-325-4172 or [cminski@email.fielding.edu](mailto:cminski@email.fielding.edu) before signing this form.

You may also contact the supervising faculty if you have questions or concerns your participation in this study. The supervising faculty has provided contact information at the bottom of this form. Two copies of this informed consent form have been provided. Please sign both, indicating you have read, understood, and agreed to participate in this research.

Return one to me at the address below, and keep the other for your files.

Thank you again,

Carol-Anne Minski, Researcher

Carol-Anne Minski, 209 Susquehanna Drive, Jim Thorpe, PA 18229

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, I agree to participate in the study:

NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*

---

FACULTY ADVISOR:

Katrina Rogers, PhD, 805-687-1099

Fielding Graduate University, 2112 Santa Barbara Street Santa Barbara, CA 93105

Please initial one of the following statements:

\_\_\_\_\_ I DO grant you permission to quote me in any reports or presentations.

\_\_\_\_\_ I DO NOT grant you permission to quote me in any reports or presentations.

If you have given permission for me to quote you, I will later send you any quotes I intend to use for you to check for accuracy and to give specific permission for use of that quote. I will also send you how I will use the quote in context in my final report for your approval.

Yes, please send a summary of the study results to:

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME OF PARTICIPANT (please print)

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send one signed copy of this form to the researcher prior to your interview date.*



## **Appendix F**

### **Procedure for recruiting coaches**

1. Send out email and newsletter notes to potential coach participants (Appendix A). Follow up by email or by telephone if necessary.
2. Receive responses. Thank those who declined (Appendix G). For coaches who agreed to participate, send out short selection criteria survey (Appendix B) requesting return of the survey by e-mail.
3. Make phone contact with willing clients to determine if their coaching practice meets criteria. Thank them for being willing to participate and either set an appointment for a telephone interview or explain the selection criteria (external executive coaches in the ICF Community).
4. Send the coach informed consent letters to return to me (Appendix E)
5. Conduct interview appointments.
6. Email audio-recording to transcriptionist and receive transcription electronically.
10. Check transcription against audio-recording.
11. Keep track of the above steps on a spreadsheet. Keep all materials received in a locked file box in my office.

**Appendix G**  
**Exclusion Letter (participant did not meet selection criteria)**

Thank you for volunteering for this research project.

In this study, we are going to be interviewing external executive coaches who are familiar with the core principles of the ICF community. There may be additional research projects in the future. Please let me know if you like to be contacted at a later time.

Again, thank you for your time and let me know if you would like to be on the mailing list for a copy of the summary results for this study.

Sincerely,

Carol-Anne Minski, Researcher

## Appendix H

### Application for the conduct of research involving human participants

<b>TITLE OF STUDY:</b>						<b>DATE SUBMITTED (today's date):</b>				
Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.						May 24, 2013				
<b>PURPOSE OF STUDY:</b> Check all that apply.										
	KA	TYPE KA # here	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pilot Study	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dissertation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Research Project	<input type="checkbox"/>	Institutional Research (Fielding only)
Do not submit this page with your application.										
	Other / Capstone		IF OTHER/CAPSTONE THEN TYPE DESCRIPTION HERE							

RESEARCHER INFORMATION – please delete the CAPS in the white boxes when you type answers		
<b>RESEARCHER'S NAME:</b>	<b>SCHOOL (ELC, HOD, PSY):</b>	<b>PROGRAM (Clinical, OMOD, etc):</b>
Carol-Anne Minski	HOD	HOS
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	<b>PHONE &amp; EMAIL</b>	<b>AFFILIATION:</b>
209 Susquehanna Drive Jim Thorpe, PA 18229	570-325-4172  cminski@email.fielding.edu	Student
<b>Student researchers only - enter supervising Faculty names(s):</b>		Katrina Rogers, PhD
All student researchers conducting human subjects research must complete the CITI training modules found at <a href="http://www.citiprogram.org">www.citiprogram.org</a> . Enter the completion date below and include a copy of the Certificate of Completion in your appendices.		
April 13, 2013		

CO-RESEARCHER INFORMATION – Include name, address, and contact information if applicable, or enter "None".
None

**REGULATORY ITEMS: Please enter “Yes”, “No”, or “NA” and descriptions as required:**

Review the Belmont Report ( <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm">www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/belmont.htm</a> ). Do you agree to comply with the principles discussed in this report?	Yes
Are/Have you also submitting/submitted to an IRB other than Fielding? If yes, please name:	No
Is this study being conducted in a country <u>other</u> than the United States? If yes, list all countries where the research activities will take place.	Yes, if the coach resides in Canada
If you answered “yes” to the question above, please provide the website links for research ethics sources in each country listed. If none are found, enter “NA.”	Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS).  <a href="http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/index">http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/index</a>
If you will conduct research in a country other than the United States, read the Declaration of Helsinki ( <a href="http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html">http://www.wma.net/en/30publications/10policies/b3/index.html</a> ). Will you comply with the principles discussed in this document? Enter “Yes” or “No”.	Yes
Confirm that you have read and understood the research ethics for the countries listed above. Enter “Yes” or No.” If none were found, enter “NA.”	Yes
<i>For Office Use Only: Qualifies for exemption? (List category)</i>	

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH – please delete the CAPS in the white boxes when you type answers**

1. Provide a <b>brief</b> description of the <b>background and purpose</b> of your research (this is your summary; e.g. pre-proposal summary for dissertation research). Avoid using technical terms and jargon. This should be no more than 350 words, and may only be a paragraph.
The purpose of this research is to explore executive coaches’ goal-setting strategies with their clients. Although goal-setting models exist, descriptions of the various ways that coaches make use of goal-setting in their conversations with clients are not readily available. One research stream especially relevant in today’s challenging management climate explores the relationship between self-efficacy and leadership in organizations. The concept of self-efficacy is important to goal-setting theory in several ways. First, when goals are self set, people with high self-efficacy set higher goals than do people with lower self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 2002). Second, people are more committed to goals and find and use better task strategies to attain the goals, and respond more positively to negative

feedback than people with low self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990; Seijts & Latham, 2001).

My platform to study self-efficacy and goal-setting will be in the work that is done by executive coaches with leaders. I hope to uncover whether or not there are any consistent patterns that coaches utilize in goal-setting sessions with executive clients. This research investigation embarks on the convergence of goal-setting, social cognitive, and leadership theories.

2. Provide a brief description of the **basic research question/issue**. Avoid using technical terms and jargon. This should be no more than one page, and may be only a paragraph.

How does self-efficacy play a role in goal-setting outcomes for executive coaches' clients?

Limited research is available in relation to executive coaching and the role of self-efficacy in goal-setting. This research hopes to contribute to the literature in two ways. The first objective is to provide descriptions of what executive coaches do or say in the coaching session to improve self efficacy with their clients. Secondly, it is hoped that this study will add to the executive coaching literature by increasing understanding of utilizing Social Cognitive Theory in the coaching session.

3. Provide a description of the **design and procedure** of your research. Avoid using technical terms and jargon. Be sure to describe **all activities** that participants will engage in and the total time required. Also, at each step in the procedure that you describe, list **all of the means you will use to collect data** during that step in the procedure (e.g. instruments, measures, tests, questionnaires, surveys, interview schedules, focus group questions, observations). If a research assistant will support your research, describe his/her responsibilities here. *Type as much information as is needed in the white box.*

This qualitative exploratory study is designed with a semi-structure interview method. The population for this study is executive coaches. Purposeful sampling will be used to select executive coaches that utilize goal setting in their one-on-one meetings with executive clients. The sample frame for this study is the community of coaches of the International Coach Federation (ICF) of North America. The ICF is recognized as the major accrediting body for coach training schools and major credentialing body for individuals.

The sample will be chosen through a recruitment letter (Appendix A) sent to ICF members, a request notice in the ICF newsletter, or personal contact. Readers of the letter/request notice will be asked to pass along the request to colleagues to gain more qualified candidates through snowball sampling. Coaches who show interest and meet the selection criteria (Appendix B) will be invited to participate in the research. The researcher (Carol-Anne Minski) will make the interview appointments with executive coaches. Permission to record the interview will be obtained when the appointment is made and re-verified at the time of the interview (Appendix C). The interview will take approximately 45- 55 minutes, conducted via telephone or Skype. A pilot study with approximately 3 to 5 executive coaches will be utilized to test the interview protocol (Appendix C) wording and timing. Participants that do not meet the selection criteria will be send a thank you letter (Appendix D).

The pilot study will be conducted September/October, 2013. Data collection for the dissertation will take place from January through March, 2014. This time period will include pre-screening potential participants for eligibility criteria, to yield completed interviews with approximately 20 executive coaches. I will begin with a list of theme questions (to focus the conversation on goal-setting). Open- ended questions

will probe for rich meaning and the order of questions may vary according to the flow of conversation. The files containing the digital recording of each interview will be e-mailed to a transcription service. The transcriber will sign and return confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). The transcribed interviews will be returned to me as a Word document over email.

3.a. Provide a listing that has the name followed by a short description of the tests, instruments, or measures and **attach copies of instruments and questionnaires for review**. For some well-known instruments, it may not be necessary to provide a copy – please check with the IRB for final determination. ***You may type as much information as is needed in the white box.***

Appendix A: recruitment letter -- initial invitation to coaches that describes the research study

Appendix B: selection survey -- describes criteria for participation in the study

Appendix C: interview protocol -- interview questionnaire guide to be used by the researcher

Appendix D: thank you letter – note to volunteers that did not meet the selection criteria

Appendix E: transcriptionist confidentiality agreement

Appendix F: informed consent for participants

Appendix G: procedure for recruiting coaches

3.b. In addition to describing the design and procedure of your research, please indicate the methods that your research will include by checking all that apply. This list is neither preferred nor comprehensive. Please let us know if you are using another method or methods:

X	Descriptive		Quantitative		Oral history		Grounded action		Field work
	Experimental		Ethnographic		Phenomenological		Grounded theory		Longitudinal
X	Qualitative		Formative		Narrative		Action research		Other

IF OTHER METHOD, NAME OR DESCRIBE HERE

4. Indicate whether recruitment of participants and/or data collection will involve the use of any of the following.	Yes	Audiotapes, videotapes, digital recordings, or photographs
	Yes	Electronic communications (e.g. E-mail, Internet)
	No	Archival data that is publicly available
	No	Archival data that is not publicly available

If your response is “yes” to any item in #4, state what specifically will be used, describe how the media will be used (e.g., coded and then destroyed, kept for possible publication or broadcast, etc.), how the media will be stored and for how long. If you are using archival data, discuss what permissions are required (if any) and include a copy of the permission to use the archival data in your appendices.

Data collection will involve digital recordings of each interview. The taped interviews will be transcribed verbatim; after tapes are transcribed, the word document will be returned to the researcher via e-mail. The researcher will listen to the tapes with the transcript to check for errors. Thematic analysis will be utilized to examine themes within the data. This method emphasizes organization and rich description of the data set. The computer will be utilized as an electronic file cabinet and as an efficient means of storing and locating data. Computer assisted qualitative data analysis will support the handling of text so that it can be analyzed. The coding process generates a description of the categories or themes for analysis. In addition to identifying the themes during the coding process, the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software can build additional layers of analysis utilizing nodes as parts of modeling systems. My



9. Has this research been through previous IRB review, or is anticipated to undergo IRB review, at another location (e.g., Veterans Administration, other university, medical center)?		N o
If yes, please explain:		
NA		
10. Indicate the <b>total number of participants</b> you plan to include or enroll in your study.	20	Indicate the age range of the participants that you plan to enroll in your study. 35 - 70
11. Will participants include individuals from any of the following groups?	No	<b>i. Minors (persons under the age of 18)</b>
	No	<b>ii. Prisoners</b>
	No	<b>iii. Persons with legal guardians, or those otherwise unable to provide informed consent: Please describe</b>
		IF iii. IS YES, THEN DESCRIBE HERE
11. a. If you answered “yes” to any of the boxes in #11, describe the methods you will use to provide the <b>special protections</b> to which these groups of participants may be entitled under federal regulation. (Some special protections are listed in 45 CFR 46, available at <a href="http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm">http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.htm</a> .)		
NA		
12. Name and/or describe the site(s), location(s), or organization(s) from which you will <b>recruit</b> or <b>enroll</b> participants and/or <b>conduct</b> your research activities. Please attach any permission request letters you intend to send to the site(s).		
The executive coaches may be located in the United States or Canada. These coaches work externally to organizations and will be interviewed in their home offices via telephone or Skype.		
13. Describe the process you will use to <b>recruit or enroll participants</b> and inform them about their role in the study. Please attach copies of advertisements, flyers, website postings, recruitment letters, oral or written scripts, or other materials used for this purpose. If you use a nomination process, indicate how you will advise participants about who nominated them. If relevant, describe how you will ensure voluntary participation free from coercion.		

- Send out email and newsletter notes to potential coach participants (Appendix A). Follow up by email or by telephone if necessary.
- Receive responses. Thank those who declined. For coaches who agreed to participate, send out short selection criteria survey (Appendix B) requesting return of the survey by e-mail.
- Make phone contact with willing clients to determine if their coaching practice meets criteria.
- Thank them for being willing to participate and either set an appointment for a telephone interview or explain the selection criteria (Appendix D).
- Send the coach informed consent letters to return to me (Appendix F)
- Conduct interview appointments (Appendix C).
- Email audio-recording to transcriptionist and receive transcription electronically.
- Check transcription against audio-recording.
- Keep track of the above steps on a spreadsheet. Keep all materials received in a locked file in my office.



14. Describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria for your participants and how these will be sensitively communicated to potential participants. What will you say to potential participants who do not meet your inclusion criteria? Please attach copies of any letters or scripts you will use to **exclude potential participants**.

Inclusion criteria:

The executive coach considers himself/herself an external business coach and receives compensation for coaching services. The coach resides primarily in North America (US or Canada) and coaches primarily in English. The coach works with leaders/executives in a one-on-one coaching relationship either in person or by telephone. Criteria for being a member of the ICF coaching community entails *at least one* of the following:

- received an ICF certification (MCC,PCC, ACC)
- attended an ICF conference in the past 2 years
- is a member of the ICF or and ICF affiliated local chapter
- received coach training from an ICF accredited coaching school

Exclusion criteria:

The coach should not be considered an “internal “coach” that works within the organization to coach members of the same organization as part of a job. The coach is not a “personal” or “life” coach. The level/title of the coaching client is above first line supervisor. When excluded, the coach will be thanked for their time, noting the research is with external executive coaches in the ICF community.

15. Please type Yes or No as appropriate in the column at the right. Respond to the statements in the right hand columns. When responding, consider both the <b>actual and potential risks</b> that could reasonably be expected to occur during the course of the study.	No	Disclosure of the participants’ responses may place the participants at risk of criminal or civil liability.
	No	Disclosure of the participants’ responses may be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or reputation.
	No	Participants may encounter physical risk.
	No	Participants may be subjected to stress beyond that ordinarily encountered in daily life.
	No	Participants may be asked to disclose information that they might consider to be personal or sensitive.
	No	Participants may be presented with materials that they might consider to be <b>offensive, threatening, or degrading</b> or they may encounter other forms of <b>psychological or social risk</b> .
	No	The fact that a person participated in research will be reported so that the participant can obtain <b>research credit</b> .
	No	As a result of this research, a permanent record will be created that will contain information (identifiers) that could reveal a participant’s identity.

16. If you answered “yes” to any items above, describe and discuss the risk below.				
NA				
16. a. Please describe any <b>other</b> risks to participants you have identified and steps you will take to minimize those risks.				
NA				
16. b. Please describe the steps you will take to <b>minimize those risks and/or ameliorate the impact</b> of any possible harm you have identified above.				
NA				
16. c. <b>For studies greater than minimal risk:</b> Are you providing any information about referrals or other kinds of help in the event a participant experiences distress? If your study is not greater than minimal risk, enter “NA”.  If Yes, please describe:				NA
NA				
16. d. If you have described any risks in 15 or 16 above, please describe how the benefits you described in 8 above outweigh the risks you have described here.				
NA				
17. Indicate how your data will be used. Enter Yes or No for each item.	Yes	Dissertation	Yes	Publication/journal article/presentations
	Yes	Pilot Study for Dissertation	Yes	Aggregate data/summary of results released to participants/parents
	No	Knowledge Assessment (KA)	No	Aggregate data/summary of results released to employer or school
		IF KA, TYPE KA # HERE	No	Aggregate data/summary of results released to agency or other organization
	No	Capstone Project:	Other ( <i>please describe here</i> ):	
18. Will you use research assistant(s) during the collection or analysis of your data?				Yes
If you are using research assistant(s), will you have them sign a confidentiality agreement?				Yes
18. a. If using confidentiality agreement, complete the form (except for the name and signature of the person(s) assisting) and include in the appendices. If you are using a research assistant and are not using a confidentiality agreement, please explain why.				
NA				

<p>19. Describe the steps you will take to address the confidentiality and/or anonymity of the participants and data. Indicate how you will safeguard data that includes identifying or potentially identifying information (e.g. coding). Indicate when identifiers will be separated or removed from the data. Also, indicate where and how you will <b>store</b> the data and how long you plan to retain it. If you are going to dispose of the data, describe how you will dispose of it (e.g. erasure of tapes, shredding of data).</p> <p>If you will identify the location of the research site in your publications, presentations, etc., discuss this use in your response below and also include that information in your informed consent document and permission request letter.</p>	
<p>Participants in this research will remain anonymous. Questionnaire numbers will be utilized instead of names. Any quotes I use from the interview will only be used with specific permission and will not be attributed by name. Drafts and other working documents will be kept on my personal computers. Related research materials will be kept in a secure file cabinet. Electronic files will be erased and paper files will be shredded ten years after the completion of the study. The results of this research will be published as a part of my Ph.D. dissertation and possibly in subsequent journals, professional or academic work, books, websites, workshops, or presentations. There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study; however participants may request a copy of the summary of the final results.</p>	
<p>20. After the research is completed, will you provide a summary of results to the participants or other stakeholders?</p> <p>If you answered Yes, please explain how this will be done. If you answered No, please explain why.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Participants who request summary of results will be mailed the summary.</p>	
<p>21. <b>Informed Consent Form:</b> Most of the information you have described above must be included, in various ways, in the informed consent.</p> <p>Have you completed and attached your informed consent form?</p> <p>In the white space below, <b>discuss <u>how</u> you will provide informed consent to participants.</b> If you are not including an informed consent form, explain why. If you are not requiring signed informed consent, explain why.</p> <p><i>Provide the following information <u>only</u> if it is applicable to your study:</i> Discuss the use of, and the process to obtain, any of the following permissions IF your research requires this documentation: minor's assent, parental permission letter, HIPAA authorization. (If your study includes minors and/or will utilize HIPAA protected data and you are requesting a waiver of documentation, discuss why.)</p>	<p>Yes, see Appendix F</p>
<p>The informed consent form will be sent to participants to be returned before the telephone interview takes place.</p>	

**Signature Page**

<b>TITLE OF STUDY:</b>	Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity.
------------------------	--

<b>PRINCIPAL RESEARCHER:</b>	<b>Researcher Certification:</b>  In making this application, I certify that I have read, understand, and will comply with the Fielding institutional policies regarding research ethics and human subjects protections, and also with all federal, state, and local laws governing the conduct of my study.  As the principal researcher, I agree that:  1. NO research activities (solicitation/recruitment, enrollment, consent, data collection, etc) will take place until <b>after</b> IRB approval or an exemption determination has been obtained.  2. Furthermore, all other required approvals (institutional, dissertation committee, etc) will be obtained before recruitment and enrollment begins.  3. Following approval, my study will be conducted exactly as described in the final IRB approved study documents.  4. I will obtain IRB approval for all recruitment materials prior to utilization.  5. I submit reports on unexpected or serious adverse events (unanticipated problems) experienced by my study participants.  6. I will submit any proposed changes or modifications to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation.  By entering my name and date of application in the spaces below, I certify that I have read and agreed to comply with all requirements set forth by the Fielding IRB.	
	Researcher Name (first, middle initial, last):	Date of Agreement: May 24, 2013
	Carol-Anne Minski	

<b>FACULTY APPROVAL:</b>  Please ensure faculty approvals have been sent before submitting your IRB application.	Name (first, middle initial, last) of Dissertation Chair, KA Assessor, or Faculty mentor:	
	Katrina S. Rogers, PhD	
	Name (first, middle initial, last) of KA Faculty (HOD Students: if this is a KA/Pilot Study for a Dissertation, both the Dissertation Chair and the KA/Pilot Study Faculty must review and approve the application prior to submission) (ELC Students: if this is a Dissertation, both the Dissertation Chair and Research Faculty must review and approved the application prior to submission):	
	Katrina S. Rogers, PhD	



November 19, 2013

Carol Minski  
Cc: Katrina Rogers

RE: IRB No. 13-0091 (Dissertation) "Executive Coaching and Self-Efficacy: A study of goal-setting and leadership capacity." by Carol Minski

Dear Carol,

Congratulations! On behalf of the Fielding Institutional Review Board, this letter is to confirm that the IRB documents received 11/18/13 have been approved.

**The study is subject to continuing review by 11/18/14, unless closed before that date.**

This approval does not replace any other required committee (e.g. full dissertation committee) or other approvals. If committee or other approvals are required to conduct your study, all approvals must be received by the researcher before recruitment, enrollment, or data collection begins. Each school has very specific requirements for approvals to be obtained and the IRB requests that you ensure that all requirements have been met. If institutional/organizational approvals are required, retain a copy of the approval(s) with your study documents.

The following information is provided to help you comply with human subjects protection requirements:

1. You must adhere to the Belmont Commission's ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and justice.
2. You must use the final IRB approved study documents to conduct your study.
3. All recruitment materials must receive IRB approval prior to utilization.
4. You must submit reports on unexpected or serious adverse events experienced by participants.
5. Federal guidelines require that projects undergo continuing review at least once a year. You will receive a communication approximately 4 weeks prior to the expiration date noted above. Complete and return the required documents prior to the expiration date to avoid a lapse of approval.
6. After you complete your study, go to [http://web.fielding.edu/private/research/IRB\\_Forms.asp](http://web.fielding.edu/private/research/IRB_Forms.asp) and download the Status Report form. Email the completed form to [irb@fielding.edu](mailto:irb@fielding.edu).
7. Documentation of informed consent and a written research summary for your project must be maintained for at least three years following the date of completion. Documentation may be in hard copy, electronic, or other media formats. The IRB may review your records relating to this project.

Any proposed changes or modifications to the current application must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval. Some changes may be approved by expedited review; others may require full board review. Please contact the IRB Administrator at [IRB@fielding.edu](mailto:IRB@fielding.edu) if you have any questions or require further information.

Best wishes,

Anna DiStefano, EdD  
Institutional Review Board Chair

## **Appendix I**

### **List of Assessments used by executive coaches in this study**

Bar On EQ-i 125

Birkman Personality Profile

Career Anchors

Derek 360

DiSC Personality Profile

EQI 2.0

Emotional and Social Competence Inventory

Hogan Assessments

Interview based 360

Kouzes and Posner

Leadership Development Profile

Leadership Wheel

Lecioni 5 Dysfunctions of a team

Lominger Voices 230

Maturity Assessment Profile

MSQ- Managerial Styles

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Profiler 360

Strengths Assessment

Tilt 365

Thomas Kilmann Conflict Inventory

VIA Signature Strengths

Saboteur Worksheet

Skills Finder

## **Appendix J**

### **ICF Core Competencies**

The following eleven core coaching competencies were developed to support greater understanding about the skills and approaches used within today's coaching profession as defined by the ICF. These competencies were used as the foundation for the ICF Credentialing process examination.

#### **A. SETTING THE FOUNDATION**

1. Meeting ethical guidelines and professional standards: Understanding of coaching ethics and standards and ability to apply them appropriately in all coaching situations.
2. Establishing the coaching agreement: Ability to understand what is required in the specific coaching interaction and to come to agreement with the prospective and new client about the coaching process and relationship.

#### **B. CO-CREATING THE RELATIONSHIP**

3. Establishing trust and intimacy with the client: Ability to create a safe, supportive environment that produces ongoing mutual respect and trust.
4. Coaching presence: Ability to be fully conscious and create spontaneous relationship with the client, employing a style that is open, flexible and confident.

#### **C. COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY**

5. Active listening: Ability to focus completely on what the client is saying and is not saying, to understand the meaning of what is said in the context of the client's desires, and to support client's-expression.
6. Powerful questioning: Ability to ask questions that reveal the information needed for maximum benefit to the coaching relationship and the client.
7. Direct communication: Ability to communicate effectively during coaching sessions, and to use language that has the greatest positive impact on the client.

#### **D. FACILITATING LEARNING AND RESULTS**

8. Creating awareness: Ability to integrate and accurately evaluate multiple sources of information, and to make interpretations that help the client to gain awareness.
9. Designing actions: Ability to create with the client opportunities for ongoing learning, during coaching and in work/life situations, and for taking new actions that will most effectively lead to agreed-upon coaching results.
10. Planning and goal-setting: Ability to develop and maintain an effective coaching plan with the client.
11. Managing progress and accountability: Ability to hold attention on what is important for the client, and to leave responsibility with the client to take action.

<http://www.coachfederation.org/icfcredentials/core-competencies>

## Appendix K

### Atlas.ti Network Views

Figure: K1

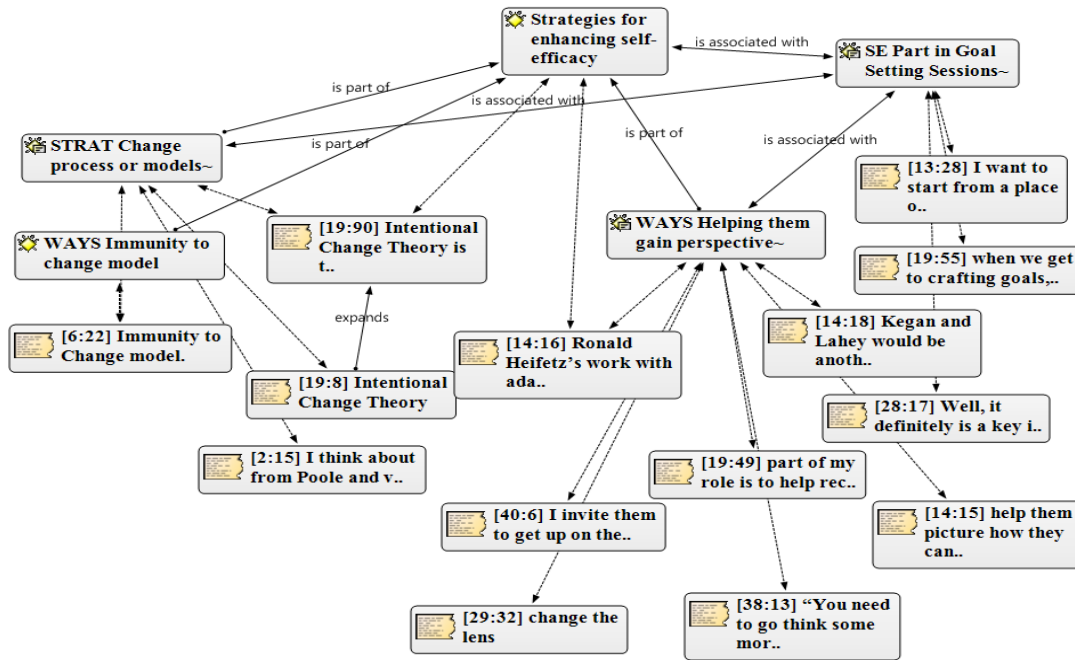
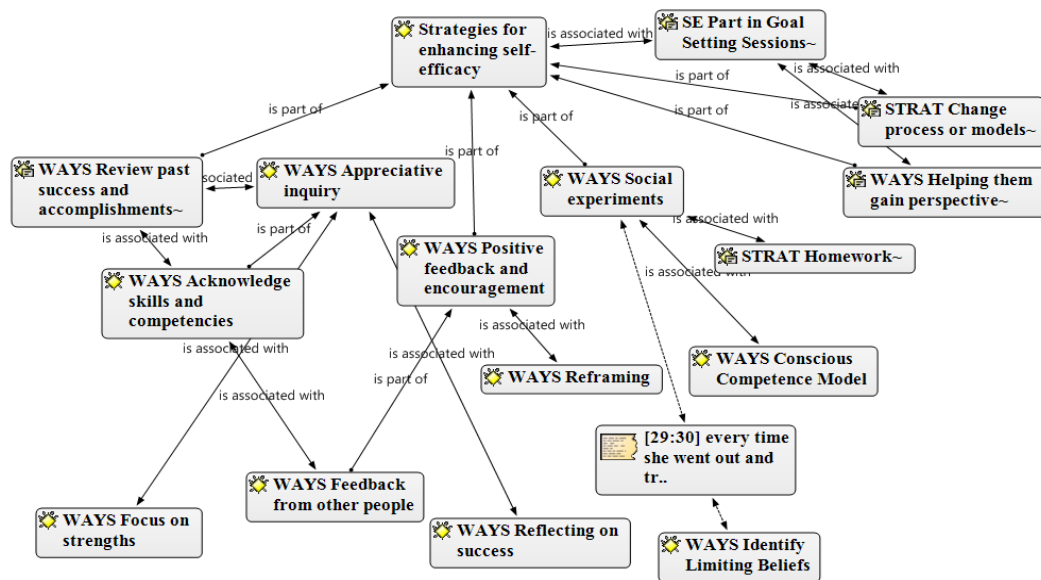


Figure: K2





## Appendix L

### Coaching Practice Topics 2000-Present

2000	Kilberg	Executive coaching and managerial wisdom
2001	McCormick Malone	Self-Efficacy and leadership effectiveness Improving self-efficacy through coaching
2002	Thatch Kampa & White Fitzgerald & Berger	Executive coaching and 360 feedback Effectiveness of executive coaching Executive coaching practice and perspectives
2003	Luthens & Peterson Grant	Feedback and coaching Impact of coaching on goal achievement
2004	Laske Grant & Zackson	Evidence based coaching and return on investment Executive, workplace, and life coaching
2005	Joo Cavanaugh & Grant	Executive coaching conceptual framework Evidence based coaching
2006	Grant Stober & Grant	Goal focused coaching Evidence based coaching
2007	Wilson Grant & Cavanaugh	Best practices in performance coaching Evidence based coaching
2008	deHann, Culpin, Curd Kombarakaran	Executive coaching helpfulness for clients of coaching Executive coaching effectiveness
2009	Baron & Morin deHann Moen & Allgood	The coach-coachee relationship in executive coaching Executive coaching helpfulness for clients of coaching Coaching and the effect on self-efficacy
2010	Baron & Morin	Executive coaching and self-efficacy related to soft skills
2011	Wildflower & Brennan Mann Baron, Morin, Morin Rogers	Knowledge based coaching Trends in the use of executive coaching Executive coaching and working alliance Coaching skills
2012	Grant & Cavanaugh	Solution-focused and strength based approaches to coaching
2013	deHaan et al.	Executive coaching outcome research
2014	Bennett & Bush	Coaching for Change

