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The Executive Coach and Clients in Reflective Practice: Levelising as a Special Case

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
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David T. Duncan
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Susan
for her patience, love, and support as I pursued my goals.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how my executive coaching clients and I engaged in reflective practice through a model of dialogical interaction called Levelising. Four individual coaching clients, representing a variety of management expertise, participated in this study. I engaged them in coaching by both inquiring into their experiences and reflecting on my own. Data consisted of verbatim transcripts from the coaching sessions, which were analyzed qualitatively using a structured, typological approach.

Findings indicated that as my clients and I engaged in a reciprocal reflective process centered on the Levelising model, they experienced uncertainty along with insight into their practices, the issues they faced, and themselves. Our Levelising experiences also shaped my own questions and reflections as their coach.

By incorporating the Levelising model into my coaching practice, I was able to help my clients move beyond simple problem-solving approaches by deliberately reflecting on their experiences and assumptions and exploring new ways of framing their experiences. Further, I observed that engagement in Levelising evolved our professional relationship as we both became more aware of how our assumptions, values, and beliefs shaped our interactions. Implications for executive coaching and research on Levelising are discussed.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Background

Organization success is widely reported to be related to how effectively leaders guide organizations to achieve desirable outcomes (Nohria, Joyce, & Roberson, 2003; Crother-Laurin, 2006; Bernthal & Wellins, 2006). Therefore, it follows that efforts to help leaders become more effective would be expected to contribute positively to an organization's success, however that success may be defined. Improving leadership effectiveness is frequently sought via leadership training and other development opportunities. For example, hiring personal development coaches for organization leaders has become a popular option in recent years (Gray, 2006; Sherman & Freas, 2004; Boyatzis, Howard, Rapisarda, & Taylor, 2004). These coaches work with leaders one-on-one seeking to help them improve in one or more areas affecting their work. These areas may include developing and maintaining interpersonal relationships, decision-making, productivity, time-management, and other areas they identify as important to their leadership effectiveness. Personal development coaching occurs in many different ways. Some development coaches serve as advisors and counselors; some focus predominantly on holding clients accountable for meeting their objectives; and others help clients to reflect on their values and experiences, thereby creating opportunities for growth and development (Gray, 2007).

In this dissertation, I describe a qualitative case study of facilitating reflective practice using the Peters (1991, 2002) DATA-DATA action research model. The first DATA acronym stands for the four actions of Describe, Analyze, Theorize, and Act. These steps involve "identifying one's assumptions and feelings associated with practice, theorizing about how these assumptions and feelings are functionally or dysfunctionally associated with practice, and acting

on the basis of the resulting theory of practice" (Peters 1991, p.1). Working through each step of the DATA model enabled me to systematically reflect on my work experience and develop ways to improve that experience. Results of my first DATA also served as the basis for my second DATA, which is an acronym for Design, Analyze, (Re) Theorize, and Act (Peters, 1991). This phase of the research included identifying research questions, designing a study, collecting and analyzing data, and re-theorizing my practice based on the results.

This model describes how people reflect in and on their practices. During the Levelising process, one positions him/herself via four perspective levels relative to oneself and one's practice. The four levels require that clients step back, figuratively speaking, in order to see themselves in various activities (Peters and Ragland, 2005). For the purpose of this study, I define reflective practice as considering one's own experiences, assumptions, values, and beliefs in the context of one's situation, and drawing on the experiences of others to improve one's practice.

Results of this study contributed to my personal coaching practice and to the literature related to executive and personal development coaching. First, the results helped me to better understand how I can improve my coaching approach through reflective practice while helping my clients reflect on their own practices. Second, this study promises to contribute to the executive coaching literature. Bennett (2006) and Feldman and Lankau (2005) reported a need for additional qualitative and quantitative research in coaching. According to these two authors, fewer than 200 studies have been published describing coach/client relations. Most of these were published during the 1990s and report on empirical case studies or testing of methodological frameworks. A stronger theoretical foundation is needed based on systematic research.

My research makes contributions regarding the coaching process and theory related to practice. It also provides insight into coaching skills, especially the skill of questioning as employed in a coaching relationship. When published, my study will introduce the concept of Levelising to the coaching literature as a framework for facilitating reflective practice by expanding our understanding of it. This study will also contribute to a more in-depth understanding of Schön's ladder of reflection (1987). My study builds on unpublished studies conducted by Gaskin (2007) and Torres (2008), who performed the first two studies of Levelising in practice. This research also helps demonstrate the relationship between reflective practice as described by Schön (1987) and the practice of executive coaching.

Description of Practice

My practice is working as an executive coach. A number of authors have defined executive coaching (Carter, 2001; Downey, 2003; Whitmore, 2002). While each author's definition is unique to his or her own practice, the definitions also share a number of common elements that I have incorporated into my own working definition. To me, executive coaching supports client development and growth by facilitating the process of joint reflection through inquiry and shared experiences.

According to Feldman and Lankau (2005), the type of coaching described in my working definition would be classified as a *person-centered approach* (p. 839). Its focus is to encourage clients to accept personal responsibility. Encouraging clients toward this end is accomplished through the development of empathetic relationships between coaches and clients. The person-centered approach to coaching is characterized as promoting self-understanding by the client without *direct intervention* by the coach. Rather, in the person-centered approach, the "coach

does not diagnose, label, or give specific advice to the client" (Feldman & Lankau, 2005. p. 840). My coaching relationship with my clients is not based on my expertise in their line of business or on my ability to solve their problems, but on my willingness and ability to "think with them" on issues related to their work and life.

I chose to become involved in executive coaching as a result of almost 30 years of experience in managing organizations and businesses. Upon becoming aware of this area of practice, it became apparent to me that I have been engaged in *informal* coaching for many years. It has been my experience for most of my career that others with whom I worked sought me out to discuss issues in their life or business. I assisted by helping them reflect on their issues by asking questions and listening intently. To pursue coaching as a professional career, I affiliated with a national company, Resource Associates Corporation (RAC), which offers training, support, and materials for those engaged in executive coaching. I recently completed a coaching certification class offered by RAC.

The coaching approach espoused by RAC is termed *developmental coaching*. Developmental coaching involves helping clients to reflect on their practices in order to grow and develop, personally and professionally. This definition is generally consistent with my personal approach to coaching. RAC requires those seeking coaching certification to successfully complete a proficiency exam, including both a written exam and practicum. Although I passed the RAC proficiency exam, I was not satisfied with my coaching proficiency at that point. In particular, I was not confident in my ability to facilitate reflective practice or in my ability to evaluate the degree to which my clients engaged in reflective practice.

Analysis of Practice

The RAC "academy" approach to developmental coaching encourages coaches to facilitate single, double, and triple-loop learning as defined by Hargrove, in his book, *Masterful Coaching* (2003) via a questioning process that promotes reflective practice.

Upon completion of the academy, I noted three primary shortcomings in my preparation for coaching and in using the RAC approach to developmental coaching.

1) The RAC coaching methodology presumes a cognitive science view of how people solve problems, use language, and learn. Cognitive science, while far from having a unified theory regarding human thinking, generally views thinking as the application of mental processes and procedures to representations people carry in their minds (Watson and Coulter, 2008). In the RAC methodology, persons being coached are expected to do the *work* associated with their learning by thinking through their issues and seeking answers based solely on their ability to draw upon their own personal experiences. The coach is instructed only to ask questions requiring the person being coached to discover the solution to his or her problem, without giving the person being coached the benefit of the coach's experience with similar problems.

In contrast to this model, I ascribe to the social constructionist ontology. Cunliffe (2004) summarized the social constructionists' ontology as one in which we "construct our social realities and sense of self between us in our everyday actions; we utilize taken-for-granted ways of sense-making that draw on the flow of our everyday activity; . . . questioning our own assumptions and taken-for-granted actions . . . challenging our conceptions of reality, and exploring new possibilities" (p. 411). While it can be argued that the coach's experience is

present in his or her questions, it appeared to me that drawing on the experience of the coach and person being coached in joint construction of solutions might be a more effective approach.

2) While the RAC materials provided example questions for use in promoting reflection, no additional guidance is suggested for facilitating reflective practice. Rather, the RAC coach is left with the task of determining how to use the sample questions such that clients engage in reflection in a manner that is expected to be beneficial to the client. It seemed to me that the example questions would be more useful if they were incorporated into a systematic approach to coaching that would help the coach determine where he or she stood regarding facilitation of reflective practice. It should also and also help the coach to guide the reflection process.

3) RAC materials provided limited information describing how a coach knows that clients are engaging in reflective practice as a result of coaching. The RAC process focused more on how the coach asked questions to promote reflection and less on how the coach observed the reflective processes in which clients are engaging. If our purpose as coaches is to facilitate reflective practice, it seems that helping them to recognize reflective practice as it occurs would be beneficial to both coaches and those being coached.

Since completing the RAC coaching, I engaged several coaching clients. During sessions with them, they told me how they adjusted their approaches to addressing specific issues as a direct result of reflecting on their practice during our coaching sessions. I wanted to encourage that result more frequently. I also noticed, on more than one occasion, that my clients challenged my assumptions regarding how I can be an effective coach. Both of these experiences led me to wonder how I could engage clients in a manner that encouraged us to reflect on our respective practices for our mutual growth.

My Practical Theory

I felt that I could improve my coaching practice by being more deliberate in my attempt to promote reflective practice via joint construction of an understanding of client problems. At the same time, I felt that a revised way of engaging with my clients would help me to grow and develop as a coach. Three inter-related ideas comprised my practical theory: the value of reflecting on one's practice; the ways inquiry and shared experiences facilitate reflection; and the importance of paying attention to the level of reflection taking place.

First, I expected that my clients could potentially improve their practices by deliberately reflecting on their experiences, values, beliefs, and assumptions. Frequently, improving one's business practice involves noting and addressing issues to prevent their recurrence. In this vein, Argyris and Schön (1978) described learning as detection and correction of errors. Single and double-loop learning, in their estimation, describes how learning occurs on two levels. Single loop learning occurs when a practitioner corrects an error without reflecting on the goals, values, frameworks, or strategies that may have contributed to the error. Double loop learning, on the other hand, involves questioning one's frames and learning systems, and then making adjustments based on that deeper level of reflection. The authors advocated double-loop learning for its utility in improving problem-solving and decision-making by addressing fundamental issues. I employ both single and double-loop learning in my coaching practice, but I take the concept of reflective practice to a deeper level. I help my clients to reflect, not only on their own frames and assumptions (double-loop learning), but also on the frames and assumptions of others, an act thereby reframing their own practice. Additionally, reflection and reframing is carried out in a context that supports the joint construction of meaning with me as their coach.

I might improve my coaching practice by being more deliberate in the promotion of reflection via joint construction of an understanding of and solution to client problems. Cunliffe (2004) described a process she uses in helping her business school students to become critically reflective practitioners. She observed that double-loop learning, which she defined as thinking critically about behaviors and questioning assumptions, is the "beginning of critical reflexivity" (p. 412). Cunliffe uses the term *critical reflexivity* to describe in-depth reflection. Critical reflexivity draws upon social constructionist views of reality (i.e., reality is subjective, multiple, and constructed between people). In Cunliffe's words,

> Critical reflexive practitioners . . . question the ways in which they act and develop knowledge about their actions. This means highlighting ideologies and tacit assumptions-exploring how our own actions, conversational practices, and ways of making sense create our sense of reality. (p. 414)

By incorporating the Levelising model into my practice, I might help my clients to engage in double-loop learning and beyond such that they notice how we engage each other in conversation and question their taken for granted sense of reality.

Schön (1983) added the dimension of time to reflective practice by introducing the concepts of reflecting-*on*-practice and reflecting-*in*-practice. Reflecting-*on*-practice occurs as practitioners "*think back* (emphasis added) on a project they have undertaken, a situation they have lived through, and they explore the understandings they have brought to the handling of the case" (p. 61). Reflecting-*in*-practice occurs as practitioners think "about doing something while doing it" (p. 54). Reflecting-*in*-practice is important because, as Schön noted, "as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss the important

opportunities to think about what he is doing" (p. 61). By reflecting-*in*-practice, "(the practitioner) sometimes . . . arrives at a new theory of the phenomenon by articulating a feeling he has about it (p. 63)." McGonagill (2002) described reflecting-in-practice in observing that, "…ultimately, to be a reflective practitioner is to see in the moment of client interaction everything one would see if one were to step out of the moment and reflect. Clearly this is an unobtainable goal but one may take small steps toward it by routinely allowing time to adopt a posture of inquiry (p. 61)."

Based on my experience in the business world, few people routinely reflect on or in their practice. However, within the coaching relationship that I have with my clients, it is not only acceptable to reflect on work and life activities, but such reflection is expected as part of the coaching engagement. Therefore, my coaching clients are uniquely situated to articulate their reflections on and in their practices and consider how to make improvements as a result.

The RAC process uses the Hargrove (2003) framework in coach training. Hargrove published a three-tier framework in which single and double-loop learning serve as the context for what he terms triple-loop learning. Hargrove defined single-loop learning as the process whereby the coach provides feedback to those being coached to help them notice circumstances under which their actions lead to unintended results. Feedback from the coach, thereby, allows the person being coached to modify his or her actions in the future. According to Hargrove, double-loop learning involves "altering people's mental models," (p. 90) resulting in a change in their thinking and actions. Hargrove defined mental models as "guiding ideas that shape how a coach thinks and interacts with people" (p. 90). In his framework, triple-loop learning involves helping those being coached to reflect and make a fundamental shift in how they think, thereby

changing their way of being. While the language employed by Hargrove implies a cognitive science approach to coaching that conflicts with my social constructionist view described earlier, I believe that the ends he sought (i.e., a different way of being), are worthwhile goals attainable via a social constructionist coaching approach. I practiced coaching prior to this study by encouraging my clients to reflect on their experiences as they sought new ways to address the issues they faced. However, when it seemed that they reached a dead end, I added my experience to theirs, thereby allowing the two of us to socially construct fresh approaches to move forward.

The second idea that frames my practice was that I can facilitate my client's and my own engagement in reflective practice through inquiry and sharing my experiences, all within the context of the client's practice and our coaching interaction. In his book *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schön (1987) described the dialogue between the instructor or *coach*, using Schön's terminology, and student. In this context, Schön specifically referred to teaching and learning architectural design, but his ideas are applicable to my coaching relationships as well. He noted the following three features to the coaching dialogue: "It takes place in the context of the student's attempts to design; it makes use of actions as well as words; and it depends on reciprocal reflection-in-action" (p. 101). This engagement is conducted in a spirit of inquiry and shared experiences. Fisher observed that "specific critical questions" (2003, p. 322) lead to stronger evidence of critical reflection in her students. Nelson, Apenhorst, Carter, Mahlum, & Schneider (2004) also used questions to promote critical thinking and reflective practice. Additionally, I thought that if my engagement with clients were to be truly collaborative, then I should be willing to share my experience as well as inquire into theirs. Sharing my experience was also true to my paradigm of social construction because doing so facilitated the joint

construction of meaning. As I coached, I avoided the temptation to advise or consult, but rather offered my experiences for my clients' consideration; in concert with my client's experiences, we jointly constructed meaning to inform action.

The third foundational idea for my practice was that by paying attention to the level of reflection practiced by my clients, I could improve my practice and enable clients to learn more about themselves and their practice. Fisher (2003) studied reflection and *reflective capacity* among university students. She developed a framework that includes three types of reflection: the technical, the practical and critical. According to Fisher:

> The technical is concerned with efficiency and effectiveness of means to achieve certain ends. The practical allows for examination of goals and the assumptions on which they are based and recognizes that meanings are negotiated through language. Critical reflection adds moral and ethical criteria such as equity and justice, locating analysis of personal action within wider historical, political and social contexts. (p. 314)

Schön (1987) emphasized that both coach and student engage in reflection and learning. The relationship is depicted as a search for meaning. He wrote, for "both the student and coach, effective search for convergence of meaning depends on learning to become proficient at the practice of the practicum" (p. 118). The actions in which they engage help the student to climb Schön's "ladder of reflection." The four rungs of the ladder, from bottom to top, are 1) Designing, 2) Description of designing, 3) Reflection on description of designing, and 4) Reflection on reflection on description of designing. Schön observes that, while climbing the ladder, "one makes what has happened at the rung below into an object of reflection." (p. 114)

Similar to Schön's ladder of reflection, Peters described a model in which reflective practice occurs at different levels. The Peters Levelising model (Peters & Ragland, 2005) describes how one positions oneself at four perspective levels relative to oneself and one's practice that require that clients step back, figuratively speaking, in order to see themselves in various activities. Below, a brief description is provided for each level. These descriptions are drawn from Peters and Ragland (2005) and expand on unpublished materials developed by Gaskin's (2007) dissertation research.

In level 1, or "pre-reflective being in the world" (Peters & Ragland, 2005, p. 95) the client is directing his or her awareness outwardly to others or to the topic and not inwardly. he or she is simply describing his or her practice to others or is involved in problem solving. At this level, there is no attempt to understand what he or she is doing or why he or she is doing it. he or she may not even be aware of himself in the engagement. In other words, he or she is "going on" without reflecting on the process or purpose.

In level 2, or "reflective being" (p. 96), the client steps back one step to pay attention to what he or she is doing during the coaching interaction or to what he or she has done previously. Such reflection may occur as a result of an unexpected or surprising occurrence during the engagement or in response to encouragement from the coach. This awareness may develop first in retrospect as the client becomes aware of something he or she has said or done. This is an example of what Schön referred to as reflecting-*on*-action. However, level 2 reflection does not necessarily require the client to disengage in the interaction in order to observe how he or she and the coach are engaging with one another. In other words, the client can reflect on his or her actions as they are occurring. This would be an example of Schön's reflecting-*in*-action. Level 2

reflection occurs, not simply in reporting on past events, but as clients pay special attention to what has happened earlier or what is happening in the current setting.

In level 3, or "framing" (p. 97), the client becomes aware that he or she is operating within a conceptual framework. This awareness occurs when he or she takes one step further away from simply being in the moment and starts to notice *how* he or she is looking at what he or she is doing. In context, as the client is engaged in the coaching activity (level I), he or she looks at himself, figuratively (Level 2). At level 3, he or she steps back once again to notice the window through which he or she sees the world and which frames his or her view. This frame is made up of the assumptions, beliefs, and values he or she carries within himself that obstruct his or her view of other possibilities.

In level 4, or "theorising," (p. 97) the client begins to demonstrate openness to other frames of reference. He or she notices and acknowledges what others have to say about the topic at hand and how it is reasonable and natural for them to hold a view dramatically different from his or her own. He or she may start to critically examine what others think, consider how his or her, and others', theories of the world have shaped experience and, conversely, how his or her own experience has shaped his or her frame and world. The client may even construct new theories based on this reflection. Level 4 Levelising seems to be similar to Schön's *frame experiment,* which he described in the following manner. "When (a practitioner) finds himself stuck in a problematic situation which he cannot readily convert to a manageable problem, he may construct a new way of setting the problem-a new frame which . . . he tries to impose on the situation" (1983, p. 63). In Schön's example, and in level 4 Levelising, the practitioner seeks to

understand new ways to frame a situation, thereby identifying novel approaches to improving his or her practice.

I chose to use the Peters Levelising model as the framework for my study because it is more comprehensive than Schön's Ladder of Reflection in that, in addition to engaging practitioners to reflect on their practice and frames of reference, it also encourages them to pay attention to other possible frames. The differences are reflected in Table 1.

Incorporating the Peters Levelising model into my practice, in the context of my social-constructionist foundations, helped me address the concerns I identified earlier regarding the RAC coaching model. First, Levelising provided a template for paying attention to my own coaching practice; second, it provided a framework for promoting reflective practice by my clients; and third, it has helped me to recognize the different perspectives my clients and I took, a fact which has helped me to identify opportunities for further reflection.

Additionally, the Peters Levelising model allowed me to engage with clients in a manner consistent with the elements of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is defined as "people laboring together to construct knowledge" (Peters & Armstrong, 1998, p. 1). Peters

Table 1. Comparison of Schön's Ladder of Reflection with Peters' Levelising Model

Rungs on Schön's Ladder of Reflection	Equivalent Levels in Peters' Levelising Model
1) "Designing" – the process of going about the work to be done	Equivalent to Peters' Level 1: Pre-Reflective Being in the World
2) "Description of designing"	A partial description of Peters' Level 2: Reflective Being
3) "Reflection on description of designing"	A partial description of Peters' Level 2: Reflective Being
4) "Reflection on reflection on description of designing"	Related to Peters' Level 3: Framing
Schön's ladder of reflection has no equivalent to Peters' Level 4	Peters' level 4: Theorizing

(2002) observed four elements of collaborative learning that lead to construction of knowledge: dialogical space, cycles of action and reflection, focus on construction, and multiple ways of knowing. Levelising is a way of expressing the element of cycles of action and reflection. Reflection is the process of 'stepping back' from an experience to ponder, carefully and persistently, its meaning to the self through the development of inferences. Peters (1991), however, noted that without action, reflection is simply theoretical; that is, reflection is only valuable if it leads to action that is deemed beneficial to the person or organization. Practitioners of collaborative learning continually explore and question suppositions, thereby eliciting new and relevant information. Participating in cycles of action and reflection allows the practitioner to critically reflect on his or her foundational values which, in turn, can result in transformational change. Levelising has special value with respect to helping me to reflect with clients and facilitate them through cycles of action and reflection leading to transformational change in their lives.

Review of Literature

Results of this research relates to the academic literature with respect to Levelising, the coaching process, and coaching theory related to practice. This review will incorporate all three areas of related literature, in terms of how each helped inform the present study.

To begin, it is clear that a very small number of studies of coaching have been conducted, and even fewer have addressed the topic of this study. The same is true for published works that contain descriptive information or conceptualizations of coaching. Finally, Levelising has only recently been developed as a framework for reflective practice. Only two studies utilizing the

framework have been completed, both in the form of dissertation research. This review begins with a discussion of the two Levelising studies, followed by an overview of studies and other publications related to the coaching process and coaching theory.

Gaskin (2007) incorporated Levelising into her practice as the facilitator of a team of people seeking to improve the quality of care provided by her employer. Gaskin engaged a team of seven health care practitioners in a series of meetings during which she sought to teach the team about the Levelising tool as she engaged them in the process of Levelising. She collected data by tape recording team meetings and conducting interviews with participants. Outside rater-observers were asked to listen to the audio recorded meetings and rate the levels of Levelising in which participants engaged. Gaskin found that the team engaged predominantly in levels 1 and 2 during the meetings. She also found that incorporating Levelising into team meetings improved team communication by providing a forum for listening and allowing more thoughtful conversation. Gaskin concluded that participants experienced more effective interpersonal communication as the result of "slowing the conversation" (p. 79) and encouraging reflection and inquiry.

Torres (2008) studied her engagement in a collaborative learning practice with eight fellow Appreciative Inquiry practitioners for an eight-month asynchronous on-line dialogue. She was interested in understanding the impact of Levelising on her own and other participants' practices. Torres' data consisted of phenomenological interview responses, her own reflective journal, and transcripts from teleconferences and on-line dialogue. She made several observations about her engagement in Levelising that are relevant to the field of executive coaching. First, Torres noted that reflective time, a practical focus, and dialogical skills were

important factors in allowing her group to engage in Levelising. She also observed that Levelising helped her and fellow practitioners to gain awareness of their frames of reference as they dialogued about aspects of the Appreciative Inquiry process. Finally, Torres observed that she and the other participants engaged in all four levels of Levelising with participation being fairly balanced at all four levels.

These two studies of Levelising produced different results as they relate to the frequency by which participants engaged in various levels of the Levelising process. For example, Gaskin's participants engaged in Levelising primarily at levels 1 and 2, even though some participants engaged in all four levels. In contrast, Torres and her colleague participants engaged consistently in all four levels of reflection represented by the four levels of Peters' (2005) Levelising model. The difference might be attributable to the characteristics of the participants or the approach that each action researcher took to helping others engage in Levelising. For example, Gaskin admitted that her attempt to teach participants how to Levelising might have been done at the expense of opportunities for her participants to actually engaged in Levelising, whereas Torres and her colleagues engaged in the practice from the beginning of their mutiple-episode experience. Moreover, the participants in Torres' study were more academically oriented that practitioners in Gaskins' study, exhibiting a proclivity for engaging in abstract thinking and theorizing of the type that goes with levels 3 and 4 of the Levelising model. Finally, both studies involved groups of people whose members engaged each other and their facilitator in episodes of Levelising, and neither study showed what might happen if two people engaged each other in Levelsing, such as might occur in a coach-client relationship. These and other features of the

limited research on Levelising thus far leave more questions to be explored about the role that Levelising might play in such professional practices as executive coaching.

In the broad context of professional coaching, Bennett (2006) reported that only 125 peer-reviewed papers and dissertations related to coaching were published in the psychological literature during the period 1937-2005. Most of these were published during the 1990s, and they described results of empirical case studies or methodological frameworks testing. Feldman and Lankau (2005) observed that fewer than 20 systematic research studies, both qualitative and quantitative, were conducted within the more specific context of executive coaching, Most of these studies explored potential positive benefits of coaching such as enhanced personal performance or improved interpersonal relationships. Feldman and Lankau (2005) observed that the field of coaching needs a stronger theoretical foundation based on systematic research. Regarding studies directly related to executive coaching, Styhre and Josephson (2007) reported that there is "surprisingly" limited coaching literature, with most of that available being explanatory in nature or reporting on coaching success. They also mention the lack of critical or analytical literature. Kilburg (2004) also noted the lack of detailed case studies. Others (McDermott; 2007; Wasylyshyn, 2003) observed that many of the published studies focus on survey data regarding how coaching was performed and participant feedback on the effectiveness of coaching.

Lowman (2005) reviewed a series of articles based on case studies of coaching. While acknowledging the challenge apparent in drawing conclusions from case study research conducted using various methods, Lowman observed a number of common themes within the case studies. For example, the factors thought to contribute to effective coaching include a

trusting relationship between coach and client, coach commitment to his or her coaching model, coach assistance with clients' attempt to understand and solve workplace issues, and coach focus on the clients' strengths rather than their weaknesses. Lowman concluded that the field of executive coaching and especially research on the practice is still in its infancy. He observed that case studies are perhaps most useful in the early stages of an emerging practice, such as executive coaching, because of their usefulness in generating empirical information that can later be studied by other methods. My study of Levelising in executive coaching should contribute to the field in a similar manner by introducing a new approach to coaching, along with evidence of its influence on coach and client.

Two case studies of personal coaching describe encounters that were especially related to my study. Styhre and Josephson (2007) conducted a qualitative action research study in which six construction site managers were selected by their leadership to be coached over a period of one year for two hours every third week. They conducted audio-taped interviews with each participant three times during the course of the study. Styhre and Josephson reported that site managers developed skills to help them reflect on their work and life situation and that the coaching program improved communication on the worksite. Schnell (2005), an executive coach, studied his relationship with two clients as it evolved over a period of 5 years. The clients were managers employed by the same company in which Schnell was employed. The managers were experiencing performance issues and were referred to Schnell for assistance. His interaction with clients is reported as a narrative in which the coach reports client growth in terms of a series of events over the course of the coaching engagement. Schnell reported a number of outcomes of his study, including the importance of having regular meetings, the value of establishing formal

agreements between the coach and clients, and the advantages and disadvantages of engaging a coach from within one's own organization. He concluded that coaching provides the reflective space needed by leaders who are working in demanding and fast-paced workplaces.

These two studies are related to the present study in their attention to coach and client relationship, the employment of particular approaches to coaching, and to the role of the coach as researcher in his own practice. My study introduces a new approach to in an ongoing coaching practice which I study as coach with myself and my clients serving as study participants. Although I don't engage clients who are employed in the same organization, I do engage them in a series of coaching sessions with appropriate agreements concerning the coach-client relationship and their participation in my study of our experience.

Other studies have sought to discover how clients respond to various coaching approaches. For example, Wasylyshyn (2003), Jones and Spooner (2006), and McDermott (2007) conducted studies using surveys and interviews to gather the views of individuals who have been coached or companies that have engaged coaches in personal development. Wasylyshyn (2003) conducted a survey of 106 of her coaching clients who were also executives. She examined a number of factors related to executive coaching, including indicators of successful coaching outcomes. Participants in the study reported that the top three indicators of successful coaching were sustained behavior change, increased self-awareness, and more effective leadership. She further noted the relationship between a client's self-observation and introspection and the likelihood of sustained improvement in their subsequent professional performance. Wasylyshyn's attention to self-observation seems to relate to the role that reflective practice is thought to play in performance improvement, which in turn supports my assumption

that Levelising will help clients become more self aware and, prospectively, contribute to improvements in their respective practices.

Studies have been conducted with the interest of assessing the value of coaching to employee performance. For example, McDermott (2007) conducted a survey of 55 companies' coaching practices, with particular emphasis on how coaching was made a part of the companies' professional development activities and subsequent performance of their executives. The companies reported that coaching senior executives improved alignment of the leadership team, their ability to execute strategy, and leadership behavior. Providing internal coaching for middle managers appeared to improve culture and morale.

Jones and Spooner (2006) used semi-structured interviews with seven coaches and fourteen high achievers from business and sports to identify factors that need to be taken into account when coaching particularly ambitious clients. For this study, high achievers were identified as executives with exceptional drive, strong task orientation, self-confidence, hunger for rewards, and a willingness to push themselves and others to achieve results. Jones and Spooner observed that a one-size-fits-all approach to coaching is not effective with high achievers. They concluded that coaches should be flexible in the coach-client relationship.

Although my study does not seek to establish a cause-effect relationship between coaching experience and performance, it does include client reports of experiences with coaching and their reaction to their experience in terms of how they see themselves in practice and other areas of their lives. Moreover, the Levelising model provides for the kind of flexibility called for by Jones and Spooner, in that it is a framework and not a specific methodology intended to guide coaching for all clients in terms of specific steps. In theory, incorporating Levelising into my

coaching practice allow me to be flexible in tailoring coaching questions to the client and to the situation they present. Jones and Spooner also emphasized the importance of a professional coaching relationship based on trust and mutual respect. My coaching approach using the Levelising model demonstrates respect for clients by acknowledging them as the authors of their own experience. Allowing clients to reflect in and on their experience, sometimes framing and reframing them, without the intrusion of coaching advice, shows respect for clients and their ability to address issues they identify.

Another area of coaching literature addresses the processes used by coaches in their engagements with clients. For example, Richard (2003) described a coaching process that deliberately emphasizes creative problem-solving techniques. This process positions the coach as a teacher who employs a number of techniques to help clients learn. Such techniques include asking vague questions to promote reflection; helping the client to state their problems in more specific terms; encouraging clients to explore alternate approach to solve problems; evaluating issues from multiple points of view; and using analogies and metaphors to frame problems in novel ways. Richard focused on the client as the agent of innovation. Incorporating the Levelising model introduces a process with features that are similar to the ones discussed by Richard. For example, level 2 reflection invites clients to explore alternative approaches to solve problems. Engagement in level 4 seeks to help clients review their issues from multiple points of view, sometimes leading to reframing of problems in novel ways.

Quick and Macik-Frey (2004) describe a coaching process in which they employed a developmental model of coaching based on what they call deep interpersonal communication. They note that this approach is neither surface nor therapeutic, but it is an approach focused on

safe, secure communication at a deep level. Their approach is conducted in two tiers, outer and inner. In the outer tier, executive clients engage in functional, organizational communication. In the inner tier, clients deal with complex, emotional topics to improve self-awareness. The authors assert that these two tiers of communication may be related to their personal and organizational success. They claim that their clients have been able to improve their ability to build relationships, illuminate long-standing issues affecting their performance, and authentically address deep feelings, emotions, values, and beliefs. Asking clients to view their practices from the different perspectives of Levelising in my coaching practice also promises to promote reflection on assumptions, beliefs, frames and ways of thinking while engaged in interpersonal communication with the coach. Level 3 inquiry, in particular, encourages clients to explore their own frames of reference which involves surfacing and exploring personal values, beliefs, and assumptions that lie below the surface of everyday actions.

Bennett (2006) noted that research is needed regarding characteristics of both coaches and clients, the coach/client relationship, the coaching process, and results of coaching. He also pointed to the need for more theories related to the practice and teaching of coaching. My review of the literature confirms Bennett's conclusions regarding areas needing additional research in the field of executive coaching. In turn, my study promises to contribute to the research literature in at least two areas identified by Bennett: the coaching process, and theory related to practice.

This study also promises to increase our understanding of reflective practice as described by Schön (1983,1987), especially his Ladder of Reflection (1987). As discussed in the next

section of this chapter, Schon's Ladder of Reflection is closely related to the Peters Levelising model.

Plan of Action

I incorporated Levelising into my coaching practice to facilitate reflective practice and identify the levels of reflective practice in which clients engaged. I did so by developing a description of the four Levelising levels in terminology consistent with my corporate coaching, developing types of questions believed to facilitate each of the four "levels" of reflection identified in Levelising, and engaging clients in coaching using the new materials and approach. Further details are provided below.

Developing Levelising Descriptions

I used existing Levelising descriptions from Peters and Ragland (2005) and Gaskin (2007) as a basis for developing my practice-specific descriptions. I then added hypothetical examples from my coaching experience to complete the working descriptions. The descriptions are summarized below.

Level 1 is characterized by the client discussing his or her beliefs or perceptions; making observations; stating a position on a topic; talking about events in his or her life or workplace; answering questions in a factual manner; or in any other manner giving information in a non-reflective manner, i.e., such that demonstrates no awareness of values, beliefs, or the perceptions of him or herself or others. Statements typical of level 1 discourse are ones such as "I am having trouble meeting deadlines," or "the organization is going through some difficult times right now," or "a coworker and I are not able to get along." Such statements are frequently presented as facts without regard to underlying assumptions and other viewpoints.

Level 1 interaction is the "default" form of engagement for discourse. No special approaches to questioning are required to engage at this level. However, as a coach, I intentionally engage in Level I while facilitating problem-solving with my clients, especially when I do not perceive that reflection is needed to address the issue under discussion. By facilitating Level I engagements, I keep the focus on the stated issue at hand.

Level 2 is characterized by reflecting-in-action (for example, "as I think about what I'm saying" or "how I am engaging in this interaction") or reflecting-on-action (for example, "let's talk about what we did last time" or "consider how you approached that meeting"). It may also be characterized by the client turning toward the coach and inquiring into what has been said; by asking the coach to more fully explain himself; or by checking his or her understanding of what the coach said. Another way to engage in level 2 is to reflect on the process taking place between the coach and the client. The client may ask the coach to clarify what he or she is doing or express confusion or frustration with the coaching process. Generally speaking, during level 2 reflection, the pace of the conversation slows as the coach and client each strive to more fully understand what is occurring in the moment or what has previously occurred. Some examples of statements made by clients during typical of level 2 interactions are, "I am not satisfied with the way I handled that problem with a coworker yesterday," or "as I sat in the back of the room, I was able to get a broader perspective on the interpersonal dynamics," or "it makes me uncomfortable to admit this to you."

As a coach, I promote level 2 Levelising in subtle ways by asking the client to pay attention to how he or she is approaching a situation, what he or she is saying, or to how he or she is saying it. In a less subtle manner, I suggest that he or she observe how we are interacting,

either in the moment or in retrospect. I also ask the client to reflect on statements he or she has made previously or actions he or she has taken.

Level 3 is characterized by any expression in which the client identifies his or her viewpoint, belief or belief system, or values. It is important to note that he or she may not necessarily label the statement as a belief or value. The statement may be a description of how the person makes sense of the world. It may be as simple as saying, "this is how I see it" or it may be as complex as saying, "this is how I experience the world" or "this is what I believe." The statement may reflect a growing awareness on the part of the client. For example, he or she might say, "I am becoming more aware of how frustrated I get." he or she might be speaking on behalf of his or her organization by saying, "In our organization, we take safety seriously." Or he or she might speak directly regarding how he or she experiences certain events, such as, "It seems to me that, as an organization, one thing we do well is…"Examples of statements made by my clients during typical of level 3 interactions are "I suppose I believe what I do because of the way I was raised" and "I just think that, as the leader of an organization, you should not reward yourself until you have taken care of the workforce."

As a coach, I promote level 3 Levelising by suggesting that the client notice the values and belief statements he or she makes. This may require that I bring attention to such statements as being value-laden since the client may not make the connection. For example, I may ask, "what accounts for you stating that…" or "What are your assuming in the position you are taking …" or "Why is that important to you?" Frequently, in my experience, people consider belief statements to be factual and not arising from a particular perspective. I also ask questions that

make them aware of contrasting points of view to provide a context in which to see their own point of view.

Level 4 is characterized by statements that indicate the client is imagining other possible ways of seeing a situation. For example, he or she may say something such as, “I wonder what she was thinking when she said …” He or she might also compare and contrast multiple points of view or notice that an individual or group has a different point of view. The client could begin questioning his or her individual frame or the frames that serve as the context for organizational decisions. In this case, he or she might say, “Why do I see it this way instead of another way?” Level 4 reflection is often characterized by deep conversation as long-held views of the world are explored and critically examined. Examples of statements made by my clients during typical level 4 interactions are, “I guess I can understand how others might view that situation,” and “I never considered this issue from that perspective.”

As a coach, I promote level 4 Levelising by inviting the client to consider what others may be thinking. For example, I could ask, “Why do you suppose that Mary behaves that way in meetings?” or “What might John be thinking that would lead to his behavior?” Other questions could ask my client to take a different perspective, such as “Knowing what you know about Mary, if you had been through what she had experienced, how would you react to this situation?” I also ask my client to brainstorm other ways that people might see a particular situation.

Developing Criteria for Facilitating Reflection

Schön (1987) observed that moving up the ladder of reflection is one method of opening up new possibilities in the search for meaning “when coach and student are stuck” (p. 116), or when they reach a “communicative dead end” (p. 118). In my experience, it can be helpful to

reflect at a deeper level when a client is experiencing distress or strong emotions regarding an issue or when he or she is struggling with a work relationship. To aid the client, I developed a way to employ to move among various levels of the Levelising model. This involved reviewing Gaskin's (2007) Levelising definitions and developing a preliminary list of speech acts associated with each level of the Levelising model (Appendix A). Using this list as a reference prior to and during my coaching sessions, I was able to encourage reflection at the different levels. For example, when I observed a client defending his or her position or giving a viewpoint, I noted this as a level 1 engagement, allowing me to consider the benefit of engaging the client at one of the other levels. For example, I might invite them to analyze the conversation (level 2), state personal beliefs or values (level 3), or imagine other points of views (level 4). Other examples are shown in Appendix A.

Developing Questions to Facilitate Levelising

The RAC method promotes questioning as the primary skill used by coaches. In Module 7 of the RAC Coaching Certification materials (*Coaching Academy Certification Manual*, 2006), lists of questions are provided to elicit openings, generate possibilities, develop plans, preview outcomes, and inspire action. Hargrove (2003) provided lists of questions to stimulate taking a stand on the "impossible future," (p. 136) promoting team reflection and learning, and testing assumptions. Using these and other references, I developed a series of questions (Appendix B) prior to initiating my study that I incorporated into my coaching practice to promote Levelising.

Engaging Clients with Revised Coaching Methodology

My coaching methodology involves four phases. During the first phase, comprising eight meetings over eight weeks, my clients are asked to read materials related to leadership and

complete a number of self-assessment exercises that we discuss during our sessions. Phase two consists of clients developing a personal development plan that is completed in four sessions. The third phase, also completed in four sessions, involves clients developing organizational goals, and the fourth phase is freeform reflection, collaborative problem-solving, and decision-making. I ask my client to send me a completed week-in-review form in between each two sessions of the fourth phase. Completing the form encourages them to reflect on the past week and identify opportunities for the coming week. The information they provide usually serves as the context for our discussions. There is no restriction on the minimum or maximum number of sessions that comprise the fourth phase of the process. This process continues indefinitely until either the client or I terminate the coaching relationship.

In summary, after reviewing and analyzing my practice, I thought that using a more deliberate approach to promoting reflective practice via joint construction of an understanding of client problems would improve the coaching experience for both me and my clients. Additionally, I felt that developing a new way of engaging with my clients would help me to grow and develop as a coach. As a result, I developed a plan for changing my approach to coaching that included developing Levelising descriptions; developing criteria for facilitating reflection; developing questions to facilitate Levelising; and engaging clients with the revised coaching methodology. In Chapter Two, I describe the method I designed to systematically study the effect of those changes on my practice.

Chapter Two: Design and Procedures

Research Questions

My practical theory comprised three related ideas. First, my clients can potentially improve their practices by deliberately reflecting on their experiences, values, beliefs, and assumptions. Second, through inquiry and sharing my experiences, within the context of the client's practice and our coaching interaction, I can facilitate my client's and my own engagement in reflective practice. Third, by paying attention to the level of reflection practiced by my clients, I will improve my practice and enable clients to learn more about themselves and their practice. Conducting my coaching in a manner that promoted joint construction of meaning while incorporating Levelising into my practice allowed me to operationalize my practical theory. As I did so, I sought to answer two questions:

1) On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?

2) How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?

I addressed the first question by classifying utterances in each coaching session into the four levels of the Levelising model. In addressing the second question, I explored how each of the levels of Levelising was expressed in discourse between me and my clients.

Methodology

An action research model was used in the design of this research study. Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 2) noted that:

> A primary purpose of action research is to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. A wider purpose of action research is to

> contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being…of human persons and communities…

My primary focus in conducting this research was to better understand how to improve my practice as an executive coach. However, I expected that the results of this research would contribute to the practical knowledge of the executive coaching community. Therefore, an action research model seemed to be appropriate for this study. In particular, I used the Peters (1991, 2002) DATA-DATA action research framework described earlier.

Case study research, according to Hatch (2002), involves the study of a "contextualized contemporary phenomenon within specified boundaries" (p. 30). My study design was consistent with Hatch's definition of case study research for the following reasons: First, the context of my study was defined as my coaching practice and my relationship with coaching clients. Second, the study was contemporary in that it dealt with prospective coaching engagements as the study was initiated as opposed to those that had occurred previously. Third, the study was bounded by a particular group of clients, by a period of time (approximately three months), and a particular method of coaching. I intend to incorporate what I learn during this research study into my broader coaching practice and to publish the results, making it available for use by others in the executive coaching profession.

Participants

Four individual coaching clients were chosen to participate in this study. They represented a variety of experiences, including the owner of a small consulting company, a senior executive in a health care start-up company, a mid-level manager in a larger company, and a senior executive manager seeking employment. I was cautious not to select participants who

had prior experience in collaborative learning or who were familiar with the Peters Levelising model. I selected participants who were clients at the time the study was initiated and who had completed the first three phases of coaching. Each client participated in four, one-hour coaching sessions with me that were conducted approximately one to two weeks apart over a period of six to eight weeks. I shared a summary of the study design with participants prior to initiating the study, explaining the procedure and expectations (Appendix C). Participants for this study met the following criteria: 1) they volunteered to participate, 2) they indicated a willingness to engage in reflection on their practice, 3) they were able to stay engaged in the coaching process for a minimum of four weeks, 4) they were able to devote one hour each session for a minimum of four coaching sessions, and 5) they agreed to have our four sessions audio-recorded.

The clients who participated in this study are identified as clients A, B, C, and D. Client A is the former vice-president of a local engineering firm. He is approximately 45 years old and, at the time of our coaching sessions, was not employed. One of our first sessions involved his decision between two job opportunities. I was a coworker with Client A for approximately 10 years when we both worked for the same previous employer. I served as his supervisor for a short period of time. He was my coaching client for approximately 4 months prior to the beginning of this study. Client B is an upper-mid level manager at a local government facility. She is approximately 45 years old and has been in her current management position for three years. I have performed consulting work for Client B, off and on, for the past eight years. She started as a coaching client approximately two years ago, and we have been meeting one or two times each month since then. Client C is the President and Chief Executive Officer of a local medical services provider. He is approximately 50 years old and has been in his current position

for two years. I worked with him in a previous company for approximately 5 years. Client D is the current President and Chief Executive Officer of a local waste management consulting company. He is approximately 40 years old. He was a student in a class I taught at the University of Tennessee in the late 1980s, and he and I have been acquainted since then. I started coaching him approximately two years ago and currently serve on his company's board of advisors.

Clients agreed to participate in this study on the basis of full disclosure, and each signed a participant consent form. The University of Tennessee Institutional Review Board approved the study before it began. All four participants for this study were my clients at the time that the study was started. Therefore, prior to seeking their agreement to participate in this study, I ensured that they understood that they were under no obligation to participate and that they could choose to cease their participation at any time during the study without impacting our relationship. I arranged for them to notify a third party, specifically my dissertation advisor, should they have questions or choose to remove themselves from the study at any time. I also assured them that, if they chose to exercise that option, I would not ask them why they chose not to participate in the study. Each participant signed an Information and Consent Form (Appendix D) prior to my initiating the study. Additionally, for the sake of consistency, I did not accept payment from any participants during the four sessions under study.

Ethical Considerations

I took precautions to protect the privacy of my clients since, in the course of our sessions, they could have disclosed information of a sensitive or proprietary nature. An additional concern associated with coaching involved the risks inherent in transformative learning. Merriam (2001), in addressing this issue, observed that new ideas may threaten a person's worldview; critical

reflection may lead to transformative learning which can involve participants emotionally; and one's perceived authority may circumvent the consensual validation that is necessary for critical reflection. Gray (2006) also cautioned that executive coaching may cause anxieties to surface that would be more appropriately addressed by a psychotherapeutic approach. These latter concerns were mitigated during my study by my providing full disclosure to the participants at the beginning of the process; limiting my inquiry to the area of developmental coaching without crossing into the area of psychotherapy; and systematically evaluating my approach to ensure that I conducted coaching during this study in a manner consistent with my intent.

Data Collection

My research was performed during the fourth phase of my coaching process. During this phase, the coaching agenda is flexible in that participants are allowed to determine the topic for the session. I developed a standardized approach to each session with the following elements. First, I opened the session in a deliberate fashion by asking a question such as, "What would you like to work on today?" I then allowed the client to describe the topic of discussion and asked him or her questions to help us both to better understand the context. Next, I engaged the client in a collaborative coaching process using the Levelising model and questions I developed to guide the process. After approximately 40 minutes, I asked permission to bring the session to a close. I then conducted a debriefing interview with each client asking each of them to describe his or her experience of the session, without my providing comment or direction. I then announced that the session was complete and scheduled a time for our next meeting.

I maintained a reflexive journal describing my learning experience and changes I made in my coaching approach based on what I learned in each session. During my coaching

engagements, I sought to be engaged (level 1) and pay attention to the engagement (level 2). Immediately following each session, I reflected on the questions I asked or statements I made during the session as well as on the response solicited by such utterances. I then attempted to illuminate my assumptions and beliefs that led to my utterances (level 3) and also tried to consider other ways that I might have approached the coaching engagement or specific areas of inquiry during the engagement (level 4). Finally, I identified the specific actions I took during the next coaching session based on these reflections. The reflexive journal provided information to aid in interpretation of the coaching session data.

My clients and I both wore lapel microphones during the coaching sessions, and our discussion for each session was recorded on the same audio-tape. This resulted in 16 recorded coaching sessions and approximately 12 hours of audio-tape. Audio-tapes were not labeled with the name of participants or any other personal identifying information. Instead, each participant was assigned a letter (coaching client A-D), and each session was assigned a number (session 1-4) that was used during both data collection and analysis to aid in protecting sensitive and/or proprietary information. The 16 audio-tapes were transcribed by two people who did not personally know the coaching clients whose tapes they transcribed. The transcriptionists were not given information that would allow them to identify my clients and, as a condition of our agreement, they each signed a confidentiality statement (Appendix E) in which they agreed not to disclose any of the information heard in the audiotapes. Upon receiving the transcribed data, I listened to each tape while reading the transcription to ensure that the data were transcribed accurately. During this process, I also made a note of participants' pauses in responding to my inquiries.

Data Analysis

I analyzed the transcribed data using a structured, typological approach described by Hatch (2002). Prior to initiating my data analysis, I identified and operationally defined the typologies to be used in subsequent analyses. Each of the four levels of the Peters Levelising model (Peters & Ragland, 2005) served as the typologies studied. The Levelising model describes how people reflect in and on their practice. According to the Peters model, during the Levelising process one positions oneself at four levels of perspective relative to oneself and one's practice. I developed preliminary speech acts for each level of the Levelising model (Appendix A), using the Gaskin (2007) Levelising definitions as the basis. Gaskin (2007) Levelising definitions are provided as Appendix F.

Data analysis involved classifying utterances according to the chosen typologies; summarizing data; identifying patterns, relationships, and themes; evaluating data connections; developing one-sentence generalizations; and selecting data excerpts. For the purpose of this study, an utterance is defined as one or more words which stand alone as a completed thought or expression. An utterance may be a sentence or a one-syllable retort. Appendix G provides an overview of my data analysis methodology.

Classifying Utterances for each Level

The first step in the Hatch (2002) analytical methodology addressed the first research question ("On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?"). During this analysis, I reviewed the data set to segregate utterances into the four levels of the framework. Completing this analysis required that I define what qualifies for reflection in terms of the four levels of Levelising. Three criteria were developed for this study to aid in identifying utterances

that qualify as reflection. I developed these criteria while listening to the audio-tapes and seeking to understand what I thought characterized episodes of apparent reflection with other non-reflective participant comments. The first criterion for reflection is that utterances indicate the participant is assessing and/or evaluating situations, ideas, or values. Under these circumstances, he or she may be considering why something happened, discerning what accounts for the current situation, conducting an honest and open comparison of ideas, or rendering a judgment based on his or her evaluation. The second criterion is that the participant demonstrates openness to changing his or her formerly-held ideas about the topic. Such openness is observed when a participant acknowledges an incomplete understanding of a situation or viewpoint or when he or she acknowledges that he or she recognizes the value of more than one viewpoint. The third criterion is that the participant reorients his or her perspective on a topic. This reorientation is observed when the participant's utterances indicate that he or she is exploring or announcing a tentative decision, acknowledging a nuance or caveat in the situation, or suspending assumptions for others to evaluate. Participants also demonstrate reorientation by announcing a new decision or by proclaiming their conclusion based on the weighing of evidence. Utterances that met any of the three criteria were classified as Level 2, 3, or 4 of the Levelising model depending on the nature of the reflection.

Simply reporting on something that occurred in the past in a non-reflective manner is not the same as reflecting on that same event. Reporting, in this example, is considered level 1 in that it treats past events as "facts" which are not given the benefit of additional reflection. Conversely, reflecting on that event could take the form of paying special attention to the event with the intent of learning (level 2), exploring one's own frame of reference related to the event

(level 3), or exploring frames of reference of other people as they might view the event or react to it (level 4).

I classified utterances by listening to each audio-tape while reading through each of the transcripts; segregating the text into *episodes*; and then identifying each episode as representing level 1, level 2, level 3, or level 4 of the Levelising model. An episode is defined as a set of utterances representing the discussion about one topic and which involves only one level of the Levelising model. The amount of text found in each episode varied significantly. For example, episodes were identified that were as short as one utterance and others that were as long as one or more complete paragraphs. The length of the episode depended on what was determined to comprise a complete idea and which represented no more than one level of the Levelising model. For example, if a participant discussed his or her thoughts regarding a decision that he had made and did so in a manner that involved reflecting on his or her own frame of reference (level 3), that group of utterances was identified as one episode. If, in the course of this discussion, he also reflected on what others may have decided in a similar situation (level 4) that group of utterances was identified as a separate episode, even though it involved the same topic. For the coaching episodes, I selected coaching utterances in which I asked questions or made statements. I did not include utterances such as "yeah," "right," "um" and other similar *backchannel* utterances in which I was simply encouraging the client to continue talking.

As I listened to the audio-tapes, I made notations about my initial perceptions regarding each episode of reflection allowing me to take advantage of verbal cues apparent in the speed and intonation of participants' responses that I may not have noticed by simply reading transcripts. Two such cues included noting when participants paused prior to or during their

answers. Another cue was participants' apparent uncertainty in their comments as evidenced by verbal pacing and tone. Next, I reviewed the written transcripts for all sixteen coaching sessions and flagged each reflection episode based on the criteria outlined earlier. At the conclusion of this process, level 2, 3, and 4 episodes were identified in each of the sixteen transcripts. Any utterances not identified as one of these three levels, by process of elimination, were identified as Level 1 utterances. Level 1 utterances were then segregated into episodes for further analysis.

The group of episodes identified as those representing level 2 of the Levelising model for all sixteen transcripts served as one data subset for subsequent analysis. The same was true for episodes representing level 3 and for episodes representing level 4 of the Levelising model. I initiated analysis of the level 1 data by analyzing the first transcript for Client A and then performing the same analysis for the first transcript of Client B, C and D, respectively. During this process, I observed that minimal new information emerged during analysis of the second and third transcript and no new information was noted while analyzing the fourth transcript. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "a category is considered saturated when no new information seems to emerge during coding…(p. 136)." Based on this part of my analysis, I determined the level to be saturated, as no new information emerged from my analysis of additional transcripts. Thus the number of level 1 episodes from four transcripts (one for each participant) was adequate to complete my analysis for level 1 discourse. In addition to identifying client episodes of Levelising, I also reviewed all sixteen transcripts and identified my coaching episodes which served as the fifth data subset.

The next three steps of my analysis helped me to address the second research question (How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?). During this analysis, I summarized

the episodes; identified and evaluated patterns, relationships, and themes within the data; and evaluated connections between the four data subsets.

Summarizing Episodes

According to Hatch (2002), summarizing data allows a researcher to distill a large data set into a more manageable size. I summarized my data set by reading through the episodes identified for each of the four levels of the Levelising model as well as my coaching episodes and noting the types of speech acts represented in each episode. According to Austin (1962) and further described by Searle (1969), Grice (1989), and others, statements made by people in discourse are not simply descriptive in nature, but are used to perform an action. Austin (1962) proposed an approach to understanding communication that includes descriptions of different levels on which speech works. For example, he called the "act of saying something" (1962, p. 94) a *locutionary act*. Austin used the term *illocutionary act* to describe the actual act performed by the speaker in performing a locutionary act. At the completion of this process, a set of speech acts, or specifically, a set of types of locutionary acts was in place for the coaching episodes and for the client episodes representing each of the four levels of Levelising.

Identifying Patterns, Relationships and Themes

I first reviewed the speech acts for each of the five data subsets to identify patterns in how Levelising was manifest in the data (research question two). According to Hatch (2002), patterns are regularities in the data. Patterns may take the form of similarities in the way things happen, differences in the way things happen, the frequency with which things happen, the sequence in which they happen, how they happen in correspondence to other events, or as apparent cause-and-effect events.

I then reviewed each of the five data subsets individually to identify apparent relationships between episode summary statements found in each subset. Hatch (2002) described relationships as "links between data elements." For my study, speech acts served as the data elements referred to by Hatch. Hatch observed that Spradley (1979) identified a number of "semantic relationships" (Hatch, 2002, p. 155) that can help in identifying links between data elements. For example, Spradley (1979) noted that data elements may relate to one another such that one data element is identified as one type of another data element; one data element may be a way to accomplish another data element; one data element was the result of another data element; and so forth. A set of relationships identified was compiled for each of the five subsets of data.

Finally, I reviewed the data to identify themes. Themes are "integrating concepts" (Hatch, 2002, p. 156) or threads of meaning apparent within the data. Themes can be recognized by asking, "What ideas or concepts seem to run throughout the data set or tie the data together?"

Confirming Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After I identified possible patterns, relationships and themes by the processes outlined above, I reviewed each of the previously identified patterns, relationships, and themes relative to the entire data set. I read each original coaching transcript to determine if the patterns, relationships, and themes identified in the previous analyses were supported by the data. During this process, I also determined if any of the patterns, relationships, or themes were associated with data from certain clients but not others. Contradictory data or anomalies were explored in depth and explained, or the original categories were redefined. The product of this step was a final set of patterns, relationships, and themes for each data subset.

Evaluating Data Connections

I identified connections between data sets by comparing patterns, relationships, and themes from each data subset with those from other data subsets to look for associations, connections, or distinctions among the data subsets. This step in the analysis provided a more holistic view of the data set and resulted in insights that were not apparent when analyzing each data subset individually.

Developing One-Sentence Generalizations

The next stage of the research process involved developing one-sentence generalizations of findings and selecting data excerpts to serve as examples. Hatch noted that a "generalization expresses a relationship between two or more concepts" (2002, p.159). Developing these statements brought closure to my analysis and helped me to document findings in a coherent manner.

Selecting Data Excerpts

As the final step in this process, I selected data excerpts that exemplified my generalizations. This step served at least two purposes. First, it provided one final indication of how well the data supported the findings. Because I had several excerpts to choose from for each generalization, it gave me confidence that the generalizations are well supported by the data. Additionally, the excerpts will be valuable in helping the reader of my dissertation to connect with my clients and hear their voices.

Reviewing Results with Participants

After completing the data analysis, I met with each of the participants, individually, to review the results of the study. I asked each of them to evaluate how well my analysis captured

his or her perceptions of what occurred during our sessions. As a result, this step in the process allowed each participant to validate his or her portion of the data.

Validity Strategies

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for evaluating the validity of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. They noted that qualitative research is considered credible if participants determine that data are believable and relevant. I addressed this criterion by reviewing draft study results with participants to assess their thoughts on the reflective experience and preliminary conclusions. Demonstrating transferability for qualitative studies, according to Lincoln and Guba, involves providing adequate description of the research context and assumptions to allow others to replicate the study and assess for themselves the transferability of the results. This dissertation documents the research context in sufficient detail to satisfy this criterion. Dependability of qualitative research studies can be improved by accounting for the dynamic context within which the research occurs. By keeping a detailed reflexive journal, I was able to track and document changes in my learning and approach. The confirmability criterion describes the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. I addressed this criterion during my post-coaching discussion with each of the participants.

Chapter Three: Results

Introduction

Chapter three presents my findings resulting from the typological analysis of coaching session transcripts, review of client debriefing sessions, and review of my reflexive journals. Analysis of the coaching session transcripts addresses the first research question: "On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?" Five data subsets were developed during analysis of the coaching session transcripts, one for the coaching question and comments and one for clients' response for each of the four levels of Levelising. Analysis of these five data subsets addresses the second research question: How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?

Research Question One Results

The first step in the Hatch (2002) typological analysis model allowed me to address the first research question ("On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?"). During this step, I read through the data for each coaching session, identified and summarized the coaching episodes, identified episodes for each of the four Levelising levels, and developed abbreviated versions of all episodes. I also classified all client discourse in the transcripts into one of the four levels of the Levelising model.

Coaching Discourse

I reviewed all sixteen transcripts and identified the coaching episodes. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of coaching episodes among clients and sessions. Coaching episodes were then classified into thirteen categories according to their purpose. One category, termed *stimulus*, captured the questions I used to initiate coaching sessions and to help the client select a coaching

topic. Eight categories described how I asked questions to encourage clients to respond according to one of the four levels of the Levelising model. For each of the four levels, I asked *probing* questions designed to solicit information, and I asked *clarifying* questions designed to solicit additional information to clarify previous information. The other four categories addressed how I summarized client input, reflected on action, reflected in action and helped clients to transition to action. Distribution of coaching episodes for the thirteen categories across the four sessions is provided in Table 3.

Client Discourse

Level 1 discourse "is the world of everyday conversation" (Peters & Ragland, p. 95) or, in my terminology, represents the default form of discourse. As described earlier, since I achieved saturation while analyzing level 1 data, I performed an analysis of one transcript for each client. From this data set, I identified 361 discreet examples of level 1 discourse. An example of a level 1 episode is, "I have to measure progress to maximize the investment of time and money for the goals I set." Table 4 shows the distribution of the level 1 episodes for the first session of each client.

Level 2 episodes indicate that the client is reflecting on his or her practice or is reflecting in the course of his or her practice. An example of a level 2 episode is, "Maybe I'm more concerned about being their friend than their mother." I identified 186 episodes of level 2 Levelising in the sixteen coaching transcripts. The distribution of level 2 Levelising episodes over the course of four coaching sessions is shown in Table 5.

Level 3 episodes involve the client in reflecting on his or her frame or viewpoint, with respect to the topic being discussed. I identified 70 episodes of level 3 Levelising in the 16

Table 2. Distribution of Coaching Episodes by Participant and Session

Client	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
A	27	29	52	30	138
B	23	27	36	34	120
C	42	48	46	42	178
D	24	32	39	23	118
Totals	116	136	173	129	554

Table 3. Distribution of Coaching Episodes by Purpose

Category	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
Stimulus	4	5	4	4	17
Level 1 Probe	14	24	48	28	114
Level 1 Clarify	4	9	12	5	30
Level 2 Probe	35	33	34	33	135
Level 2 Clarify	17	6	6	12	41
Level 3 Probe	3	8	2	1	14
Level 3 Clarify	1	1	1	0	3
Level 4 Probe	7	3	3	0	13
Level 4 Clarify	3	2	1	0	6
Summarize	14	21	29	11	75
Reflect on Action	7	17	26	31	81
Reflect in Action	5	5	6	3	19
Transition to Action	2	2	1	1	6
Totals	116	136	173	129	554

Table 4. Distribution of Level 1 Client Episodes

Client	Session 1
A	88
B	56
C	127
D	90
Total	361

Table 5. Distribution of Level 2 Client Episodes

Client	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
A	4	8	7	8	27
B	19	3	2	12	36
C	23	11	10	16	60
D	8	14	16	25	63
Total	54	36	35	61	186

coaching sessions. An example of a level 3 episode is, "…maybe my fundamental sense of happiness is driven more by a sense of doing my best than it is my making more money." The distribution of level 3 Levelising episodes is shown in Table 6.

Level 4 utterances indicate that the client is noticing the frameworks utilized by other people, or, in some cases, is noticing frameworks that he or she has adopted previously or may adopt under different circumstances. An example of a level 4 episode is, "…sometimes I think that if I had 10 or 12 free hours a day, I wouldn't have as much trouble getting all of these things done." I identified 57 episodes of Level 4 Levelising in the complete data set. The distribution of level 4 Levelising episodes is shown in Table 7.

Research Question One Summary

The first research question is, *On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?* Table 8 shows the total number of coaching episodes designed to encourage reflection at each level of the Levelising model with the total number of client episodes observed

Table 6. Distribution of Level 3 Client Episodes

Client	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
A	4	6	3	1	14
B	5	5	0	1	11
C	11	4	2	10	27
D	7	1	8	2	18
Total	27	16	13	14	70

Table 7. Distribution of Level 4 Client Episodes

Client	Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Total
A	0	0	5	2	7
B	6	4	1	0	11
C	3	2	2	3	10
D	8	3	12	6	29
Total	17	9	20	11	57

Table 8. Coaching and Client Episodes by Level

Levelising Level	Coaching Episodes (All 16 sessions)	Client Episodes
Level 1	144	361 (Four sessions)
Level 2	176	186 (All 16 sessions)
Level 3	17	70 (All 16 sessions)
Level 4	19	57 (All 16 sessions)

for each of the four levels. The number of coaching episodes identified for level 1 and level 2 questions is approximately nine-fold greater than the number of episodes identified for levels 3 and 4. The number of level 1 and 2 client episodes is approximately four-fold greater than level 3 and 4 client episodes.

In addition to the coaching episodes in which I asked questions to encourage client reflection, I identified 175 episodes in which I reflected on the subject under discussion. This reflection took the form of summarizing client comments (75 episodes), reflecting-on-action (81 episodes) and reflecting-in-action (19 episodes).

Research Question Two Results

The next steps of my analysis helped me to answer the second research question, *How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?* First, I summarized the client episodes identified for each of the four levels and the coaching episodes by grouping them into the types of locutionary acts represented by each episode. Next, I identified and confirmed patterns, relationships, and themes within the data. Finally, I evaluated the connections between the five data subsets.

Summarizing Coaching Episodes

Table 9 summarizes coaching episodes in terms of the types of locutionary acts identified.

Table 9. Types of Coaching Locutionary Acts

Ask questions to initiate dialogue
Ask questions about factual information (level 1 probing)
Ask questions about previously provided factual information (level 1 clarifying)
Ask questions about client's thoughts on previous actions or statements (level 2 probing)
Ask questions about client's thoughts on previous reflections (level 2 clarifying)
Ask questions about client's assumptions, values, and beliefs (level 3 probing)
Ask questions about client's previous comments re: assumptions, values, and beliefs (level 3 clarifying)
Ask questions about other perspectives or frames of reference (level 4 probing)
Ask questions about client's previous comments re: other perspectives or frames of reference (level 4 clarifying)
Summarize statements made by client
Reflect on actions or statements of coach or client
Reflect on mechanics and logistics of the coaching session

Coaching Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After summarizing the episodes, I reviewed the types of locutionary acts for the coaching data subset to identify patterns, relationships, and themes.

Coaching discourse patterns

I identified three patterns in the coaching data by reading through and noting similarities in the speech acts summaries.

The first pattern is that four of the speech acts involved asking probing questions of my client with the intention of gathering information or encouraging reflection. Questions were

asked to solicit factual information, encourage reflection on previous actions or statements, solicit information about client's assumptions, values, and beliefs, and explore other perspectives or frames of reference.

Four of the speech acts involved asking clients to clarify information they had provided previously. Such questions included asking questions about previously provided factual information, asking questions regarding clients' previous reflections,
asking questions about clients' previous comments regarding assumptions, values, and beliefs, and asking questions about clients' previous comments regarding other perspectives or frames of reference.

Three of the speech acts were focused on my reflections as a coach. In these three, I summarized the statements made by clients, reflected on my own or client actions or statements, and reflected on the mechanics and logistics of the coaching session. In each of these, to varying degrees, attention is taken from the client and directed toward me as a coach.

Coaching discourse relationships

I reviewed the sequencing of coaching speech acts for each of the sixteen sessions. With the exception of the stimulus questions, which are always found early in the coaching session, and the transition to action questions, which are frequently found toward the end of each session, there is no clear pattern to the sequence or frequency of coaching questions. My coaching discourse seldom followed what might be considered to be a logical path that leads from level 1 probing questions to level 1 clarification questions to level 2 probing questions to level 2 clarification questions. Rather, I initiated five of my coaching sessions with level 2 questions, two with summaries, and one with a reflection on action.

Coaching discourse themes

The primary theme evident in all of the coaching speech acts is *perspective*. Questions, summaries, reflecting-on-action, and reflecting-in-action were, for the most part, designed to help clients to create a new understanding of why they approach matters the way that they do; to examine their own frames of reference; and to increase their awareness of the frames of reference of others. Coaching questions posed at each level of Levelising helped clients to increase their perspective at all four levels. For example, I asked questions such as "Do you remember how long ago it was that you set those goals?" (level 1); "Why do you think you thrive in that environment?" (level 2); "What are some underlying values or beliefs or assumptions related to that decision?" (level 3); and "What do other families do in a similar situation?" (level 4).

The coaching summaries, in particular, were designed to help the clients to "see what they say" so they could better understand their own perspectives. The following exchange is an example of my attempt to help a client to reflect on previous statements

Coach: "You said a moment ago that your tendency is to jump in and do it yourself."

Client: "Oh, big time."

Coach: "If it doesn't get done 'I'll just do it myself'"

Client: "Yeah."

Coach: "Tell me more about that."

The client went on to explain how she tended to perform work that she had attempted to delegate to others. Table 10 summarizes results of my analysis of coaching discourse patterns, relationships, and themes.

Summarizing Level 1 Client Episodes

Table 11 summarizes level 1 client episodes in terms of the types of locutionary acts identified.

Level 1 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After summarizing the episodes, I reviewed the types of locutionary acts for the level 1 client data subset to identify patterns, relationships, and themes.

Level 1 client discourse patterns

I identified five patterns in the level 1 data by reading through and noting similarities in the speech acts summaries. One pattern observed was that in four of the speech acts the client stated "factual" information about the present, past, or the future. This included making declarative statements about the present such as, "She is currently involved in several projects;" reporting on the past with statements such as, "I've talked to every person about our goals;" recounting previous conversations by saying things such as, "The other day, I told the kids, 'I need your phones;'" and predicting the future with statements such as, "Eventually she is going to get another job offer."

In five of the speech acts, a pattern emerged showing that clients provided additional information to improve the coach's understanding of previous statements. Using statements such

Table 10. Coaching Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Coaching Discourse Patterns	Coaching Discourse Relationships	Coaching Discourse Themes
Probing questions Clarifying questions Coach reflections	Coaching episodes did not follow a logical sequence	Perspective

Table 11. Level 1 Types of Client Locutionary Acts

Report on the current state of affairs
Report on the past
Recount conversations
Predict the future
Expand on previous statements
Give examples
Modify or qualify a statement
Compare ideas
Explain the nature or extent
Offer reasons why the situation is as it exists
Defend an action or decision
Render a judgment
Make an announcement
State a conclusion
Offer an opinion
Make jokes
Initiate or reengage in the coaching session
Check the coach's understanding
Check adequacy of client's answers
Connect with the coach's experience
Answer questions

as, “And I also don’t see much movement in that direction,” clients expanded on their previous statements. Clients gave examples for previous statements such as, “For example, I think the employees expect me to…” Clients also modified or qualified statements by remarks such as, “But in that book, the focus comes back to values,” and they compared ideas with statements like, “And I have to be careful to address interest of the company and the individuals.” One other speech act associated with this pattern is clients explaining the nature or extent of a situation. One example of this speech act is, “There’s not as much formal teamwork.”

In another pattern, evident in two speech acts, clients sought to justify a situation or defend an action. For example, they offered reasons why the situation was as it existed by making statements such as, “The current climate has created mistrust” or defended an action or decision by making a statement similar to the following: “I think that was the best I could do.”

In four of the speech acts, clients made statements demonstrating what they had decided or concluded. Speech acts representing this pattern included rendering a judgment, making an announcement, stating a conclusion, or offering an opinion. Examples of statements for this pattern included, “I’ve found that it is easy to get caught up in day-to-day…” and, “…so, I would like to have a simple score sheet.”

In six of the speech acts, clients sought to make a connection or to reconnect with the coach. They did so by making jokes, initiating or reengaging in the coaching session, and asking questions about the coach’s experience The client connected by checking the coach’s understanding of client statements and checking adequacy of answers given by the client.

Level 1 client discourse relationships

For most of the level 1 speech acts, the client made, what he or she believes to be, declarative, objective statements. The purpose was primarily to transmit information and to aid the coach and client in developing a more complete mutual understanding of the situation as it existed. Ideas, opinions, or information were treated as if they were factual and could be readily transmitted from client to hearer. Generally, the hearer's responsibility was not to reflect on statements, but to accept or reject.

A logical flow exists for the sequencing of some of these types of speech acts. For example, making a declarative statement about the present, past, or future logically preceded statements that modified or qualified such statements. Offering reasons for the situation, defending actions or a decision, and rendering judgments usually, but not always, were situated contextually. Conclusions logically followed a discussion that set the context for such conclusions. Many of the conclusion episodes initiated with the conjunction "so," a fact indicating that the following statement was tied contextually to previous statements. Also, checking the coach's understanding of client statements was preceded by client statements that were the subject of the client inquiry. In a similar manner, answering questions preceded client checking on the adequacy of his or her answers.

Level 1 client discourse themes

One strong theme that permeated the level 1 speech acts was *certainty*. Clients reported on the state of events, qualified statements, and defended actions in a manner that did not consider the validity of the information or the possibility of other points of view. They rendered judgments and drew conclusions based on information that was not questioned. While this manner of

discourse was common, when isolated and studied as a group, the effect was striking. In the following example of level 1 discourse, the client states the reason for why the owner of his company was reluctant to delegate responsibility. By his statement, he illustrated that he was only considering one possible reason: “In the current case, it really is a very owner-centric situation. And that has grown out of the fact that the company really was started, I think, managed and grown by one individual so it only makes sense.” In the next example, the client answered my level 1 question regarding the function of a quality management system. He replied: “It provides for measuring the work product in comparison to those specifications. It defines the systems that are in place to help you achieve those. And then it provides a mechanism for correcting them.” The factual nature of this response indicated that client was not reflecting on the answer, but simply reporting it. This type of answer was illustrative of much of the level 1 discourse.

In level 1 discourse, clients transmitted information in a logical and factual manner. They reported facts, provided context for information previous reported, justified their conclusions and announced how they resolved to address issues. Table 12 summarizes the patterns, relationships, and themes identified in such statements for level 1 client discourse.

Summarizing Level 2 Client Episodes

Table 13 summarizes level 2 client episodes in terms of the types of locutionary acts identified.

Level 2 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After summarizing the episodes, I reviewed the types of locutionary acts for the level 2 client data subset to identify patterns, relationships, and themes.

Level 2 client discourse patterns

I identified four patterns in the level 2 data by reading through and noting similarities in the speech acts summaries.

The first five speech acts in Table 13 were related to one another in how clients reflected-in-action as they focused on elements of the coaching session. For example, clients made references to the fact that the session was being recorded and how that fact affected their level of comfort in responding to questions. Other references were made to the value of being allowed to reflect openly and how expressing thoughts "out loud" helped them to reach insights. Upon hearing themselves respond to questions, some referred to their responses as "interesting," "rationalizing," "rambling," or noted, on one occasion, that what they had said made them sound "bad." On several occasions, clients commented that I had asked a "good question," a "great question," or a "hard question."

The next five speech acts were related in how clients struggled with determining how to address issues they brought to the coaching sessions or issues that surfaced during the session. In several episodes, clients openly admitted that they did not know how to address the issue at hand. In other episodes, clients were, in essence, arguing with themselves by presenting both sides of an issue as they talked through it, or they asked questions of themselves. Also, on more than one occasion, clients answered an inquiry by first stating that they did not know the answer and then

Table 12. Level 1 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Level 1 Discourse Patterns	Level 1 Discourse Relationships	Level 1 Discourse Themes
Report Provide Context Justify Resolve Connect	Presented as declarative statements to transmit information A logical sequence was evident in many cases	Certainty

Table 13. Level 2 Types of Client Locutionary Acts

Critique the questions asked
Make observations on aspects of the coaching session
Reflect on statements made by clients during the coaching session
Remark on the "honesty" of client's responses
Remark on the value of saying things "out loud"
Admit to struggle with certain situations
Admit a lack of knowledge
Ask questions of themselves
Present both sides of an argument
Reply "I don't know" to questions followed by providing an answer
Indicate that the clients is "stepping back" to look at a situation
Analyze the situation
Explore reasons for the current situation
Explore options to address a situation
Make statements that indicate apparent breakthrough in the client's thinking
Demonstrate client's resolve to address a situation

formulating an answer within one or two sentences. In each of these patterns, clients demonstrated an awareness of not having ready answers to situations in which they found themselves.

Four speech acts were related in respect to how clients analyzed their situation as they sought resolution of concerns. In several episodes, the clients' terminology indicated that they were stepping back, figuratively speaking, to see the situation more clearly. Examples of those comments included one client saying, "Now that I look at it" and another noting, "I've never consciously thought of it that way." In several episodes, clients explored reasons for the situation being as it was and, in other episodes, clients explored the options available to them to address the situation. In these patterns, clients demonstrated the action of reflecting *on* their situation and exploring different approaches to determine a course of action.

Two speech acts were related in respect to how clients reached resolution on issues. In several cases, clients' comments indicated that they had achieved breakthroughs in their thinking about a situation. In other episodes, clients indicated a resolve to implement the actions they identified earlier. The language in these episodes indicated that they had discovered an approach of which they were not previously aware and a resolve to implement the approach.

Level 2 client discourse relationships

A number of relationships were observed in the level 2 speech acts. While it may be logical to assume that clients would somehow acknowledge that they were struggling with finding a solution to their concern followed by analyzing the situation leading to a resolution, in practice, speech acts did not always follow this progression. However, while statements indicating breakthrough and client resolve to address issues almost always followed period of

reflection, the reflection prior to resolution was seldom linear. More often, the reflective process leading to breakthrough was convoluted and difficult to analyze and describe.

Level 2 client discourse themes

Two themes apparent in the level 2 data were uncertainty and growing awareness. As opposed to the certainty that characterized level 1 speech acts, uncertainty characterized the level 2 speech acts. In several Level 2 episodes, clients struggled with situations in their lives and work, admitted to not having answers, and participated in self-questioning. Even as clients analyzed issues, it was clear that frequently clients were not able to arrive at clear answers to their problems. Only two of the speech acts demonstrated clarity and resolve in addressing client uncertainty. The uncertainty theme is illustrated by the following answer to my inquiry regarding my client's admitted difficulty in making a firm decision. She replied, "…so, I don't know, Dave, I just, I'm not sure I'm even doing something I'm good at that I should be doing. …I don't know if it's chemical because of the emotional state…there's a lot of, umm, anxiety…" Another client responded with the following comment when asked about what other options might be available to him. He said, "I don't know. Maybe I don't know enough about it to be outside the box. I don't even know what else there is for that kind of, uhh…" Both of these examples illustrate how clients experienced uncertainty when reflecting on my questions.

Clients also demonstrated a growing awareness during level 2 episodes. Their speech acts indicated that they were stepping back, figuratively speaking, and analyzing the situation. Clients asked themselves questions and presented both sides of an argument. Through these processes, their awareness grew regarding the situation, their personal priorities, and available solutions. One client expressed her new awareness of why she likes to have a clean house. She noted, I

love being in a clean, straight house. It makes me feel in control. I guess that's it, you know, everything's in control and I feel good." Another client observed a new way of thinking about creating a mission statement when he said, "That would be, (pause) that's interesting, it might take a different approach to creating that mission statement by letting the division managers tell me where they think they'll be and accumulate that in a single mission." In each of these examples, clients acknowledged a new understanding of some aspect of their work or life. On occasion, the growing awareness resulted in breakthrough thinking and resolve.

In level 2 discourse, clients reflected *in* and *on* action in a non-linear manner, often acknowledging uncertainty and analyzing their situation. This sometimes led them to a new awareness and a breakthrough in their thinking. Table 14 summarizes the patterns, relationships, and themes for level 2 client discourse.

Summarizing Level 3 Client Episodes

Table 15 summarizes level 3 client episodes in terms of the types of locutionary acts identified.

Level 3 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships and Themes

After summarizing the episodes, I reviewed the types of locutionary acts for the level 3 client data subset to identify patterns, relationships, and themes.

Table 14. Level 2 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Level 2 Discourse Patterns	Level 2 Discourse Relationships	Level 2 Discourse Themes
Reflect-in-action Acknowledge uncertainty Analysis Breakthrough	Speech acts did not always follow a logical progression The reflective process leading to breakthrough was varied	Uncertainty Growing awareness

Table 15. Level 3 Types of Client Locutionary Acts

Make observations about how the world works
Make observations about the situations of other people
Discuss client's personal characteristics
Identify values and traits important to the client
Label client's personal values
Make value judgments
Suspend truisms for review
Make emphatic statements
Say what others should do
Mention morally-required actions
Mention actions required by the situation

Level 3 client discourse patterns

I identified four patterns in the level 3 data by reading through and noting similarities in the speech acts summaries.

The first two speech acts were related in that they both described client observations based on their personal experience in the world. The first speech act involved making observations about how the world works. In these episodes, one client observed that one has to "start the engine" to be successful in a personal work-out program. Another client observed that, "As you get older, there's more peer pressure," and another client noted, "I think it's just human nature, we all do that." Such episodes described well-established assumptions clients formed based on their experience in the world even as they sought to examine their assumptions.

Another set of episodes involved clients making observations about how it was for others in the world. For example, one client noted, “It’s really hard for them (kids) to understand why they think a certain way.” Another noted that different people require different incentives to make changes.

The next four speech acts described the results of introspection by the client. In one set of episodes, clients described their own personal characteristics. Such descriptions included clients observing that they thrived on working in an environment with a lot of interaction or by observing specific things that frustrate them. One client observed that he tried to have well-developed bases for his decisions, and another described how he defined his sense of fairness. In another set of episodes, clients described ideas that were important to them, such as being an owner instead of being an employee, performing well in their jobs, and the factors that drive “fundamental happiness.” In another set of episodes, clients labeled their personal values using words such as “principles,” “models,” and “character.” Examples include, “That’s certainly a principle to me,” “the principles…I was raised on,” “my model is…the CEO is always last,” and “it’s about having character.” In the last set of episodes, clients made value judgments. Examples of this pattern included statements such as “the cutthroat thing to do …would be to…” and “I don’t think it’s okay to live that way.”

The next four speech acts were related regarding how clients examined truth claims. Such statements were frequently stated in second person language with an occasional episode in first person plural language. Two sets of episodes involved clients stating or questioning truth claims. Examples of stating of truth claims included, “You can’t know how something works until…,” “you always pay creditors...,” “dissension is good,” “kids need to learn responsibility,” and “you

gotta give back." A few episodes addressed truisms from a more reflective stance by indicating more uncertainty about the truth stated. Two other sets of episodes related to the way that truth claims were expressed. I observed that truth claims were stated in emphatic terms and by directing the claim toward "you" or "we. Examples of these are patterns are, "You have to get there emotionally," "you have to have the right players," and "we get to the point faster…if we learn from others."

The final two speech acts were personal imperatives mentioned by clients. Such imperatives usually took the form of the client stating an action he or she felt obligated to perform. Imperatives either arose from the need for action such as, "I have to do this to survive" or from a moral basis. Examples of moral imperatives included, "They need me to be their parent" and "I have to do this to help them."

Level 3 client discourse relationships

The primary relationship observed in the level 3 speech data subset is that, on several occasions, observations clients made about their experience in how the world works or the situations of other people seemed to serve as a catalyst for introspection regarding their own values. Frequently, clients compared the beliefs of others with their own beliefs. On some occasions the discussion lead to long monologues regarding what clients believed and what accounted for that belief. For example, one client described a manager in another company for whom he had little respect. As he analyzed why he held those views, he started a comparison of that manager's traits with the traits that he considered to be more desirable. Ultimately, this led to a discussion about why he had formed such strong views about the traits he considered to be honorable in managers.

Level 3 client discourse themes

Two themes found within the level 3 data were *introspection* and *dissonance*. The uncertainty found in level 2 episodes was turned inward in level 3 episodes as clients became increasingly introspective. In many of the episodes, clients struggled to examine and understand some of their most basic beliefs and values. This examination was performed directly as clients discussed their personal characteristics or indirectly as they examined their own truth claims and moral imperatives. One client observed the following as he examined his approach to business: "…my perception is that I tend to get drawn into 80% tactics, 20% or less strategy, maybe 5% strategy, and I really need to flip that. I need to be 80% strategy, 20% tactics…" In another episode, the client seemed to become surer of his position as he spoke. He noted "It's very important to me that we not be superficial, but that the image be honest… Right? It can't exist without the substance, that's right."

The second theme, dissonance, was seen in clients espousing strongly held values and beliefs while either they or I suspended them for review and critique. For example, one client responded with the following statement when asked why he took a certain position, "I think that's a, that's a, that's certainly a principle, I think, to me. I mean it's just a part of professionalism and credibility and reliability and all of that, is if I, you know, make a commitment." Even though he seemed to take a stand on "principle," the language he used in stating his position and the awkwardness in his statement indicated that he was evaluating the statement as he went along.

In level 3 discourse, clients examined their personal experience, often leading them to assess their values, truth claims, and action imperatives. Sometimes dissonance between their

stated views and values led to additional introspection. Table 16 summarizes the patterns, relationships, and themes for level 3 client discourse.

Summarizing Level 4 Client Episodes

Table 17 summarizes level 4 client episodes in terms of the types of locutionary acts identified.

Level 4 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After summarizing the episodes, I reviewed the types of locutionary acts for the level 4 client data subset to identify patterns, relationships, and themes.

Level 4 client discourse patterns

I identified five patterns in the level 4 data by reading through and noting similarities in the speech acts summaries.

A pattern I observed in the first four speech acts was clients reflecting on specific people they had known or organizations with which they had been involved. These examples were both positive and negative. In each of these cases, the client recalled concrete examples of people from their past, including themselves when they were younger, and their parents' perspectives. Each of the four clients referred to perspectives of specific others as frames of reference for their own decisions and behavior.

In each of the next three speech acts, the client imagined the perspectives, desires, responses, and expectations of other non-specific people or groups of people. Such non-specific people were more abstract than in the first set of patterns. In this set of patterns, clients

Table 16. Level 3 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Level 3 Discourse Patterns	Level 3 Discourse Relationships	Level 3 Discourse Themes
Personal experience Personal values Universal truths Action imperatives	Clients' observations about their own experience or situations of others led to introspection regarding personal values	Introspection Dissonance

Table 17. Level 4 Types of Client Locutionary Acts

Reflect on the actions of specific people
Reflect on the client's actions when he or she was younger
Reflect on actions of the client's parents
Reflect on actions of organizations with which the client has been involved
Imagine how groups of people might view a situation or behave under certain conditions
Imagine how another person might view a situation or behave under certain conditions
Imagine expectations of other people
Imagine circumstances at an earlier point in time
Imagine the current situation under different circumstances
Imagine how it would be if the client took a different approach
Imagine how others might approach the current situation
Reflect on metaphors that describe the client's organization
Reflect on metaphors that describe the client's role in the organization
Reflect on metaphors that describe actions the client is considering

considered the perspectives or expectations of "leaders," "shareholders," "creditors," "employees," and "the world." References to perspectives of non-specific others fell into two categories: those who occupied certain roles in life, such as leaders or children; and generic organizations such as corporations.

In the next two speech acts, clients reframed the situation by imagining a different context and how they might react in that context. This included how they might behave if there were more urgency or conversely more time in their day. One client also considered how her work situation might be if she were promoted to the next level in the organization. Frequently, the word "if" was used to initiate episodes in which clients imagined a different context.

In the next two speech acts, clients imagined how taking another approach might affect a situation. The two episodes in this pattern involved considering the value of putting off decisions instead of acting now and the relative value of learning from others versus "creating my own path."

In the next three speech acts, clients used metaphors to reframe the discussion. Two clients used this approach, one of them extensively. Two types of metaphors were used: those for leaders and those for the clients' organization. Leaders were considered, metaphorically, to be shepherds, orchestra conductors, and point guards in basketball. The company was an organism with life breathed into it by key people in the organization. Performing work was compared to working on a car and how one becomes more proficient with experience.

Level 4 client discourse relationships

Most clients seemed to find it easier to reflect on concrete actions they had observed in specific other people than to imagine how theoretical, non-specific others might view a situation

or how an imagined different context or approach might affect their point of view. Therefore, reflecting on parental actions, the clients themselves when they were younger, and other people or organizations they knew was a common starting point for level 4 reflection. I also observed that, for one client and on more than one occasion, it seemed that describing metaphors led the client to seek additional metaphors.

Level 4 client discourse themes

Two themes observed in the level 4 episodes were *imagination* and *expanding world view*. Many of the speech acts required the client to imagine people or groups of people and how they might view a situation or behave in a situation or to imagine different contexts or approaches. For example, one client observed that "…I think in general, the world expects me to milk the maximum profit out of the company." Even when considering specific others (themselves when younger, parents, coworkers, etc.) clients were required to imagine what the specific others may have been thinking or their intent. In one episode, a client imagined how the Human Resources manager in his company might approach assigning raises. He observed that "…she wasn't suggesting this, but, what would be simple from her point of view would be to have a formula – move everyone that same at the same time…" Developing and describing metaphors required clients to be creative in imagining how their situation was similar to and different from another, frequently quite dissimilar, situation. One example of exercising imagination using metaphors is when one client compared his business and his role in the business to that of a basketball game. He observed, "…jumping over into basketball, at the early stages of the company, and even now, I see myself as the point guard. Opportunity comes in…I

try to get the ball to the person who needs the ball to score. So, the ball moves through me a lot, you know, the point guard gets a lot of touches, and I do that a lot."

Just as level 3 speech acts demonstrated that clients were looking inwardly, level 4 speech acts demonstrated that clients looked out at the world around them and considered new ways of viewing their situation. This expanded worldview opened the door for new possibilities. For example, when I asked a client how his employer might react to his decision to terminate his employment, he considered a number of possibilities by noting, "Umm, so, so the response could be one from disappointment to relief or it could possibly even just be neutral. I think he's really been so distracted on other things that it may not be, you know, he may not have the time for it, his brain, may not even connect to…"

In level 4 discourse, clients frequently used specific examples of people or organizations as a starting point to imagine different ways to frame their point of view. They considered other contexts and approaches, as well as metaphors to seek a new perspective. As a result, they frequently expanded their ways of viewing the world. Table 18 summarizes the patterns, relationships, and themes for level 4 client discourse.

Confirming Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

After I identified patterns, relationships, and themes, I read the original coaching transcripts to determine if the patterns, relationships, and themes identified were supported by the data. This review resulted in some minor changes in the lists of speech acts for level 1 and in the reclassification of some of the speech acts from one level to another. The most significant

Table 18. Level 4 Client Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Level 4 Discourse Patterns	Level 4 Discourse Relationships	Level 4 Discourse Themes
Specific other people Non-specific other people Other contexts Other approaches Metaphors	Concrete actions served as a common starting point for further level 4 reflection	Imagination Expanding world view

change resulting from this review was noticing that a set of episodes I originally identified with level 2 were, in fact, representative of level 3 and 4 as well. These episodes are addressed in the following section.

Evaluating Data Connections

The final step in answering the second research question involved comparing data across all of the five data subsets. In this process, I stepped back from the individual analyses to look for connections across the entire data set. Due the large amount of data, I developed three summaries to aid in this process: a summary table and two sets of summary statements.

Hatch (2002) suggested that a visual representation can serve the researcher as he or she seeks to identify connections within the data set. I summarized my data by developing a table to provide a visual reference. Table 19 contains a summary of speech act patterns, relationships, and themes identified for the five data subsets. The table is organized in terms of the five data subsets which are found in the first column. In the second column, I labeled each speech act pattern indentified in the five data subsets. The third column contains a brief statement of the relationships I found when looking across the data within each data subset. In the fourth column, I provided each of the themes previously identified. In all, Table 19 contains 21 discourse patterns, seven relationships, and nine themes.

Table 19. Summary of Discourse Patterns, Relationships, and Themes

Data Subset	Discourse Patterns	Discourse Relationships	Discourse Themes
Coaching Episodes	Probing questions Clarifying questions Coach reflections	Coaching episodes did not follow a logical sequence	Perspective
Level 1 Episodes	Report Provide Context Justify Resolve Connect	Presented as declarative statements to transmit information A logical sequence was evident in many cases	Certainty
Level 2 Episodes	Reflect-in-action Acknowledge uncertainty Analysis Breakthrough	Speech acts did not always follow a logical progression The reflective process leading to breakthrough was varied	Uncertainty Growing awareness
Level 3 Episodes	Personal experience Personal values Universal truths Action imperatives	Clients' observations about their own experience or situations of others led to introspection regarding personal values	Introspection Dissonance
Level 4 Episodes	Specific other people Non-specific other people Other contexts Other approaches Metaphors	Concrete actions served as a common starting point for further level 4 reflection	Imagination Expanding world view

After summarizing data into a table, I then developed summary statements for each of the 21 patterns identified (Appendix H). This helped me capture the core ideas found within the data that comprised each pattern. I then took this process one step further by distilling the 21 summary statements into five cumulative statements, one for each data subset. During this process, I captured the essence of the patterns, relationships, and themes in for each data subset within one statement. The five summary statements are:

1. Engaging my clients in Levelising through questions and reflections called on my clients to reflect on their actions, frames of reference, and the frames of others to help them gain perspective on their experience.
2. In level 1 discourse, clients reported on the state of events, qualified statements, and defended actions in a manner that did not consider the validity of the information or the possibility of other points of view.
3. In level 2 discourse, clients expressed uncertainty and stepped back, figuratively speaking, to analyze their situation, sometimes leading to a growth in awareness.
4. In level 3 discourse, clients examined basic beliefs, values, truth claims, and moral imperatives. They espoused strongly held values and beliefs while suspending them for our review and critique.
5. In level 4 discourse, clients looked at other people, other contexts, other approaches, and metaphors to find new ways to view their situations.

Distilling the entire data set into summary statements for the patterns and then for each subset of data helped me to clarify my findings and gain a better perspective on the entire data set. Upon completion of this process, the final step was to capture the essence of my findings for

question two. By reviewing the table and two groups of summary statements, I was able to further summarize my study in the following three, one-sentence subgeneralizations:

Subgeneralization One

As clients engaged in Levelising, they expanded their perspective and gained insight into their actions and frames of reference.

This is illustrated by the following data excerpt in which a client discussed insight into her resistance to following a structured approach to projects:

> This whole business of structure not working for me is a brand new thought. I have never really realized that I was resistant to that. But now it's almost like it's, I'm setting myself up for failure when I try to do it that way. The realization that I can do that and make that work for somebody else but it doesn't work for me, that's huge.

Clients expanded their perspective on themselves and their actions while engaged in level 2, 3 and 4 Levelising, although this occurred in different ways for each level. In level 2 episodes, clients stepped back to analyze their situation and considered new approaches to address their issues. In level 3 episodes, clients examined their basic beliefs, values, truth claims and moral imperatives--espousing specific values and beliefs and suspending them for review and critique. In level 4 episodes, clients considered other people's perspectives, contexts, and approaches to find new ways to view their situations.

Clients noted how talking through issues with me helped them to improve their perspective. One stated, "This type of session requests the mind to come here and focus and answer. To me, that is one of the most productive aspects of this." Another noted, "Sitting and

talking for 40 minutes" is very helpful because she learned things that she "didn't know (she) knew." She further observed:

I believe the way we think changes as you talk through it because you begin to see gaps or weaknesses, and I'll start to say something to you and then because I'm saying it out loud, it's like "It's not logical," so what, you know, it leads you into other, thinking it through much better than you would if you were not talking.

Clients reported that, as a result of reflection, they had gained new insight into their situations. I identified 21 episodes, representing all clients, where they indicated breakthroughs in their thinking. In the majority of the breakthrough episodes, clients mentioned insight gained through reflection. One client made the following statement indicating fresh insight into how his standard for business performance may not necessarily be higher than the standards of those who work for him: "Here's a discovery just in talking through this with you…just an instantaneous discovery… that whole discussion (we just completed) is predicated on the idea that my standard is necessarily going to be higher than one of those others." Another noted that he was able to gain a better understanding of his core beliefs and how important it was to see issues from a new perspective. All clients mentioned that, as a result of reflecting during our sessions, they were able to gain insight into issues. One noted, "To say out loud 'autonomy'…wow, that is important, you know…I hadn't really thought about that." Another said, "I really saw something that… I didn't see before."

Clients also reported that, as a result of our coaching session, they had gained clarity and resolve to address a situation. For example, with regard to talking to her supervisor about seeking a new position, one client noted, "But, you know, I'm thinking I'm gonna do it, Dave. I just, I've

waited and waited, and I don't like convincing myself to go to work every day. I hate that." Other clients also mentioned specific ideas they had or actions they might take as a result of their reflection during our session. For example, one mentioned actions he planned to take to reduce procrastination, and another planned specific actions to work toward addressing a communication issue.

Subgeneralization Two

Clients experienced uncertainty or frustration in the process of reflecting.

This is illustrated by the following data excerpt in which a client responded to my question, "How do you know when you have achieved that mission?"

> Man, that's a great question. I don't know if you do and I know that I psychologically think myself up regularly wondering if I'm achieving that or not. I go back a couple of years ago and (a previous employee) left the company and just, you know: "Why did she leave? How could she leave? Didn't she see what we were trying to accomplish and how it was bigger than just a job?

As clients engaged in levels 2, 3, and 4, speech patterns in their discourse seemed to provide evidence of uncertainty and frustration. While reflecting, clients used phrases such as "maybe," "I don't know," "I think," "I believe," "I guess," "probably," "I'm not sure," and "I hope." Additionally, several times clients repeated phrases, such as, "I don't know, I don't know," and "I'm not sure, I'm not sure", which seemed to indicate that they were struggling to come up with answers to the questions. I noted several long pauses in the audio-taped sessions that revealed that clients were reflecting prior to answering questions. Clients also used phrases such as, "um," "you know," and "honestly," which showed they were giving themselves more

time to reflect prior to answering. In general, many of the sentences in level 2, 3, and 4 episodes were awkwardly constructed.

Additionally, clients struggled with finding solutions to issues we discussed. They acknowledged the limits of their ability to even understand some of the issues. For example, one client openly questioned whether or not he was in the right position and if he was competent in his job. Clients often seemed exasperated as they struggled to understand their own actions and their inability to explain their feelings as evidenced by phrasing of their responses. For example, in response to my question about the reason for an action he had taken, one client simply replied, "I dunno, I dunno, I dunno…"

Subgeneralization Three

My questions and reflections shaped the Levelising experience for me and my clients and my questions and reflections were shaped by our interaction.

This is illustrated by the following data excerpt in which a client reflected on the dynamics of our interaction:

> Today you took some of the things I said and integrated a couple of the thoughts and then asked me some pertinent questions about, about what you thought you heard me say and I think you were a little bit more, umm, I think more active this time than in the past. And I like that. I like the probing approach but I think it's, to me it's more beneficial when you expand a little bit…

Below, I discuss how my questions and reflections shaped my clients' experience in how they followed my lead, how particular words I chose fostered additional reflection, and how clients reported they had learned as a result of our coaching sessions. I also discuss how both of

our experiences were affected by the different way in which we engaged each other and how my experience of Levelising evolved during the study due to changes I made in my approach to questioning clients and reflecting on their responses.

Regarding the manner in which my questions shaped by clients' experiences, I observed that, as clients responded to my questions, they followed my lead, that is, responding in a manner I would have expected based on my questions. In other words, I noted that clients usually provided level 1 responses to level 1 coaching questions; provided level 2 responses to level 2 questions; and so forth, for the other two levels. One exception to this pattern, particularly noted early in a coaching session, was clients providing level 1 responses to level 2 questions. However, if I persisted in asking level 2 follow-up questions, clients eventually started providing level 2 responses to level 2 questions and continued doing so for the balance of the session.

My choice of words while summarizing clients' statements helped them to gain new perspective and sparked additional reflection. For example, during one coaching session, a client mentioned how important it was that his company be appropriately represented to the public and to his employees. In summarizing his comments, I used the word *image* to reflect this idea. He responded by reminding me that he despised "superficial things" and that he was not referring to a "façade." While my use of the word image was not meant to imply a superficial façade, it inspired a long reflection by the client on how he wanted his company's external representation to be true reflection of the internal substance of the business. In another summary, I suggested to a client that we focus on his work *processes* instead of work *product.* He inferred from my use of the word *process* in my summary statement that I was suggesting that he standardize his business procedures which, in his opinion, would stifle his creativity. While that was not my intent, it

caused him to reflect on the value of standardizing some of his more mundane business processes in order to allow a higher level of creativity.

Clients made observations about how my questions and reflections shaped their experience by contributing to their ability to reflect and learn more about themselves. One observed how being asked questions helped him to "put together some things that I haven't before" by encouraging him to verbalize ideas. One client made the following observation: "A couple of instances of the 'tell me more' approach caused me to think a little bit deeper about underlying questions which helps to formulate a clear picture." Another client noted, "You asking the question and making me answer it, by virtue of being here, being asked the question…it…causes me to reflect on things and put together some things that I haven't before. I like the way I think when we sit in these sessions and talk." One client observed the value of the coach/client interaction: "You can't seem to get there in talking to yourself" and "(without coaching) it's hard to get through a thought process. You're so busy. Spending an hour just sitting and thinking about it …would not be as effective as spending an hour talking about it." Another of my clients, commenting on the value of the coach and client interaction noted:

> This type of session requests the mind to come here and focus and answer. To me, that is one of the most productive aspects of this. This is very much like a conversation I might have in my own mind but you keep me pointing in a direction where my mind would wander off. You also through your own wisdom catch things that are worth drilling into – that's valuable.

The ways that I engaged each client varied. During sessions with client A, I found that I summarized his statements much more than I reflected on his actions. For the other three clients,

I reflected on their actions more than I summarized their statements. I asked client B many more level 1 probing questions than level 2 probing questions. Conversely, I asked clients A and D more level 2 probing questions than level 1. I did not ask *transition to action* questions during any of the four sessions for clients B and D.

The ways my clients engaged with me varied also, affecting my own experience of Levelising. Clients A, B, and D tended to give long monologues only interrupted by my occasional utterance of encouragement, such as "okay," "right," or "uh huh." Client C, on the other hand, tended to provide short answers to each question, requiring that I ask more questions and engage more actively by offering my own reflections.

My experience of Levelising evolved during the study due to actions I observed in my clients' responses to my reflections. In the earlier coaching sessions, I was more active in sharing my personal experience after allowing clients to reflect on theirs. I expected clients to consider my experience, along with theirs, as they determined how to move forward. My initial approach to coaching was summed up by one client as follows:

> I think it's valuable to not provide your spin on it too early, but I do think there's value at some point, and maybe it's even as an afterthought, to come back and say, "I was in that situation; this worked for me", because there's a lot of value, learning from other people's experiences. But you don't want to do it to the point where you influence your thought process and you don't really get through it, yourself. You gotta get through it yourself until you thoroughly understand it before you, then, can take your spin on it.

However, during the course of the study, I found that clients did not respond as positively to my discussions about my experiences as I had expected. Instead, as I discussed my experience

related to theirs, clients immediately brought the discussion back to their own experience, without including mine. As I became aware of this phenomenon, I was more careful not share my experiences with clients. I noted in my reflexive journals, on more than one occasion, how difficult it was for me to resist the urge to interject my own experience. I also noted that by resisting the urge, I was able to be more focused on the client's experience.

Although clients did not react to my experience as I had thought they would, I observed that clients found value in my summaries of their statements. Clients mentioned this frequently during our coaching sessions. Additionally, in the reflexive journal entry for session C4, I observed, "I am finding that one value I bring is summarizing what clients have told me during the course of our session. This seems to help them to 'see what they say.'" My reflexive journal entry to session C2 noted that I was more active in helping the client to see themes in her comments and how that helped her to reach a different level of understanding. For example, during one of the sessions, a client reflected on her experience in teaching a class and the lack of enthusiasm on the part of those taking the class. She mentioned early in the discussion how her own interest in the class had waned. About halfway through the session, I reminded her of her previous comment and asked her to reflect on her own lack of enthusiasm. Drawing attention to her comment sparked a long reflection on her involvement in the class, eventually resulting in the client concluding that she could improve participant enthusiasm by re-engaging in the class and becoming more enthusiastic herself.

Research Question Two Summary

The second research question is, *How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?* As my clients engaged in all four levels of Levelising, they sometimes experienced

frustration with issues and problems that surfaced during the coaching sessions. My coaching questions and reflections encouraged both me and my clients to reflect on client statements, actions, frames of reference, and the frames of others. Through this process clients expanded their perspective and gained insight into themselves and their practices. The three subgeneralizations were further distilled into a one-sentence generalization that captures the ideas tying the entire study together.

> *As my clients and I engaged in a reciprocal reflective process centered on the Levelising model, they experienced uncertainty and insight into themselves and the issues they faced.*

In Chapter Four, I discuss my findings in terms of my practical theory and related literature.

Chapter Four: Discussion

In Chapter Two, I theorized that my clients could potentially improve their practices by deliberately reflecting on their experiences and underlying belief systems. I also theorized that I could facilitate reflective practice for my clients and me through inquiry and the sharing of my own experiences. By paying attention to my clients' reflection levels, I also theorized that I could improve my practice and enable clients to learn more about themselves and their own respective practices. My approach to reflecting with my clients utilized Peters and Ragland's (2005) Levelising model. The two research questions that guided my research were: *On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?* And *How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?* In Chapter Three I present my findings resulting from the typological analysis of coaching session transcripts, review of client debriefing sessions, and review of my

reflexive journals. In this chapter, I discuss findings related to each research question in terms of my practical theory and related literature.

Research Question One

On which levels do coach and client engage during coaching sessions?

I found that my clients engaged in all four levels during coaching sessions. Level 1 episodes comprised the largest set of client data by far, with the number of episodes decreasing with each subsequent level of the Levelising model. Gaskin (2007) and Torres (2008) also found that participants in their studies engaged in all four levels, although not at the same rate for each level.

Gaskin (2007) incorporated Levelising into her practice as she facilitated a team of people seeking to improve consumer care quality. She observed that the team members engaged primarily in levels 1 and 2 of the Levelising model with only occasional engagement in levels 3 and 4. I also found that my clients engaged in levels 1 and 2 more frequently than they engaged in levels 3 and 4. Gaskin concluded that four "environmental factors" (p. 80) contributed to this phenomenon in her study: constraints on time, the lapsed time between meetings, the culture of production, and a general resistance to change. She also concluded that the time she spent teaching the team *about* Levelising might have been more beneficial if, instead, she had spent that same amount of time engaging the team in the *practice* of Levelising. While her context involved team facilitation and mine involved individual coaching, there were two similarities in our practices. Meetings in both of our studies lasted approximately 45 minutes and occurred approximately every two weeks. However, I did not find that the length of our meetings constrained clients from engaging in levels 3 and 4. In fact, both my clients and I were satisfied

with what we were able to accomplish during our sessions. I also did not observe any negative consequences related to lapsed time between meetings or clients being over-focused on productivity. My clients and I were able to re-engage with each other readily, even if we had not met recently, and they seemed to regard our time together as a respite from their hectic, productive lives as opposed to an impediment to getting their work done. My clients seldom suggested that they needed to finish our session so they could return to work. This difference might be attributed to my relationship with clients and what they seek to gain from coaching sessions. Since my coaching relationship with my clients is predicated on their willingness to explore issues with intention to change their viewpoints and behaviors, I did not detect the resistance to change observed by Gaskin.

Finally, unlike Gaskin's practice, I did not attempt to teach my clients *about* Levelising, but rather I engaged them in the *practice* of Levelising from the start. The difference noted in Gaskin's findings and mine may simply be attributed to the fact that she was facilitating a group of people and I was working with clients one-on-one. One might expect different outcomes from these two different contexts due to the dynamics of working with groups versus working with individuals. Perhaps the individual attention I was able to give my clients contributed to our ability to reengage after being apart and made my clients regard the time spent together as being useful and productive.

Torres (2008) incorporated Levelising into her study of a collaborative learning experience with eight colleagues. She and her colleagues participated in eight online dialogues over a period of eight months. Torres reported that participants engaged in all four levels of the Levelising model during each session. Further, in six of their eight conversations, they spent the

majority of time in levels 3 and 4. Torres attributed their ability to engage in the "full spectrum of Levelising" (p. 99), to "…participant competencies related to dialogical practice and their post-modern mindset" (p. 99). To highlight her participants' comfort with abstract concepts, Torres observed that, "…had the make-up of the group been heavily weighted on the practical side, we might have spent the majority of dialogue at level I and II" (2008, p. 100). Participants in my study were all managers with significant experience leading technical organizations. Managers in general and technical managers in particular, in my experience, are more inclined toward the "practical side" referenced by Torres as compared to a theoretical or abstract orientation. As Torres implied, much of the practical work of business is performed at level 1 and 2 which may have been one reason that my clients primarily engaging at those levels. This is not to say that my clients and other managers are not capable of reflecting across all levels of the Levelising model. In fact, I found that all of my study participants were both willing and able to reflect at levels 3 and 4. These levels just occurred to a lesser degree, perhaps due to my clients' practical orientation. My prior relationship with each client and our history of engaging predominantly in level 1 and 2 discourse may have also contributed to this finding. While I attempted to engage each client in a manner that was different from our previous meetings, it is possible that our historical manner of engagement showed up in our discourse from time to time. Table 20 summarizes the percentage distribution of episodes of Levelising for each of the four levels and the three studies: Gaskin, Torres, and the present study. It should be noted that Torres did not give an average percentage for each level, so her values are reflected in the table as ranges in the third column. For comparison purposes, I extrapolated my level 1 data for the first session with each client as if it were representative of all client sessions. My values are reflected

Table 20. Comparison Of Engagement in the Levels of Levelising in Research

	Gaskin (2007)	Torres (2008)	Duncan (2009)
Level 1	49.66%	18 to 30%	82%
Level 2	40.82%	18 to 30%	11%
Level 3	7.03%	18 to 41%	4%
Level 4	2.49%	20 to 36%	3%

in the fourth column. While the values shown in Table 20 cannot be analyzed statistically, they provide a perspective on the degree to which participants in each of our studies engaged in the four levels. The information in Table 20 shows that in two of the studies, mine and Gaskin's, participants engaged primarily in levels 1 and 2. In Torres' study, they were more evenly distributed over the four levels.

As a coach, I personally engaged at all four levels of the Levelising model during coaching sessions. My engagement in Levelising occurred in at least three ways. First, I asked questions that, by design, encouraged clients to respond at one of the four levels. Second, I made comments that summarized client statements, reflected on their actions, and reflected on some aspect of our session, (i.e., I reflected-in-action). Third, I reflected on client comments and changed my way of engaging with them based on examining my own actions, my frames of reference, and other frames of reference. My engagement in Levelising via questions, summaries and reflections is discussed in the next section, under research question two, subgeneralization three.

Research Question Two

How is Levelising manifest in coach and client discourse?

I discuss findings for research question two in terms of three subgeneralizations that, taken together, describe the essence of this study.

Subgeneralization One

As clients engaged in Levelising, they expanded their perspective and gained insight into their actions and frames of reference.

In level 2 Levelising, clients discussed the different ways that they looked at situations or issues and how their views changed based on reflection. They also evaluated the different options available to them that they had not considered before and, in many cases reflected on what they thought they might do to address a situation. As clients reflected, their awareness of their situation and personal priorities deepened. On occasion, their growing awareness resulted in breakthrough thinking and resolve.

Gaskin reported participant comments on how Levelising allowed them to approach issues in a more thoughtful manner and, in particular, how it freed the group to move beyond level 1 problem solving. Participants in her study also credited Levelising with slowing their conversation and leading to reflection which, in turn, led to improved team functioning and, ultimately, better consumer care. In my study, clients were not aware that I was using the Levelising model in our coaching interactions, so they did not report on how it affected them or our interaction. However, in reviewing my level 2 data I noted that, as a result of our engagement in Levelising, clients moved from level 1 problem solving to level 2 reflection in a manner similar to that reported by Gaskin.

In level 3 Levelising, my clients examined their frames of reference and gained perspective on their own experiences, values, beliefs, and assumptions. They also reflected on taken-for-granted truisms and personal responsibilities. Torres (2008) noted, “Levelising appears to be an effective practice for gaining awareness of one’s own frames… ” (p. 101). Cunliffe

(2004) expanded on how discovering one's frames can lead to insight. She observed that "critically reflexive practitioners…question the ways in which they act and develop knowledge about their actions. This means highlighting ideologies and tacit assumptions--exploring how our own actions, conversational practice, and ways of making sense create our sense of reality" (p. 414). Peters (1991) described reflective practice as, "identifying one's assumptions and feelings associated with practice, theorizing about how these assumptions and feelings are functionally or dysfunctionally associated with practice, and acting on the basis of the resulting theory" (p. 89). My coaching sessions where I used Levelising helped my clients to reflect on their assumptions and commit to taking action. I found my clients paying attention to their own words and seeking to understand why they expressed what they did even as they suspended those beliefs, rules, motives, and facts for examination.

In level 4 Levelising, my clients considered prior perspectives of specific and non-specific people and organizations. They also reframed situations by using metaphors and considering different contexts or approaches. By incorporating level 4 questions into my coaching sessions, I encouraged my clients to investigate other frames of reference. In the Styhre and Josephson (2007) case study in which construction site managers were engaged in coaching, their participants also noted that, as a result of coaching participation, they were able to view situations from various angles. In some cases, my clients developed creative metaphors to reframe their situations. Cunliffe observed a similar result in her three-year study of management dialogue. She noted, "Managers… employed very imaginative ways of talking about the organizational experience and the features others felt were important. They spoke through stories, metaphors and archetypes of what they saw as significant events or dilemmas"

(2001, p. 357). As a result of reflecting on other frames, my clients reported that they had gained perspective into their own frame of reference.

Subgeneralization Two

Clients experienced uncertainty or frustration in the process of reflecting.

Most of the issues clients brought to the coaching sessions were important to them. They had struggled with some of the issues for a long time. Many were issues that could make a significant difference in their lives; therefore, it was not surprising that clients had deep emotional ties to such issues. Hargrove (2003) observed how emotional the coaching process can be for clients. He noted, "People don't just have their perspective; they become their perspective. People don't just have their beliefs; they become their beliefs…" (p 94) The extent to which my clients identified with their stories, beliefs, and values became apparent during coaching transcript analysis. Asking them to reflect on those stories, beliefs and values at multiple levels created discomfort. In such cases, clients struggled to express their thoughts, questioned themselves, presented both sides of an argument, and waited for long periods of time before answering some of my questions. In discussing the source of emotions in executive coaching, Whitworth et al. (2007) observed that emotions frequently arise as clients discover that their actions are not consistent with their values. I observed that my clients also seemed to experience distress when they attempted to reconcile their stated beliefs with their behavior. But, my clients also expressed frustration for other reasons, such as struggling simply to understand or express their beliefs and values.

While my clients' uncertainty and frustration created times of discomfort for both of us, I noted that when they seemed to be struggling with answers at a more emotional level, the

experience frequently led to additional insight into their situations. Hargrove (2003), in discussing his approach to facilitating transformative learning through coaching, observed that emotions can be a powerful source of energy in helping clients to learn and grow. He noted that by expressing their emotions clients can see their situation from a new perspective.

Subgeneralization Three

My questions and reflections shaped the Levelising experience for me and my clients and my questions and reflections were shaped by our interaction.

I engaged in Levelising with my clients by intentionally asking questions targeted to particular levels so that I addressed all four levels of Levelising. I also verbally summarized client statements during our sessions, made statements that reflected on their actions, and reflected on some aspect of our session. Finally, I changed my way of engaging with clients by examining my own actions, my frames of reference, and considering other frames of reference that I might use in my client interactions. I elaborate on this experience below.

Levelising through questions

Prior to initiating this research study and incorporating the Levelising model into my practice, I structured my coaching sessions around a set of questions I developed during preparation for the RAC Coaching Academy practicum. While some of those questions encouraged client reflection, they were designed primarily to help clients understand and resolve issues. In the context of this study, my prior coaching questions would have been considered, predominantly, as representative of levels 1 and 2. Incorporating the Levelising model into my coaching practice helped me to ask questions that allowed clients to reflect in ways that they

were not reflecting before, that is, exploring their frames of reference and examining alternative frames.

In addition to increasing the scope of questions available to me for my coaching practice, the Levelising model also provided a logical framework with which to observe client reflection. In their book on executive coaching, Bacon and Spear (2003) identified questioning techniques to help clients reflect on their actions; to understand their assumptions, values, and beliefs; and to explore context. These three techniques resemble levels 2, 3, and 4 of the Levelising model. However, these are three of many techniques described by the authors who provide no insight into how the three might relate to one another, if at all. By contrast, the Levelising model not only allowed me to engage clients in multiple forms of reflection, but it did so within the context of a cohesive framework. Peters and Ragland (2005) described the four modes of Levelising in terms of a practitioner stepping back, figuratively speaking, a series of times, each time increasing his or her perspective. The framework they described is easy to understand and put into practice. In my role as a coach, having a logical framework to guide the questioning and reflective process allowed me to stay more focused on my clients and to better understand and enhance their experience.

Results indicated that I asked more questions to encourage level 1 and 2 responses than I did to encourage level 3 and 4 responses. It is possible that my practical orientation, as noted by Torres (2008), contributed to my inclination towards level 1 and 2 questions in that my background is similar to that of clients participating in my study. One example that supports this idea is that, on one occasion, I prefaced a level 3 question regarding a client's assumptions by warning him, "This is going to sound like a strange question." Later, reflecting on my comment

about the question made me aware of two related ideas. First, I realized that this client and I have similar professional backgrounds and have always related to one another on a professional level rather than a personal level. I was uncomfortable asking him questions that I believed were not of the genre he would expect based on our mutual background. Additionally, my warning made me aware of my own assumptions regarding how my clients might regard level 3 questions. The client later remarked that he did not find it to be a strange question at all. From this response, I learned that my prior assumptions were not correct. This event seemed to illustrate my practical orientation as described by Torres.

Levelising through summaries

Each of my clients noted that my summaries of their statements helped them to better understand their perspectives. Whitworth et al. (2007) noted that, in their coaching experience, clients often are not able to see with any clarity what they are doing or saying. To improve clarity, Bacon and Spear (2003) observed that summarizing client comments helped the client to develop a view of themselves that they might never have seen otherwise. Coleman (2002) suggested further that paraphrasing and reflecting helped clients sort things out when they were confused by complex situations. Hargrove (2003) noted that summarizing client statements led to transformative change by allowing clients to think and act differently. As I summarized my clients' statements, I allowed them to consider not only what they said, but how I perceived their statements. They often responded that my summaries gave them fresh insight into their thoughts, leading them into further reflection about what they had learned.

I also found it interesting how my clients and I, even though involved in the same dialogue, could experience the session from remarkably different perspectives. At the end of

each coaching session, I asked clients to share what they had learned from the session. In almost every case, the insight they shared was different from what I had expected. Bacon and Spear (2003) provided an interesting perspective on the process of summarizing client statements and asking for their summaries:

> So when you summarize the key points of the dialogue you are, in a sense, negotiating a shared understanding of what was important and what should be remembered. Finally, if you ask your clients to summarize key points, then you also gain some insight into what they considered important – and it may differ from what you considered important. (p. 221)

The difference in my clients' frames of reference and my own was illustrated in our responses to each other's summaries. In both cases, our openness to comprehend each other's perspective allowed us to create new understandings.

Reflecting in and on action

In my findings, I noted that reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action were both prominent and important features during my coaching sessions. These orientations served as the foundation for Schön's (1987) description of his engagement with architecture students. His approach to *coaching* students relied less on asking questions and more on engaging the learner in dialogue via reflecting in and on action. While much of the methodology Schön described in this context did not fully translate into executive coaching, some of his description of dialogue between the coach and student was similar to the dialogues my clients and I experienced during our coaching sessions. For example, Schön noted, "When the dialogue works well, it takes the form of reciprocal reflection-in-action" (p. 163). I found that my clients and I engaged in

reciprocal reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action to a much greater degree than I had expected. Based on training I received prior to my study and as described in my practical theory, I expected to engage my clients almost exclusively by asking questions and by occasionally sharing my own experience with my clients. In practice, however, I found that I frequently reflected on my clients' situation and reflected regarding the context of our meeting. Both of these types of reflections seemed to make a positive contribution to our sessions. They helped me to stay connected to my clients and helped my clients to gain additional perspective on their situations.

Evolving coach/client relationships

As previously mentioned, I entered this study thinking that I could facilitate my clients' and my own engagement in reflective practice both by inquiring into clients' experience and by sharing my own experiences with them. Whitworth et al. (2007) suggested a similar approach that summarized, in retrospect, how I planned to approach my coaching:

> We emphasize that clients are naturally creative, resourceful, and whole and that they do have the answers or know how to find them. Still at times it may seem pointless to withhold your knowledge or experience when it is clearly relevant and could spare clients time, money and effort. As long as you are conscientious about framing the conversations as your experience and encouraging clients to find their own best way while exploring a number of alternative pathways, your experience will be seen as one more potential course of action and not the "expert's" way. (p. 112)

However, early in the study I discovered that clients did not respond to the sharing of my experiences in the manner that I had expected. As I reflected on this phenomenon, I noted in my

reflexive journal that clients seemed to value my listening and summarizing their experiences and reflections much more than they valued my experience or advice. Based on this reflection, I changed the manner in which I engaged my clients.

When my clients did not respond positively to my experience, they may have been resisting what they perceived to be my attempts to solve their problems. My prior relationship with my clients and knowledge of their operations may have contributed to my tendency to move too quickly into level 1 problem-solving. In particular, I noted two sessions during which I attempted to help my clients solve their problem instead of encouraging them to reflect further. I believe that knowing too much about clients, their jobs, and their issues did not allow me to approach them as a naïve questioner. Schnell (2005) observed that when a coach knows too much about the organization and the managers he is coaching, this knowledge affects his ability to be objective. It is too easy in that situation for a coach to assume that he knows how to address the client's problems. I may have been in a similar position due to my prior relationships with my clients.

My findings for this question were summarized in the following generalization:

As my clients and I engaged in a reciprocal reflective process centered on the Levelising model, they experienced uncertainty and insight into themselves and the issues they faced.

Conclusions

Based on the above findings and discussion, I was able to draw four conclusions:

1) Engaging clients in Levelising resulted in both coach and the clients reflecting on all four levels, but not at the same rate for each level. Clients were more likely to reflect

at levels 1 and 2, perhaps due to their orientation to practice and problem solving. As coach, I was able to reflect at all four levels, particularly in terms of how I directed questions to clients and how I reflected on my own practice.

2) By incorporating the Levelising model into my coaching practice, I was able to help my clients to move beyond level 1 problem-solving, to deliberately reflect on their experience and assumptions, and to explore new ways to frame their experiences. Clients participated in each level in ways defined in the Peters and Ragland (2005) Levelising model. Manifestations of each level (e.g., use of metaphors and stories in level 4) were consistent with related theories of coaching and reflective practice.
3) The uncertainty and frustration clients experienced while Levelising led to further insight into issues and new perspectives on their actions. This outcome was consistent with literature that addressed the role of emotions in the coach-client relationship.
4) As my clients and I engaged in Levelising through my questions and our reflections, our relationships evolved as we both became more aware of how our assumptions, values, and beliefs shaped our engagement. There was a reciprocal relationship to this interaction; that is, clients' reflections led to further reflection on my part, and resulting changes in my coaching approach influenced clients' subsequent reflections. These evolving changes were particularly evident in terms of my decision to forego sharing my own experiences with my clients. These conclusions form the basis of my discussion in the next chapter of implications for research and practice.

Chapter Five: Implications

In this chapter, I consider the implications of this study for research, for the field of executive coaching, and for my practice.

Research Implications

My research adds to the limited research on Levelising initiated by Gaskin (2007) and followed by Torres (2008). While three studies that focus on a particular form of reflective practice do not constitute a body of literature, they collectively shed more light on the way Levelising works in different settings. Gaskin and Torres both engaged their participants in a group setting. My research is performed in the context of executive coaching which, in my practice, is conducted with individuals. Therefore, my study provides insight into the dynamic of engaging participants in Levelising in a one-on-one setting instead of in groups. It also adds to the findings of Torres' study, in terms of how the researcher-practitioner and other participants influence each other's reflective experiences.

All three studies show that participants can and do engage in all four levels of Levelising. However, the studies were not consistent in terms of the number of instances of reflection at each of the four levels. In the present study and in Gaskin's work, participants engaged in Levelising primarily at levels 1 and 2. In contrast, Torres reported that she and other participants more evenly engaged at all four levels. I have speculated that the more practice-oriented participants in my study and in Gaskin's study were more likely to engage in levels 1 and 2, in contrast to Torres and her participants, who she reported to be more comfortable with more abstract forms of reflection. On the other hand, all three groups were engaged in practice rather than in academic pursuits, and all three studies showed that all participants were capable of engaging in

levels 3 and 4. Thus, it is unclear what actually accounts for the differences observed among the three studies. More studies need to be done in this area of Levelising research.

My research also contributes to a broader understanding of Schön's work on reflective practice, specifically his Ladder of Reflection (1987). Schön's Ladder describes an approach to coaching architectural design students by helping them to reflect at various levels, each step of reflection being one step further from direct engagement in the design process. My case study of coaching executives through various steps of reflection provides data regarding how reflection at different levels, in terms of the Levelising model, manifested in coach and client discourse and on how reflecting-in-action and reflecting-on-action contributed to the coach/client relationship.

Several authors have noted how little research has been performed in the field of executive coaching. Styhre and Josephson (2007) reported that there is "surprisingly" limited coaching literature and that most available is explanatory in nature or reports on coaching success. Feldman and Lankau (2005) observed that the field of coaching needs a stronger theoretical foundation based on systematic research. Kilburg (2004) noted the lack of detailed case studies in the coaching literature. Bennett (2006) suggested that research is needed regarding characteristics of both coaches and clients, the coach/client relationship, the coaching process, results of coaching, and theories related to the practice and teaching of coaching. As I entered this study, I expected my research to contribute to at least two of the areas outlined by Bennett (2006): the coaching process and theory related to practice. My study contributes to these areas as well as helps create a better understanding of the coach/client relationship. For example, my study describes how my approach to coaching evolved during the study based on

client responses to my comments, and how changes in my approach influenced subsequent client responses.

My study also introduces the concept of Levelising to the coaching literature as a framework for facilitating reflective practice. Engaging executive coaching clients in terms of Levelising promises to help coaches be more systematic in their efforts to facilitate reflective practice, especially by helping them to pay attention to reflecting, framing and theorizing as it is practiced by coaches and their clients.

My research affirms the need for additional research in the coaching literature, particularly with respect to case studies of coaching processes. For example, executive coaching literature could benefit from research in the following areas:

1) Additional case studies using the Levelising model. My research was bounded by a particular group of participants with whom I had a prior professional relationship. Studying Levelising with different client groups would shed more light on the role of Levelising in coaching practices.
2) Additional case studies using a different coaching approach. I employed a "person-centered approach" (Feldman & Lankau, 2005, p.139) in my coaching. In this genre, personal reflection is valued and coaching intervention is discouraged. In other approaches, based on behavioral or cognitive theory, coaching would follow a different path and, presumably, might have a different result.
3) Long-term case-study research to observe changes that clients make in their practices and how those decisions are related to a coaching engagement. It is important that clients report how coaching affected their perspectives and how changes in

perspective influence changes in their practices. However, a more valuable outcome, perhaps, would be clients demonstrating transformative change in their lives.

If I were to perform this study again, having the benefit of hindsight, I would pay more attention to my own experience of Levelising and how it may have shaped my clients' experience. I might consider conducting the study in phases, analyzing the data between each of the phases, and more deliberately adjusting my coaching methods based on the analysis. Even though I maintained a reflexive journal during the study and noted how I changed my view of the coach/client relationship, following a phased approach may have resulted in a clearer picture of how my own Levelising experience affected me and my clients.

Implications for the Field of Executive Coaching

In addition to contributing to research in the field of executive coaching, my study also contributes to the practice of coaching in a number of ways.

In Chapter One, I observed shortcomings in my preparation for coaching, especially as I attempted to use the RAC approach to developmental coaching. These shortcomings included: (1) a reliance on clients to think through their issues and seek answers based solely on their ability to draw upon their own personal experiences, without benefit of the coach's experience; (2) RAC provides limited guidance on how to facilitate reflective practice; and (3) there is and a lack of information on how to recognize that clients are engaging in reflective practice as a result of coaching. My study helped me to address these shortcomings and will be helpful for other coaches incorporating the RAC approach into their respective coaching practices. For example, developing a set of questions designed to facilitate reflection at the different levels of the Levelising model helped me to be more systematic and structured in my coaching approach.

Further, identifying types of locutionary acts for both the coach and client during this study provided valuable insight into my own and clients' reflections as they are revealed in our discourse.

In addition, as a result of this study, I recognize more value in helping clients to reflect on their own experiences without the need to interject my own. Therefore, I do not regard this aspect of the RAC approach to be as problematic as I did previously. Other coaches might find this distinction between client and coach experience useful in their own practices.

My study introduces a new model to the field of coaching and provides case study research regarding use of the model, as reported from the perspective of both coach and client. For coaches whose work with clients is focused primarily in terms of level 1 problem-solving and level 2 reflection, incorporating Levelising into their practices can help them to direct clients' attention to their frames and to ways of reframing their situations. Information in the tables describing the types of locutionary acts associated with coaching and with client responses at each of the four levels of Levelising should be particularly valuable to executive coaches interested in gaining a deeper understanding of reflective processes.

The Levelising model can be used as a framework that is both useful for facilitating reflection and for observing oneself and clients in the process of reflection. Coaches who understand how they and their clients are reflecting during a coaching session are better positioned to help themselves and their clients to examine their frames of reference and consider other frames of reference as they deal with issues.

Finally, studying my practice using an action research approach can serve as a model to other coaches who may have interest in researching their own practice. This study demonstrates the value of researching one's own practice and provides at least one methodology for doing so.

My Coaching Practice

As I entered this study, I theorized that my clients could potentially improve their practices by deliberately reflecting on their experience and underlying belief systems. I also theorized that by paying attention to the level of reflection practiced by my clients (using the Levelising model) I could improve my practice and enable clients to learn more about themselves and their respective practices. This part of my practical theory has not changed as a result of this study. However, while I also theorized that I could facilitate reflective practice for my clients and me through inquiry and shared experiences, I now place less emphasis on sharing my experience with clients and more on helping them pay attention to their own experience. This understanding has changed how I approach my coaching engagements. Instead of adding my own experience to coaching sessions, I maintain a focus on my clients' issues and experiences and seek to help them gain perspective on their practices.

This study has contributed to my practice in other ways as well. Using the Levelising model in my coaching practice helps me to pay closer attention to how my clients and I are engaged during our coaching sessions. Paying attention to our engagement makes me more aware of the impact of my questions, my summaries of client statements, and my clients' experience of our coaching sessions. This awareness prompts me to be more deliberate in how I engage with my clients. This study has also increased my awareness of nuances in client language and unspoken messages in client comments. As a result, I am better able to distinguish

between clients reflecting on their perspectives and simply reporting on events. During this study, I was particularly impressed by the extent and depth of reflection that my clients experienced when they were given the opportunity to do so. All reported how valuable it was to be given "permission" to reflect freely. Understanding the value my clients place on this type of interaction has made me more patient as clients "think out loud."

Closing reflections

In the course of this study, I learned the importance of engaging my clients in all four levels of Levelising. Doing so demonstrates how to move beyond problem-solving to more deliberate reflection on their experience, assumptions, beliefs, and values, and ultimately helping them to reframe their experience through exploring other frames. I also learned that when my clients reflected at multiple levels, they experienced uncertainty and frustration, but that these challenges frequently helped them see their situation from new perspectives. I learned that my experience of Levelising as observed, in part, by my questions, summaries, and reflections, played a vital role in shaping my client interactions. Finally, I learned that, as my clients and I engaged in Levelising, our professional relationship evolved as we both became more aware of how our assumptions, values, and beliefs shaped our engagement. When I took into consideration the results of other studies of Levelising, coaching, and other authors' ideas about reflective practice, I was able to further contextualize and understand my practice and the particular outcomes of my study. My hope is that my study will help form the basis for additional Levelising studies, particularly as they might occur in coaching practices.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Preliminary Speech Acts for Levelising

Level 1: Pre-Reflective Being in the World

a. Speaking without context to previous statements
b. Defending one's position
c. Instructing – stating a "fact"
d. Confronting others
e. Leading or directing –via questions
f. Giving one's viewpoint
g. Advising

Level 2: Reflective Being

a. Reflecting-on-action
b. Reflecting-in-action
c. Probing – via questions
d. Seeking clarification – via questions
e. Inviting others to question you and your assumptions
f. Analyzing the conversation
g. Expressing confusion or frustration

Level 3: Framing

a. Reflecting on reflections of others
b. Reflecting on one's own reflections
c. Reflecting on the process of reflection
d. Expressing a personal viewpoint
e. Expressing growing awareness
f. Stating personal beliefs and values
g. Stating organizational beliefs and values
h. Suspending assumptions

Level 4: Theorizing

a. Imagining other points of view
b. Critically examining other points of view
c. Comparing and contrasting multiple points of view
d. Questioning individual and group frames
e. Exploring a frame horizontally
f. Exploring a frame vertically
g. Thinking about thinking
h. Creating new frames

Appendix B – Levelising Question Categories for Business Coaching

Stimulus Questions

- What would you like to work on today?
- What's important for you to work on?
- What would be a good result of our meeting today?
- What would help you the most right now?

Level 1 Questions – Pre-reflection ("Fact-based" Problem solving-Decision-making)

Probing

- What is happening?
- Say more . . .
- Why is that happening?
- How do you know this?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- What do you think causes ... ?
- Why is ... happening?
- Why? (keep asking to the void)
- What accounts for . . . .
- What evidence is there to support what you are saying?

Conceptual Clarification Questions

- What do we already know about this?
- What exactly does this mean?
- What is the nature of ...?
- Can you give me an example?
- Are you saying ... or ... ?
- Can you rephrase that, please?
-

Level 2 Questions – Reflection (Paying attention to past or present circumstances)

Reflecting-on-action

- How did you react to . . . .
- How have you handled that in the past . . .

Reflecting-in-action

- What are your thoughts on how we are discussing this?
- How does this look to you right now?
- If you were to step back from the situation, what would you see?

Conceptual Clarification Questions

- Why are you saying that?

- How does this relate to what we have been talking about?

Level 3 Questions – Framing (Paying attention to one's own frame of reference)

Probing assumptions
- What else could we assume?
- You seem to be assuming ... ?
- How did you choose those assumptions?
- Please explain why/how ... ?
- How can you verify or disprove that assumption?
- What would happen if ... ?
- Do you agree or disagree with ... ?

Level 4 Questions – Theorizing (Considering other viewpoints and perspectives)

Questioning Viewpoints and Perspectives
- Another way of looking at this is ..., does this seem reasonable?
- What alternative ways of looking at this are there?
- Why it is ... necessary?
- What is the difference between... and...?
- Why is it better than ...?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
- How are ... and ... similar?
- What would ... say about it?
- What if you compared ... and ... ?
- How could you look another way at this?

Transition to Action Questions

Promoting action
- What do you plan to do about _____?
- What other options should you consider?
- Based on what you told me, what is the next step?

Probing implications and consequences of action
- Then what would happen?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How could ... be used to ... ?
- What are the implications of ... ?
- How does ... affect ... ?
- How does ... fit with what we learned before?
- Why is ... important?
- What is the best ... ? Why?

Appendix C – Summary of research protocol

1) I will start to tape as soon as we are finished with greetings/introductions.

2) I will start our session by asking: "What do you want to work on today?"

3) During the session, I will ask you a number of questions but will rely on you primarily for the content of our meeting.

4) I may, from time to time, share my own experiences if they seem to be similar to yours and, in my opinion, may provide food for thought for your reflection.

5) I will not use your name during our session so the transcriptionist will not have that information as a clue to your identity.

6) After approximately 40 minutes I will bring the session to a close by asking:

    a. Would this be a good time to close today?
    b. Share one thing you are taking away from today's session.

7) Then, I will ask you to give me an approximately 5 minute "debrief" of your thoughts on the session.

8) I will send the tape to be transcribed as soon as possible. To my knowledge, the transcriptionist is not anyone who knows you. They will not be given your name.

9) When I get the tape back from transcription, I will offer to let you review it for personal and sensitive items. You will be asked to sign a form indicating that you have reviewed the transcription or have declined to do so.

10) Your name will not be used in any of my data analysis or dissertation.

Appendix D– Informed Consent Statement

Facilitating Reflective Practice in Business Coaching

INTRODUCTION

You are invited to voluntarily participate in a study of my coaching practice. The purpose of the study is to investigate how incorporating a process called "Levelising" into my business coaching practice will facilitate reflective practice by clients. Results of this study will lead to a better understanding of how a business coaching practice might be improved through engaging clients in a reflective practice process.

INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be asked to participate in four audio taped coaching sessions with me over a period of eight weeks. During each of these sessions, I will use an open-ended approach to facilitating reflective practice. Both you and I will wear lapel microphones and the discourse will be captured on one audio tape for each session. Each audio tape will be labeled with a unique numerical identifier for you – your name will not be attached to the audio tape or to the numerical identifier. The audio tapes will be transcribed by a third party and you will be given the opportunity to personally review the entire transcription for accuracy and to identify sensitive information to be removed from the study.

During each of the four meetings, I will ask you questions and offer my own experience. However, I will not attempt to advise you on how to deal with each situation under discussion nor will I attempt any intervention on your behalf. Rather, I will rely on you to evaluate your own situation and, in light of your experience and mine, to determine a course of action. I will document my observations from each session through a reflexive journal. In the reflexive journal, I will not identify you by name.

RISKS

This proposed research presents minimal potential risks to you as a participant. However, during the coaching sessions, you may disclose information of a sensitive or proprietary nature. Such information will be protected by the following measures: 1) Numbers will be used to identify you in all aspects of this study (Participant 1 through 4), for the purpose of data collection, analysis, and reporting of results; 2) any transcribed information that would identify you will be purged from the data; 3) you may refuse to participate in the study or you may choose to withdraw your

participation at any time; and 4) the person transcribing the coaching sessions will sign a confidentiality agreement.

BENEFITS

Results of this study will lead to a better understanding of how I can improve my business coaching approach through reflective practice and will help you and other clients to systematically reflect on your practice. Additionally, it promises to contribute to executive coaching literature and to process and theory related to coaching practice. It may also provide

insight into coaching skills, especially the skill of questioning as employed in a coaching relationship.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data will be stored in a locked file room at my office at 10820 Murdock Drive, Knoxville, TN 37934 and consent forms will be kept in a locked cabinet in the major professor's office at A519 Jane And David Bailey Education Complex, 1122 Volunteer Boulevard Knoxville, TN 37996-3400. Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected file in my personal computer. The data sources, consisting of transcripts, tapes, field notes and other forms used in the analysis of data will be destroyed upon completion of my doctoral dissertation, or by May 2011, whichever comes first. Consent forms will be stored for three years following the study. Other than my dissertation committee chair and participants in the research, no other persons will be given access to the original data. Consolidated results of my study may be shared more widely.

It is understood that all information shared in this research study, including the audio taped recordings, transcripts and reflexive journal are shared in good faith that all information will remain strictly confidential. I understand I have a responsibility to honor this confidentiality agreement and hereby agree not to share any information that you identify as confidential with anyone except you, the participant. Results of the study will be shared with my committee members, my doctoral chair, John Peters, and readers of my dissertation.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study), you may contact me at (865) 250-0750 or my professor, John Peters, at (865) 974-8145 or (865) 207-4074. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact University of Tennessee Research Compliance Services of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be destroyed.

_____

CONSENT

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____

Appendix E – Confidentiality statement

Confidentiality Agreement for Hired Transcriber

As a transcriber of the tape-recorded interviews of those participating in the study regarding facilitating reflective practice in business coaching under the direction of David T. Duncan and John Peters of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Educational Psychology and Counseling Department, I agree to guarantee confidentiality to participants who are a part of this study. I will not publicly divulge information I learn about the participants.

_____

Signature

_____

Date

Appendix F – Levelising Definitions from D. Gaskin (2007) Dissertation

Level 1: Pre-Reflective Being in the World
Awareness is directed outward to others, rather than inward. This kind of knowing is not a result of conscious decision-making. At this level you are engaged in your practice and would find it difficult to articulate what you are doing. Our actions have bases, but for the most part not the result of conscious deliberation. We are "just doing it" and not stopping to think about what we are doing. Level I can be characterized by members of a group acting (speaking) and being (engagement) in such a way that it does not appear the group is demonstrating reflection but rather is engaged primarily in discussion and information sharing as shown in the examples below.

1. Discussion in a group on a topic where members make individual contributions.
    a. "Pop-Corning" or group members speaking one after the other without reflecting on the view of the person who spoke before him or her.
    b. Defending one's position: no awareness of values, beliefs, or the perceptions of others. Example: Person speaking is ignoring others' statements and continuing to assert his or her own beliefs or perceptions.
    c. Talking as if there is only one objective truth. Example: "Everyone knows that…."
    d. Statements that could lead to conflict or defensiveness. Example: "Let's talk about something else…" or "Not this again…"
    e. Closed ended questions: leading or directing questions

2. Giving Information in a non-reflective manner.
    a. Giving one's viewpoint. Example: "I think we should…" "I see it this way…"
    b. Giving advice. Example: "You should…"

Level 2: Reflective Being
This often occurs as a result of an unexpected or surprising occurrence or in response to a prompt from others as you consider your actions. This awareness usually develops first in retrospect as you become aware of already completed actions. From this perspective, you can reflect on your actions in the moment of acting and afterwards. You retain your relationship to the practice and choose to examine it at the same time.

1. Explicit knowledge or stated knowledge. At this level we are expressing what may have previously been tacit knowledge: knowing something but unable to describe what we know. At this level we are beginning to state what we know in a way that leads to reflection on what we say we know. As we do this we can reflect on our actions or reflect in our actions.
    a. Reflecting-on-action. Reflecting-on-action is discussion of an event or conversation that has already occurred. Example: "At our last meeting when we discussed CQI topics and you said…" or "Let's talk about what we did last time…"
    b. Reflecting-in-action. Reflection in action is commenting on what one is saying as one is saying it. Example: "As I think about what I'm saying or trying to say…" "Let me think about what I'm trying to say right now…"

2. Turning towards others and asking into what has been said. This is a conscious effort to fully understand what someone else in the group is trying to convey with his or her words.
   a. Open-ended questions, probing into statements and inviting others to speak.
   b. Asking into what others are saying: "Is this what you mean when you say…"
   c. Individuals in a group invite others to inquire into what they say and assumptions. Example: "Does this make sense?"

3. Reflection on Process
   b. Group or individual decides to analyze what is going on within the conversation. Example: "Here is what I see we are doing as a group…"
   c. Confusion or frustration is voiced by a member or members of the group. Example: "I'm confused about what you are saying. Could someone help me understand…"
   d. Suspension of assumptions. Example: "Here is what I'm thinking right now, but I want to check with others and make sure I understand this correctly…"

4. Conversational Pace and Structure
   a. Conversation slows down and responses from group members are not as automatic. There are fewer examples of individuals trying to "jump in to" at a pause in the conversation.
   b. The conversation involves deep listening and demonstration of this listening by incorporation of other's views and ideas into one's statements. Example: "As I listen to what you are saying, I wonder, do you consider…."
   c. Pauses between statements become more apparent.
   d. Silence becomes more frequent.

Level 3: Framing

You become aware of yourself reflecting on your actions or others become aware of you reflecting on your actions and you or others see that you are operating from within a conceptual framework. This is noticing how you are looking at what you are doing. It is any kind of expression that identifies a person's viewpoint or belief system. A vocalization of one's beliefs and values as a product of individual and/or group experiences although not necessarily labeling it as a belief or value.

Example: "I'm beginning to notice how focused I am on crisis management."
Example: "I am becoming more aware of how frustrated I get with these meetings that don't result in the completion of a task."
Example: "This is how I see it."
Example: "In our organization, we are consumer centered."
Example: "I experience our team as being really good at meeting consumer needs…"

Level 4: Theorizing

You begin to think about frames or demonstrate openness to frames and to realize, for example, that language itself is a frame for your experience of the world. You look around and see what others have to say about what is being said and done. You can think about thinking, critically

examine what others think, consider how you and other's theories shape your experience of the world, and perhaps even construct new theories.

1. Imagining other points of view. This is what Wittgenstein (1953) calls "Deconstruction" or arresting or interrupting the spontaneous or unselfconscious flow of our everyday talk in order to see other possibilities. This is not actually seeing. Example: "Think of…" "Suppose…." "Imagine….")

2. Comparing and contrasting multiple points of view by comparing different individual's points of view or noticing that an individual or group has a different point of view.

3. Group begins questioning individual and group frames. Example: "Why do we see it this way and not another way"?

4. Deep conversation that explores a frame horizontally (recognizing the view of each of the group members) and vertically (group explores a topic in greater depth). Group members explore an idea or frame to a greater depth in order to deepen an understanding. Example: Group members ask for multiple perspectives on a topic such as "what are we doing as a team that results in our consumers who are in crisis getting most of our attention?" The intention with understanding multiple perspectives is to create new understanding so that a change could occur in how a group is performing a task. In this example, if there is a wide understanding of the reasons for why the group gives more attention to crisis, then the group could decide if they want to make a change in how they practice or what they pay attention to regarding consumer care. The group could ask the question: "is there something about the way we currently provide care to our consumers that results in those who are in crisis receiving the greatest attention"?

Appendix G – Research Methodology Summary

1) Define typology

2) Classify utterances according to the typology

3) Summarize data into types of locutionary acts

4) Identify patterns, relationships, and themes

5) Analyze patterns, relationships, and themes

6) Evaluate data connections

7) Develop one-sentence generalizations

8) Select data excerpts

Appendix H – Pattern Summary Statements

Coaching Speech Act Pattern Summary Statements

1. Asking probing questions initiated discourse with clients at one level of the Levelising model
2. Asking clarifying questions called on the client to elucidate previous comments regarding one level of the Levelising model
3. Reflecting on actions and statements of clients helped the coach to connect with the client's experience or thoughts

Level 1 Speech Act Pattern Summary Statements

1. Reporting on past, present, or future activities allowed client and coach to have the same background information as a foundation for the coaching session.
2. Providing additional context to previous statements allowed client and coach to interact on the basis of a deeper understanding.
3. Justifying previous actions allowed the client to explain the rationale for what he or she had done.
4. Announcing judgments, decisions, or conclusions allowed clients to communicate the resolution of an issue.
5. Engaging the coach through jokes, comments, and questions allowed the client to establish a connection with the coach.

Level 2 Speech Act Pattern Summary Statements

1. Reflecting-in-action allowed clients to pay attention to how the coach and client were interacting, serving as a foundation for further reflection.
2. Acknowledging uncertainty allowed clients to release their grasp on certainty and open the door for new possibilities.
3. Analyzing their situation allowed clients to thoughtfully consider issues and alternatives.
4. Acknowledging breakthrough in their thinking allowed clients to observe the result of reflection and commit to making changes.

Level 3 Speech Act Pattern Summary Statements

1. Examining their own experience in the world allowed clients to ground their reflections in what they know and understand.
2. Reflecting on personal characteristics allowed clients to examine their own taken-for-granted values, beliefs, and assumptions.
3. Exploring universal truths allowed clients to examine taken-for-granted values of others.
4. Considering action imperatives allowed clients to examine the reasons for and motives behind their actions.

Level 4 Speech Act Pattern Summary Statements

1. Using specific people as frames of reference allowed clients to ground their reflections in concrete examples.

2. Using non-specific people as frames of reference allowed clients to explore their own frame of reference through imagining the frames of others.
3. Imagining different contexts allowed clients to consider how they might react if the situation was different.
4. Imagining different approaches allowed clients to consider how doing things differently might affect their situation.
5. Exploring metaphors allowed clients to consider unusual frames of reference.

Vita

David T. Duncan is President and owner of The ConneXions Group, Inc. He works as an organization development consultant and business coach. Dave has thirty years of experience in managing technical organizations, facilitating strategic and business planning, and growing successful businesses. In 1993, he co-founded PrSM Corporation, an engineering and environmental consulting firm chosen by Inc. magazine as one of the fastest growing privately-held companies in the U.S. In 2005, Dave sold his interest in PrSM Corporation and founded The ConneXions Group, Inc. to apply his experience toward helping other business owners to "connect their vision to business results." He served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Tennessee and is a Fellow of the American Industrial Hygiene Association. He is an experienced facilitator who specializes in business planning and promoting group collaboration and creativity. Dave holds a masters degree in Air and Industrial Hygiene from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and a doctoral degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Tennessee. He lives in Knoxville, Tennessee with his wife, Susan. They have two children, Luke and Taylor.